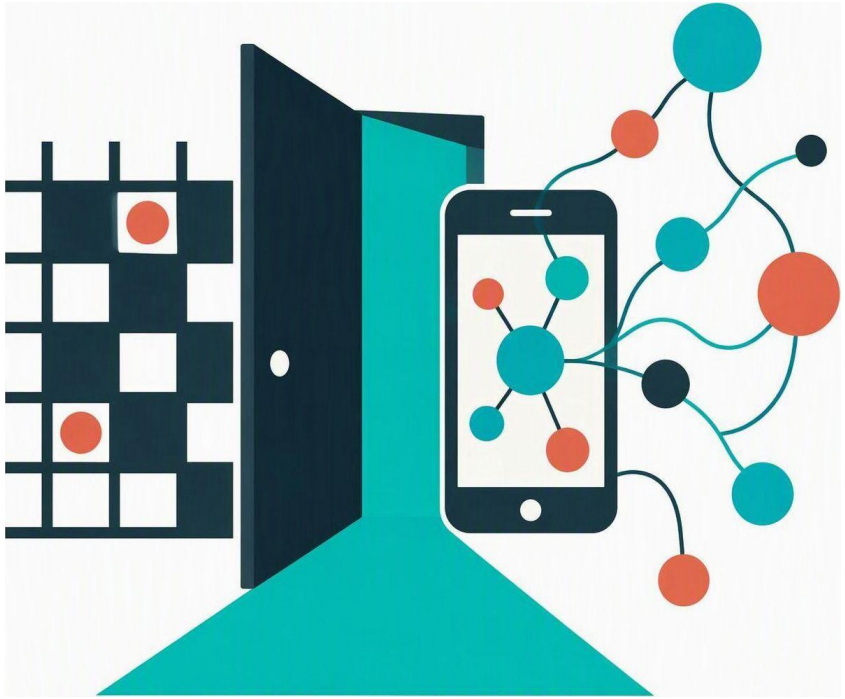
Digital rights, institutionalised youths, and inequalities

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Journalism inspiration

- Journalism education (Clark, 2013)
- Participatory news media projects (Brites and Pinto, 2017; Jaakkola, 2020; Clark & Marchi, 2017) news as an educational tool (Brites et al., 2017).
- Media education as Strategic audience work for journalistic actors (Jaakkola, 2020)

Digital rights and inequalities

Digital inequality concerns access, skills and use, and the benefits people can obtain.

Institutionalised youths are kept aside from digital possibilities because security is privileged.

Rights include information, expression, participation and education in digital environments.

01	ACCESS	Devices, connectivity and opportunities
02	SKILLS & USE	Critical, creative and participatory practices
03	OUTCOMES	Educational, civic and life-course benefits

Helsper, 2017, 2021; Livingstone & Third, 2017; United Nations, 2021

DiCi-Educa: design and participants

Participatory action research in three Portuguese educational centres, March 2018 to April 2021 in disconnected settings.

48 young people aged 12–17: 44 boys and four girls.

Workshops combined critical dialogue with photography, video, podcasts and music production (topics on digital citizenship, digital rights and otherness).

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Evidence and limits

Initial and final questionnaires (young people) and focus groups (staff), participant observation, and media outputs.
The final workshop was remote during Covid-19.

Different sorts of data and complementarity of methods were applied to gain a broader understanding of the participants, their subjectivities and complexities, and to ensure the quality of our interpretation and analysis of the data.

Youths' life contexts before institutionalisation

>90%

reported daily internet/smartphone habits and watching television

A different digital reality

One quarter had never used a computer or laptop

More than 80% learned alone or with peers

Online civic participation was limited

Brites & Castro, 2022

Research question

How did they discuss digital environments and digital rights during DiCi-Educa?

Brites & Castro, 2022

Inside the centres: *digital deserts*

Internet access was restricted, supervised and technically fragile.

Young people and staff repeatedly discussed the tension between security and autonomy.

During Covid-19, remote schooling and family contact required some internet access, still under supervision.

Brites & Castro, 2022

Digital rights in the young people's words

"Internet as a Right? Is That True?"

Discussion of digital footprints, privacy and future employment made the stakes concrete.

They recognised the need for rules, including time limits and supervision, alongside opportunities to participate.

Brites & Castro, 2022

Making media, expressing experience

Photography, podcasts, video and music created space to discuss past, present and future lives.

Participants selected images around friendship, nature, self-portraits and freedom.

These youngsters had their contributions credited as authors in the workshop's contents following their wish to see their names on the first PowerPoint slide along with the names of the research team

Brites & Castro, 2022

Making media, opened spaces for voice



Nature at the educational centre



The idea of freedom

Photographs made by participants; reproduced from Brites & Castro (2022, p. 9, Figs. 2–3).

‘Rap DiCi-Educa’

DiCi-Educa Rap 

So now I’m going to tell you about what friendship means to me 

A little respect mixed with loyalty 

A friend is a brother, and a brother is a family 

But I must tell you one thing, and of this I am sure 

Being human is the best thing that exists in nature 

Conclusion and implications

Digital rights require more than access: critical and communication skills, meaningful expression and supportive contexts.

A collaborative, co-deliberative model can address safety and participation together.

The need for longitudinal research, staff training and better digital and human resources.

Youths feel that they lack technical knowledge and a place to learn about it (EC1, EC2, and EC3 field notes and initial questionnaires).

Brites & Castro, 2022,

A small seed



The project after the project:

- ➔ Preparing young people to use the internet in recreational activities at Educational Centres / Digital skills training for adults and young people
- ➔ Radio club
- ➔ Multimedia club

Media and Communication
Digital Rights, Institutionalised Youths
https://www.cogitatiopress.com/mediaandcommunication/article/view/5663/2942

CICANT
DiCi ebook
https://cicant.ulusofona.pt/publications/books/105-artigo-c

Taylor & Francis
Digital news and inequalities
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450128.2025.2572785

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Thank you. We'd be happy to answer any questions.

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