

Rethinking the Conceptual Model of Governance: Insights from Gen Z's Political Entrepreneurship Prototypes in Digital Civics and Democratic Innovations

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Abstract

This study re-examines conceptual models of governance through an analysis of political entrepreneurship prototypes created by Gen Z students, focusing on digital civics and democratic innovation. Dominant governance models—networked governance (Rhodes, 1996; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007), interpretive governance (Bevir & Rhodes, 2016), and state-centric governance (Pierre & Peters, 2018)—are based on formal institutional relations and have not yet accommodated the experimental micro-arena driven by young citizens using digital technology. Using a qualitative content analysis of 28 prototypes (12 digital civics and 16 democratic innovations), this study examined how Gen Z design collective decision-making processes. The findings suggest that digital civics build political literacy, and that democratic innovations facilitate policy co-production. This study proposes the concept of governance as co-produced micro-arenas—small-scale collective decision arenas designed by young political entrepreneurs—to expand governance theory to cross-generational collaborative ecosystems.

Kata kunci: *governance, political entrepreneurship, Gen Z, digital civics, democratic innovations*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the concept of governance has become a key term in academic debates in public administration, policy, and political science. This term emerged in response to the limitations of hierarchical, centralized, and bureaucratic government models in addressing the complexity of cross-sectoral and multifaceted public issues (Ansell & Torfing, 2022). While the state was previously considered the sole steering actor, much of the literature now emphasizes that governance represents a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism in a collective decision-making process. No single actor has complete authority over others (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009; Pierre & Peters, 2020).

Historically, the shift from government to governance has been marked by the emergence of various non-state actors—civil society organizations, market players, and citizen communities—who have assumed roles in policy formulation and public service provision. Rhodes (1996) refers to this phenomenon as “the hollowing out of the state,” as the state increasingly relies on external networks to carry out its functions. This perspective later gave rise to what is known as the networked governance model, which views public policy no longer as a linear product of state institutions but rather as the result of horizontal negotiation, resource exchange, and trust-based coordination among autonomous actors (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Ansell & Torfing, 2022). This model emphasizes cooperative logic (co-governance), which enables collaboration across administrative and sectoral boundaries.

Furthermore, the interpretive governance model developed by Bevir and Rhodes (2016) and Bevir (2011) was also developed. This model rejects the structuralist view of governance and emphasizes

that governance must be understood as a contingent social practice determined by local actors' interpretations. In this view, policies are not simply born from the institutional design of the state, but are the result of interactions, meanings, and narratives negotiated by actors within their respective social contexts. Therefore, governance studies should highlight the diversity of local practices and dynamics of the meaning constructed by actors, not just formal governance structures.

However, several scholars reject the claim of "state decline" and instead develop state-centric models of governance. Bell and Hindmoor (2009) and Pierre and Peters (2020) emphasized that the state remains the central actor orchestrating relations with non-state actors to expand its capacity, rather than being replaced by horizontal networks. They argue that network-based approaches often ignore the asymmetries of power and resources held by the state, potentially obscuring unequal relations between actors. In this model, governance is viewed as a state strategy for survival in an increasingly complex world rather than as an indication of the weakening role of the state.

From this literature synthesis, it appears that there are at least three major patterns in the conceptual models of governance: (1) networked governance, which emphasizes horizontal networks; (2) interpretive governance, which emphasizes the meaning and practices of local actors; and (3) state-centric governance, which emphasizes the state as an orchestrator of governance. All three arise from different ontological assumptions: networked emphasizes the distribution of power; interpretive emphasizes agency and meaning; and state-centric emphasizes the institutional capacity of the state. These differences in assumptions give rise to epistemic conflicts among the models.

This conflict is evident in the debate between the networked view, which emphasizes self-organizing networks, and the state-centric view, which emphasizes the state as the center of control. Rhodes (1996) and Sørensen and Torfing (2007) emphasize that governance should no longer be understood as top-down orders but rather as horizontal coordination born of trust. Conversely, Bell and Hindmoor (2009) asserted that networks are never equal; the state retains a dominant position in distributing resources and setting agendas. Bevir and Rhodes (2016) more radically reject both approaches, arguing that governance cannot be reduced to structure but must be understood as a discursive practice that continually changes according to actors' interpretations.

