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Deliberation or Self-presentation?

Young People, Politics and Social Media

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Abstract

This article presents a study of how politically engaged young people use social media for political purposes. There has been a growing optimism that social media can stimulate political participation and deliberation, especially among young people. Based on focus group interviews with Norwegian teenagers, the article argues that social media have become an important platform for young people to participate in political activities. Whether the purpose is internal meetings or external mobilization, social media provide platforms for planning, reporting and communicating political activities. At the same time, politically engaged young people are hesitant about using social media for political deliberation. They are concerned about how they present themselves, and they are reluctant to stand out as highly political. One important explanation for this is that social media integrate different forms of communication and collapse social contexts. This causes teenagers to delimit controversies and try to keep political discussions to groups with more segregated audiences.

Keywords: social media, young people, political participation, deliberation, self-presentation

Introduction

There is a growing concern that young people are losing interest in politics. Several studies have reported that election turnout and party membership are sinking, especially among young people (Milner 2010, Dahlgren 2009, Maktutredningen 2003: 19). At the same time, there is widespread optimism that social media can stimulate political participation among young people. This optimism was fuelled by Obama's 2008 campaign. The campaign managed not only to get new groups of citizens to register to vote, but also to become active in the campaign. Online and social media like MySpace and Facebook played important roles in mobilizing voters (Castells 2009: 390).

Studies have shown, however, that social and online media do not seem to have revolutionized political participation for the large majority of young people (Bakardjieva 2010, Olsson and Dahlgren 2010). Social media are mainly social, and the primary purpose of participating in social networking sites is to socialize and check out what friends are doing (Storsul et al. 2008, Dahlgren 2009: 180). This does not mean that social media are unimportant for political activities. As we have seen in the Obama campaign and in the social and political upheavals in North Africa in 2011, networks of social media are powerful tools in situations when people have a joint political agenda

(see, e.g., Lotan et al. 2011). But, in general, young people's attitudes towards politics do not seem to be radically affected by online and social media.

It is possible, however, that in the same way as social media are powerful in specific situations where people have a strong political agenda, they may also play an important role in the everyday activities of already politically engaged people. This is the focus of the current article, which presents a study of how politically engaged teenagers in Norway use social media for political purposes.

Young people are interesting because the potential of online media to enhance democratic participation may be especially strong among young people (Olsson and Dahlgren 2010). On the one hand, there is a concern over the (low) level of political engagement among youth, and on the other, young people have adopted digital technologies from an early age and are hence called the Internet generation (Milner 2010). In addition, the architecture of the Internet may fit well with young people's informal, peer-oriented, anti-authority approach to political activity (Livingstone 2009:121). Thus, both the potential and the motivation to use social media for political purposes may be particularly strong among politically engaged young people.

Based on theories of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy, as well as theories of communication and social interaction, the present article argues that social media constitute a promising but complex setting for democratic participation and deliberation. Against this background, the article asks: How do politically engaged young people use social media for political participation and deliberation purposes? In what ways does the integration of communication forms and social contexts on social media influence the political uses of social media?

In the following, the article first presents the theoretical framework outlining key concepts that are important for analysing use of social media for political purposes. Thereafter, focus group interviews are presented as the method of investigation, and the composition of the groups is discussed. Next, the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings are presented, followed by the main conclusions end the article.

Participation, Deliberation and Self-presentation

The vision that new technologies will increase political participation and strengthen democracy is a long-standing one. For example, in the 1920s, Bertholdt Brecht envisioned the radio as a communicative apparatus (Brecht 1973), and in the 1980s Benjamin Barber was optimistic about the capabilities of cable networks for strengthening local democracy (Barber 1984: 274). In the 1990s, attention shifted to the Internet and the democratizing potential of broadband networks. Nicholas Negroponte wrote very optimistically that: "Digital technology can be a natural force drawing people into greater world harmony" (Negroponte 1995: 230). Nguyen and Alexander argued that ICT was an "enormously liberating force working against hierarchies of all kinds. This is the democracy citizens in advanced nations always dreamed of" (Nguyen and Alexander 1996: 11). Henry Jenkins (2006) has later called the emerging forms of mediated communication "participatory culture".

Many such visions about the democratizing power of the Internet rest on implicit notions of democracy. In these visions, more democracy usually implies increased participation, more equality and less hierarchy. These notions all point in the direction

of a concept of democracy that is stronger than merely a representative democracy in which representative institutions dominate and citizens are relatively passive (Barber 2004). In particular, elements from theories of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy can be identified.

