

How do social media change the conditions for civic and political mobilization?

Bernard Enjolras, Kari Steen-Johnsen and Dag Wollebæk

This paper examines how the expansion of online social media affects offline civic and political mobilization. Based on individual web survey data on participation in demonstrations and on social media use in Norway, we ask whether social media transform individual level and structural level conditions for mobilization. Our results show that social media impacts on individual agency in relation to demonstrations, in particular on the access to information and the interest in participating. Further, being connected to information structures through social media has a strong and independent effect on mobilization, and must be conceived as a supplement both to established organizational society and to mainstream media. Finally, our analysis shows that there are significant differences between those who are mobilized to demonstrations through social media and those who are mobilized through established civil society and political organizations, since participants mobilized through social media are characterized by lower socio-economic status and younger age. A similar pattern occurs when social media mobilization is compared to mobilization through mainstream and other media. Based on our findings we therefore argue that a transformation of civic and political mobilization may be underway. Social media seem to represent an alternative structure alongside mainstream media and established political and civil society that recruits in different ways and that reaches different types of people. If so, this is a different finding from what has been concluded in relation to the impact of the Internet (web 1.0.) on political engagement, where the re-enforcement thesis has so far received quite substantial support.

Introduction

In this paper we examine how the expansion of online social media affects offline civic and political mobilization. In a very short time, social networking sites such as Facebook have emerged as new structures in civil society, interconnecting practically speaking entire populations in networks with new and distinctive properties. The affordances and built-in network logic of these social media represent powerful tools of collective action which present institutionalized actors with new opportunities and challenges. In the vein of Quan-Haase and Wellman (2004), we ask whether this recent and rapid development has supplemented, weakened or transformed civic and political mobilization.

We examine civic and political mobilization as an outcome of individual agency and mobilizing agency (Norris, 2002). In such a view the potential for mobilization depends on individual characteristics, such as economic resources, motivation and skills (individual agency), as well as on the structures for spreading information and for motivating individuals to participate (mobilizing agency). Social media may transform both these individual level and structural level conditions. Social media allow individuals to construct, within a digital pre-designed system, a public profile which is visible and more or less accessible by other users; to display the list of other users with whom they share a connection; and to view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social media therefore introduce new informational capabilities for producing, recording and spreading information through networks.

Based on individual web survey data we first examine the importance of social media in mobilizing individuals to public demonstrations. We analyze the informational and motivational roles of social media related to demonstrations in general, but also conduct a more in-depth analysis of mobilization related to the “Rose marches” which took place after the recent terror attacks of 7/22, 2011 in Norway. Second, we investigate the relative roles played by social media and by offline political civil society organizations as structures for mobilizing agency. Third, we analyze the impact of social media in terms of which groups are being mobilized. Do social media transform civic and political mobilization in terms of leveling out socio-economic participatory differences? In the final section we summarize our findings and discuss their implications for established and institutionalized actors in civil society.

Characterizing social media: affordances and networks

The rise of a “networked information economy” (Benkler, 2006) has revolutionized the media political economy. Whereas mass-media communication required centralized means of information production and large investments in physical capital, networked media are based on relatively cheap personal computers interconnected through the Internet. This entails a decentralization and democratization of the means of production and distribution of information, knowledge and culture. The networked information economy improves the capacities of individuals to produce information themselves, to cooperate with others in loose non-hierarchical networked communities or within formal organizations outside the market sphere. Decentralization and network connection have also facilitated nonmarket production and consumption of information, as well as large-scale cooperative efforts exemplified by initiatives such as Wikipedia. Social media sites have emerged against this backdrop, instigating the new era of digital communication popularly known as Web 2.0. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube are characterized by a pre-defined and easy-to-use digital architecture.

In this paper, we argue that social media sites have distinct, inherent properties, conceptualized as affordances and network functionalities. These properties sharply reduce the costs associated with civic and political participation. Consequently, they transform patterns of mobilization, affecting both who participates and how they participate. By *affordance* we refer to the type of action or a characteristic of actions that a technology enables through its design. The digital architecture of social media can usually be described along three types of integrated affordances (boyd, 2011): profiles, friends’ lists, and tools of communication. Profiles constitute the space where gathering and conversation take place. Social media users control, to some extent, their profile by regulating who can access their profile. Profiles may be public (as it is the case with Twitter) or semi-public (Facebook). Friends’ lists materialize and display publicly the social graph and the audience of the social media user. Friends’ lists are the “imagined audience” or “public” of the social media user. Tools of communication allow public, semi-public and private forms of communication. Public and semi-public tools of communication (such as comment on a person’s wall on Facebook, or addressing a tweet to a given user) enable mediated public encounters. In addition, these communication tools enable combinations of communicative patterns ranging from one-to-one and many-to-many.

Another fundamental characteristic of social media is their capacity to link people within a digital network. Social networks are important because individuals and groups derive benefits from their underlying social structure. One of the powerful functions fulfilled by networks is to bridge the local and the global, allowing local phenomena to be spread across the entire network and to produce global effects. However, this bridging ability is dependent upon the structural characteristics of the network. One structural characteristic is the degree to which the social network mixes strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). While requirements of continuous effort and personal investment limit the number of strong ties, weak ties are less demanding to maintain and can be more numerous. Weak

ties are therefore particularly useful in order to broaden the individual's network facilitating access to valuable information. Typically, social media are tools for maintaining weak ties.