This epistemic conflict generates fundamental tension: Should governance be understood as de-governmentalized networks or state-orchestrated systems? On the one hand, the network view tends to idealize actor autonomy and egalitarian collaboration but often ignores power imbalances. In contrast, the state-centric view emphasizes the need for a coordinating center but risks stifling innovation and participation. This tension is why conceptual models of governance remain incompletely integrated and are often chosen pragmatically, according to the context of the case (Levi-Faur, 2012); Ansell & Torfing, 2022).

In addition to these conflicts, an important conceptual (research) gap needs to be addressed. Most conceptual models of governance are based on formal institutional relations between the state and civil society (state-society networks). However, contemporary governance practices in the digital era demonstrate the emergence of experimental micro-arenas driven by young citizens, particularly Gen Z, which combine the logic of participation, democratic innovation, and digital technology (digital civics). In this context, digital platforms, online communities, and technology-based social prototypes have become actors in collective decision making, although they have not yet been accommodated

within mainstream governance conceptual frameworks (Zwitter & Gstrein, 2023; Triantafillou & Lewis, 2024).

This situation raises the need to expand conceptual models of governance to encompass not only state actors and established organizations but also political entrepreneurial initiatives born from the youth. Such initiatives mark a shift in governance logic from state-controlled systems or formal networks to participatory ecosystems, based on data, platforms, and citizen creativity. However, almost no existing governance models explain how Gen Z digital political innovation prototypes function as legitimate collective decision-making spaces.

Furthermore, although networked and interpretive governance emphasizes horizontal coordination and meaning-making by local actors, it does not adequately explain how micro-arenas initiated by the younger generation function as legitimate collective decision-making spaces.

Based on this background, this study aims to update the conceptual model of governance by positioning Gen Z students' political entrepreneurship prototypes—particularly those focused on digital civics and democratic innovations—as a new arena for governance. This approach is expected to pave the way for integrating participatory, experimental, and digital dimensions into the conceptualization of governance while simultaneously addressing the challenges of building better public governance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Entrepreneurship

This study uses the concept of political entrepreneurship to explain the role of agents (actors) who creatively and proactively create policy and institutional change in the context of public governance. Petridou et al. (2016) defined it as a purposive action to seize opportunities for political gain, characterized by alertness, innovation, and the ability to build coalitions across political networks. Political entrepreneurs can be individuals or collectives, and operate within complex socio-political settings to encourage changes in the status quo.

The literature further emphasizes that political entrepreneurship has two main levels: policy entrepreneurship (initiating policy change) and institutional entrepreneurship (changing the rules of the political game) (Martin & Thomas, 2013; Galanti, 2018). At the local level, political entrepreneurship often emerges in improvisational, relational, and experimental forms, relying on social and cultural values to build legitimacy (Jonnalagadda, 2022; Sobari, 2019).

Thus, political entrepreneurship within the framework of this study is understood to be an agent of change in governance, connecting agencies (actors), and structures (rules/institutions) to generate political innovations.

Generation Z as Political Actors

Generation Z is a cohort born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s (Dimock, 2019; Dolot, 2018). They are the first generation to grow entirely in a digital and global environment characterized by digital natives, multitasking, and a high degree of adaptability to rapid changes (Pandit, 2021).

In a political context, Friedman and Schultz (2024) assert that Gen Z possesses generational consciousness shaped by collective experiences of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence, economic recession, and climate crisis.

Gen Z is also characterized by a cosmopolitan-progressive value orientation with strong support for social justice, gender equality, identity diversity, and environmental protection. They prefer non-hierarchical, issue-based, and digitally native political participation and are skeptical of formal institutions, but trust peer community networks (Sloam & Henn, 2019; Iorgulescu, 2016).

These characteristics make Gen Z key actors in political innovation and demand a more horizontal, participatory, collaborative, and responsive governance model that aligns with their generational values.

Digital Civics

Digital civics is an interdisciplinary approach that emphasizes the design of a citizen-government relational ecosystem based on digital technology and not simply the digitization of public services. Asad and Le Dantec (2017) view digital civics as a technology-based public advocacy practice that enables citizens to build cross-community coalitions, produce data, and create new public issues.

Corbett and Le Dantec (2018) added that the core of digital civics is building trust (trust work) between public officials and citizens through participatory and co-creative designs. Clements (2020) described digital civics as a socio-information ecosystem (infosphere) that shapes new ways for citizens to act as informational organisms in the digital space.

