

**Motivating Civic Participation Among Young European Adults Through
Gamified E-Participation**

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Technology statement

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Abstract

Civic participation is essential for democratic societies, particularly for young adults as it shapes their future civic behaviour. Traditional methods of participating, however, often present barriers for youth, prompting a shift towards digital forms of participation, or e-participation. While e-participation shows promise, it faces challenges in leveraging motivations for engagement and ensuring diverse representation. Gamification has emerged as a potential strategy to enhance e-participation, with studies demonstrating increased enjoyment and motivation. Yet, despite these promising results, comprehensive implementation guidelines remain elusive, highlighting a critical gap in the field. By employing a research-through-design approach, this study sought to explore the potential of a gamified e-participation tool in promoting civic participation among young European adults. A prototype named ManifestoMaker was developed and tested by 10 young European adults. Participants were asked to use the tool to write two manifestos on topics that interested them and provide feedback on their experiences. Qualitative analysis of participant interviews revealed that ManifestoMaker promoted emotional expression and self-reflection, leading to increased political efficacy for some users. However, mixed results in civic participation tendencies highlighted challenges in translating empowerment into action. While the study suggests potential for gamified e-participation tools in fostering political efficacy and civic participation, limitations call for caution in generalizing findings. Future research should focus on longitudinal impacts of e-participation tools and strategies that help young adults address external barriers to civic participation. This study provides insights into designing gamified e-participation tools for more effective youth engagement in the digital age.

Keywords: civic participation, e-participation, young adults, gamification, research-through-design, thematic analysis

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Introduction

The future of democracies within the European Union (EU) depends heavily on the civic engagement of its young citizens. Fostering youth participation is crucial for preserving democratic principles in future generations, as it shapes their long-term civic behaviour. By engaging in civic activities, young people gain valuable opportunities to learn democratic values, address issues of public concern, and hold their governments accountable (Ballard et al., 2020; Burr et al., 2002; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Hill et al., 2004; Sears & Valentino, 1997; Wass, 2007). This early involvement not only educates youth about democratic processes, but also instils a sense of civic responsibility that can last a lifetime, ultimately strengthening the foundations of democracy within the EU (Burr et al., 2002). Additionally, involving youth in democratic processes fosters inclusivity and representation, by ensuring that the political system reflects the diverse interests of all citizens (Freelon et al., 2013). However, the European Commission (2020) reported that young adults in Europe exhibit lower engagement in traditional civic activities than other age groups. This lack of participation may be linked to perceptions of exclusion from formal democratic processes, which can lead to disillusionment and diminished civic engagement (see Banaji & Buckingham, 2010; Davis et al., 2004; Freelon et al., 2013; Lührmann et al., 2019).

While traditional forms of civic participation—such as community meetings—struggle to resonate, e-participation (i.e., electronic-participation) offers new avenues for fostering youth's civic engagement (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Dahlgren, 2013; Thayer & Ray, 2006). By leveraging digital technologies, e-participation can reduce barriers, facilitate interaction, increase transparency, and strengthen trust, thereby motivating young adults to become more politically involved (see Hill et al., 2004; Sears & Valentino, 1997). Moreover, e-participation positively impacts young adults' political effectiveness, knowledge, and

engagement, making it a promising avenue for fostering their civic participation (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018). However, while e-participation initiatives have shown promise for engaging young adults, transitioning from traditional civic participation to effective e-participation is challenging. Skewed representation and limited long-term engagement mean that more research is needed to understand motivational factors and develop effective feedback mechanisms (see Freelon et al., 2013; Simon et al., 2017). As such, this study aims to explore how a gamified e-participation tool, specifically a manifesto-writing tool named ManifestoMaker, can effectively promote civic participation among young European adults.

ManifestoMaker offers an accessible format that leverages young adults' passion for social issues (Buckingham, 2007; Karamat & Farooq, 2016; Loader et al., 2014; Pontes et al., 2017), encouraging creative self-expression (see Bailin, 2002; Bonk & Smith, 1998; Ennis, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2006; Thayer-Bacon, 2000) and prompting young adults to articulate their views (Ito, 2017). By engaging with this tool, young adults are encouraged to identify and critique societal issues and propose viable solutions. This process should stimulate critical thinking (see Hauser, 1999), foster political awareness (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Levy & Zint, 2012), and help young adults' build confidence in their political voices (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Therefore, given that political efficacy is strongly associated with civic participation (Oser et al., 2022), writing manifestos may encourage young adults to engage more actively in civic life.

The method for this research followed a research-through-design approach and involved developing and playtesting a prototype (Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2014). By having participants playtest the prototype, their experiences, interactions, and manifestos can be observed, gathered, and analysed to generate insights (Choi et al., 2016). Through this

approach, the study contributes to the understanding of how interactive tools can foster civic participation among young adults. The guiding research question was as follows:

RQ: *How can a gamified e-participation tool focused on manifesto-writing effectively motivate civic participation among young European adults?*

Theoretical Framework

Civic Participation and E-participation

Civic participation is the active involvement of citizens in addressing public concerns, and it is essential to democratic societies (Dalton, 2018; Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006; Zukin et al., 2006). Engaging young adults in civic life is particularly important, as it shapes their future civic behaviour, fosters democratic principles, and enhances the wellbeing of individuals and communities (see Ballard et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2004; Levinson, 2010; Sears & Valentino, 1997; Wass, 2007). Increased civic engagement among young adults is linked to higher social capital, leading to positive outcomes such as lower crime rates, better health, and increased trust (see Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Kawachi et al., 1999; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Riumalló-Herl et al., 2014). However, young adults often feel excluded from political decision-making processes due to a lack of representation in formal political institutions and meaningful participation opportunities (see Davis et al., 2004; Henn & Foard, 2011; Lerner, 2014; Levinson, 2010; Loader et al., 2014). Scholars have observed that traditional civic engagement methods, such as community meetings and volunteering, require substantial time and resources, creating barriers for young people who are balancing education, work, and other commitments (see Burr et al., 2002; Loader et al., 2014). As a result, current democratic systems may not align with young people's understanding of participation or adequately reward their involvement (see Ginwright & James, 2002; Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Soe, 2018; Loader et al., 2014).

Researchers have identified a strong connection between an individual's belief in their ability to make a difference in civic matters and their level of civic participation (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). This concept, known as *political efficacy*, is defined by Campbell (1954)

as ‘the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process’ (p. 187). Political efficacy is divided into two types: external and internal (Balch, 1974). *External efficacy* refers to an individual’s perception of how responsive governmental institutions are to the needs of citizens. *Internal efficacy* relates to an individuals’ belief in their ability to understand and engage with civic matters. Studies consistently show that internal efficacy positively correlates with civic engagement (see Oser et al., 2022; Wollman & Stouder, 1991). Notably, positive educational experiences can enhance internal efficacy (see Kahne & Westheimer, 2006), potentially empowering young people to become more active and effective in the political process.

One possible avenue for fostering civic participation among young adults is through leveraging their extensive use of digital technologies (see Thayer & Ray, 2006; Dahlgren, 2011; Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018). Often referred to by scholars as *e-participation*, electronic-participation offers innovative opportunities for young adults to engage with civic issues. Zuckerman (2014) pointed to a shift towards ‘post-representative democracy’, reflecting a broader evolution in how younger generations interact with civic and political issues in the digital era. Platforms such as Kiva, GlobalGiving, and Kickstarter exemplify this trend, allowing individuals to directly support specific projects. These platforms resonate with young adults’ preferences for immediate and visible outcomes from their efforts. However, only a small portion of these activities can be classified as civic participation, highlighting the necessity for tools that effectively promote civic involvement among young adults (Dahlgren, 2011).

While digital participation tools have shown promise in engaging young adults, the transition from traditional civic participation to effective e-participation is not straightforward. Several challenges and shortcomings in digital democracy initiatives have

been highlighted by previous studies. The first major challenge is the skewed representation of people who are already politically active, well-educated, young, male, and predominantly from urban areas (Simon et al., 2017). This skewing highlights the need to broaden participation to include a more diverse demographic. Secondly, there is limited evidence on what motivates people to engage in e-participation initiatives (Freelon et al., 2013). Gaining insights into these motivations is crucial for designing initiatives that can attract and engage a broader audience. Finally, there is a need for more research on effective feedback mechanisms that foster sustained engagement in e-participation projects (Simon et al., 2017). Indeed, without a clear understanding of which feedback mechanisms are most effective, e-participation projects may struggle to maintain long-term engagement and fail to reach their full potential in terms of inclusivity and impact. Thus, research in this area could provide valuable insights into designing feedback systems that not only encourage initial participation but also foster ongoing interaction and commitment from a range of participants.

Gamification

The quest for effective engagement strategies has led to an increase in research exploring the application of gamification in e-participation (Lerner, 2014). Scholars theorised that thoughtful gamification could motivate citizens and policymakers (see Gastil and Broghammer, 2020; Lerner, 2014). *Gamification* refers to designing services and processes with game-like motivational affordances to invoke engaging experiences and motivate beneficial behaviours (Hamari et al., 2014; Hassan & Hamari, 2020); it introduces elements such as time constraints, clear goals, challenges, and rewards to create a sense of achievement and competitiveness, enhancing users' interaction.

