

## DIGITAL CULTURE AS A FRAMEWORK OF CIVIC ACTIVISM<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** The basic assumption of the paper is that digital culture, regardless of how much it is based on technological progress, is not determined by it, but necessarily arises from the values, ways of thinking and acting that are grounded in that technology and by it, and that have enabled its development. Thereby, the introduction will be dedicated to a critical deliberation on digital culture as a platform for the (de)construction of individual and collective identities, analysing its participative, mobilizational and subversive potential in the context of agitation and realization of social and cultural changes, civil rights and freedoms. The main purpose of this paper is to explain from the sociological point of view how digital culture has determined, shaped and transformed the paths of civic activism, especially in the last few years in Serbia. By using secondary sources of data, the paper will analyse to which extent the Internet and social networks represent important instruments of communication and mobilization of citizens for protesting and organization of various political events. A special critical emphasis will be directed towards the effects, advantages and limitations (activation or passivization) of civic engagement in the context of digital culture. The application of the comparative method in the final part of the paper will point out how much Serbian civic activism follows or differs from European movements that also rely primarily on the Internet and social networks as a medium for mobilization.

**Key words:** digital culture, civic activism, the Internet, civic identity.

### 1. Introduction

With the dominance of digital technologies in the contemporary global age, we are ever more exposed to the increased significance of interactivity, new media, the rise of the internet and social networks, as well as the digitalization of every life experience, which in turn opens new spaces for the manifestation of numerous sociocultural controversies (advantages and limitations). As a result, in the framework of sociological theories at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the process underlying the emergence of a new form of society (a post-industrial, information, computer science-related, network society), the affirmation of new

<sup>1</sup> Received March 2020 / Accepted May 2020

<sup>2</sup> E-mail: jelena.petkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

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models of communities (electronic, virtual, online communities), and a new type of culture (digital, virtual culture) were analyzed and explained. With the inclusion of certain polemics pertaining to the nuances which emerged from the various analytical perspectives, theoreticians of the information, network society and digital culture (Bell, 1999; Castells, 2001; 2002; Negroponte, 1998; Gere, 2011; Jones, 2001) point out the central importance of knowledge, information, communication and creation within new and increasingly more complex forms of social organization on the web, but also off of it, presenting an entire sequence of complex conditions and numerous causes which lead to the transformation of the way of life and reconfiguration of personal and collective identities. The important potentials of new information and communication technologies (ICT) are primarily reflected in encouraging economic, social, cultural and political interaction both in cyber space and outside of it, offering the possibility for new and productive types of work and business dealings, the digital creation and reception of cultural content, as well as the realization of political and activist potential in the context of electronically mediated communication (the internet as a virtual agora, digital citizenship and democracy, twitter diplomacy, digital counter-culture, etc.). Certain controversies related to the informatization of society and the digitalization of culture are related to the tensions which refer to, among other things, the affirmation of digital social inequality, as well as the fabrication of explicit or implicit manipulative strategies, often masked by various ideological constructs. By guiding the complex transformations of the everyday life of people which take place in the fold of the contemporary information society, the aforementioned circumstances contribute to the efforts to reconfigure some old social, cultural and political questions and phenomena within the sociological discourse, and to once again critically reevaluate their new manifestations and mutual relations.

This paper will focus on a critical evaluation of digital culture as a framework for civic activism, with the aim of implementing a sociological approach to shedding light on and explaining the different ways in which digital culture has reshaped some political practices over the past few decades, that is, transformed various means of civic activism. While negating ideas pertaining to technological determinism, in the beginning of the paper we approach the determination of digital culture and its critical evaluation in the context of new interactive, communicative, productive and creative possibilities for (de)constructing personal and collective identities. Since digital networks and the “life lived on them” are a matter of public, and not only private interest, it is useful to study the potential role of digital networks as a space for political debate, the realization of digital citizenship and democracy, that is, the creation and shaping of certain segments of political culture. By applying a comparative method and analysis of secondary sources, primarily by relying on the results of research carried out in the world and locally, we will indicate just how important the internet/social networks are as a source of communication and mobilization of citizens for protests and the organization of various political events. By studying the participatory, mobilizing and subversive potential of digital culture, emphasized in the advocacy for and realization of social and cultural changes, civil

rights and freedoms, our intention in this paper is to provide a special critical analysis of the effects, advantages and limitations (the instigation to action or passivization) of civic activity in the context of digital culture.

