

From protest to parliament: The role of digital technologies within an online community

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Abstract

Our teaching case introduces the story of how the Italian Five Star Movement used digital technologies in the growth from a personal blog discussing politics back in 2005 to the most voted party in the Italian election in 2018, becoming part of the government. The Italian Five Star Movement is among the largest eParticipation initiatives globally. It is (almost) totally organized through the use of digital platforms. Members form online communities and are continuously invited to discuss and make decisions that end up into Italian politics. Adopting a chronological perspective, we describe the development of the Italian Five Star Movement, focusing on their use of digital technologies at various stages and for various purposes. The case illustrates the growth of online communities and the advent of a social movement organization within the political sphere, and how to organize for members to discuss and make political decisions online. Furthermore, it demonstrates the growth of online communities and opportunities and challenges faced with such a quick progress.

Keywords

Digital technologies; eparticipation; online communities; social movements; teaching case; the five star movement