Some studies have demonstrated that adding game mechanics to tasks can make civic activities more enjoyable (see Alsawaier, 2018; Geurts et al., 2007; Hassan & Hamari, 2020;

Prandi et al., 2015; Simon et al., 2017). Additionally, literature reviews have found promising results for increasing enjoyment and motivation in e-participation (Gastil & Broghammer, 2020; Hamari et al., 2014; Hassan & Hamari, 2020; Simon et al., 2017). Gamification has also been found to enhance students' intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and relatedness, but only impacted perceived competence minimally (Dahlstrøm, 2017; Gimenez-Fernandez et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024). However, factors like age, design elements, and competence can moderate gamification's effects on intrinsic motivation (Li et al., 2024; Ranz, 2015). While promising, the literature has gaps between theory and practice, lacking implementation guidelines for effectively applying gamification in e-participation (Alsawaier, 2018; Hamari et al., 2014). The lack of implementation guidelines warrants caution when implementing gamification. To optimise motivational benefits, it's essential to tailor the game-like motivational affordances to match the unique needs and characteristics of the intended target user.

Manifesto-writing

This study sought to stimulate civic participation among young European adults by providing an environment for writing manifestos. Many young people feel disconnected from traditional political processes (see Loader et al., 2014; Soe, 2018) yet are often passionate about social issues and desire to express their views (Buckingham, 2007; Karamat & Farooq, 2016; Loader et al., 2014; Pontes et al., 2017). Manifestos provide an accessible format for doing so that does not require specialised knowledge and carries historical significance in driving change (Hauser, 1999; Latour, 2010). A *manifesto* is 'a written statement that describes the policies, goals, and opinions of a person or group' ("Manifesto", n.d.). However, manifestos can also serve as warnings or calls to attention towards a cause or theme that the author finds important (Latour, 2010). This capacity to address issues of public

concern aligns with the definition of civic participation and makes the manifesto a suitable medium in this study.

Writing a manifesto can stimulate critical thinking, as it involves an open-ended goal (Lai, 2011) and creative thinking (see Bailin, 2002; Bonk & Smith, 1998; Ennis, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2006; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). Manifesto-writing involves expressing strong convictions, requiring exploring and confronting biases and assumptions (Ito, 2017). This information then must be manipulated in a new context, as the aim of a manifesto is to call for change and provide logical arguments for doing so (see Hauser, 1999). Furthermore, drafting and revising a manifesto can stimulate reflection by requiring authors to consider multiple perspectives to effectively articulate their views (Bentvelzen et al., 2022). In addition, open-ended discussions about political issues enhance both political awareness and political efficacy (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Levy & Zint, 2012; Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Thus, since political efficacy is closely linked to civic participation (see Oser et al., 2022), activities like manifesto-writing could stimulate young adults to become more civically engaged.

The human-computer-interaction (HCI) community has seen several attempts to develop writing environments for drafting and designing manifestos (Ashby et al., 2019; Hanna et al., 2019; Matos et al., 2019). Researchers in this community advocate for the use of manifestos, arguing that manifesto-writing can stimulate new ideas by liberating researchers from the constraints of careful academic speech and rational argument. To facilitate manifesto creation, these researchers have introduced various gamified tools such as MANIFESTO!, Manifesto Machine, and Moving Type Machine. By providing a structured yet creative environment, these tools aim to foster innovative thinking and expression within the HCI community. For example, MANIFESTO!, created and tested by Ashby et al. (2019),

offers prompts—in the form of cards—that encourage participants to develop critiques and lines of reasoning on topics important to them. These prompts support creativity by imposing constraints on writing style and message tone, thereby stimulating, and supporting opinion-forming. The goal of MANIFESTO! is for players to write a short text as a manifesto on a topic they find important.

Research-Through-Design

This study employed a *research-through-design* (RTD) method. RtD combines design practice with research inquiry, involving the creation and evaluation of prototypes or design artefacts to generate new knowledge, insights, and understanding about a particular phenomenon or problem space (Gaver, 2012; Zimmerman et al., 2007). RtD is an increasingly common methodology applied in academic research, particularly in fields like design, information systems and HCI.

In practice, RtD involves several key steps to explore and address complex design problems. Initially, the researcher identifies a complex design problem or opportunity within a real-world context, framing it to guide the study (Zimmerman et al., 2007). This framing is followed by an iterative design process wherein the researcher creates artefacts such as prototypes, systems, or interfaces to explore the problem space and potential solutions (Gaver, 2012). These prototypes are then tested in real-world settings to observe their functionality and gather user feedback, which informs further refinement (Zimmerman & Forlizzi, 2014). Throughout this process, critical reflection and documentation are essential, as the researcher evaluates design decisions and articulates the rationale behind these choices (Clarke, 2018). The artefacts and the design process itself generate new knowledge, offering insights into the problem domain, design principles, or methodological approaches (Stappers

& Giaccardi, 2017). The insights gained contribute to building or challenging existing design theories (Koskinen et al., 2011). Finally, the findings are disseminated through academic publications, providing detailed accounts of the design process, visual documentation of artefacts, and reflections on the knowledge generated (Clarke, 2018).

RtD allows researchers to engage with complex, real-world problems in a hands-on manner, generating knowledge through designing and creating. It is particularly valuable for exploring ill-defined problems and for generating design knowledge that can be applied in practice. For this study, the prototype named ManifestoMaker served as the design artefact that enables the exploration of how e-participation tools can foster civic engagement among young European adults.

Method

Study Design

Ten participants tested a prototype of a gamified tool called ManifestoMaker based on the MANIFESTO! card game by Ashby et al. (2019). The procedure was conducted virtually via Zoom. To evaluate the participants' attitudes towards civic participation, pre-test and post-test surveys were administered. Additionally, interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences with the prototype and their perceptions of civic participation.

Participants

Ten European young adults aged 18-28 were approached through convenience sampling (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). This age group was chosen because it reflects a life phase where individuals are settling into adulthood (Wiciak et al., 2022). The inclusion of the participants from different European nations was crucial to capturing a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, reflecting the continent's cultural and social diversity (see Table 1). As all the participants could understand and speak English, the spoken language and materials during the procedure were in English. None of the participants had any prior experience in manifesto-writing. To ensure anonymity while maintaining data integrity, each participant in the study was assigned a unique identifier. These identifiers ranged from P1 to P10, where 'P' stands for 'Participant' followed by a number. This numbering system allowed the researcher to link all data points for each individual across various stages of the study without revealing their personal information.

Table 1

Overview of the participants.

#	Gender	Age (Years)	Nationality	Education Level
1	Male	22	Italy	Bachelor's
2	Female	20	Portugal	Bachelor's
3	Male	19	Netherlands	Bachelor's
4	Male	23	Italy	Bachelor's
5	Male	20	Austria	Masters's
6	Male	24	Germany	Bachelor's
7	Female	22	Romania	Bachelor's
8	Female	22	Netherlands	Masters's
9	Female	23	Netherlands	Masters's
10	Male	28	Netherlands	Bachelor's

Note. As participants did not participate in the study simultaneously but rather sequentially, this table organises them in the order of their participation.

Materials

Pre-test and Post-test Surveys

A Qualtrics survey was created to measure the pre-test and post-test attitudes towards civic participation (see Appendix A). The survey questions were adapted from the study by Henn and Foard (2011), who investigated the tendency towards political participation among young people in Britain. The adaptation of these questions was necessary to align them with the study's focus on European civic participation. For instance, questions were rephrased to better fit the study's context, such as using "sign a petition" instead of "vote" and replacing

“Britain” with “Europe”. The selection of questions aimed to capture the participant’s tendencies towards civic participation, by inquiring about their convictions regarding civic activities. Each question required participants to respond to statements about civic participation using a five-point Likert scale. Likert scales were chosen for their simplicity and effectiveness in gauging degrees of agreement, allowing participants to indicate whether they *strongly disagree*, *somewhat disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *somewhat agree*, or *strongly agree*. Examples include “By being active in my community, I feel as if I can/could really help change the way that Europe is governed” and “Signing petitions gives citizens an opportunity to tell politicians what they think is really important”. These survey questions enabled the assessment of various civic tendencies, such as belief in the impact of community involvement on European governance, the perceived duty of participating in formal groups, and the value of signing petitions as a means for citizens to express their views to politicians. The survey’s primary purpose was not statistical measurement but to complement and enrich the qualitative interview findings. The surveys provided a baseline through the pre-test and offered insights into any potential effects of interaction with the prototype through the post-test.

Interview Questions

A list of interview questions (see Appendix B) was developed by adapting and combining approaches from two previous studies. Questions designed to gather subjective feedback on the prototype and playtesting experience were adapted from those used in the study by Rooksby et al. (2016), which evaluated an application for tracking individuals’ screen time. Examples of these questions include, “What did you think of the game?” and “What functionalities or game mechanics, if any, would you suggest to improve the game?” Additionally, questions from Matos et al. (2019) were incorporated to encourage reflection on

civic participation. Examples of these questions include “What are your biggest concerns in life?” and “Do you think there should be a greater effort to encourage young people to understand the relevance of politics in their lives?” This combination of questions was intended to capture both participants’ experiences and behaviours while playtesting ManifestoMaker, as well as their perceptions of civic participation.

