



Being Online

A collection of short activities

Target Audience

The activities are designed for all age groups above 15 years old.

Scenario developed as part of the DigiPatch project: Moving from a networked to a patchworked society.

Title: Being online

This scenario was designed based on both online and in-person sessions.

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Scenario was consulted with education specialists from:

- *Belgium (Spelen der wijzen)*
 - *Italy (Milan Natural History Museum)*
 - *Spain (Parque de las Ciencias)*
 - *Malta (Esplora Interactive Science Centre)*
 - *Poland (Copernicus Science Centre)*
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Keywords

Critical thinking, identity, filter bubbles, algorithms, subjectivity, (micro)identities, dialogue, social polarization, reflection, digital world.

Short Description

The activity collection "Being Online" is an engaging toolkit created to help participants delve into the science and psychology behind belief formation, the influence of social media algorithms on how we perceive reality, and the critical role of open dialogue. Through activities such as analyzing online "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers," as well as reflecting on the subjectivity of human experiences, participants gain insights into the dynamics of digital environments. These activities practice critical thinking, empowering visitors to consciously navigate and evaluate the information they encounter while exploring their own behaviors and social interactions in the face of contemporary digital challenges.

All activities have a universal character, and the examples are based on psychological mechanisms and global challenges.

Workshop Objective

Showing participants how to critically evaluate information on the internet and social media and navigate the digital world consciously, to better understand themselves, others, and the impact of social media algorithms on our lives.

Materials

Tip: If the materials are intended for repeated use, it is recommended to laminate the printed pages before cutting them.

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Inside Your Echo Chamber

Duration: 10 -15 minutes

Format:

- Individual activity
- Group activity (2–5 participants)

Materials:

- Texts from Attachment #1

Instructions

The facilitator distributes one of the selected texts from Attachment #1 to each participant or reads it aloud, depending on the age of the participants. The participants read or listen the description of the situation. After finishing the reading, the facilitator initiates a discussion by asking four questions:

- What makes people join such groups?
- What are the short-term effects of engaging with the described community?
- How might the beliefs of the characters in the scenarios change if they regularly interact with like-minded individuals online?
- Why do you think so? Expand on your reasoning. Can you think of a counterargument?
- What could be the long-term effects of the character's involvement in the described community?

Guiding Questions

- What emotions might drive the characters to participate in the described online groups?
- Do you think the characters have other options for expressing their feelings or solving their problems? What might these be?
- How can you identify when a group starts to become radicalized?
- Do you see any parallels between the stories you read and other examples from your own environment?

Takeaway for Participants

- Participants will understand and be able to explain the basic mechanisms that draw people into closed online groups, highlighting how these groups can pose risks. They will also describe how "echo chambers" reinforce and perpetuate strong beliefs, fostering isolation from diverse perspectives and hindering critical thinking.

Additional information about the formation of (micro)identities:

The description introduces the concept of (micro)identity creation on the Internet. It explores their characteristics and examines the behavioral mechanisms of individuals participating in these groups:

The development of digital media fosters the creation of open and diverse social networks. It offers people unlimited opportunities to gain knowledge, express themselves, share opinions, and communicate with one another. **At the same time, it also contributes to the formation of various closed groups—tribes—characterized by:**

- Strong identity: A deeply ingrained sense of belonging to a particular group or community, marked by distinct traits, values, and beliefs.
- Strong in-group ties: Deep solidarity, support, and loyalty among group members.
- Alignment around personal interests and concerns.
- A worldview rooted in a unified set of beliefs and understanding of reality.
- Unique systems of norms and rules governing group actions, often at the expense of other groups or society at large.
- Perceived importance and the prominent role of such a group for self-perception.

However, we also observe the emergence of entirely novel forms of (micro)identities facilitated by digital media, distinct from traditional tribal affiliations. These (micro)identities exhibit:

- Development of weaker and more superficial in-group ties alongside intensive group participation.
- Temporality, instability, and fluidity, enabling easy transition between groups to fulfill individual needs or pursue specific social or political objectives.