## 2. Digital culture and the (de)construction of identity

If we were to approach culture from an analytical point of view and the most general socio-anthropological perspective, as the way of life and form of human activity in a certain location and at a certain time in history, then the concept 'digital' certainly determines a significant part of the culture of the historical time we are living in. The way of life of contemporary man in most societies today, especially the most developed ones, is determined by specific ways of communication, symbolization, a system of determination, production and expenditure whose intermediaries are digital technology and the media, especially since the development of the internet, beginning from the 1990s to date. Avoiding the traps of technological determinism which treat technology as an independent cause of social change, the sociological approach to determining digital culture is founded in the attitude that, however much it is based on technological progress, digital culture is not solely determined by it. This form of culture necessarily emerges from a broad spectrum of social needs, choices, values, ways of thinking and acting which, even though based on digital technology and mediated by it, also enabled its development and its current importance. Charlie Gere adopted the attitude that digital culture in its current form is not entirely new but is a historically conditioned occurrence, and so its development is not enabled solely by technological progress, but also by the complex needs of society. This includes the needs of 19<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and the wars dating from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also an entire sequence of heterogenous elements and socio-cultural practices such as the post-war avant-garde, counter-cultural utopianism, critical theory and philosophy, and techno-scientific discourse on information and systems. Furthermore, this author explicitly states that the world today is in a sense enchanted, bewitched, and deluded by the effects of new technologies and the media, as well as with what they offer and promise, believing at the same time that their important role as an apparatus of subjugation, control and exploitation is being overlooked (Gere, 2011: 19-20).

What is beyond doubt is that that ICT radically changed society and the living practices of individuals, with the tendency of rapidly increasing development and thus potentially deepening changes in the future. Life in the digital era means that, in addition to practices which we use to approach the physical and material world, there are also those which tie us to the virtual world.<sup>4</sup> The responsibility for actions taken in the virtual world is even greater than the one we carry in the real world, since

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<sup>4</sup> Some claim that the division into an *online* and *offline* world is no longer relevant in the world of today, considering that all experiences permeate both the *online* and *offline* space at the same time, abolishing the strict differences between them (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017: 4).

digital prints remain, are remembered, are rarely deleted and are always available on a planetary level. Life in the digital world allows an individual to manage their own time by spending it on numerous activities, such as providing information, getting an education, conducting business, or creative expression, communication, purchasing, socializing and entertainment, which increases the significance of various forms of digital culture in contemporary society. With new information technologies, electronic mediation of communication and numerous digital platforms based on the concept of networking and interaction, the possibilities for production, exchange and consumption of various cultural content and meaning, for the organization and promotion of numerous sociocultural activities, values and institutions, have expanded significantly.<sup>5</sup> At the same time we are faced with new opportunities and dilemmas, since the possibilities which tradition and traditional forms of authority offer us no longer guide our lives in the same way they used to. As a global communication network which enables the simultaneous dispersion and centralization of power, the internet relativizes spatial barriers by transforming the complex relations between local activities and long-distance interaction, thus enabling the reevaluation and blurring of traditional authorities, and the broadening and restructuring of existing social organization and new forms of the self (Slevin, 2000).

Considering that identity is not a given, but is instead a dynamic process of identification, a product of incessant searching, negotiation, the systematic establishing and denoting of the relations between similarities and differences between individuals and the collective (Jenkins, 2008: 18), we could say that electronic networks have affirmed themselves as a medium, and not merely a means of multiplying the possibilities of identity (de)construction. Communication mediated by digital technologies at the same time strengthens our identity, but also provides it with changeability and mobility, from which we could derive the conclusion that the internet provides a fertile environment for the growth of multiple realities and multiple identities. At the same time, online communities reproduce the existing social structures, but also undermine them and create new possibilities for resistance towards established sociocultural values and practices. On the one hand, the existing social distinctions are transferred to the digital space, implying new forms of social inequality and exclusion due to the unequal approach to digital technologies and networks which are subservient to class, education, profession, age and language. On the other hand, new emancipatory potentials of the internet are in correlation with the expansion of the possibilities for communication, social mobility and organization, contributing to the relativization of the hierarchical practice of material and symbolic production and consumption, established in real society and offline space (with the help of greater access to information, freedom of choice, anonymity, expressiveness, playing with personal identities, experimenting with artistic and innovative possibilities, new forms of cultural and political representation and

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<sup>5</sup> Digital culture includes various cultural and media content and forms, such as virtual reality, digital television, digital special effects, digital movies, electronic music, video games, the internet, etc. In addition, the term digital is also tied to numerous cultural and artistic fields of study, including net.art, digital art, digital architecture, cyberpunk novels and movies, etc.