ManifestoMaker

The prototype for this study, ManifestoMaker (MM), was developed as an adaptation of the MANIFESTO! card game by Ashby et al. (2019). Like its predecessor, MM utilised four categories of cards: Provocation, Orientation, Opening, and Tone. These categories served to define different parameters of the manifesto-writing task, with Provocation suggesting a broad theme, Orientation designating the type of manifesto, Opening providing the initial phrase, and Tone setting the rhetorical register. Although the prompt outlined the structure, the participants could devise their own topics within that framework.

Resembling MANIFESTO!, the participants could replace one card per round. A substitute card was revealed only after the starting card had been chosen for replacement. Hence, the participants had to base their decision on the suitability of the starting cards. This mechanic introduced an element of strategy and decision-making, engaging the participants’ critical thinking skills as they assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their initial hand (see Gaver, 2012; Zimmerman et al., 2007); and it allowed the participants to tailor their starting hand to better align with their desired manifesto topic or personal preferences, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the writing process from the outset (Bentvelzen et al., 2022; Dahlstrøm, 2017; Gimenez-Fernandez et al., 2021). While it retains the core concept, MM introduces several key differences from MANIFESTO! which are discussed below.

Firstly, where MANIFESTO! was a physical card game, MM was created using a cloud-based design platform called Figma (Figma, n.d.). Figma's rapid prototyping tools allowed for quickly creating an interactive digital prototype that could be easily shared and accessed remotely. Additionally, the digital prototype allowed for realistic interactions as participants could navigate through the menus and select cards using their mouse and use the keyboard while writing their manifestos. However, while Figma allowed the prototype to be accessed remotely, it could not be accessed by multiple participants at the same time. Therefore, MM would only allow playtesting by individual participants. A link to the digital prototype is provided in Appendix C.

The card selection page (see Appendix D1) showed the four starting cards for that round, each with a "Replace" button positioned underneath, that the participant could press to substitute the card (see Appendix D2). By pressing the "Next" button, the participants could advance to the writing page (see Appendix D3), thereby initiating the writing component of the round.

Secondly, the game's structure was altered. While MANIFESTO! accommodates up to six participants and allows for collective writing, MM is designed for individual play only. Thus, the participants did not read or vote on each other's manifestos in MM, focusing solely on their own creation. Moreover, MM had the participants complete their manifestos within a 15-minute timeframe, consisting of an initial 10-minute limit and an optional 5-minute extension. This time limit served two purposes: it presented a challenge to the participants (Hassan & Hamari, 2020) while also standardising the playtesting procedure's duration.

Thirdly, the writing process in MM is digital, utilising a 'writing page' (see Appendix D4) instead of MANIFESTO!'s physical game sheet. Unlike MANIFESTO!, MM did not enable participants to incorporate drawings or visual elements into their manifestos. The

writing page in MM displayed the four selected cards on the left, while the remainder of the screen featured a simple text editor where participants typed their manifestos using a keyboard. The text editor was limited to plain text input and did not provide any styling or formatting capabilities.

The fourth divergence from MANIFESTO! was the visual styling. As the study was aimed at young adults from the EU, MM's visual styling intentionally resembled the EU flag, with a blue background and yellow accent colours. Additionally, the loading screen which participants would see at the start of the test and between rounds featured a 12-star circle (see Appendix D1). To complement the overall EU-inspired styling, the background of the prompt cards featured a cropped-out image of a euro banknote (see Appendix D2). While the card categories in MM, were not color-coded like in MANIFESTO!, they were distinguished by subtitles.

Finally, MM also employs a reduced card set compared to MANIFESTO!, utilising only 16 cards in total, as opposed to the 53 found in its predecessor. Additionally, contrasting MANIFESTO!'s random card distribution, MM implemented a standardised initial setup, where all participants receive identical starting cards. Furthermore, the substitution mechanism in MM is deterministic; when a participant opts to replace a card, the substitute is predetermined rather than randomly selected (see Table 2). Limiting the amount of prompt cards was necessitated by the constraints of prototype development. The manual implementation of every possible card combination would have required a considerable amount of effort. Consequently, this more structured approach allowed for a manageable development process while still preserving the core gameplay mechanics.

Despite these differences, MM retains the core concept of MANIFESTO! by challenging participants to think creatively about possibilities for change within given

constraints. Both games aim to stimulate thought and discussion about real-world issues and potential solutions, encouraging participants to engage with important topics in a structured yet creative manner.

Table 2

Overview of the Starting and Substitute Cards.

Card Type	Orientation	Opening	Tone	Provocation
Round 1				
<i>Starting</i>	Declaration	We are	Excited	Needs before desires
<i>Substitute</i>	Challenge	In the future	Outraged	Ask why
Round 2				
<i>Starting</i>	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
<i>Substitute</i>	Rules	Imagine	Playful	Challenge inequality

Note. The participants could choose to substitute one starting card per round.

Procedure

Pre-test Survey and Playtest

The playtesting procedure involved several key steps (see Figure 1). The participants were contacted via Zoom and introduced to the researcher, who provided an overview of the study's objective and procedure. Before proceeding, the participants were informed about how the collected data would be used and were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study. They were also informed that they were expected to come up with their own manifesto-topics. After the introduction, the participants completed pre-test survey, which included the informed consent form. The researcher then set up the prototype and assumed the role of a moderator, responsible for timing the rounds and assisting participants if they

encountered any challenges during gameplay. The participants played two rounds to ensure familiarity with the game mechanics. Each round consisted of a selection component and a writing component. After the first round, the participants were given a five-minute break before proceeding to the second round, which followed the same format.

At the start of a round, the participants selected the prompt cards they would use to write their manifesto. During the selection component, the participants were required to share their screen, enabling the researcher to observe their interactions with the tool's interface. After selecting the prompt cards, the participants could start writing the manifesto. At this point, the participants were instructed to stop sharing their screen to create a more private writing environment, potentially allowing the participants to engage with the task more naturally (Lavery et al., 2023). This approach is consistent with ethical research practises that seek to minimise unnecessary stress on participants and may contribute to the collection of more authentic data (Janssen et al., 2021). Next, the researcher set a timer for 10 minutes and the participants would start writing the manifesto. The participants used a keyboard to write their individual manifestos within a 10-minute time frame. After nine minutes had passed, the researcher notified the participants that they had one minute left, giving them the choice to either complete their manifesto or extend the time limit by an additional five minutes.

Post-test Survey and Interview

Once participants finished the second round, the researcher provided them with a link to the post-test survey. After completing the post-test survey, a 15-minute semi-structured interview occurred. The interview aimed to explore the participants' perceptions of the prototype as well as their perceptions of civic participation. The interview commenced with an open-ended question such as, "What are your thoughts on the game?" After the interview,

participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation. Afterwards, the researcher sent an email that contained a digital copy of the letter of informed consent.

Figure 1

Overview of the playtesting session



Note. The selection and writing components occurred for both rounds. These are displayed with a dashed outline.

Thematic Analysis

The researcher employed a systematic approach to analyse participant interviews using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2016) methodology. The steps that were followed were familiarising yourself with the data, generating initial codes, looking for themes, reviewing these themes, defining and naming themes, and setting up the report. The process began with verbatim transcription of audio recordings using Microsoft Word's transcription tool, followed by manual review and correction.

Familiarisation with the data occurred during the transcription review process, where the researcher took notes on potential codes and interpretations. The transcripts were then imported into Atlas.ti for open-coding, where relevant quotes were highlighted and assigned codes using a reflexive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2016). This method encouraged ongoing

examination of the researcher's perspectives and their influence on theme emergence, enhancing the analysis's depth and credibility. It is worth noting that due to time and resource constraints, the data was coded by a single researcher, which may have implications for the analysis's reliability and potential bias.

Theme development involved organising codes into topical clusters, following Braun and Clarke's (2016) approach. The researcher initially identified five themes, which were subsequently revised and refined to better represent the interviewees' experiences with MM, ultimately resulting in two final themes. The analysis concluded with a report summarising the data into a coherent narrative, with themes building upon each other logically. An overview of the final themes, their descriptions, and example quotes is provided in Appendix E.

1	Yes	Youth representation in government	Declaration	We are	Excited	<i>Ask why</i>
2	Yes	Discrimination	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	<i>Challenge Inequality</i>
Participant 5						
1	No	Discipline	Declaration	We are	<i>Outraged</i>	Needs before desires
2	Yes	My Golden Version	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
Participant 6						
1	No	Sustainable Travel	Declaration	We are	Excited	Needs before desires
2	No	Sustainable Travel	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
Participant 7						
1	No	Consumption Habits	Declaration	We are	Excited	Needs before desires
2	No	Working Together	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
Participant 8						
1	No	Affordable Housing	Declaration	<i>In the future</i>	Excited	Needs before desires
2	No	Embrace Diversity	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
Participant 9						
1	Yes	Animal rights	Declaration	We are	<i>Outraged</i>	Needs before desires
2	Yes	Refugees	Vision	Until now	Hopeful	We are in this together
Participant 10						
1	Yes	We are Europe	Declaration	We are	Excited	Needs before desires
2	Yes	A World Without Losers	Vision	<i>Imagine</i>	Hopeful	We are in this together

Note. The researcher assigned descriptive labels to provide the reader with a clear overview of the topics addressed in the manifestos. Prompt cards that participants substituted during the selection component are displayed in italics.