If politicized, (micro)identities exhibit:

- Focus on fragmented (functional) ideologies diverging from conventional left-right ideological divides.
- Opposition to what they perceive as the prevailing socio-political and economic status quo.
- Often negative references to other groups. Negativity (towards selected values, specific policies, etc.) can often be the main reason for their emergence (however short-lived it may be).
- Propagation of narratives leveraging discontent, anger, and fear to assign blame and harshly criticize perceived culprits.
- Paradoxical reinforcement of isolation, loneliness, or detachment from societal values.

Participation in both group-tribes and (micro)identities within digital networks can engender social divisions, bolster intolerance, and diminish mutual trust. Over time, (micro)identities may lead to the gradual erosion of societal order, state legitimacy, and institutional credibility, and anarchization of social life.

More information about this topic is available at:

- <https://digipatch.eu/>
- https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/internal-security/counter-terrorism-and-radicalisation/prevention-radicalisation_en

Your own Filter Bubble

Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

Format:

- Solo activity
- Collaborative activity (groups of 2–5 participants)

Materials:

- A set of 45 cards (9 for each issue) from Attachment #2
- A table from Attachment #3

Every day, we use the internet and social media, which tailor content to our interests. They show us posts, videos, and advertisements that, according to algorithms, are most likely to catch our attention. These algorithms analyze our clicks and likes, creating "filter bubbles" — spaces where we mainly see content that aligns with our views. This activity helps participants understand how algorithms work, how they shape our online experiences, and what consequences our choices have.

Takeaways for Participants

- Participants will gain a clear understanding of how social media algorithms influence content exposure and create "filter bubbles," empowering them to critically assess their online interactions and seek more balanced information sources.
 - Recognize the critical role of critical thinking in filtering the information found online.
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Opening the activity

The facilitator introduces the term "algorithms":

Algorithms are sets of instructions or rules that computers and digital devices use to solve problems or perform specific tasks. They are present everywhere in the digital world—they determine what content we see on our social media, which advertisements are shown to us, and even the navigation routes suggested to us. They operate based on analyzing data collected about us and our behavior online.

Example:

The Algorithm as a Librarian: *"Imagine walking into a library where the librarian only gives you books based on your recent choices. Like fantasy? You only get fantasy books. Prefer nonfiction? You only get nonfiction. How quickly would you get bored or start seeing the world through a single lens?"*

Your own Filter Bubble

Instructions

Variant I

Step 1: Preparing for the Activity

1. Choose one of the categories marked with a special symbol, e.g., earth.
2. Select three cards marked with the big symbol of a given category and let the participant choose the first one.
3. Divide the remaining two categories into two groups marked with two different symbols and place them out of view of the participants.
4. Set up the table from Attachment #3 in the center.

Step 2: Algorithm in Action

1. Explain to participants: *"Based on your choices, the algorithm will show you content similar to what you have chosen."*
2. Place the first card marked with the category symbol in the column labeled **Your choice**.
3. Initially, select cards that reinforce the previously chosen narrative. Hand the participant cards one by one, which strengthen a particular narrative. Ask them to read the content aloud and place it in the column labeled **Content suggested by the algorithm**.
4. Place the second and third cards marked with the category symbol one by one, and again use the remaining cards to reinforce a particular statement. This might be the opposite of the previous card you chose.

(A sample scheme can be found in Attachment #4)

Step 3: Marginalizing Other Content

1. Explain to participants: *"Meanwhile, content that could broaden your perspective is being overlooked by the algorithm."*
2. Ask the participant if they can think of any content that might have been excluded.
3. One by one, talk about and move the remaining three cards into the column labeled **Content you miss out on**.

Your own Filter Bubble

Reflection and Summary

Ask Participants

- What kind of content ended up in the **"Content you miss out on"** column? Could any of it be interesting or important to you?
- Did you notice how the algorithm amplifies only one perspective?
- What might be the consequences of seeing only one side of an issue over an extended period?