Ben-Porath and Dishon (2018) emphasize the need for a deliberative approach in digital civics to shape digital citizens who are critical, empathetic, and resilient to disinformation. Cazacu et al. (2020) also highlighted the empowerment aspect, where citizens are not only technology users but also co-creators of public systems.

Thus, digital civics in this research framework is understood as a collaborative arena between citizens and the government that forms new governance relations through the use of digital technology.

Democratic Innovations

Democratic innovation refers to institutions or mechanisms deliberately designed to broaden and deepen citizen participation in political decision making (Smith, 2009). These innovations differ from conventional participation, because they give lay citizens a direct role in formulating strategic policies. Smith emphasized the importance of inclusivity, popular control, rational deliberation, transparency, and efficiency in designing democratic innovation.

Elstub and Escobar (2019) expanded this concept by viewing democratic innovations as hybrid representative-participatory-deliberative spaces that bridge state and civil society while responding to the crisis of public trust and global democratic recession. Sahoo et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of contextualizing non-Western democratic innovations and categorized their practices into three forms: consultative, open, and connected.

Mohamed and Wheeler (2001) highlight youth-led democratic innovations, which position youth as the primary agents in designing new participation mechanisms based on the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach.

Thus, in this study, democratic innovation is understood as a hybrid space that enables young citizens, especially those belonging to Gen Z, to become co-designers of collective decision-making mechanisms in governance.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis (QCA) strategy formulated by Schreier (2012). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to systematically and thoroughly examine the political entrepreneurship prototypes developed by Generation Z students by identifying, organizing, and interpreting the explicit and implicit meanings contained in their project descriptions. This strategy is also relevant to the research objective of building a new conceptual model of governance, as QCA supports inductive-deductive category construction, which begins with an initial coding frame based on governance theory and is then developed openly following empirical findings from prototype data.

The primary data sources in this study are 12 political entrepreneurship prototypes themed “Digital Civics” and 16 prototypes on “Democratic Innovations” developed by Generation Z students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP) at Brawijaya University in 2023–2024. These 28 prototypes represent all the course outcomes that meet the three main criteria. First, prototypes must be thoroughly documented, including descriptions of the project, objectives, key actors, participation mechanisms, and target users. Second, the prototypes are explicitly oriented toward expanding participation and collective decision making, either through the themes of digital civics or democratic innovation. Third, the prototypes are available in a format that allows systematic qualitative analysis, that is, a written document.

Table 1 lists the prototypes used in this study. All of these data are considered representative of the experimental micro-arena created by Gen Z as part of the practice of governance.

Table 1 Political Entrepreneurship Prototypes

Digital Civics	Democratic Innovations
1. SIAP 2024 (<i>Sistem Informasi Partai Pemilu/ Election Party Information System</i>)	1. POLVED.ID (Political Education for Voter Development Indonesia)
2. MUARA (<i>Muda Aktif Bersuara/ Young, Active, and Vocal</i>)	2. Forum of Young Politician (FYP)
3. Polthub	3. MerahMuda
4. Neochoice by Neosena.id	4. Paramuda
5. Sudut Pandang Sedaya (<i>Sedaya's Point of View</i>)	5. I-Build
6. RADAR POLITIK (<i>Ranah Pemuda Sadar Politik/ Politically Aware Youth Realm</i>)	6. RUUvolution
7. GAPURA POLITIK (GAPOL)	7. Youth EduWatch
8. Kotak Aspirasi Pemilih (<i>Voter Aspiration Box</i>)	8. Policy Art (POLART)
9. PEMILU.CORNER (<i>Election.Corner</i>)	9. Ayas Butuh Kerjo (<i>#ArekMalangButuhKerjo/ ArekMalang Needs Jobs</i>)
10. EFO (<i>Education for Ourvote</i>)	10. G2Z (<i>Golkar to Gen Z</i>)
11. DEMO-DU (<i>Democracy Education for Youth</i>)	11. KOLEGIAL (<i>Kolaborasi Legislatif dan Gen Z untuk Aspirasi Lingkungan/ Legislative Collaboration and Gen Z for Environmental Aspirations</i>)
12. Aplikasi Pilkada Pintar (<i>Smart Election Apps</i>)	12. GEN-FREE (<i>Strategi Menghadapi Silent Majority di Kalangan Gen Z/ Strategies for Dealing with the Silent Majority Among Gen Z</i>)
	13. TRAPUNG (<i>Transformasi Pemuda Unggul/ Transformation of Outstanding Youth</i>)
	14. PADAT.ID (<i>Partisipasi Demokrasi Anti Disinformasi Terpadu/ Integrated Anti-Disinformation Democratic Participation</i>)
	15. PARTI Z (<i>Partisipasi Gen Z: Ruang Aspirasi Lingkungan/ Gen Z Participation: Environmental Aspiration Space</i>)
	16. GEBERRR (<i>Gen Z Bersuara/ Gen Z Speaks Out</i>)

