



HFDT - Impulsreferate

„Enhancing access to digital public services for older people - social and societal perspectives“

by Laura Pajula (University of Jyväskylä)

„WhatsAppers from the South“

by Sérgio Barbosa (University of Coimbra)

Tuesday, 14th of May 2024 at 14:00

hybrid Event: HFDT-Raum IDea_Lab, Leechgasse 34, 1. UG, 8010 Graz
or <https://unimeet.uni-graz.at/b/kot-uhv-mm2-oij>

Abstract - „Enhancing access to digital public services for older people - social and societal perspectives“

The Finnish welfare state is built on the provision of public services, including education, health care, and social services, to support citizens' well-being. These services have increasingly become digital, with the government encouraging citizens to engage more online. While digital public services hold the promise to improve citizens' well-being, they also may increase inequalities in society. In terms of digitalisation, older adults may be potentially vulnerable to perform their daily tasks with digital services. Thus, an inclusive welfare society cannot depend on services that some citizens have problems accessing.

In my doctoral dissertation, I examine how access to digital public services can be enhanced for older adults (aged over 65) through social and societal perspectives. I approach the topic from the viewpoints of different stakeholders and peer tutors. In my research, I answer to the following research questions: 1) How are current digital public services perceived to meet the needs of older adults, and 2) how should access to digital services be enhanced to cater to the needs of older people? The research aims to assess for existing digital services, how well they have succeeded in addressing real-life needs and desires and thereby supporting the digital inclusion of older adults.

Laura Pajula:

Laura Pajula, MSc, is a Doctoral Researcher at the Centre of Excellence in Research on Ageing and Care in the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä. Her work focuses on older adults' digital inclusion, with particular emphasis on digital public services, and access on social and societal level. Pajula has comprehensive experience from project work and cross-sectional collaboration at the intersection of aging and digitalization. She is currently working on the DigilN project (Towards Socially Inclusive Digital Society: Transforming Service Culture) funded by the Strategic Research Council.



Abstract - „WhatsAppers from the South“

This research investigates at the everyday digital activism of WhatsApp in the Global South, looking at Brazil. I argue that a new type of political activist is emerging amongst contemporary social mobilizations in the XXI century: the so-called WhatsApper, a (digital) activist who intensely appropriates the chat app leveraging its app affordances for emerging forms of political participation. The qualitative approach includes a long-term digital ethnography of two pro-democracy WhatsApp groups, chat scrapping, and several face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. It explores WhatsApp activism as emerging repertoires that allow everyday activists to connect to their political activities in which they live, construct and experiment with their fellow group members: i) how local communities adopt and appropriate WhatsApp affordances; ii) how WhatsApp shapes everyday politics nowadays; and iii) how a progressive agenda to foster social change at the local level is intertwined with WhatsApp-mediated activism beyond US and Europe, contextualizing their use and appropriation in the Global South countries.

Sérgio Barbosa:

Sérgio Barbosa is a PhD candidate at the University of Coimbra. He is a research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies on Science, Technology and Society, TU Graz. He was a Digital Humanism Junior Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in 2023. His research interests include digital activism, chat apps, digital ethics, and Global South.