Relate to Everyday Life

"For example, if you watch videos about healthy eating on YouTube, the algorithm will suggest more content about diets, but it won't show you videos on how to deal with eating disorders. This can lead to a narrow view of the topic."

Variant II

- Divide the cards into separate stacks for each issue and place them in five separate piles.
- Ask participants to pick one card from one stack and place it in the **Your Choice** column.
- Then, have them pick additional cards from the same stack and match them to the appropriate column: **Content suggested by the algorithm** or **Content you miss out on**.
- While assigning cards to the respective columns, ask participants to explain their reasoning for each choice. Discuss each answer.

More information about this topic is available at:

- <https://digipatch.eu/>
- <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/digital-media-literacy/what-is-an-echo-chamber/1/>

Traces of Thought

Duration: 10 - 20 minutes

Format:

- Solo activity
- Collaborative activity (groups of 2–5 participants)

Materials:

- Two sets of cards from Attachment #5

Every day, we interpret the world around us—the behavior of others, information in the media, or opinions we hear online. However, our interpretations are often prone to errors and pitfalls. That's why it's crucial to understand how our beliefs, emotions, biases, and limitations shape what we perceive as truth.

Instructions

The card set is a tool designed to facilitate discussions exploring the diversity of human beliefs, identities, and interpretations. The cards are meant to encourage reflection, dialogue, and the discovery of how differently we can view the world. There are no right or wrong answers — their value lies in the diversity of perspectives.

Guidelines for the Facilitator

- **Encourage openness:** Participants may have differing opinions—this is the strength of the activity.
 - **Avoid judging responses:** Your role is to moderate, not to evaluate.
 - **Ask probing questions:** Help participants think deeper by asking, "Why do you think that?" or "Does anyone see it differently?"
 - **Adapt the pace:** If the questions seem too abstract for the group, start with simpler or more concrete ones: e.g. *"When the aroma of warm bread fills the air, what comes to your mind?"*
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Takeaways for Participants

- Understand that everyone interprets reality differently, as our experiences, emotions, and beliefs shape how we perceive the world.
- Develop greater empathy and openness to the diversity of human perspectives, helping to avoid snap judgments.
- Develop critical thinking by learning to question one's own conclusions and becoming more aware of the influence of media, culture, and society

Traces of Thought

First Set of Questions

The questions in this set are designed to encourage participants to reflect on the diversity of human experiences and interpretations. In the context of daily life and online activity, they remind us that our reactions to stimuli — like scents, visuals, or information—are always filtered through our personal histories, emotions, and culture.

When looking at the stars, do we see the same things?

This question invites us to consider how our perspectives differ, even in the face of a shared experience. Stars, visible to everyone, become a symbol of subjectivity:

- For some, they represent inspiration and beauty.
- For others, a scientific phenomenon.
- For others still, a reminder of the past or dreams for the future.
- For some they are just stars.

When the aroma of warm bread fills the air, what comes to your mind?

- The smell of fresh bread, often used in bakeries or supermarkets to evoke hunger and encourage purchases.
- Online, similar "stimuli" might resonate collectively, such as nostalgic content, humor, memes, or visual triggers.
- This question encourages reflection on the individuality and universality of human experiences.

Can one person cry while another laughs at the same thing?

This question highlights differences in emotional responses to the same event or stimulus:

- What moves one person to tears might make another laugh or feel indifferent.
- Context, personal experience, and even the current mood influence how we interpret the same things.

Follow-up Questions

- Do we always see the same things in the same way?
- Does everyone (e.g., a scientist, an artist, or a child) see the stars in the same way? What does this depend on?
- When was the last time a scent evoked a personal memory for you?
- What influences our memories?
- How can our memories shape our reactions?

Traces of Thought

Second Set of Questions

The questions in this second set provoke reflection on identity, the definition of who we are, and the superficiality of judgments and interpretations.

Am I what I eat?

- This question encourages participants to think about how what we consume — both physically and intellectually — shapes our identity. In the context of the internet, it raises awareness of how the content we consume daily influences us, whether we realize it or not.

Is a white peacock still a peacock?