The call for more political involvement and engagement from citizens has been developed in theories of *participatory democracy*. One of the most influential scholars within this tradition, Carole Pateman, emphasized that ordinary people and not only the elite should participate in politics (Pateman 1970). Within this tradition, the formal existence of political rights is seen as being of little value if they cannot be practiced (Held 1987: 255). Thus, society needs to be organized in ways that enable participation by everyone, including redistribution of resources. The theory has been debated and criticized among other things for requiring an unrealistic organization of society and an authoritarian obligation to participate. Yet the participatory approach has inspired a number of theories that do not necessarily comply with to the most radical sides of the tradition, but share the focus on increased participation. Building on a large number of contributions within this field, Nico Carpentier argued in favour of what he calls maximalist democratic participation. This is an approach that emphasizes both representation and participation. At the same time, it attempts to maximize participation, not only in institutionalized politics, but also in political dimensions of the social (Carpentier 2011). In the context of such theories, much of the enthusiasm about the democratizing potential of new technologies comes from an expectation that new technologies may enable ordinary people to participate in politics in both institutional and social settings. This may contribute to a stronger democracy (Barber 1984) with more maximalist participation (Carpentier 2011).

Closely related to this is the expectation that new technologies may increase *democratic deliberation*. Peter Dahlgren stressed that deliberation is not in opposition to participation, but should be seen as one mode of participation (Dahlgren 2009: 97). Democratic deliberation implies that more dialogue and less hierarchy may strengthen the collective shaping of politics through persuasive argument. One of the most influential theorists within this tradition is Jürgen Habermas. He has been concerned with conditions that make rationality and deliberation possible. In the deliberation-process, all should have the same possibilities to promote their view (Eriksen and Weigård 1999: 18). The printed press and media provide news and analysis of current affairs enabling information, and facilitate debates and deliberation between different views (see, e.g., Keane 1991), but the capacity of these media to make people participate in political processes and engage directly in deliberation is limited. The Internet, on the other hand, has an architecture in which all users are equal and may interact directly. Thus, a level playing field may be enabled, where participation and deliberation can take place, with less hierarchical distance between elites and ordinary people.

These reflections concern the Internet as such. Social media are also Internet services, and much of the optimism about the potential of social media to increase participation and deliberation is the same as the general ideas about the Internet. I will, however, highlight two aspects that are particularly characteristic of social media: the inclusiveness of social media, and the integration of mass media and personal media forms.

Social media, such as Facebook, have become remarkably popular arenas for socialization and communication. In contrast to other Internet-based forums where specific groups of people interact based on joint interests, the most popular social media include

almost all groups that are online. In Norway, for example, 71% of the online population over 15 years of age use Facebook at least weekly, whereas 89% of young people (12-29) are on Facebook.[1] This makes Facebook an exceptionally *inclusive arena* were people from all groups meet. Thus, it may have some resemblance to a Habermasian public sphere in which democratic deliberation can take place (Habermas 1971). Social media, however, are not only public. Social media are used for both public and private purposes and include elements of both mass media and personal media.

Marika Lüders (2008) developed a model of the relationship between mass and personal media. Criticizing Niklas Luhmann and John Thompson's definitions of mass media as being outdated as they exclude interaction between sender and receiver, Lüders argued that distinctions between these media forms should rather be outlined as differences in the types of involvement required from users along two axes: one axis describing the level of institutionalization and professionalization, the other describing the level of symmetry in interaction. According to Lüders, the mass media are institutionalized and professionalized, with a division between producers and audiences. Professional media organizations, like television and the press, produce content for the public. Even if audiences are invited to participate, mass media are still asymmetrical. Personal media, on the other hand, are private, non-institutional, and more symmetrical than mass media (Lüders 2008). Telephony and e-mail, in which people interact with each other, are classic examples of personal media. Lüders argued that the distinctions are not fixed, but can best be understood as varying positions along a continuum. Digital media and user-generated content in mass media contribute to reducing the differences between the media forms. Social media, according to Lüders, are situated in the middle, between these end points (Lüders 2008). Social media are both personal and symmetrical, and institutional and asymmetrical. Private interaction can take place between personal friends, but this interaction may also have a large audience and thereby resemble mass communication. Similarly, while private individuals are interacting on social media, institutional and professional actors may also use social media to communicate asymmetrically to larger publics. Thus, social media *integrate media forms* and thereby challenge established forms of interaction.