Source: Prototype outputs of Political Entrepreneurship Classes in 2023 and 2024.

Data collection was conducted in stages through an inventory of prototype documents produced in the Political Entrepreneurship course and digitizing all materials into a text format. Subsequently, the researchers extracted descriptive data from each prototype using a project summary sheet format containing the 5W+1H elements, key actors, networks, and policy logic within each prototype. All data were compiled into a single text-based analysis corpus for systematic analysis using QCA techniques.

The data analysis was conducted using the QCA model formulated by Schreier (2012). Initially, researchers constructed a coding frame based on the literature on conceptual models of governance developed by Rhodes (1996), Bevir and Rhodes (2016), Sørensen and Torfing (2007), Ansell and Torfing (2022), and Pierre and Peters (2020). This initial coding frame was then applied to the prototype text corpus to identify governance elements such as the actors involved, relationships between actors, coordination mechanisms, and decision-making patterns that emerged in each prototype.

Throughout the process, the analysis categories were revised and expanded inductively to accommodate the new findings emerging from the data. The coding results were then grouped into several conceptual dimensions representing the governance patterns formed by the prototypes. The final step involved constructing a conceptual governance model based on Gen Z prototypes and interpreting their contributions to the debate over the existing governance models.

Through this process, the analysis sought to generate theoretical abstractions from the micro-ideas of Gen Z political entrepreneurship that could be used to develop new conceptual models of governance as a collective decision-making process. Governance development can learn from creative ideas of digital civic prototypes and democratic innovations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study confirm that co-production not only divides roles between the state and society, but also forms a cross-generational collaborative ecosystem that effectively carries out government functions (steering, accountability, and capacity building) outside the formal state structure. The theoretical implication is that the concept of governance as co-produced micro-arenas expands the scope of networked and collaborative governance by adding the dimension of “generational governance,” namely, the recognition of the role of the younger generation as designers and managers of legitimate and sustainable collective decision-making arenas.

Digital Civics Prototypes

This research analyzes 12 digital civic prototypes developed by students (Generation Z) in a Political Entrepreneurship course at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Brawijaya University, in 2023. All the prototypes displayed relatively consistent trends. They are designed to create an equitable, enjoyable, and collaborative digital political participation ecosystem while challenging the conventional methods of political education and public participation.

An analysis of the project descriptions, visual documentation, and development process of each prototype indicates that Gen Z is not merely a consumer of political messages but rather a designer and manager of their own political participation arena. Within a governance framework, this reflects the emergence of governance practices from below, which have been experimentally developed through community-based initiatives: At least three main patterns characterized all prototypes.

The first is Political Literacy as a Gateway to Participation. This group of prototypes places strong emphasis on political literacy as the starting point for building a meaningful participatory democracy. Prototypes such as SIAP 2024, MUARA, Sudut Pandang Sedaya, EFO, GAPURA POLITIK, RADAR POLITIK, DEMO-DU, and PEMILU.CORNER were explicitly designed to address Gen Z's weak political interests and the perception that politics are boring, elitist, and full of conflict.

For example, SIAP 2024 is a digital civics prototype developed by Gen Z students to address low political literacy among first-time voters ahead of the 2024 elections. Website-based SIAP 2024 not only provides information on political party profiles, visions and missions, and key policy issues but also integrates interactive entertainment formats, such as educational games and political-themed Instagram filters. The goal was to bring political learning closer to the daily lives of young people accustomed to visual and interactive styles.