counter-cultural resistance). So, instead of homogenization, the equation of cultural models within the larger or imposed cultural identities, “the internet has enabled numerous “marginal”, specific identities, individuals within their national cultures or majority cultural models, to find themselves partners and groups which could satisfy their interests, and develop their cultural needs” (Dragičević Šešić, 2001: 285, translated by JP and JB). These tendencies were anticipated at the end of the last century by Nicholas Negroponte, who indicated that by mutually connecting people on the web, numerous values of states-nations or national sovereignty would make room for electronic communities. It is his opinion that we will socialize in a “digital neighborhood” in which physical space will lose its importance, and time assume a different role, which is today becoming increasingly more certain (Negroponte, 1998).

Digital culture actually represents the axis of broader communities, where the mutual human relations via networks include the creation and exchange of various cultural content and lifestyles, or more widely determined cultural models or values. Furthermore, over the past few decades a specific digital subcultural style has been affirmed, which has through its symbolic, subversive and activist potential enabled the study of existing regimes of power and socio-cultural values by asking the question of possible alternatives, as well as of the development of new forms of resistance (hacking, cyberpunk, digital music, cyberfeminism etc.). Gere states that hacking as a ‘symbolic and esthetic’ form of resistance has achieved a new form of expression, especially during the 1990s when artists themselves began to use computer networks as a venue for new forms of avant-garde artistic practice and political activism (Gere, 2011: 187). In the form of online communities of rebels and protectors of civil liberties and the democratic right to openness and freedom of expression (Ross, 1991), hacker activism can also be seen as a segment of the digital counter-cultural activity though the spreading of civil disobedience on the internet in the form of a symbolic expression and deliberate injury to the legal, esthetic, moral and other limitations.<sup>6</sup>

To the extent that it provides new forms of public space and socio-cultural participation, digital culture offers us, by all accounts, the opportunity to express alternative personal and group identities, other models of opinion, organization and action. By redefining freedom of expression and discourse practices, by undermining traditional concepts of public and private space, digital culture and the global informational environment contribute to politics becoming not only an instrumental activity for achieving certain goals, but also a digitally expressive activity, a means of creative, symbolic and subversive establishment and confirmation of identity, group values, ideals and belonging within the public sphere.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Ross noted that “official” computer systems are often the focus of hackers’ efforts (intelligence services and defense services, the police and armed forces), which they attack in defense of civil liberties which are endangered by the centralized bureaucracy of the military-industrial complex (Ross, 1991).

### 3. Digital citizenship and democracy

One of the very important functions of a digital society, its political function or, narrowly speaking, civic participation, emphasizes the concept of citizenship as a bond between an individual, society and the state. An individual, through the status of a citizen, could be recognized as a member of the community, while outside of that status he practically does not exist for the country he lives in. In that sense, an important dimension of citizenship is status, that is, the formal-legal dimension within which membership is framed. However, in addition to that, a very important dimension of citizenship is also the activist one, that is, the one which is actualized by the participation of an individual in the community through his civic activism. In addition to citizenship conceptually being analyzed through a legal-formal and activist dimension, it can also analytically be connected to the law and obligations, which are also studied within the legal (judicial, normative), and ethical field. The importance of citizenship today is radically being transformed, since as citizens we do not only realize ourselves within territorial wholes (the national state, supranational institutions, and local levels), but also in the virtual space which within itself contains numerous (digital) communities.

Through the practices of digital activism, numerous possibilities are opening up for citizens, such as being able to follow certain social events and support a particular rally or idea, to express their opinion publicly on social media or on internet forums, to found a website which could focus on some kind of civic activism, to ask questions pertaining to social problems, to advocate topics and create a space for debate. All of the aforementioned enables an individual to participate in self-expression, that is, confirm himself as a (digital) citizen.<sup>7</sup>This, of course is not impossible in the so-called offline world; however, the possibilities there are limited. The internet has an advantage because it is more readily available, it negates physical limitations, and the activities themselves that we should like to participate in can be realized much faster. That is why we could say of ICT that it potentially makes a great contribution to the democratization of society, since it represents a facilitating mechanism which enables citizens to take part in the deliberation process and decision-making process.

