

Social Research Call

Title:

The Political Implications of Accessibility Policies



Acronym: SIGNPOL

Project leader: Pau Vall-Prat

Host organisation: Universitat de Barcelona

Main purpose of the project: SIGNPOL investigates the political implications of accessibility policies, focusing specifically on Deaf-related accessibility measures. The project examines whether accessibility politically empowers disabled citizens, generates positive spillovers for non-disabled citizens, and shapes how voters evaluate political actors who employ them.

Design/methodology/approach: The project employs an original video-based survey experiment administered across three complementary samples: a representative sample, a disabled oversample, and a dedicated Deaf community sample. Respondents are randomly exposed to videos that vary in accessibility intensity and in political actor characteristics.

Potential results: The project expects accessibility policies to shape political attitudes among disabled (especially Deaf) citizens, while also raising awareness of disability-related inequalities among the general public. It anticipates that more visible measures will generate stronger effects than lower-visibility ones, and that politicians will benefit from using accessibility. The findings will produce two peer-reviewed articles and a policy brief.

Social relevance of the research: SIGNPOL addresses a persistent democratic deficit: the political marginalization of disabled citizens. The project brings evidence on whether accessibility contributes to closing this gap into public debate and policy advocacy. The project also explores whether accessibility promotes “spillover solidarity”, testing whether accessibility contributes to reducing stigma and foster solidarity between disabled and non-disabled citizens, offering a blueprint for more inclusive democratic institutions.

Originality/value of the project: SIGNPOL is the first study to causally estimate the political consequences of accessibility policies, bridging political behaviour research and disability studies. It also focuses on sign language as a political phenomenon, filling a substantive gap that political science has largely overlooked. Finally, it will produce the first representative, fully accessible survey of Deaf individuals' political attitudes in Spain.