Furthermore, SIAP 2024 serves as an alternative learning space outside the formal channels of the General Elections Commission (KPU) or political parties. By concisely and engagingly presenting information, this prototype sought to overcome the dominance of campaign information, which is often biased and full of propaganda. Gamification features, such as party compatibility quizzes, enhance the political learning experience and help first-time voters identify their political preferences more reflectively.

From a governance perspective, SIAP 2024 reflects the practice of networked governance by involving students, lecturers, and campus audiences as collaborative actors in building a political literacy ecosystem. If expanded, this prototype has the potential to become a voter education model that could be adopted by the General Elections Commission (KPU) or by civil society organizations. Thus, SIAP 2024 is not merely an academic project but rather an embryo of digital-based democratic governance innovation relevant to the participation styles of today's young generation.

Generally, all digital civics prototypes feature a combination of informative and entertainment (edutainment) content: short Instagram and TikTok videos, online quizzes, interactive infographics, IG filters, and offline games, such as darts and political crossword puzzles. All of this represents a conscious strategy to normalize politics as a fun, aesthetic, and social daily activity, rather than a rigid, formal one.

This pattern is significant because it demonstrates how Gen Z political entrepreneurs leverage their digital prowess to reduce affective and cognitive barriers that hinder their peers' political participation. They do not wait for the state or educational institutions to provide materials, but instead create their own peer-based political-learning ecosystem. From a governance perspective, this pattern represents a form of informational empowerment of young citizens that expands collective decision-making capacity from an early stage by providing generation-friendly information.

The second pattern is the creation of a Two-Way Deliberative Space between Young Voters and Candidates. Prototypes aim to build a two-way, deliberative space between young citizens and formal political actors, marking a shift from one-way political communication to dialogue. Prototypes such as Polthub, Kotak Aspirasi Pemilih (Voter's Aspiration Box), Aplikasi Pilkada Pintar (Smart Regional Election App), and Neochoice have been consciously designed to bridge the relational gap between young voters and candidates/political parties.

Polthub connects Gen Z voters and spokespersons for presidential campaign teams in a discord-like discussion forum, whereas Kotak Aspirasi Pemilih (Voter's Aspiration Box) creates a channel

for citizens to submit aspirations channeled directly to the campaign team. Neochoice and Aplikasi Pilkada Pintar expanded this approach by providing candidate profiles, public debate forums, voting simulations, and policy-feedback channels.

These deliberative spaces are conceptually significant because they demonstrate Gen Z's explicit efforts to renegotiate its position from the audience to the partner in political decision making. According to the logic of governance, this pattern demonstrates the embryonic formation of a hybrid deliberative network that combines state (candidates, political parties, and election management bodies) and community actors (student communities) in a single equal discussion space. Such initiatives constitute institutional entrepreneurship, because they design new structures to bring together two previously separate domains.

The third pattern involved the formation of a Gen Z political-community network. Prototypes seek to build a generation-based horizontal political-community network. Several prototypes, such as RADAR POLITIK, GAPURA POLITIK, PEMILU.CORNER, and Polthub, not only transfer political information, but also mobilize peer communities as key actors.

They use user-generated content-sharing features, online discussion forums, and collective online gaming systems to foster a sense of shared project ownership. In this case, Gen Z's involvement is not hierarchical but rather based on digitally connected peer solidarity.

This pattern demonstrates a shift from representation-based governance to network-based governance, where authority is no longer centered on the state or formal institutions, but rather spreads across interconnected community networks (self-organizing networks; Rhodes, 1996). Initiatives like these demonstrate Gen Z's capacity to build alternative sociopolitical infrastructures independent of formal structures while affirming them as collective actors capable of self-coordination.

Democratic Innovation Prototypes

Research on 16 Democratic Innovation prototypes shows that Generation Z is not merely a passive consumer of public policy, but actively creates new channels of participation that expand the collective decision-making ecosystem. Each prototype emphasizes Gen Z's need for open, deliberative, and equal participation, while demonstrating their ability to build new mechanisms that challenge conventional governance models that have been elitist and top-down.

Several prototypes are oriented toward building political literacy and connecting Gen Z to the legislative arena. For example, POLVED.ID combines online political classes, discussion forums, election simulations and reflective journals. This platform fosters young citizens' capacity to understand the democratic process and encourages them to develop public ideas.