The participants' manifesto topics encompassed 17 unique subjects, which were synthesised into four distinct categories: Social Issues, Environmental Sustainability, Community Cohesion, and Self-Development.

Social Issues reflected participants' concerns about a range of societal challenges, encompassing social and political equality as well as human and animal rights. This category

included topics such as Abortion, Animal Rights, Discrimination, Youth Representation in Government, Affordable Housing, and Refugees. The prevalence of these topics suggests that participants are interested in contemporary social issues.

Environmental Sustainability emerged as another noteworthy category, featuring topics such as Sustainable Living, Sustainable Business, Consumption Habits, and Sustainable Travel. The frequent selection of these topics suggests a focus on ecological practises and sustainable development among participants.

Community Cohesion was comprised of topics such as A Better Future, Polarisation, Stronger Together, We are Europe, and Working Together. These topics suggest that participants recognise the significance of social cohesion and collective action in addressing societal challenges and fostering progress.

Self-Development addressed personal growth and individual improvement through the topics Discipline and My Golden Version. Notably, both manifestos in this category were written by the same participant (P5).

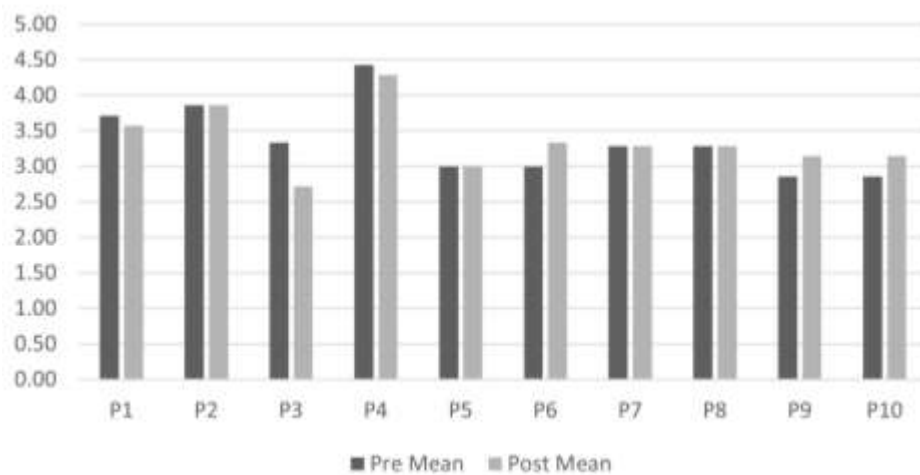
Surveys

The data obtained from the surveys reveal the varied impact of the intervention (see Figure 2). Three participants (P1, P3, and P4) showed a decrease in their attitudes towards civic participation, with P3 exhibiting the most notable decline. In contrast, three participants (P6, P9, and P10) demonstrated slight increases in their post-test means. Meanwhile, the remaining four participants (P2, P5, P7, and P8) maintained consistent scores, showing no change between their pre-test and post-test results. Notably, all the participants' scores remained above the midpoint of 2.5, suggesting that none held unfavourable attitudes towards civic participation either before or after the intervention. Additionally, the average mean

across all participants remained unchanged at 3.36 when comparing the pre-test and post-test results. These results indicate a varied impact of the intervention on participants' attitudes towards civic participation, with some participants becoming less favourable, some more favourable, and others remaining unchanged.

Figure 2

Survey Results per Participant



Note. The graph illustrates the changes in attitudes towards civic participation among the participants before and after playing two rounds of MM. The y-axis quantifies attitude levels on a scale from 0.00 to 5.00, with higher scores indicating more favourable attitudes. Dark grey bars represent individual pre-test means, while light grey bars show post-test means. Perceptions of a gamified manifesto-writing tool.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the interview transcripts revealed insights into the participants' experiences with, and perceptions of, MM. The findings from each theme will be outlined in the sections below. The tool elicited diverse responses, from excitement and emotional engagement to scepticism about its game-like qualities. While the study considers MM as a

gamified tool, it was introduced to the participants as a game. Thus, whenever participants mention a “game” in their quotes, they are referring to MM.

Perceptions of a Gamified Manifesto Writing Tool

Most of the participants responded positively to MM, with two participants (P1 & P5) expressing surprise and excitement at the novel approach of the concept. When asked about his opinion on the tool, P1 noted, “[...] excitement first of all, for sure, uh, excitement because it’s very different from everything else that I ever did”. Similarly, P5 stated, “[...] I was surprised to find a text-based game that involves 4 different cards, but you’ve managed to distil it down to a good formula”. While these remarks suggest that MM successfully captured participants’ interest and curiosity, not all the participants found the experience equally engaging or game-like. P6 expressed scepticism about the classification of a game, stating, “[...] I thought it wasn’t really a game because I didn’t really see like a game element in it”.

Five participants (P2, P3, P5, P9 & P10) viewed the experience as an emotional outlet or meditative practice. P2 described it as “[...] meditation, you just you lose what you write [...]”, indicating that the process of writing manifestos could serve as a form of stress relief or self-exploration. P3 noted, “I really had to dig deep within my emotions and formulating sentences”, suggesting a cognitive and emotional engagement with the tool. P10’s statement, “[...] I was kind of in my head screaming while I was typing it. I got really into it myself”, vividly illustrates the emotionally charged sensation he had when composing his manifesto. His comment about getting “really into it” implies absorption in the task. The statement of “screaming in my head” can be interpreted as a powerful release of pent-up thoughts or emotions. Similarly, P9 remarked that “[...] it kind of allowed me to be outraged about

something”. The use of the word “allowed” is notable, as it implies that P9 may have felt constrained in expressing such feelings in other contexts.

The prompt cards received mixed reactions. Most participants found the cards helpful in guiding their thoughts and overcoming writer’s block. When summarising her writing process, P2 noted, “This is where those cards really helped me to have a feeling so ‘Working together’, that card made me think of a community, ‘Vision’ made me think of what I envisioned the future to be like”. P8 echoed this sentiment, stating, “I think the game really helped me, uh, come up with the manifestos. If I didn’t have the cards, and I have to really start from scratch, I think I would have had more difficulties with that”. However, two participants (P1 & P4) felt constrained by the prompts, with P1 suggesting, “[...] maybe the possibility of replacing more cards can also give the possibility to the participants in being a bit more comfortable, especially if they really want to write about a certain topic”.

The tool’s ability to facilitate self-reflection and emerged as a substantial aspect of four participants’ (P1, P4, P5, P9 & P10) experiences. P10 exemplified this, stating “I didn’t expect that I would learn something about writing and also my own views on certain things and more”. P1 similarly noted, “I discovered some things of myself as well, so that was actually pretty cool”. P1 elaborated by sharing a personal revelation he experienced during the first round, “the first round that I played, was the topic that I value the most and for that I think I’m going to pursue for the rest of my life as an ideology”. Another noteworthy reflection was that of P5. While initially describing himself as not politically engaged, P5 found that the MM got him to express “[...] an issue that I had with the way how things were run”. Apparently, the experience encouraged P5 to actively consider problems in his local environment that bothered him, leading to a realisation about his own inaction regarding these issues. P5 continued, suggesting that MM could serve as a catalyst for civic

participation, likening it to a hypothetical “[...] big red stamp [...]” that encourages action. This reflection shifted P5’s perspective on civic responsibility, prompting thoughts about being “[...] a citizen that’s actively trying to change things”.

Political awareness was observable among three participants (P4, P5 & P7). For instance, P5’s realisation about his own inaction, occurred after he reflected on the problems in his local environment. This reflection was prompted by MM, which encouraged him to express concerns about how things were run. P4’s political awareness was also notable during the interview. He expressed discontent with formal political institutions, saying “[...] I do still think that there's huge inequalities institutionalised [...]”. P4 also acknowledged the political exclusion of young adults, noting that the government was overrepresented by “[...] old people [...]”. While notable, P4’s political awareness was preexisting, suggesting that this was not because of the interaction with MM.

Perceptions of Manifesto-sharing

The participants’ responses illuminated some of their views on sharing manifestos. The desire to be heard and to potentially effect change appeared to be a substantial motivating factor for engaging with the manifesto-writing process. P1 articulated this sentiment, stating “[...] it’s basically what I really would like to shout to the rest of the world”. P1 continued, acknowledging that his experience with MM “[...] gave me the possibility [...] to do what I actually want to do. Meaning, talking to people, motivating them to change their habits”. In addition to just broadcasting ideas, the participants also expressed a desire to interact with others. For instance, P6 felt that the addition of competitive elements would make the experience “[...] more fun [...]” and “[...] give me the motivation to write something better [...]”. In contrast, P4 sought to “[...] connect and resonate with others”,

implying an interest in finding like-minded individuals. He envisioned MM as a platform to “[...] discover more people who share that dream [...]”, implying a desire to form communities around common values.