The inclusiveness of social media like Facebook and the integration of media forms also make social media complex arenas for people to manoeuvre in. The inclusiveness means that people find themselves on the same arena as people from very different contexts of their lives: family, friends, old schoolmates and new colleagues. This is the same phenomenon Marwick and boyd (2010), in their study of how Twitter users imagine their audiences, called "collapsed contexts". When context collapse and media forms integrate, self-presentation becomes a challenge.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of *self-presentation* for online interaction (Lüders 2007). This is not something people do only when online. On the contrary, as Ervin Goffman (1959) suggested, self-presentation is an important part of everyday life and necessary for social interaction. Depending on the social situation and the audience present, people tend to emphasize some aspects of themselves in order to comply with their social role. According to Goffman, when people act in a social situation, they *perform.* The performance has a *front stage,* which represents for whom the performance is intended, and a *back stage,* which is out of sight of the audience. Typically, a waiter is on the front stage when serving restaurant guests, but backstage in the kitchen. As the performance is different in various social settings, segregating

the audience is an important social strategy for the performer to control his or her front stage (Goffman 1959: 137). But, if social contexts collapse and communication forms integrate, controlling the front stage becomes complex.

The inclusiveness and integration of media forms that are important characteristics of social media may have important implications for political participation and deliberation:

First, social media may enable more people to *participate*. The inclusiveness of social media and the integration of communication forms lower the threshold for people to participate. Getting information, stating opinions and communicating with a large number of people is in principle very easy. This is an important reason why politicians and political campaigns find social media to be important and why we have also seen that, in some campaigns, social media have been very effective tools for mobilization.

Second, social media may facilitate *deliberation* between more people. The reduced hierarchies between sender and receiver of information may imply not only that everyone can state their opinion, but also that ordinary people can communicate directly with authorities, and with each other. This inclusiveness has generated expectations that social media may enable political deliberation that could include people from all groups.

Third, the integration of communication forms and collapsed social contexts may, however, make such participation and deliberation complicated. In social situations, people are concerned about how they *present themselves* and highlight different aspects in different social settings. When the front stage is difficult to control, this might influence how people interact on social media. A study of civic and political groups in offline settings showed that in front stage settings, when addressing a public, there was a strong tendency to avoid speaking about politics, whereas when microphones were turned off, the talk could become political. The reason pointed out was that politics was regarded as putting sociability at risk (Eliasoph, quoted in Dahlgren 2009: 95). The role such mechanisms play in social media where contexts collapse is the focus of the present paper.

Data and Methods

In order to investigate how social media are used for political participation and deliberation purposes and in what ways the integration of communication forms and social contexts affect the political uses of social media, focus group interviews have been conducted. Focus groups enable informants to stimulate each other and exchange views on many aspects of the phenomenon studied (Tjora 2010:107).

The study focuses on political activities in both the conventional political arena and single-issue arenas. Participants were therefore included both from youth parties and from civic and single-issue-oriented organizations. The participants selected for the study were teenagers, between 16 and 19 years old and active members of their organizations. They were not, however, leaders, as these may be more likely to be part of a more professionalized communication strategy. The participants' political engagement was the basic reason for selection. Other criteria, such as the teenagers' socio-economic background or variations in age (within the very narrow age-spectrum) have not been focussed on here.

Two sets of focus group interviews were conducted.[2] The first set of interviews was a pre-study that took place in 2008 and included two focus groups with eight to nine participants in each. Each group consisted of participants from a mix of political, civic

and single-issue organizations. The main purpose of these focus groups was to explore what means of communication the teenagers used for political purposes. The questions were designed to encourage participants to discuss how they used different forms of mediated and unmediated communication for political purposes. The interviews showed that Facebook in particular dominated completely as the most important tool for political engagement among politically engaged teenagers.

In order to get a more in-depth understanding of how politically engaged teenagers used social media, and particularly Facebook, a second set of focus group interviews was set up. These interviews were conducted in 2010 and included four groups with four to five participants in each. To facilitate free discussions about how they used social media within their organizations, each group consisted of participants from only one organization. Two groups had members from political youth parties, and two groups from single-issue/civic organizations known for being active outside the conventional political arena. These interviews confirmed the findings from the first interviews and provided more detail about the political use of social media. Further, there were strong commonalities between groups of teenagers coming from different organizations. This stability over time and across groups indicates that conventions for use of social media for political purposes had been established.