At the deliberative forum level, the Forum of Young Politicians (FYP) presents an egalitarian, collaborative, and discord-based discussion space enriched by the support of public figures and palace networks, demonstrating new patterns of horizontal and vertical collaboration between young citizens and the state. MerahMuda introduced a three-stage mechanism for aspirational participation: collecting aspirations, scientific processing by students, and submission to the PDIP faction of the Malang City Council (DPRD), marking a shift in the public communication model from partisan mobilization to knowledge-based deliberation.

Other prototypes explicitly promoted a political representation agenda, such as Paramuda, which encouraged political parties to increase the representation of young legislative candidates, and

G2Z (Golkar to Gen Z), which opened an intra-party channel for assessing and providing feedback on the performance of Golkar legislators. These two prototypes challenge the classic assumption that parties are closed institutions, positioning Gen Z members as co-creators of party policies.

TRAPUNG and RUUvolution complement this spectrum of representation by focusing on Gen Z's involvement in the national legislative process. TRAPUNG opened a channel for submitting aspirations to the DPR, whereas RUUvolution packaged substantive legislative issues into a popular digital campaign to make them more accessible to Gen Z members. These prototypes demonstrated that Gen Z is not simply an object of political education, but a potential legislative actor that initiates a direct feedback loop to parliament.

TRAPUNG is a democratic innovation prototype designed to increase representation of Gen-Z aspirations in the national legislative process. This platform was created in response to the lack of legislative literacy among young people and their limited access to deliberations on bills that directly affect their daily lives, such as employment, education, and digital space.

This prototype offers an interactive channel that allows young people to submit their aspirations, criticisms, and suggestions regarding priority bills in the National Legislation Program (Prolegnas), along with concise information about the bill's substance and the profiles of the house members discussing it. Furthermore, an online discussion forum provides a deliberative space for Gen Z members to test their ideas before they are formally submitted. With this approach, TRAPUNG combines educational, participatory, and deliberative functions that are rarely available in conventional legislative channels.

TRAPUNG's existence demonstrates how Gen Z acts as a political entrepreneur, not only criticizing it from the outside but also designing substantive participation mechanisms within the formal political arena. From the perspective of democratic innovation theory (Smith, 2009), TRAPUNG can be categorized as a form of institutional innovation that challenges legislative exclusivity by opening access to direct participation for young citizens. If widely adopted by the DPR, this platform has the potential to become a hybrid participation model that combines digital deliberation with the formal legislative process, which could strengthen policy legitimacy in the eyes of future generations.

In addition, several prototypes have focused on strengthening checks and balances and public oversight, such as the Youth EduWatch, which encourages participatory oversight of digital education policies, and I-Build, which opens channels for reporting and discussing infrastructural issues. These prototypes expand participation beyond voting to monitor, evaluate, and provide data-based input. Similarly, PADAT ID integrates an open data portal and Gen Z aspiration forum to strengthen transparency, accountability, and evidence-based citizen input into the local policy cycle.

Other innovations came in the form of creative and emotional participation channels that overcame psychosocial barriers to participation in the research process. POLART provides an art-based space for political aspirations, enabling Gen Z members to express their ideas, both visually and anonymously. GEN-FREE created anonymous discussion forums to liberate Gen Z from a culture of silence (silent majority), making anonymity an empowerment strategy. GEBERRR and KOLEGIAL combined aspiration reporting, discussion forums, e-voting, and transparent follow-up within a single digital participation cycle to create a structured and open model of legislative participation.

Several prototypes also link political participation to Gen Z's daily needs, such as Ayas Butuh Kerjo, which connects regional budget literacy with local job opportunities, and PARTI Z, which uses

environmental issues (flooding) as a gateway for public participation. This approach demonstrates that Gen Z frames political participation not solely as a matter of ideology or institutions, but as a collective problem-solving strategy closely related to their daily lives.

Overall, these Democratic Innovation prototypes illustrate the emergence of a new pattern of governance characterized by (1) collective decision-making based on horizontal networks between young citizens, state institutions, and political parties; (2) the integration of deliberative participation, public oversight, and political representation; (3) the reframing of policy issues as personal, contextual, and emotional to make them relevant to Gen Z; and (4) an emphasis on citizen ownership (sense of agency) throughout the policy cycle, from input to evaluation. These findings challenge the old governance model oriented toward hierarchical control and open up opportunities to conceptualize governance as a collaborative ecosystem across generations and institutions, with Gen Z as a key node in the collective decision-making process.

