

# **Civic Empowerment in the Digital Age: Youth Engagement and Internet Rights**

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# Democratization

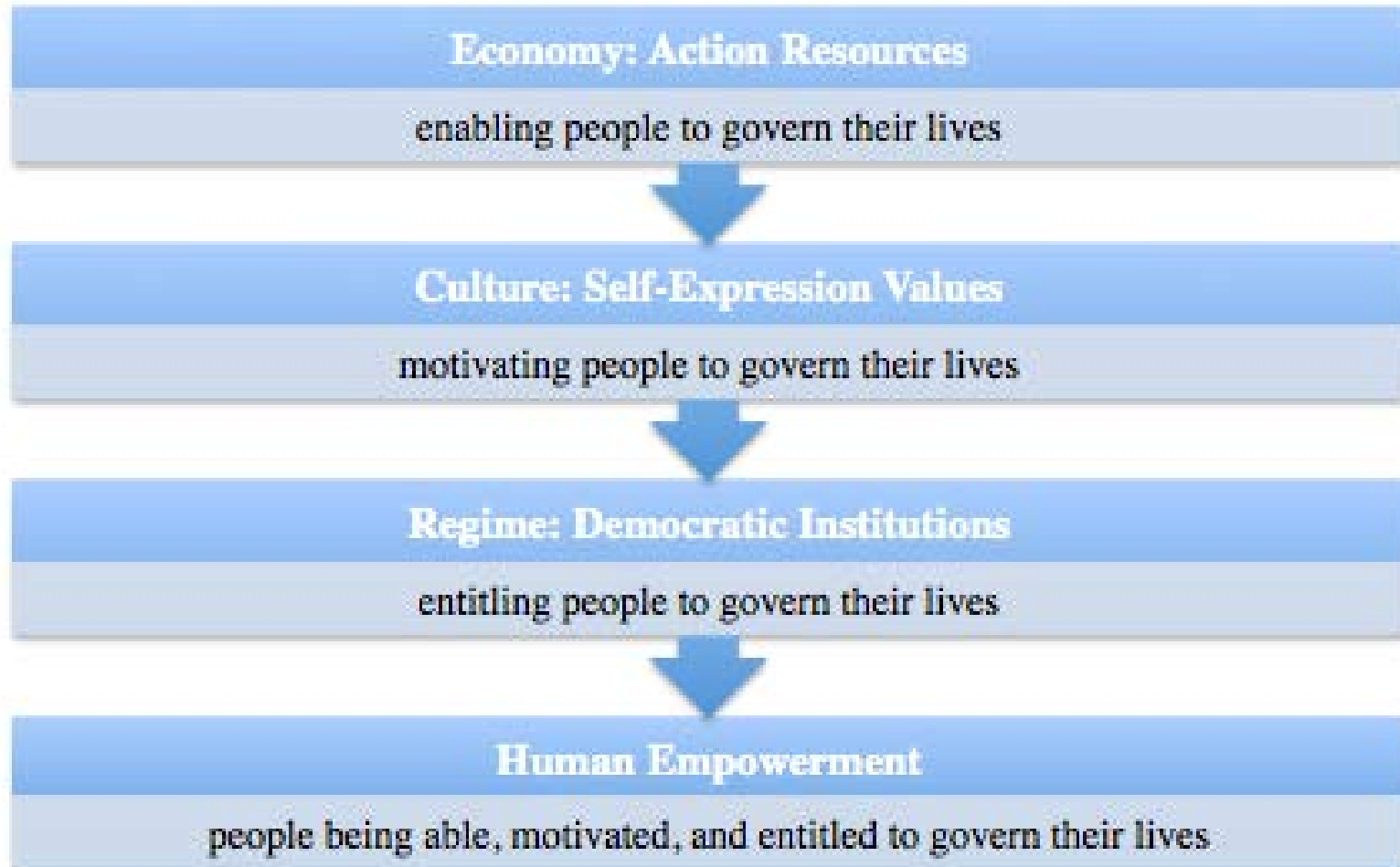
- Children are coming of age in complex environments
  - Internet harnessed for political action, freedom
- Changing role of citizens
  - Motivation, ability, opportunity for civic involvement
  - Empirical knowledge strengthens campaigns to promote democracy through digital literacy

# Case Study: Post-Communist Lithuania

- Rapid institutional development outpaced the development of civic culture
  - Lack of open networks, reliable information, & opportunities for local self-governance
  - Systemic mistrust, political powerlessness
- Apathy & inactivity ingrained in society
  - New Internet opportunities

# Human Empowerment Framework

## Welzel and Inglehart's Human Empowerment Sequence



# Civic Potential

- Civic experiences online contribute to participatory values: trust, efficacy
- Three dimensions of Internet engagement:
  - Social networking
  - Information exchange
  - Political expression

# Connecting Online & Offline Activism

- Organizational participation, community action, political discourse
  - Specific pathways: networking, self-expression
- Expanding online cultures for youth
  - Reaching disengaged: low SES, low government responsiveness & trust, remain marginalized

# Final thoughts

- Historical and cultural contexts shape Internet engagement
- Youth are active agents, participating on an everyday basis
  - Creative construction of identities & peer communities
  - Ability to access information & tools and contribute to them → community life
- Engagement may evolve with technology