

When Culture is the User : Learning from Cultural Data and UX Research to Engage European Youth in Politics

Abstract

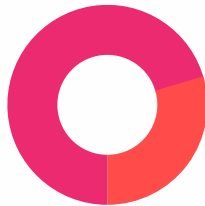
Cloe Chapotot & Jon Durand

This paper stems from the observation that discourse around Spanish politics had generated a level of strain and hostility that deterred many from participating, especially the youth. Its research was conducted through entrepreneurial methods, as the aim was to better understand the political climate in Spain and its adjacent academic literature in order to find all causes – cultural or periodic – responsible for voter disillusionment, and then address them with an approachable technological product.

The incumbent Pedro Sánchez called a snap election for July 2023, moving it up from its previous November 2023 date and catalysing this cultural research regarding the 37.5M census of Spanish voters, out of which 70.4% cast their votes, and 4.66% of which had come of age to be first-time voters this election. The previously mentioned entrepreneurial method consisted of interviewing a sample of young individuals about their past political engagement so that future behaviour could be predicted more accurately, rather than basing it on claims of future engagement that some authors liken to wishful thinking. Early interviews were conducted by Javier Belmonte and Jon Durand, spearheaded by Juan Vergara with a product in mind that would similarly base itself on the previous actions of political parties, rather than the wishful contents of their programs. Responses reflected an order of priorities that placed politics fairly low among interviewees, raising the question of whether this was cultural.

Spanish Elections

2023



29.6% abstained

This initiative, materialising as a website named ProVota, raised parallels between itself and the French app Elyze, also aimed at engaging the youth in its own respective election. Research efforts were thus also directed at the French product, and came to include talks with its chief developer François Mari, especially upon the addition of Cloe Chapotot to the research team. It includes their learning points and areas where Spain differs. This paper is thus also presented in the context of larger European trends, and the perceptions of interviewed Spanish nationals when comparing themselves to other EU countries. All anecdotal data was then contrasted with existing Spanish and European academic literature in order to measure potential schisms between the actual political climate and its perceptions within the culture.

<https://provota.es>

The body of research grew when behavioural science consultancy Alquimic, founded by students in Spain, offered its services to ProVota a month ahead of the election. Previous data was complemented by further UX research in order to address real needs and present a useful tool while encouraging the Spanish population to vote in the election. The foundation of using legislature as opposed to the political programs was able to differentiate ProVota, and appropriately reflected the research method employed in its development. At its core, the mission of ProVota is to promote participation in politics among the citizenry, and firmly believes in the importance of transparency and integrity, both in this research and in the polis.