

CITIZEN MINDSCAPES – DETECTING SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND NATIONAL DYNAMICS IN SOCIAL MEDIA



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BACKGROUND

Social media has become ubiquitous in everyday lives during the last fifteen years. The combination of social scientists research questions, language technology and advanced data analysis methodologies offers interesting possibilities for the study of questions of importance from social media sites.

Suomi24 is Finland's largest topic-centric social media as well as one of the largest non-English online discussion forums in the world. Every month, 86% of Finns using the Internet visit the site (source: TNS metric) – at least to find out an answer to a question they have googled. Due to anonymity the discussions are topic-oriented rather than reflecting the identity and image of the author. The material opens unique perspectives for studying the qualitative and quantitative dynamics of interaction, be it emotionally supportive, everyday problem-solving, or conflict-oriented.



PURPOSE AND GOALS

Citizen Mindscapes builds a research collective for social media analysis by focusing on Suomi24. We bring together researchers from social sciences, digital culture, welfare sociology, language technology, and statistical data analysis and build long-term collaboration that leads to new ways of exploring social and political interaction.

We tackle the Suomi24 forum from three complementary perspectives: (1) the digital culture of reading and writing that produces social media, (2) the visual tools and statistical data analysis methods needed for analyzing and researching the digital content, and (3) a small number of spearhead research questions, such as identifying different types of micro interaction, how heated debates might turn into political movements and how to detect emotional waves from the discussions.

METHODOLOGY

We utilize methodologies from various research traditions for the study of a shared object. Language technology, statistical analysis, data exploration are utilized for analyzing the discussions. Users are studied using quantitative user surveys and statistical analysis. Qualitative research methods include thematic interviews and observations. The developed data sets and tools will be integrated in the Language Bank in collaboration with Fin-Clarín infrastructure and CSC. The collaborative research frontier is organized by using participatory processes and communication platforms, promoting open science, open data and open source.



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