As the empirical basis of the study is focus group interviews with young people in Norway, a group that have almost universal access to online media[3] and thereby excellent opportunities to use social media for political purposes, the findings will not be generalizable in any statistical sense. Nevertheless, the findings may be informative concerning how politically engaged young people may use social media for political purposes under relatively favourable conditions and thereby contribute to our conceptual understanding of the potential and limitations of social media.

Participation and Co-ordination on Facebook

When the young people studied discuss how they use social media for political purposes, it becomes obvious that participating in organizing political activities is no longer about handing out leaflets, sending out letters, and setting up posters on walls. The informants described a joint practice in which practically all organization and coordination took place electronically, and Facebook was the dominant arena.

At the time of the interviews (and the time of writing this paper), Facebook was the most widespread social medium in Norway.[4] In the interviews, only a few other social media were mentioned. This was mainly YouTube, on which some watched political videos and monitored a couple of discussion forums for specific issues. Twitter, which received great attention among journalists and political leaders, was only mentioned a few times, and only as a phenomenon, not as something these teenagers used themselves.

Facebook has a number of functions that were systematically used to organize and coordinate political activities both internally and for external purposes. There was little variation between the informants in how they used the different functions, illustrating that conventions had been established as to how to use Facebook for political purposes.

One of the main functions on Facebook is to announce one's *status*, that is to write what is on one's mind in the status field, something that will immediately show in friends' news feeds. This function is used to promote events or views or other things

people would like to communicate. In some instances this is accentuated by using the *profile picture* to underline views. For example, some informants tell about how they participated in campaigns against child abuse by using a picture of their favourite cartoon as their profile picture.

Another important function is *events*. On Facebook, users may create an event page and invite people they know to participate. People who have confirmed that they will participate in an event will then get reminders about this on their Facebook homepage. The function is used for organizing parties, meetings, public demonstrations, etc. When a big demonstration was organized in Oslo against Israel's bombing of Gaza in 2009, more than 20,000 people were mobilized in two days without any advertising, using only Facebook and word of mouth. Many informants report that they even organize their local meetings as Facebook events.

The *messages* function is a tool for Facebook users to send direct messages to each other. This is frequently used for individual communication and for smaller groups. For many purposes of direct communication, this function has replaced regular e-mail. One indication of this is that the informants regularly talked about the messages function as "mail". They explained that regular e-mail was filled up with spam, therefore, they used the internal messaging system in Facebook instead. Only a few informants claimed that they still used regular e-mail for exchanging documents (which Facebook at that time did not have a good solution for).

Facebook *groups* can be created by anyone and are used for a number of purposes, both internal and external. Facebook groups are often created for people to show that they support a specific cause. In that context the group is open and the ambition is to attract as many members as possible, quite similar to a petition. Other groups are created for internal purposes in an organization. In such groups, members discuss plans and policies, circulate minutes from meetings, plan new activities, etc. The internal groups are sometimes closed so that only members can read and write, and sometimes also hidden so that only members can see that the groups exist.

Finally, on Facebook, users can push the *like* button and thereby announce that they like their friends' statuses, group memberships, participation in events, etc.

In these ways, Facebook was frequently used for organizational political participation, reducing the need for other means of communication and coordination. Facebook did not replace physical meetings, but the meetings were planned and organized through Facebook. E-mail was seldom used and paper mail had been almost completely replaced by electronic communication, mainly Facebook. Only one informant said that he once got papers in the mail, and that was before attending a national congress for which he received a large number of documents. Facebook had also replaced telephony and text messages (sms) for organizational purposes. Telephony and sms were important in young people's lives, but only for the closest circle of friends. When organizing something less personal, like political activities, Facebook dominated.

Awareness of Self-presentation

At the same time as the teenagers used Facebook as a tool to participate in political activities, they were very concerned about how they presented themselves. Facebook was primarily a social arena for these teenagers, as it is for the majority of Facebook

users. The informants explained that they were Facebook friends with most people they had met, people from school, family, the neighbourhood, sports, and politics. Thus their Facebook networks were very mixed, bringing together friends and contacts from very different contexts, what Marwick and boyd (2010) called "context collapse". This made self-presentation challenging and influenced how they engaged in politics.

In all the focus groups, the informants explained that they evaluated their Facebook friends and how they appeared, and they were greatly aware of how they presented themselves. As one girl said:

> On Facebook, you judge each other's lives. That's what you do. I look at pictures, how they are, and I look at interests if we share some interests. If you visit my profile you can find out everything about me. All the things I like.