However, the participants’ desires to share their manifestos with others were tempered by self-doubt or fear of judgement. When asked if he would share his manifesto with others, P1 admitted that he “[...] would not publicise it or make it public [...]”. His reasoning for not sharing his manifesto was “because [...] people wouldn’t listen to me”. Similarly, P10 expressed nervousness about sharing, noting “you have to open yourself up to people that you probably don’t know. And, it’s a bit scary ‘cause you may or may not be judged”. These concerns highlight the perceived vulnerability and the potential emotional risks involved with sharing personal political views on the internet. P2 also acknowledged this vulnerability, emphasising the importance of creating safe spaces. She proposed a controlled environment where participants can practice voicing opinions and receive feedback. Interestingly, another potential facilitator of open discussion that emerged was anonymity. For instance, P5 noted that sharing with strangers feels safer, as opposed to sharing with friends or relatives, due to lower personal stakes.

P5 and P9 specifically critiqued the role of social media in political discourse, reflecting a belief that the casual and often superficial nature of social media interactions undermines the potential for meaningful political engagement. P9 observed, “I think social media is kind of making it very easy to be very angry about things without understanding the issue fully”. This statement reveals a concern about the depth of understanding behind many political expressions on social media platforms. P9 introduced the concept of “[...] performative activism [...]”, suggesting a scepticism about the authenticity and effectiveness of civic participation that occurs primarily through social media. This perspective was echoed

by P5 who recognised the difficulty of cutting through the noise in today's information-saturated environment. P5 described his first manifesto as a clear and forceful message that could serve as "[...] a nice rallying point [...]". However, P5 continued by acknowledging the challenges posed by the contemporary media landscape, noting, that his the message in his first manifesto "[...] would have been damn effective if it wasn't the age of information". He implies that the sheer volume of information and the nature of content on social media platforms dilute the impact of individual messages. P5 elaborated by pointing out the prevalence of "motivational quotes, political complaints" on social media. He observed that these messages are often "not as powerful, but more condensed", highlighting a concern that the depth and nuance of political discourse are being lost in favour of more digestible, bite-sized content. Despite this, P5 acknowledged that such messages can still serve a purpose, saying "But is it a good conversation starter? Yeah [...]". This acknowledgement suggests that P5 sees some value in the role of social media in initiating discussions, even if it falls short of changing minds. However, the phrase "[...] if people take it seriously in the first place" further underscored his scepticism about the seriousness with which social media users engage with political content. The critiques from P5 and P9 suggest a belief that the medium of social media inherently limits the effectiveness of more substantial political messages.

Discussion

This study explored how a gamified e-participation tool—specifically, a manifesto-writing tool named ManifestoMaker (MM)—could effectively stimulate civic participation among young European adults. This exploration was guided by the research question “How can a gamified e-participation tool focused on manifesto-writing effectively motivate civic participation among young European adults?”. The data revealed that participants could use MM to articulate their thoughts on a diverse range of topics, with prominent categories including Social Issues, Environmental Sustainability, Community Cohesion, and Self-Development. The tool provided an emotional outlet and facilitated self-reflection, with participants expressing surprise at the personal insights gained through the process.

The study expected that MM would foster reflection and political awareness among participants, and feedback indicates that the tool may have achieved this. For example, P1 reported that the first round of manifesto-writing led him to identify a topic he values highly and intends to pursue as a lifelong ideology. This personal revelation indicates that the tool prompted P1 to reflect on his beliefs. Furthermore, P5, who initially described himself as not politically engaged, reported that the tool encouraged him to consider concerns about local issues he had previously overlooked. However, not all observations of political awareness could be attributed to MM, as the awareness observed from P4 was preexisting. MM’s apparent stimulation of political awareness seems consistent with the idea that open-ended discussions on political issues enhance political awareness (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Levy & Zint, 2012). MM’s ability to stimulate reflection may stem from participants considering future perspectives when proposing solutions to issues in their manifestos. This aligns with Bentvelzen et al.’s (2022) identification of the future as one of four temporal design resources that artifacts and apps can use to encourage reflection.

It was also expected that the interaction with MM would foster political efficacy, subsequently motivating participants towards broader civic engagement. Some of the findings confirm a positive effect on political efficacy. While P10 was initially nervous about sharing his manifesto due to fear of judgement, he stated that the writing process inspired him to “learn how to write and convince others”, reflecting newfound confidence in articulating and advocating for his views. This was also reflected in P10’s survey results, which showed an increased tendency towards civic participation. Additionally, P5, who initially did not consider himself politically engaged, reported that the tool helped him articulate his views and take his civic responsibilities more seriously. He described the experience as a catalyst for considering himself as a “citizen that’s actively trying to change things”, suggesting a shift in his perspective on civic participation. However, his survey results did not reflect these statements, showing no change.

Reviewing the literature could point to a possible explanation for the seeming increase in political efficacy among participants: by prompting participants to articulate their thoughts and feelings, MM facilitated an open-ended discussion about political issues (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Levy & Zint, 2012). This may have helped participants clarify their beliefs and goals, fostering a sense of ownership over their ideas and actions, thereby enhancing their agency and confidence in contributing to civic discourse (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). Consequently, the participants may have felt more empowered to advocate for change and even actively engage in civic activities (see Boulianne & Theocharis, 2018; Oser et al., 2022).

However, some findings also suggest that the interaction with MM had a negative effect on the participants’ political efficacy. For instance, the survey results for P3 and P4 indicated a potential decrease in their tendency towards civic participation. This decline

might be attributed to an increase in political awareness and critical thinking. Banaji and Buckingham (2010) suggest that young adults may feel powerless when confronting substantial societal issues. For instance, P3's second manifesto focused on polarisation, a complex and potentially discouraging topic, while P4's first manifesto addressed the lack of youth representation in government, highlighting systemic barriers to participation. Although their manifesto topics suggested a political awareness, P3 and P4 may have also underscored the challenges of effecting change, possibly diminishing their motivation for civic participation. However, Kahne and Westheimer (2006) argue that exposure to such constraints could help young adults develop realistic expectations by illustrating the limitations of citizens' ability to bring about change.

Additionally, P1 expressed reluctance to publicise his manifesto, citing concerns that "[...] people wouldn't listen to me", indicating a lack of confidence in how his views would be received by others. The survey results for P1 also indicated a decrease in motivation towards civic participation, aligning with his reluctance to share his manifesto. This finding contradicts his earlier report of finding a lifelong ideology, as that would suggest increased political efficacy. However, this incongruency can be explained by the interaction between internal and external efficacy described by Kahne and Westheimer (2006). Low external efficacy can diminish internal efficacy and subsequent motivation for civic participation. So, while P1 may have felt empowered internally, external factors—such as expected judgement from others—may have dampened his motivation to participate in civic activities beyond personal reflection.

The contrast between P1 and P10—both reluctant to share their manifestos but showing different effects in their surveys—underscores the varied impact of external factors on the participants' motivation. This discrepancy highlights the challenges some participants faced

in translating their newfound confidence into public action, suggesting that further support may be needed to help individuals like P1 bridge this gap. The discrepancy also points to the complex interplay between internal efficacy and external barriers in shaping civic participation outcomes. While MM successfully fostered these participants' sense of internal efficacy, it may not have adequately addressed the external obstacles that can hinder active participation in civic life. As Kahne and Westheimer (2006) suggest, focusing on activities that promote internal efficacy without addressing external barriers can lead to a limited understanding of civic participation. Further research could explore strategies to provide individuals with sufficient preparation for the often contentious and difficult task of understanding and changing the dynamics of complex social, economic, and political issues.

Limitations

This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and planning future research. First, the sample is not fully representative of the intended target group. Although the study included seven distinct nationalities, four participants originated from the same country. This lack of representation may have influenced the results due to an overrepresentation of a particular culture. Additionally, all the participants were or had been students in higher education. This means that the results may not be representative of young adults from other educational levels. Future studies should aim for larger, more diverse samples to validate and expand on these findings, ensuring greater generalisability.

The study primarily examined initial reactions to a prototype and short-term attitudinal changes. Longitudinal research would enable assessing the long-term impact of e-participation tools on civic engagement and political efficacy. Future investigations could delve deeper by having participants engage with an e-participation tool repeatedly over an

extended timeframe. One possible approach to achieving this would be to incorporate these tools into the broader school curriculum, providing a natural setting for long-term interaction and impact.

Another consequential limitation of this study was the absence of multiple coders in the data analysis process. Due to resource constraints, it was impossible to employ additional researchers to independently code and analyse the interview data. This limitation potentially introduces a risk of researcher bias and reduces the opportunity for inter-coder reliability checks. Multiple coders can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative data analysis by providing different perspectives and ensuring consistency in theme identification and interpretation. Future studies with greater resources should prioritise the use of multiple coders to strengthen the reliability and validity of the findings, thereby increasing confidence in the results and conclusions drawn from the data.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the role of the gamified e-participation tool ManifestoMaker in promoting civic engagement among young European adults. The tool encouraged participants to articulate their thoughts on pressing social issues and fostered political awareness for some. The participants reported gaining personal insights and some experienced increased political efficacy. However, the mixed results regarding participants' motivation to engage publicly highlight the complexities involved in translating internal empowerment into civic action. The study's limitations, including a non-representative sample and the absence of multiple coders, suggest caution in generalising the findings. Future research should aim for more diverse samples and employ longitudinal designs to assess the long-term impact of e-participation tools. Additionally, strategies to support individuals in addressing external barriers to civic participation should be explored. By

addressing these areas, we can better understand how to leverage gamified e-participation tools to cultivate a more engaged and politically aware young citizenry.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Letter and Surveys

Informed consent letter

This informed consent letter was presented to participants at the beginning of the pre-test survey. The participants also received a digital copy of the informed consent letter through email to read through.