- This question opens a discussion on external changes, appearances, and authenticity.
- It reminds us that not everything that looks different loses its essence, both in real life and online.

If I roar like a lion and walk with pride, am I a lion?

- This question addresses the boundary between authenticity and imitation. In the online world.
- A keyboard warrior is someone who expresses strong opinions, arguments, or hostility online, often in a bold or aggressive manner, but avoids such behavior in face-to-face interactions. They typically take advantage of the anonymity and safety of the internet to act more confrontational or outspoken than they would in person.
- Highlights the challenge of distinguishing between what is genuine and what is merely a facade.

Follow-up Questions

- Can we become someone else?
- Are you a lion if you look and act like a lion?
- How can the information we consume daily affect us?
- How can differences in opinions influence your perception of others?
- Can a politician be a false "lion"?

Attachment #1

Christopher has always been passionate about the history and traditions of his country, but at school, he often faced misunderstanding and ridicule. He increasingly avoided conversations on these topics until one day he came across a patriotic group online. Finally, he felt he had found his place — people there shared their love for their homeland, discussed important historical events, and organized local initiatives. Christopher eagerly participates in discussions and feels proud to be part of such an engaged community. However, he has started expressing negative opinions about people with left-leaning views, which are met with enthusiasm by other users on the platform. In his more extreme statements, he sees only a manifestation of passion and dedication. For Christopher, the forum has become a space where his love for his country is fully appreciated.

Jane is a young girl struggling with being overweight, often subjected to hurtful comments about her appearance at school. This has caused her to withdraw and avoid discussing her feelings. Online, she discovers a "body positivity" forum where she immediately feels accepted and safe. She finally finds a group of people who understand her experiences and reassure her that she doesn't need to change to feel worthy. Occasionally, the forum features posts criticizing individuals who choose to change their lifestyle, labeling them as "traitors," and mocking slim people for promoting unrealistic beauty standards.

Ian is a frustrated young boy from a small town. He's tired of the girls at school ignoring him. He feels rejected and believes it's because he isn't tall or wealthy like some of his peers. He thinks girls are only interested in tall guys wearing designer clothes. Recently, he came across an online forum where other young people share similar frustrations and grievances. Ian feels like he's finally found a place where someone understands him.

Attachment #2

Problem: Climate Change



Your choice

"Only a few scientists question the human impact on climate change."



"Adapting to climate change rather than preventing it is a more realistic approach."



"The current rise in global temperatures is a natural cycle of the planet."



Highlighted and overlooked content

"The high costs of green energy may negatively impact the economy."




"Nature has self-cleaning and adaptation mechanisms to cope with changes."




"Climate policies lead to job reductions in traditional industrial sectors."




"The green transformation, driven by innovation, boosts economic growth."




"Renewable energy sources are the future of humanity."




"Youth are organizing global climate strikes, demanding action from governments."




Attachment #2

Problem: Technology and Society



Your choice



"Automation enhances human safety."





"Automation creates new jobs in many sectors."





"Excessive automation threatens job losses in many sectors."



Highlighted and overlooked content



"Innovative technologies contribute to deepening social inequalities."





"Social media algorithms manipulate our emotions."





"The development of artificial intelligence may pose a threat to privacy and freedom."





"Modern technologies are revolutionizing medicine, saving millions of lives."





"Blockchain technologies are transforming the way data is stored and exchanged."





"New 3D printing will revolutionize the manufacturing industry."



Attachment #2

Problem: Social Media



Your choice

"Social media facilitate the spread of fake news."



"Social media foster positive social relationships."



"Spending excessive time on social media worsens mental health."



Highlighted and overlooked content

"Social media are a tool for political manipulation."




"Children and teenagers are losing the ability to form genuine relationships due to social media."




"Content on social media is often superficial and harmful to educational values."




"Social media can support education and cultural exchange."




"Social media campaigns attract millions of viewers."




"Moderate use of social media improves mental health."




Attachment #2

Problem: Globalization



Your choice

"Social media can promote education and cultural exchange."