The teenagers therefore thought carefully about how they appeared on Facebook. They were concerned about what impression they made among different groups of friends and family, not only today, but also in the future. They were, in other words, conscious about the importance of managing their front stages. Quite a few tried to segregate their audiences and had divided their Facebook friends into separate lists that allowed their teenage friends to see photos from parties, whereas parents and other adults could only see some selected photos. They were also aware that they could be faced pictures or statements again in the future that could affect their possibility to get a job. In one focus group, a discussion developed about what would have happened if Obama had had Facebook in college, at the time when he has admitted he smoked marijuana. "Then we would have pictures of him smoking!" one boy said. And then they discussed whether or not that would have cost him his presidency.

The concern about self-presentation also affected which groups the teenagers would join. These were selected, not only because of interest and opinions, but also because of the impression it would make. One girl explained that:

> There are some groups you want to be in because you want to be associated with them. Like, if I am a member of a Fair Trade group on Facebook, this is no coincidence. I can ignore buying Fair Trade products, but people will consider me a very smart Fair Trade person.

In general, the teenagers were greatly aware that self-presentation influences how they use Facebook for political purposes. They joined political groups, but as this example shows, they were careful in selecting which groups to join. They supported causes, but only a chosen few. They joined events and publish pictures, but they made sure that the total presentation was balanced the way they wanted it to be. And, as we shall see, the teenagers were somewhat reluctant to engage in political debates.

Leaders Deliberate – Members 'Like'

In contrast to expectations of how the Internet and social media may enable *more* political deliberation, the teenagers expressed that they were hesitant about engaging in political debate on Facebook. One girl expressed what was a widespread position among the teenagers: "On Facebook I say less than I usually do."

Democratic deliberation in its strict sense is about resolving political conflict. Peter Dahlgren argued that this view excludes discussions that may have democratic relevance, discussions in other social settings and contexts (Dahlgren 2009: 89). In order to include as much of the relevant activities as possible, in the following deliberation has been understood widely and any engagement in political debate has been seen as an indication of democratic deliberation.

Still, in all the focus groups, the teenagers explained how concern about self-presentation limited their use of Facebook for political debate. The teenagers found it much easier to post apolitical statements than to engage in political debate. They observed that leaders in their organization were active and discussed and debated political issues, but they rarely engaged in discussions themselves. The teenagers could announce that they 'like' statements from their leaders by using the "like" function, but they were hesitant about posting political status updates or comments.

There are several reasons for this hesitance, all related to how they want to present themselves. Their Facebook profile is open to all their friends, it is their entry point into the social arena, and the teenagers explained that it was therefore important not to be too provocative. As one girl commented:

> The profile is more shallow. You talk to friends. But for political and school things and such, you use groups.

One of the reasons for keeping the profile uncontroversial was the fear of being ridiculed. Posting political statements on their profile may generate long discussions and annoying comments from political opponents who just wanted to mock the person posting the statement. "If you go on Facebook there is so much drama," one of the teenagers explained. The integration of personal and mass media forms made it difficult to know what the audience was and who could engage in interaction. The solution often mentioned was to limit discussion and political comments to friendly groups:

> You must stay within the groups you have on Facebook. There you can engage in debate because there you only meet likeminded people.

The teenagers were very aware that their social contexts collapse on Facebook. They therefore managed their front stage by keeping their profile uncontroversial, and they used groups with a more segregated audience for political discussions.

But for a few, making provocative statements was half the fun. In one group, where most were concerned that they wanted to avoid endless discussions with people they disagreed with, one boy argued that this could actually be an effective way of attracting attention to an issue:

> If you want attention from a lot of people about something, then you write something a bit provoking on these people's walls and then you generate long debates involving lots of people who then get to know about it.

Another aspect that made young people hesitant about engaging in political debate on Facebook was irony. Irony makes Facebook discussions difficult in two ways. First, the teenagers explained, if they post comments and argue seriously for or against a statement made by someone else, it is embarrassing to find out that the original statement

was meant ironically. Second, they were concerned that they could be misunderstood and generate bad feelings if they used irony themselves:

> I use sarcasm and irony quite a lot, especially on Facebook. There you can write something a bit badly and expect that it is received as humour. But if they don't get it, then you have to delete comments, and everything is misunderstood.