Informed consent

This is important information about the study. Please read carefully before deciding to participate in this study. If you have any questions, please contact researcher Yason Moeniralam, whose contact details are provided at the end of this text.

This study consists of two parts. If you decide to participate in the study, you will receive a short pre-test survey (less than 5 minutes). This survey is to be completed before you can participate in the study. During the study you will be playtesting ManifestoMaker, a game that prompts players to write their own manifesto. In a manifesto, you declare your core values, vision, and goals to the world. Manifestos can be written by anyone. One well-known example is the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The session will entail playing the game (20 minutes), a survey (less than 5 minutes) and an interview (15 minutes). You will play two rounds of the game (10 minutes each) where you write two short texts. Then, you will fill out the post-test survey. At the end of the session, you will be interviewed about your experiences while playing the game. There are no right or wrong answers, all data is valuable. The total time you will spend on this study is expected to be approximately 1 hour.

This study has been approved by the Ethical Review Board of Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences. The expected burden for participating is the duration of the session where you complete the main task (approximately 40 minutes), which might be too long for some participants. Additionally, the task may be experienced as challenging, causing feelings of being overwhelmed or anxious. Finally, you may want to protect your privacy by keeping your product of the session (the two short texts) to yourself, as they may contain personal or political beliefs. The following measures are taken to prevent you from any harm. At any time during the session, you are allowed to ask for a break. Additionally, half-way through the session you will be given the option to take a break before continuing. The preparation exercise will prepare you for the task of writing your own manifestos. This will ensure that you do not feel overwhelmed or anxious during the session. Finally, you are allowed to decide whether to keep your written texts for yourself during and after the session. This is done to ensure the safeguarding of your privacy.

By participating in this study, you can contribute to discovering and forming design requirements for gamified e-participation tools that aim to promote civic participation among young European adults. You may also learn about manifestos and how to write your own manifesto. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this study, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. This has no consequences. You also never have to give a reason for terminating your participation. When you withdraw before or after the data collection is complete, all your data will be destroyed. The interview will be recorded (audio and video). This recording will only be viewed and listened to by the researchers listed at the top of this information letter. After the interview, the recordings will be transcribed anonymously before the data is further processed. After transcription, the recordings will be destroyed and the data will not be

traceable to any individual. We handle your personal data with the utmost care. If you participate in the study, your data collected through the interview will be anonymized and will be entered into a dataset that will be kept for a period of ten years.

The data that is collected through the surveys will be generalized for the whole group and your original data will be destroyed after analysis. The anonymized dataset will not be made available, but a selection can be made available upon request. This data will consist of excerpts from the transcript of the session. Information that may lead to your identity (e.g., your name and contact details) will not be included in this dataset but will be destroyed after the interview has ended. As a result, the information in the dataset can never be linked to your personal data. After ten years, all data from the dataset will be destroyed.

If you wish to receive the results of this study, your contact details will be retained until the thesis has been completed and I can send you the results. As soon as I have sent you the results, I will destroy your contact details. Data is only shared with researchers from the research team, consisting of the researchers mentioned above. I am aware that your data must be handled with the utmost care and respect. Contact information If you have any questions before or after this study, or if you have experienced any adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, please contact the principal investigator whose contact details are listed on top of the first page.

If you have any remarks or complaints regarding this research, you may also contact the “Research Ethics and Data Management Committee” of Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences via tshd.redc@tilburguniversity.edu If you want to participate in this study, we ask you to give official permission below. If you decide to participate, it will be much appreciated, and I thank you in advance!

By giving consent, you acknowledge that you've either read or had this consent form read to you, all your questions have been addressed satisfactorily, and you consent to partake in the focus group session willingly.

Pre-test Survey

The participants filled out a short Qualtrics survey in which they gave consent to partake in the study, answer a few demographic questions and answer a few question that inquired about their tendency towards civic participation. The survey can be previewed through [this link](#).

- By giving consent, you acknowledge that you've either read or had the consent form read to you, all your questions have been addressed satisfactorily, and you consent to partake in the study willingly.
 - I consent, begin the study
 - I do not consent and do not want to participate
- What is your age? If you don't want to answer this question, you can leave it open.
 - number
- What is your gender?
 - male
 - female
 - Prefer to self-describe, namely
 - Prefer not to say
- What is your nationality?
 - list
- What is your current level of education?
 - Bachelor's program at a University of Applied sciences (hbo)
 - Bachelor's program at a university
 - Master's program at a university
 - Other, namely:
 - Prefer not to say
- I feel/would feel a sense of satisfaction when I volunteered/if I volunteered
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I would be seriously neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn't participate in formal groups (e.g., Girl scouts, Rotary, PTA)
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I would be seriously neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn't participate in informal groups (e.g., Book clubs, Sports clubs)
 - Strongly disagree

- Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- Signing petitions gives citizens an opportunity to tell politicians what they think is really important
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- By being active in my community, I feel as if I can/could really help change the way that Europe is governed
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I do not feel connected to politics at either the regional, national or EU level
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- Elections help to keep politicians accountable for the promises they make
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree

Post-test Survey

The participants filled out a short Qualtrics survey in which they answered a few question that inquired about their tendency towards civic participation. The survey can be previewed through [this link](#).

- I feel/would feel a sense of satisfaction when I volunteered/if I volunteered
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I would be seriously neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn't participate in formal groups (e.g., Girl scouts, Rotary, PTA)
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree

- Strongly agree
- I would be seriously neglecting my duty as a citizen if I didn't participate in informal groups (e.g., Book clubs, Sports clubs)
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- Signing petitions gives citizens an opportunity to tell politicians what they think is really important
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- By being active in my community, I feel as if I can/could really help to change the way that Europe is governed
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- I do not feel connected to politics at either the regional, national or EU level
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- Elections help to keep politicians accountable for the promises they make
 - Strongly disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Strongly agree
- You have reached the end of the survey.
 Please indicate whether you would like to be informed of the results of the study.
 If you answer yes, your email will be saved until the study has finished and the results have been sent to you.
 If you answer no, your email will be removed and you will not be contacted once the study has finished.
 - Yes, I would like to receive the results of the study after the study has finished
 - No, I would not like to receive the results of the study after the study has finished

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

1. What did you think of the game and the study?
2. Can you summarise your experience while playing the game and writing the manifestos?
3. Where there any negative/positive experiences that stand out to you?
4. Are there any e-participation platforms you currently make use of? If so, which ones and why?
5. What, if any, functionalities/game mechanics would you suggest to improve the game?
6. What are your biggest concerns in life? Financial stability, job security, emotional security, climate change, social justice, etc.
7. Can you relate your biggest concerns to the broader social-political context of your country or region? Explain why.
8. Do you think that there should be a greater effort to encourage people to understand the relevance of politics in their lives? If so, how could this be done on a wider social level?
9. Do you think that your manifestos have the potential to influence the opinions of others? Explain why.
10. Do you think that your friends would want to try out this game? Explain why.
11. Is there anything else you would like to say about the game or the study?

Appendix C

Link to ManifestoMaker Prototype

The prototype for ManifestoMaker was used by participants during the playtesting procedure can be found on [this link](#).

Appendix D

Screenshots of ManifestoMaker Prototype

Figure D1

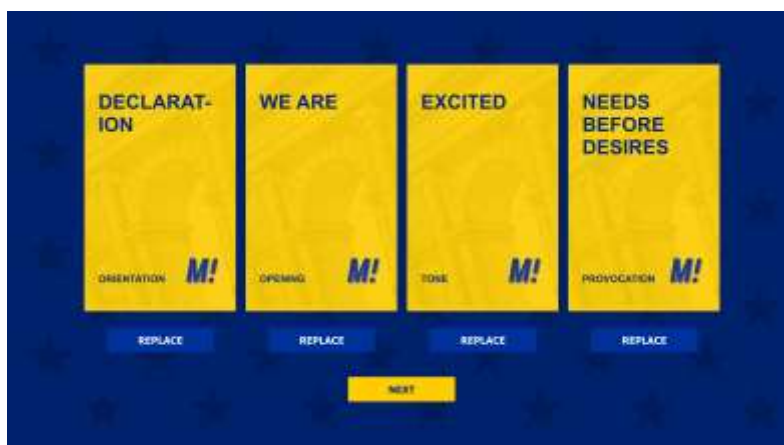
Loading Screen



Note. The styling resembled that of the EU flag

Figure D2

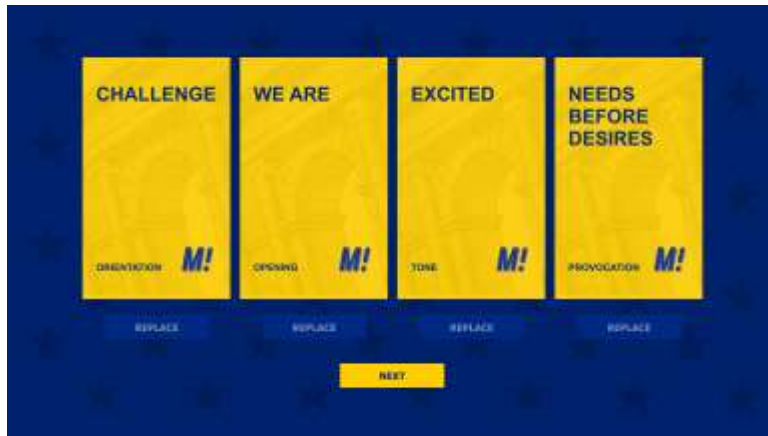
Prompt Selection Screen for Round 1



Note. Participants could only substitute one starting card.