"The global economy increases inequalities between countries."



"Global corporations monopolize the market, driving local businesses out."



Highlighted and overlooked content

"Globalization leads to the exploitation of workers in developing countries."




"The import of cheap products harms local producers."




"International organizations push the interests of wealthy countries at the expense of poorer ones."




"Globalization opens up new opportunities for young entrepreneurs."




"International cooperation strengthens the fight against pandemics."




"Global supply chains reduce product costs for consumers."




Attachment #2

Problem: Economic Inequalities



Your choice

"Inequalities are a natural outcome of a free market."



"Inequalities hinder competition and suppress innovation."



"Large social programs support citizens' independence during crises."



Highlighted and overlooked content

"Taxes on the wealthy weaken entrepreneurship and investment."



"Wealth redistribution may hinder economic growth."



"Not all inequalities are bad—some reflect different levels of effort and skill."



"The UN report indicates that global inequalities are increasing."



"Women earn, on average, less than men in the same positions."



"Social programs help reduce income disparities."



Attachment #3

	Your choice
	Content suggested by the algorithm
	Content you miss out on

Attachment #4

Your choice	Content suggested by the algorithm	Content you miss out on
Problem: Climate Change "Only a few scientists question the human impact on climate change."	"The green transformation, driven by innovation, boosts economic growth." "Renewable energy sources are the future of humanity." "Youth are organizing global climate strikes, demanding action from governments."	"The high costs of green energy may negatively impact the economy." "Nature has self-cleaning and adaptation mechanisms to cope with changes." "Climate policies lead to job reductions in traditional industrial sectors."
Problem: Climate Change "Adapting to climate change rather than preventing it is a more realistic approach."	"The high costs of green energy may negatively impact the economy." "Nature has self-cleaning and adaptation mechanisms to cope with changes." "Climate policies lead to job reductions in traditional industrial sectors."	"The green transformation, driven by innovation, boosts economic growth." "Renewable energy sources are the future of humanity." "Youth are organizing global climate strikes, demanding action from governments."
Problem: Climate Change "The current rise in global temperatures is a natural cycle of the planet."	"The high costs of green energy may negatively impact the economy." "Nature has self-cleaning and adaptation mechanisms to cope with changes." "Climate policies lead to job reductions in traditional industrial sectors."	"The green transformation, driven by innovation, boosts economic growth." "Renewable energy sources are the future of humanity." "Youth are organizing global climate strikes, demanding action from governments."

Attachment #5
Set 1

*When looking at the
stars, do we see the
same things?*



*When the aroma of warm bread fills the air,
what comes to your mind?*



*Can one person cry
while another
laughs at the same
thing?*



Attachment #5
Set 2



Am I what I eat?

*Is a white peacock still
a peacock?*



*If I rear like a
lion and walk
with pride, am
I a lion?*

The above scenario was developed as part of the DigiPatch project: Moving from networked to patchworked society.

The objective of the work undertaken under the Knowledge exchange (KE) component of the DigiPatch project is to develop innovative KE solutions that address the mechanisms involved in the functioning and isolation of narrow social groups on the Internet, and efforts to make their members more open to contacts, relations, and cooperation with others.

The Copernicus Science Center, together with societal stakeholders in the project — including educators involved in formal and informal education (such as museums, NGOs, cultural institutions, and think tanks) — collaborate in developing the DigiPatch research and utilizing the findings, among other means, through:

Innovative KE solutions for the DigiPatch project. As part of this action: (2a) The Copernicus Science Centre will hold an international workshop for prototyping KE solutions that address the mechanisms involved in the functioning and isolation of narrow social groups on the Internet and, efforts to make their members more open to contacts, relations, and cooperation with others. The workshop participants will consist of 10–12 representatives of societal stakeholders of the project: educators, artists, researchers, and social activists from Poland, Germany, Sweden, the UK, and Spain. During the workshop, they will develop prototypes of KE solutions that will make it possible to incorporate the outcomes and findings of the research project into educational efforts and social initiatives.

More information about the project is available at: www.digipatch.eu