The forms of civic practices are diverse, and the places in the virtual world where these practices take place are manifold. What we usually consider digital activism are those activities which take place on social networks, which certainly is not incorrect. However, what is of great importance are those practices which are based on the possibility of citizens being active on websites which were founded by national or local political entities, including directly taking part in a discussion on important national or local issues. The spectrum of activities is great, beginning from online voting, filling in questionnaires, to meetings and discussions in so-called digital assemblies. The process of deliberation includes various actors, from citizens,

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Ribble cites nine dimensions of digital citizenship, including: the digital access, digital communication and collaboration, digital commerce, digital fluency, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibility, digital health and welfare, and digital security and privacy (<https://www.digitalcitizenship.net/nine-elements.html>).

politicians, clerks, to civil society organizations and the media, which renders the entire communication democratic and public.<sup>8</sup> Those in favor of using ICT in political communication believe that its effect is primarily positive, since it contributes to the direct inclusion of citizens in the decision-making process. In a broader sense, we could conclude that ICT creates a new formula for democracy, a digital democracy. Of course, for such management to be realized, the key issue is for the governments themselves to recognize its importance, to be of an open democratic spirit and finally to implement the mechanisms for its realization. In addition, considering that younger generations have been living with technology since birth, which is why they are referred to as digital natives, we could expect the political systems in the future to transform even more in accordance with their demands, habits and practices, which leads us to the conclusion that digital democracy is our future.

#### 4. Digital civic activism

Internet communication can have an important role in political processes, and can sometimes also take on a revolutionary dimension. Specific counter-cultures or cultures with identities of resistance to the dominant values are formed on social networks and in virtual space in general. We could say that Julian Assange and Edward Snowden belong to the group of new revolutionaries of the digital age, as do numerous social and urban social movements, such as *Occupy Wall Street* and *Anonymous*. These kinds of movements and protests, which they instigate, emerged as the expression of civic dissatisfaction, that is, armchair politics which neglect civic interests and everyday life and are concerned only with the economic interests of large corporations. The alienation of politicians and high-ranking individuals from the citizens sometimes results in anti-politics, which can assume the form of political apathy and civic passivity. However, one part of the dissatisfaction spills over into the mobilization of the public to offer resistance, which is usually and primarily something that happens precisely in the online world.

The described social context spills over from the global level into Serbian society, where for the past few years we can note an increase in political apathy and civic dissatisfaction. The research results of a public opinion poll from 2017 indicate that 37% of the respondents stated that they are not interested in politics, while 34% stated that they do not get politically involved. Only 4% of the citizens see themselves as politically active individuals. The reason for this low percentage can be found in the statements of the citizens, who claim to have lost trust in political parties and key political figures in Serbia (see Cesid, 2017). However, one part of the dissatisfied citizens started to become active in an organized form, which is indicated by the increased number of local initiatives and associations which are shifting the focus of politics towards topics pertaining to the immediate social environment, as they

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<sup>8</sup> Some of the examples cited in practice in the world include: *Regulations.gov* (United States), the *National Dialogue of Public Involvement in EPA Decisions* (United States), and *Citizen Space* (United Kingdom) (for more see Holzer, Melitski, Rho and Schwester, 2004).

are considered to be primary political environments which are most significant for the quality of life of citizens. The communication within such movements takes place primarily through social networks, since information can most quickly be disseminated and could reach a greater number of people this way.<sup>9</sup> The importance of the internet and social networks (especially Facebook) for mobilizing the public and initiating protest activities was supported by research on events such as *Protest protiv diktature* (in English: the Protest against dictatorship) from 2017. This was a protest which was initiated in April 2017 via Facebook, spontaneously and non-deliberately on the part of an individual,<sup>10</sup> and all this immediately after the presidential elections. Due to the dissatisfaction with the election process, as well as the increasing political divisions and social tensions, a Facebook page was formed, called *Protiv diktature* which rapidly began to gain more and more followers. Research shows that this was an activity of a new political generation of younger people, mostly students from urban environments, who were otherwise inactive in the traditional political space (in political parties) (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017). What is interesting is the finding that most of the participants of the *Protiv diktature* protest had heard of it through social networks or internet portals, whether they were younger participants (76%) (who are generally informed online), or members of older generations (60%) who are more prone to turning to traditional media for their information. More than one half of the participants who took part in these protests think that the use of the internet contributed to the increase in their interest in socio-political issues. At the same time they cite that they do not trust television stations with a national broadcasting frequency (Babović, Bajčeta, Veličković, Petrović, Stefanović, Cvejić, 2017: 20), which is not surprising, considering that one of the main reasons for the emergence of the protests was precisely the belief that the media in Serbia are not free, and that they do not reflect the current socio-political pluralism. Furthermore, the disappointment in traditional media is the result of their increasing sensationalism and superficiality, while on the internet an individual can select any content on his own and thus freely monitor the information process.