Figure D3

Prompt Selection Screen for round 1 - After Substitution



Note. In this example, the starting orientation card “Declaration” has been substituted for “Challenge”.

Figure D4

Writing Screen



Note. The left side of the screen showed the selected prompt cards. The right side of the screen contained the text editor.

Appendix E

Results of the Thematic Analysis

Overview of the themes identified through the thematic analysis

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Example quote
Perceptions of a gamified manifesto-writing tool	Enjoyment	What contributed to a positive experience	“It was like a fun game to do. I think honestly, it's something very cool to share with people” [P2].
	Emotional expression through manifesto-writing	The participants experienced emotions while writing their manifestos	“My second text over here kind of delved into what was essentially poetry” [P5].
	Feedback about different game elements	The participants’ opinions of the game elements incorporated into the tool	“This is where those cards really helped me” [P2].
	Self-reflection during manifesto-writing	The participants learned something new about themselves while writing their manifestos	“I discovered some things of myself as well” [P1].

Perceptions of manifesto-sharing	Political awareness	The participants show interest in or knowledge of politics	“It's something that you kind of pick up, same as taxes for example, like how to live as an adult, like what it means to be contributing to society and be an active member of society” [P7].
	Desire to be heard	The participants express a desire to share their opinions	“what I've always wanted to shout to everyone else around me was exactly what I wrote in the manifesto” [P1].
	Self-doubt	The participants express doubt in their abilities to persuade others	“I think in one way I could make people think about it. But I don't know if I could accomplish that with a very rough draft” [P2].
	Fear of judgement	The participants express a fear of being judged by others	“it's a bit scary 'cause you may or may not be judged” [P10].
	Suggestions on social interaction	Participants' suggestions on how they would like to interact with others	“I actually think it's best when you discuss this with some random person, so you have no idea who you're talking to” [P5].

Critiques of social media	Participants mention negative aspects of social media	“I think social media is kind of making it very easy to be very angry about things without understanding the issue fully” [P9].
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Appendix F

Manifestoes Written by Participants

First Manifesto Written by Participant 1

In the future, we are living sustainably. We have changed our habits and lifestyles to ensure not only our well-being but also a favourable life for future generations.

That change starts with us. It demands us to change how we think about our daily choices and behaviours. It requires us to choose instant gratifications at the expense of our planet's health and those who will come after us. It is time to adopt sustainable practices that nurture and preserve our natural resources.

What if every choice we made was about being sustainable. What if we saved resources, and if we used clean energy for our homes and cities. What if we can make it real if we all work together.

In the future, consumption is mindful and purposeful. We no longer rely on single-use plastics and embrace reusable alternatives. We support local, eco-friendly businesses and choose quality over quantity, we have created the foundation for a more sustainable economy. Our cities are green and filled with parks and urban gardens. By promoting public transportation, cycling, and walking, we reduce carbon emissions and promote healthier lifestyles. From green architecture to circular economy initiatives, we embrace solutions that regenerate rather than deplete our precious natural resources.

This declaration is a promise to future generations. We owe it to them to leave behind a world that is thriving, not struggling. One where sustainable living is the new normal. By prioritizing needs before desires, we can ensure a favourable life for future generations

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 1

Until now, big companies have avoided taking responsibility for their impact on the environment. But we can't just stand by and watch anymore. We must hold these companies accountable and teach them how to be sustainable. They need to start doing their part to protect nature. Taking care of the environment should be a key part of how they do business. It's not just about making money - it's about saving our Earth for the future generations.

Dealing with climate change has felt like a big challenge, but if companies join us in this fight, we can make real progress towards a carbon-neutral world. Imagine going to the supermarket and seeing only planet-friendly products that are made in factories that use renewable energy and eco-friendly methods. This is the future we should aim for!

It's not going to be easy, but we have to try. Climate change is affecting all of us, and it will only get worse if we don't act now. We need to push for laws that make polluting companies be more responsible and support businesses that are already doing good things for the environment.

There's a saying that "in every small barrel, there's good wine." I think this applies to companies too. Even the biggest companies have the potential to make positive changes. We're all in this together, and together we can make a real difference for our planet.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 2

We are losing our rights because of people who have no business in telling us what we can or can not do. Some people think abortion is wrong. They say it's about their beliefs, but what about the needs of women? This is about needs, not just about beliefs or desires.

Abortion is a right that must be protected. Women and individuals should have the choice to decide about their own bodies. No one should force them to have a baby if they don't want to. If someone cannot take care of a baby or if having a baby is dangerous for them, they should have the right to choose.

Governments should not tell us what to do with our bodies. Laws should protect our right to make choices about our own health. Abortion is not just about having a choice. It is about safety and well-being. We need to support those who need abortion care. It's about justice and human rights. Everyone should have access to safe and legal abortion services without fear or shame.

It is time to stop judging and start understanding. It is time to prioritize the needs of women and individuals over outdated beliefs and moral judgments. We must fight for reproductive rights and ensure that everyone has the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 2

Imagine a world where we created a better future because we all worked together. We worked together because we realized that we are in this together.

Imagine neighbours supporting each other in difficult times because we built resilience and compassion within our communities.

Imagine businesses using renewable energy, reducing waste, and supporting local farmers because we created a thriving economy that cares for our planet.

Imagine schools teaching children about sustainability and the importance of working together because the adults learned the importance of these skills to contribute to our shared goals.

Imagine governments and leaders listening to our voices and standing up for a sustainable future because we advocated for policies that protect our environment.

Imagine celebrating different cultures and ideas while working towards common goal because we embraced diversity and inclusivity.

Imagine children playing in clean parks and breathing fresh air because we took action. Because communities came together to protect our planet. We planted trees, cleaned up our neighbourhoods, and recycled our waste.

Imagine that we finally realized that we are in this together, and that together we can build a better future.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 3

We are abusing living beings with feelings that should not have to suffer because of our desire to consume them. We have to change how we think about animals. Animals also deserve to live free from harm and exploitation.

Imagine the fear and pain that animals endure in factory farms and slaughterhouses. They deserve to be treated with kindness and respect, just like humans do. We need to stop putting our own desires before the needs of animals. Just because we like how something tastes, it doesn't mean we should hurt animals for it. We need to show compassion to all living beings, not just the ones we find cute or useful.

We don't need to kill animals for food anymore. There are many plant-based foods we can eat instead. By choosing these options, we can protect animals and make the world a better place. We can all make a difference by being more aware of animal rights. We can choose cruelty-free products and eat less or even no meat. Every small action counts.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 3

Until now, everywhere we go, it feels like people are always yelling at each other, each thinking they are right and not wanting to listen.

But I have a dream for a different world. A world where we all treat each other with respect and try to understand each other's points of view. In this dream, instead of getting mad, we want to talk to each other and really listen. We know that inequality exists in many ways. Some people have more money, some people have more power, and some people are treated unfairly because of their race or where they come from. But instead of fighting, we want to find common ground. We want to learn from each other's experiences and try to make things better for everyone. Mutual respect is the key to this dream. It means treating everyone with kindness and believing that everyone is important, no matter who they are. It means listening carefully, not just waiting for our turn to talk. It means being curious about other people's ideas, even if they are different from ours.

Picture a world where people talk about politics without shouting, where we see disagreements as chances to learn, not reasons to argue. Picture a society where powerful people use their influence to help others who need it most.

This dream asks us to set aside our assumptions and embrace diversity. It asks us to seek out the often ignored voices and give them a chance to be heard. It asks us to teach our kids the value of being kind and open-minded. To show them that it's okay to disagree, as

long as we do it respectfully. This dream can become a reality where mutual respect is not just a idea, but something we all practice every day. A world where we learn from each other and grow together, where we replace division with connection and to turn conflict into cooperation. We can make this dream come true, but only if we choose to stop yelling and start listening.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 4

We are demanding change in government representation! Why are there so many old people making decisions for our future? It is time for young people to have a seat at the table.

Look around. How many politicians do you see who are young like us? Hardly any! It's like they think only older people can understand what's important. But we know better. We care about education, the environment, and our future.

Why should decisions about our education be made by people who have not even been in a classroom for decades? We need leaders who understand our challenges and goals.

Why should decisions about the environment be left to those who won't be around to see the results of their choices? We demand a voice in shaping policies that will affect us and our children.

Older politicians may mean well, but they are out of touch with our reality. They grew up in a different world with different problems. We need fresh perspectives and new ideas to address today's issues.

We are not just the leaders of tomorrow, we are the leaders of today. We have a right to be heard and a right to participate in decision-making processes that shape our lives. We deserve a government that reflects the diversity of our population, including age diversity.

We deserve a government where young people are actively involved in shaping policies and laws. We deserve leaders who listen to our concerns and prioritize our future.