In general, expressing political views with words may be both risky and difficult:

> It is difficult, I think, to comment because then you use more words. It is a lot easier to just 'like'.

The difficulty of using your own words to express political views increases with the social risks of getting negative feedback and ridicule, of misunderstanding and of being misunderstood.

Consequently, it seems that the social risk of engaging in political debate in a social arena is at least as great on Facebook as it is on other arenas (Dahlgren 2009: 95). Being political is not generally considered cool. And as these teenagers report, Facebook may actually be a bit more unpredictable than offline arenas, as they never know who is listening, and they cannot see people's faces and interpret what is irony and what is serious. This is reinforced by the context collapse as Facebook networks integrate people from very different settings. Marwick and boyd argued that this "may create a lowest-common denominator effect, as individuals only post things they believe their broadest group of acquaintances will find non-offensive" (Marwick and boyd 2010). This corresponds well with the Norwegian teenagers who explained that they hold back and say less on Facebook than they normally do.

What these teenagers reported stands in contrast to the optimistic scenarios predicting that social media would increase democratic deliberation. Social media are important tools for organizing and coordinating activities, but the social characteristics of the arenas delimit political debate. This does not mean that there is no political debate on Facebook, but that even politically engaged teenagers hold back and often refrain from making political comments because of their awareness of how they present themselves in the social arena.

Conclusions

The present study of how politically engaged young people in Norway use social media for political purposes shows that social media have become important instruments for political participation. Whether the purpose was internal meetings or external mobilization, social media provided platforms for planning, reporting and communicating political activities. In only a very few years, Facebook had replaced other means of mediated communication, such as e-mail and paper mail, for participatory purposes of organization and coordination. In this regard, social media were important tools for the politically engaged young people under study.

At the same time, these young people were hesitant about using social media for political deliberation. They were concerned about how they presented themselves and they were reluctant to stand out as highly political. One important explanation for this is that social media integrate different media forms and the teenagers' political

and social contexts collapse. As Marwick and boyd (2010) observed, this generates a tendency for individuals to only post things they believe most people in their network will find non-offensive. This tendency is confirmed in the present study. The young people interviewed were generally very careful about how they wanted to appear in social media, experiencing engagement in political debate as particularly risky. They managed their front stage by limiting political arguments and keeping discussions to groups with more segregated audiences. This has, as I have argued, clear parallels to the role self-presentation plays in everyday life (Goffman 1959). Awareness of the front stage, or the social context, is just as important online as offline. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985: 44) argued that when situations merge, we do not simply get a combination of situations, but a new situation with a new set of rules and roles. This is a good description of what takes place in social media: When contexts collapse and media forms integrate, a new situation develops with new conventions – including reluctance about being too political and controversial.

This does not mean, however, that social media are unimportant for political deliberation. The young people interviewed here have only been interviewed. Consequently, we can only draw conclusions based on what they say about their actions and their own reflections on being reluctant about engaging in political discussions on Facebook. Their actual online activities have not been studied. It is possible that the level of political deliberation is quite high. The interesting observation noted here is that the teenagers experience that they limit themselves, and that they do so more in social media than in physical settings.

The present study is based on a few focus group interviews with politically engaged Norwegian teenagers. The findings therefore cannot be generalized statistically to any larger group. The study may nevertheless improve our conceptual understanding of the possibilities and limitations of social media for political participation and deliberations. The study suggests that the potential for using social media as a useful tool for participating, coordinating and organizing political activities is obvious. At the same time, it argues that the characteristics of social media, the inclusiveness and the integration of media forms, also represent a challenge, as they may imply hesitance towards political deliberation. In the present study, the complexities of self-presentation in collapsed contexts caused the teenagers to restrain themselves. Further research is needed to discuss to what degree this may be a general limitation of social media, across social and political contexts and age groups.

Notes

1. TNS Gallup 2012.
2. The 2008 interviews were moderated by Cecilie Kløvstad at AC Nielsen and the 2010 interviews were moderated by research assistant Ane Lindholt. Interview guides were developed in close cooperation between interviewers and the author of the present article. All analyses have been done by the author. Procedures for handling privacy were approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).
3. In 2010, 93% of Norwegian 16- to 24-year-olds used the Internet daily (SSB 2011).
4. In 2010, 90% of Norwegian 15- to 29-year-olds used Facebook at least weekly, whereas 80% in this age group used Facebook daily (TNS Gallup 2010).

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