The analysis of 28 political prototypes designed by Gen Z students in the Political Entrepreneurship course shows that this generation understands politics not only as an electoral activity, but also as a social design space in which they can create new arenas for collective decision-making. These prototypes represent Gen Z's early practices in shaping its own version of governance, microscale, digital, and collaborative, which is slowly building a bridge between young citizen communities and formal political institutions in Indonesia. Overall, two major contrasting yet complementary patterns have emerged: digital civic and democratic innovation prototypes.

Digital civic prototypes generally act as incubators of democratic values and skill development. It creates a political learning space that blends digital technology, popular culture, and participatory values to make politics feel close to Gen Z's everyday lives. Conversely, the Democratic Innovation Prototype functions as a channel for policy coproduction. This creates an arena in which Gen Z members can voice their aspirations, monitor policy implementation, and participate in formulating agendas along with formal political actors.

The Emergence of A New Configuration

The findings of this study make an important contribution to the theoretical debate on governance by answering the fundamental question of how public governance can be formed in the context of involvement of a new generation, non-state, and digital technology. In general, the prototypes designed by Gen Z students demonstrate patterns that cannot be fully explained by classical governance models and instead mark the emergence of a new configuration based on co-produced micro-arenas—small-scale collective decision-making arenas that they create as political entrepreneurs.

1. Challenging Hierarchical and Market Models: Non-Bureaucratic and Non-Competitive Logic

While the hierarchical governance model emphasizes coordination based on hierarchy, command, and control (Rhodes, 1996), and the market governance model relies on incentive mechanisms and efficiency (Pierre & Peters, 2020), the Gen Z prototypes explicitly reject both logics.

None of the prototypes were built within a hierarchical structure or based on formal authority. Even in the COLLEGIAL prototype, the deliberation space was designed to be equal, without a permanent chairperson or leader. Similarly, there is no logic for competition or market incentives, and no scores, rewards, or efficiency-based selection mechanisms exist. Instead, they prioritized

equality and social meaningfulness. This demonstrates that Gen Z is building governance that abandons hierarchy and competition as fundamental assumptions—a fundamental shift from the two dominant governance models of the 20th century.

2. Strengthening and Expanding the Logic of Networked and Collaborative Governance

This finding aligns more closely with the logic of network governance (Rhodes, 1996; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007), which emphasizes horizontal coordination between actors, and collaborative governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2022), which emphasizes the co-production of public decisions.

The Digital Civics prototype established a horizontal network based on campus communities, whereas Democratic Innovations expanded its network to include the House of Representatives (DPR), political parties, and government agencies. For example, the TRAPUNG prototype collaborated with the Youth Department to develop training for young cadres, whereas the I-Build connected residents with the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) to oversee infrastructure projects.

Interestingly, however, these networks are not merely a means of coordination but also serve as mechanisms for establishing new collective decision-making arenas. In other words, Gen Z is not simply joining existing networks, but designing them as new arenas for governance. This demonstrates the shift from networked actors to network builders.

3. The Emergence of Micro-Governance Arenas

The main contribution of this finding is the emergence of what can be called micro-governance arenas, small-scale collective decision-making spaces designed by young citizens to instill values, build networks, and produce governance functions.

This concept bridges the gap between civic engagement and institutional governance. Previously, these two realms were often understood separately; citizens (especially the younger generation) were merely participants, whereas governance functions were carried out by formal institutions. However, the Gen Z prototype demonstrates that governance functions (steering, accountability, and capacity building) can be initiated and implemented from below by young communities:

This complements Bevir and Rhodes' (2016) argument that governance must be understood as a practice discursively constructed by actors with differing beliefs (decenter's theory of governance). The Gen Z prototype demonstrates that generational beliefs—digital-native, horizontal, and collaborative—can produce governance configurations, even without formal authority.

4. Generational Logic: From Civic Users to Civic Governors

These findings also highlight a dimension rarely addressed in governance literature: generational logic. Nearly all prototypes demonstrated the transformation of Gen Z's role from civic users to civic designers, and then to civic governors.

In the digital civic cluster, they acted as political educators, educational forum designers, and issue awareness builders. In the Democratic Innovation Cluster, they act as party liaisons, policy monitors, and formulators of public recommendations.