We are the future, and our voices matter. It's time for a government that truly represents all of us, young and old, equally.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 4

Until now, discrimination has been around for far too long. But we can't tolerate it anymore! In the world we envision, racism, sexism and discrimination have ceased to exist. A world where justice isn't a privilege for a few, but a right for everyone. Every individual is valued not for how they look, but for who they are. Everyone has the same opportunities, regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

We can make this happen, but only if we fight for it. We must break the cycles of discrimination through education and initiatives that uplift the marginalized. Each voice has a right to be heard and there should be no systems that maintain inequality.

It's time to wake up and open our eyes! We can't keep pretending the problem doesn't exist. Every day we see examples of discrimination around us, maybe even without realizing it. It's time to say enough and do something concrete. It's not enough to talk about it on social media or be outraged for a day, we need to act and really change things.

And you know what? Change starts with us. Yes, with you who are reading this. Every small gesture counts, every word can make a difference. Whether it's defending a classmate who's being targeted or speaking out against the injustices you see, you can make a difference. Don't wait for others to move first. Be the change you want to see in the world!

First Manifesto Written by Participant 5

We are tired of seeing people succumb to their whims and desires. We are surrounded by voices that seek to manipulate us, using our morals and weaknesses against us for their own gain. This cannot continue.

We need discipline to refuse temptations and instant gratification. Your morals and values should not be for sale to the highest bidder. It is important to decide for yourself what is necessary for your well-being over short-term pleasures.

The modern age offers quick fixes and instant gratification that only leads to emptiness and regret. That is why we need discipline and the ability to stand up after falling. Make conscious choices based on your true needs, not manipulated desires. By doing so, you can keep the control over your own life.

We are the architects of our destiny, and self-control is our strength. Let us reclaim it now, before it is too late.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 5

Until now, my journey of self-improvement has been a winding path filled with challenges and moments of self-doubt. But today, I address this to the person I aspire to become.

When we first locked eyes, me and the gold version, all I saw was disdain. It was a reflection of everything I wished to change but felt powerless to confront. However, I now realize that the power to transform lies within my own hands. We are in this together, united in our pursuit of a better self. We will prioritize self-care and nurture our minds, bodies, and spirits. We will cultivate positive habits and let go of negativity that weighs us down. We will learn from our mistakes and celebrate our successes, knowing that every experience contributes to our growth. I promise to honour your existence by aligning my actions with my

aspirations. We will set clear goals and work diligently towards achieving them. We will embrace challenges as opportunities for growth.

Together, we are unstoppable.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 6

We are standing together today to combat global warming. Our planet is in trouble, and we must act now to make a real difference. The time has come to prioritize needs before desires. We are seeing too many unnecessary flights, damaging our environment with each takeoff. Cheap flying might seem convenient, but they are only harming our environment for short term pleasures.

We should use more sustainable travel options like trains. Trains are a fantastic mode of transport, connecting cities and regions with speed and reliability. Let's invest in modern, high-speed railways that cross Europe, providing fast and affordable alternatives to short flights. Traveling by train should be the standard for everyone. The EU must prioritize funding for train infrastructure over subsidies for budget airlines. Let's make train stations the new airports!

Together, we can change our travel habits for the betterment of our planet, one train ride at a time.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 6

Until now, the planet has suffered from the effects of global warming while we watched. But by promoting train travel over flying, we can reduce our carbon footprint.

Cheap flying is the easy choice for many, but it comes at a high cost for the climate. Imagine a Europe where train networks connect us. Trains are less bad for the climate than planes.

We are in this together, so let's make train travel the norm for everyone.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 7

We are living in a modern world where desires often overshadow our true needs. We are bombarded with messages telling us to consume more, to indulge ourselves without thinking of the consequences. But we must shift our focus back to what truly matters, living in balance with nature and each other.

This means making conscious choices that prioritize our collective well-being over individual wants. Our consumption habits need to change. Do we really need that extra t-shirt, or can we leave it in the store? We need to try to change our mindset to be more thankful for what we already have. We need to buy responsible clothing and food, going for quality, not quantity. We can set an example with our actions. Visit a thrift shop, instead of a Zara or H&M. Try to take shorter showers or eat meat only once a week for example. Simplicity is nothing to be ashamed of. It's a good thing!

Instead of putting our desired before the needs of the world, we should align them. We can create a future where humanity and nature exist in balance.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 7

Until now, our world has been split by differences. But imagine a future where these differences don't separate us. Instead, they bring us together for a common goal of hope and progress.

In this better future, we'll understand that despite our varied backgrounds, we're all part of one big global community. We'll believe in the idea that "we are in this together," knowing that our collective well-being depends on working together and understanding each other.

Teamwork and kindness are always better than fighting and disagreement. Violence will not solve the problems we face, working together will. We are in this together, so we need to help each other to become better as a whole, no matter where someone comes from. Our focus should be on the things we have in common, instead of the things that make us different. This mindset will allow us to build a better future for our children.

Our dream of a better future isn't far away. It is close if we choose to act together. It is close if we build connections instead of walls. It is close if we promote understanding instead of separation. It is even closer if we choose for a brighter tomorrow today.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 8

In the future, everyone deserves an affordable house that they can feel safe in. A place that they can call home. Housing should be a basic right for all, instead of an investment opportunity for rich investors.

No one should have to struggle to find a decent place to live. Young families need a safe place to raise their kids. Students need rooms so that they can learn to take care of themselves. People who are poor also need houses, so that they are not forced to sleep outside. It is unfair that the rich collect houses like in monopoly, while so many people are having to struggle to just find a place to live.

Housing should not be a source of stress or inequality, but a basis for stability, happiness and equality. It's time to put the basic needs of people before the financial desires of investors. By guaranteeing affordable housing we can make this happen.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 8

Until now, there has been too much fighting and not enough listening. But there is more that can be achieved by taking each other seriously and allowing others to share their ideas. Hopefully we will soon realize even though we are different, we are in this together. We should celebrate what makes us different and use it to make things better. We can learn each others strengths by working together on a common goal. We can see the world differently by taking the point of view of others and look through their eyes. We can celebrate our differences by sharing our cultures without toxic judgement. We are in this together and that means we should with each other instead of against each other. Together we are stronger.

First Manifesto Written by Participant 9

We are treating animals without the respect they deserve. Animals are living creatures who deserve kindness and care, but they often suffer because of humans.

It is time to think about the needs of animals before our own desires. No animal should suffer just so we can have things our way. The way animals are treated in farms, and labs is disgusting and needs to change. It is not okay to keep animals in tiny spaces, deny them what they need, or hurt them for experiments or our entertainment. Animals should be treated with respect. They should be safe from fear and harm, able to act naturally, and not used for profit.

We need to speak out for those who can not speak for themselves. We need better laws to protect animals, stricter rules for industries that harm them, and more awareness about how our choices affect them. We can make a difference by choosing plant-based foods, supporting products that do not hurt animals, and speaking up for animal rights.

Stand up against animal cruelty and work towards a better world for all creatures. A world where animals are seen as beings with feelings and have rights. A world where every animal is treated with care and respect.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 9

Until now, refugees have been treated unfairly and not understood. It's time for a new idea. One where we see refugees as fellow humans who deserve kindness and help. Refugees should be welcomed warmly, giving them safety and respect. Refugees are people with their own stories and talents, not problems.

To change how we see refugees, we need to learn more about them. We should find out about their lives and why they had to leave their homes. This can help us understand them better. When we know their stories, we can see that refugees are just like us. They have hopes, dreams, and skills. By learning about refugees, we can help others see them as people, not as strangers or problems. This can make our communities more welcoming for everyone.

Do we not want to live in a community where everyone is accepted and valued for who they are? Do we not want a future where borders don't divide us, but where kindness brings us together across cultures? By being kind and understanding, we can make our world more open and friendly. We should not view refugees as invaders but as fellow humans.

We are in this together!

First Manifesto Written by Participant 10

We are Europe, a place with many different people and cultures. But people are not treating each other with respect like they should.

It worries me that discrimination and lack of respect are common in our societies. Instead, we should show understanding and kindness to each other. That means recognizing that every person, no matter who they are or what they believe, deserves to be treated fair and with kindness. Europe is the combination of every individual that is in it.

We can not ignore the problems of injustice and inequality around us. We need to support those who are struggling within our European family. Focus on helping each other and make sure everyone has housing, healthcare, and education.

We should use compassion and understanding to create a Europe that welcomes diversity and treats every person with dignity and kindness, a Europe where we celebrate our differences and listen to everyone's voices, a Europe where we prioritize the needs of the community before individual desires.

We are all Europe.

Second Manifesto Written by Participant 10

Imagine a world where no one is left behind, where the concept of "losers" is replaced by a desire to help each other. A global community built on mutual respect and collaboration, where wealthier nations support less fortunate countries, instead of exploiting them for selfish gain.

Wealth should not be a tool for domination but a reason to help each other. This means we have to change the way we think. Cooperating instead of competing, generosity

instead of greed, wellbeing over profits. No country should be disadvantaged due to its economic status.

Wealthier countries should embrace their responsibility with optimism and compassion. Where investments are made not for short-term gain but for long-term prosperity. By investing in less wealthy nations, we pave the way for a more fair and connected world. There are no winners and loser. We are in this together, so we better act like it.

Together, we can create a world where we all help each other, a world without losers.