In addition to the aforementioned protest, relatively young movements in Serbia also warrant analysis, those with a primarily local character which emerges as an expression of rebellion against specific problems in the immediate environment, but which actually indicate the deeper fissures in the social system. Social networks in that sense emerge as an important, even essential channel of communication which enables the problems which the movements are focused on to reach broader groups of citizens in the country, and even wider. The research of several social movements in Serbia, including *Odbranimo reke Stare planine* (in English: Let's protect the rivers

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<sup>9</sup> Dalibor Petrović believes that social networks in Serbia predominantly use three means of political activism: activism through portals, forums and protest types of activism (Petrović, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> This finding lends support to the claim that an individual as a citizen is most powerful on the internet, sine "armed" by cyber space and new technologies, he can quickly reach a great many people and in a short time spread his political opinions, a certain piece of information, or an invitation, and potentially could draw the public in, and then maybe even mobilize it.



of Stara planina), indicate that their orientation towards social networks as a means of communication with the public emerged as a necessity, considering that they see the traditional media, both local and those with a national frequency, as unwilling to hear their side of the story (for more see Delibašić, Nikolić, Vasiljević 2019: 28). However, other forms of communication are not negligible, and so the importance of fieldwork, face-to-face communication with citizens, printing and distributing of posters and leaflets, as well as recording documentary material and movies is also promoted. This confirms the well-known thesis in the theory of social movements that, even though digital space opens vast possibilities for civic activism and the spreading ideas, action in a concrete (physical) space remains an important element for the success and duration of a social movement and the realization of its goals. Otherwise, if all the activism takes place solely online, the activities of the movements could turn into a temporary rebellion (Petrović and Petrović 2017: 422). This is what Manuel Castells, who considers social networks to be an important source of information, refers to networking and inciting emotional charges among citizens and activists; however, new social movements mostly manifest their solidarity through physically gathering at protests in real space, covering even greater spatial distances for this purpose.<sup>11</sup>

The examples which we have included in this paper confirm the thesis that new social movements in Serbia, as well as other types of protests and political organization or involvement, over the past few years primarily relied on the internet and communication through social networks in order to indicate social problems, but also to spread their own political ideas and to organize events or protests. Even though Serbia does not belong to the group of developed European countries, the digital society has taken roots in Serbia, which is supported by the data that an ever increasing percentage of citizens are using the internet,<sup>12</sup> as well as that an ever increasing number of movements and organizations are using the digital sphere as the primary space of political communication. So, we could say that in terms of the meaning of social networks for civic activism, Serbia is keeping up the global social trends. In addition to Serbia, it is worth mentioning that other countries which do not belong to the developed West are also carrying out their revolution using the internet and social networks as their primary means of disseminating information and mobilizing the public. What we are primarily referring to is the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, which included a series of political movements in a number of Arab countries. Using footage of excessive use of force against demonstrators which rapidly spread via the internet, the protests managed to spark dissent in other parts of the world, and what emerged were some new social movements (with anti-capitalist tendencies). In that sense, it is important to note the huge undisputed contribution of the digital technologies to the rising protests against political-economic elites in the

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<sup>11</sup> New social movements which primarily rely on social networks in their communication Castells sees as those which reflect the collective feeling of somewhere between rage and hope (Castells, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> The frequency of internet use by the citizens of Serbia at the end of 2019 was 77,4% (<https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/upotreba-ikt/upotreba-ikt-pojedinci/>).

US, Spain, Mexico and Turkey (Petrović 2016: 400-401). In addition, some research indicates the special importance of social networks in bringing topics pertaining to human rights to a wider audience. The sharing of footage from events where certain stigmatized social groups are being attacked by the police caused a great surge of emotion among the citizens, which later initiated campaigns and even the formation of movements whose aim was to invoke support in people for the rights of endangered minorities and for the spreading of social justice. One of the movements which was formed as a strong reaction to the infringement of the rights of African Americans by the US police is *Black Lives Matter* (Chiappelli 2017: 94).