This logic challenges the view of Pierre and Peters (2020), who posited governance as the domain of established actors (the state, market, and civil society). The Gen Z prototypes demonstrate that the new generation can become a domain of governance itself, not merely a supporting actor in other

domains. This highlights the need to expand the governance framework to avoid demographically historical and open spaces for generational governance as a new concept.

5. Synthesis: A New Governance Model Based on Co-Produced Micro-Arenas

Conceptually, these findings contribute to a new model called governance, as co-produced micro-arenas and small-scale collective decision-making arenas are designed by young citizens as political entrepreneurs. They combine participatory values, cross-domain networks, and digital technology to produce governance functions (steering, accountability, and capacity building), without being embedded within formal institutional structures.

This model explains why governance functions can emerge from non-state, non-hierarchical, and small-scale communities in prototypes, such as PADAT ID, KOLEGIAL, Youth EduWatch, and TRAPUNG.

This theoretical contribution broadens the contemporary governance landscape, which previously emphasized interactions between formal institutions to encompass the production of governance by a new generation in experimental digital arenas. Furthermore, these findings underscore the need for states and public institutions to integrate Gen Z-led microarenas into public governance to create cross-generational legitimacy and effectiveness.

The shift from hierarchical and market-oriented governance models to micro-governance arenas initiated by Gen Z demonstrates that small community-based digital arenas are capable of performing governance functions previously considered exclusive to the state, from providing information and facilitating deliberation to monitoring policies. This finding challenges the assumption that these functions are effective only when managed by formal institutions or market actors, and emphasizes the need to integrate Gen Z's experimental arenas into the public governance ecosystem.

From a governance theory perspective, this finding opens up opportunities for developing the concept of a "generational collaborative ecosystem," which recognizes the younger generation not merely as policy beneficiaries but also as legitimate steering actors in public decision-making processes. Practically, state and public institutions must adapt policy mechanisms to recognize, facilitate, and connect these micro-arenas with formal processes, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of intergenerational governance.

However, this research is limited to a campus-based prototype designed within the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Brawijaya University, for the academic year 2023–2024. The results do not yet represent the diversity of Gen Z initiatives across regions and political contexts; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized broadly. Further studies could expand the scope to include Gen Z prototypes beyond campuses and assess the sustainability and long-term impact of micro-arenas on formal public policy.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the prototypes designed by Gen Z students in a Political Entrepreneurship course represent the emergence of a new pattern of public governance practices that fundamentally differs from conventional governance models. Through the 12 digital civic prototypes and 16 democratic

innovation prototypes, it appears that Gen Z is not merely participating as passive citizens, but has initiated, designed, and operationalized collective decision-making arenas that carry out governance functions (steering, accountability, and capacity building) outside formal state structures.

These two prototype clusters demonstrate complementary orientations and logic. Digital Civics prototypes serve as incubators of democratic values and skills, building a digital-based, enjoyable, and inclusive political learning space. Democratic Innovation prototypes serve as channels for public policy co-production, building networks with formal actors, encouraging public deliberation, and developing advocacy and policy-oversight mechanisms. This difference in orientation demonstrates the transformation of Gen Z's agency from civic users to civic designers, and then to civic governors, a finding that theoretically challenges the view of governance that still positions young people solely as objects of political education.

This finding makes an important theoretical contribution to the debate regarding governance models. The Gen Z prototype implicitly rejects the hierarchical and market logic underlying classical governance models (Rhodes, 1996; Pierre & Peters, 2020) and closely aligns with the networked collaborative governance model (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007; Ansell & Torfing, 2022). However, they go further by constructing micro-governance arenas—small-scale collective decision-making arenas designed to instill value, build networks, and generate governance functions. Thus, this study proposes a new model: governance as co-produced micro-arenas, which positions the new generation not merely as actors, but as distinct governance domains.

This finding suggests that encouraging young people to participate is not simply about inviting them to join the existing institutions. Instead, state and public institutions must recognize, facilitate, and integrate the experimental arenas created by young people as part of the governance ecosystem. The insights generated from Gen Z's prototypes of political entrepreneurship—cross-generational, cross-domain, and cross-technological collaboration principles—can improve and enrich the conceptual governance model.

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