## Conclusion

Considering that culture is always historically and contextually determined, we could say that each epoch faces a unique epistemological challenge and a need to develop methods of cultural analysis which are suited to the specific spirit of the times. Today that refers to the need to understand and explain the most significant changes in people's way of life, which emerged as part of the digital culture, in collaboration with numerous elements such as technological innovation, new means of social organization, the transformation of cultural practices and values, new possibilities of self-expression and innovative forms of social, cultural and political/civic identification and participation. Digital culture, as a specific way of life in a network society mediated by ICT is subjected to the influences of wider social determinism, while at the same time determining the facts of socio-cultural life and certain manifestations of the individual or collective behavior on the web or off of it. This is also confirmed through the analysis of digital culture as a framework of civic activism, which indicates that the realization of civil rights and participation in public life is based on the ability to not only provide new forms of digital communication and interaction, but to also feel and assume responsibility and to actively take part both on the internet and in offline space, that is, in a broader social context. The development of the digital culture of resistance, contextualized according to the needs of the times, certain social circumstances and communities, stems from the need for a unique digital rebellion against the ruling social, cultural and political mainstream, which stems from a need for authentic expression, free communication, artistic, civic or political alternatives. In that sense, digital space can take on the function of an alternative artistic and political scene, while the internet/social networks could become a medium for the (de)construction of personal and group identities, as well as an implement used to achieve but also to negate democracy.

By summing up the offered analytical insights, it is possible to conclude that the advantages of ICT in the activities of new social movements are visible, among other things, in the fact that activism takes place almost incessantly in the digital space, while in the real world it is sporadic and occasional. Personalized forms of political activism which are present in the digital world are manifested through various types

of activities through which the individual publicly states the content which he finds politically relevant. In addition to rewarding the activities of social network users (liking the posted content for example), this also allows us to open the possibilities for the exchange of opinions, for discussions, and other forms of open communication. However, despite that, the glorification of digital activism as the determining generator of political change in the future is misguided. Some authors think that the subjective need of citizens to participate in large social events could lead to the wrong conclusion that something of the kind is actually happening. Activities in the online sphere can be very significant (primarily in terms of disseminating information and mobilizing the public), which from the aforementioned examples and findings in this paper can be verified, but need not be a deciding factor in any social-political upheaval. What this means is that despite the persistent political activism on social networks, the actual political achievements are often of a limited range and depend on a series of specific social circumstances (Andrejić, 2017; Petrović, 2016). As indicated previously, activism in the digital world is an important channel of communication, but civic participation in the real (physical) space still remains essential for achieving specific socio-political changes. The fact is that online activism can easily be transformed into clicking or so-called clicktivism, which is considered a negative social occurrence, considering that its final outcome is the passivization of citizens. Thus, we can conclude that being a citizen in contemporary society in the full sense of the word means being active both in the real and in the digital space. Digital citizenship, thus, is an important contemporary form of citizenship, but it in no way negates the importance of traditional forms of civic participation.

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## DIGITALNA KULTURA KAO OKVIR GRAĐANSKOG AKTIVIZMA

**Sažetak:** *U radu se polazi od stava da digitalna kultura, ma koliko utemeljena na tehnološkom napretku, nije njime isključivo određena, već nužno proizlazi iz vrednosti, načina mišljenja i delovanja koji su utelovljeni u toj tehnologiji i posredstvom nje, i koji su omogućili njen razvoj. Stoga će uvodni deo rada biti posvećen kritičkom promišljanju digitalne kulture kao platforme za (de)konstrukciju individualnih i kolektivnih identiteta, razmatranju njenog participativnog, mobilizatorskog i subverzivnog potencijala u kontekstu zagovaranja i ostvarivanja društvenih i kulturnih promena, građanskih prava i sloboda. Osnovni cilj rada jeste da se iz sociološke perspektive objasni kako je, i u kojoj meri, digitalna kultura odredila, oblikovala, odnosno transformisala način građanskog aktivizma, posebno tokom poslednjih nekoliko godina u Srbiji. Korišćenjem sekundarnih izvora podataka, pre svega oslanjanjem na rezultate sprovedenih istraživanja, analizovaće se koliko je internet/društvene mreže važno sredstvo u komunikaciji i mobilizaciji građana na protestno okupljanje i organizovanje raznih političkih događaja. Posebno će biti učinjen kritički osvrt na efekte, prednosti i ograničenja (pokretanje na akciju ili pasivizacija) građanskog delovanja u kontekstu digitalne kulture. Primenom komparativne metode, u završnom delu rada biće ukazano na to koliko se Srbija i srpski građanski aktivizam uklapaju ili odstupaju od evropskih pokreta kojima su takođe primarno sredstvo mobilizacije internet i društvene mreže.*

**Ključne reči:** *digitalna kultura, građanski aktivizam, Internet, građanski identitet.*