Digital social networks combine two types of structural network effects which at the same time are constraining and enabling social processes: small-world effects and rich-gets-richer effects. *Small-world effects* are the result of the small-world structure of social media where individuals are linked to clusters of friends and the clusters are linked to each other through few individuals or links (Watts, 1999). *Rich-get-richer effects* result from the combination of the specific network structure of the Internet due to the hierarchy of pages' popularity associated to the way search engines' algorithms work.¹ Social media, as a result of the small-world effect and the rich-get-richer effect, are networks which are at the same time highly connected and highly hierarchized; everybody is connected through weak ties and people bridging structural holes, but few are very popular and visible (in terms of friends and links), whereas most of the users are not very popular and consequently not very visible.

When people are connected by a network, they may influence each other's behavior and decisions. This creates social processes where individual behaviors are aggregated through the network to produce collective outcomes. *Information cascades* are one of those social processes occurring when people make decisions sequentially, are able to observe others' decisions in order to draw rational inferences from those decisions, and imitate those decisions on the basis of their inferences. Many social phenomena, such as fashions, the popularity of celebrities and best-sellers, the spread of technological choices and news, are characterized by information cascades. The small-world network structure of social media is conducive of information cascades because users can easily observe what their connections do, make inferences and decisions on the basis of these observations which in turn are propagated further along the network.

In summary, the affordances and network functionalities of social media alter conditions of civic and political participation. Network effects contribute to transforming individual action into collective action through aggregating mechanisms, and to facilitate information propagation across individual graphs. The networks functionalities and affordances characterizing social media make them potentially very efficient in spreading information about upcoming events and demonstrations within a population. The small world effect makes it likely that the same information will reach all parts of a network, and therefore reach differentiated sets of groups and individuals. One may also argue that information cascades may have a not only an informational, but also a motivational effect, since social media allow making visible the choice of that others make to join a group or to sign up for an event. Taken together, these aspects of social media might lead to the hypothesis that mobilization processes through social media would both be broader and more efficient than earlier forms of mobilization.

How social media change the conditions of social mobilization

What are the implications of social media for political and civic mobilization? In this paper we analyze civic and political participation in line with Norris (2002) as the result of individual agency and mobilizing agency. Both individual and mobilizing agency have been discussed in the mobilization literature. The most cited model of individual agency as basis for mobilization is found in the civic voluntarism model of Verba et al. (1995). This model explains individual differences in civic and

¹ The World Wide Web's structure is characterized by a scale-free network (Barabási, 2003; Lewis, 2009; Newman et al., 2006) which is typically associated to a "power law" distribution of the nodes of a network according to their degree (the number of links attached to a node). The Rich-get-richer phenomenon expressed by the "power law" distribution of popularity (of web sites) in digital networks, is due to the extreme imbalances characterizing the phenomenon of popularity: whereas few achieve fame, most of us remain anonymous.

political participation by emphasizing the individual inequalities in resources (income, education, skills) and motivation (political interest, information, self-efficacy) that characterize citizens' social and political background. Theories of mobilizing agency (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003), on the other hand focus on the role of organizations and social networks, such as political parties, trade unions and voluntary associations and informal networks, in mobilizing, engaging and organizing citizens. Mobilization is defined as "the process by which candidates, parties, activists and groups induce other people to participate" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003:25). Indirect mobilization occurs from this viewpoint when political leaders contact citizens through social networks of friends, neighbors and colleagues. Social networks in this account are a facilitator of political mobilization. Through the ties of camaraderie, neighborliness, and family, social leaders are able to communicate their messages and to engage people in civic and political action.

With the emergence of social media, both the conception of individual agency and of mobilizing agency as basis for mobilization needs to be modified. We expect social media to impact on both counts. On the *individual side* two dimensions- motivation and resources – have to be considered. If the emergence of social media entails a change in mobilizing agency, by offering new structures of information, it is reasonable to argue that such a development is closely linked to changes in individual agency. In particular, one may hypothesize that social media may serve to level out the impact on resource inequalities in relation to civic and political engagement, since social media offer new and open types of networks alongside the networks embedded in organized civil society. Social media, by offering low-cost and socially open avenues for participation, may reduce the importance of socio-economic resources as a factor determining political and civic participation, reinforcing in this way an existing trend.

Research on political participation has indeed indicated a link between high socio-economic status and protest participation (Barnes & Kaase 1979). Recent multilevel analyses of ESS data confirm that unconventional participation is to a greater extent contingent on high education and income than voting (Schäfer 2010, Berglund, Kleven & Ringdal 2008). In the specific case of demonstrations, however, more recent studies point in the direction of declining social differences. Gallego (2007) and Norris et al. (2005) argue that as protest has become a legitimized tool of political action the demonstrators' socioeconomic characteristics are less distinct than before. While Gallego's (2007) analysis of ESS data shows significant effects of education in most countries, income and class yields contradictory and mostly insignificant results. Empirical research into the case under study here, Norway, seems to conform to this pattern. The higher educated have been found to participate more frequently in public demonstrations in a range of studies over time (Olsen & Sætren 1980, Pettersen & Rose, 1996, Aardal, 2007, Gallego, 2007). With regard to income, Olsen & Sætren's study with data from the early 1970s found an overrepresentation of high income groups, Pettersen & Rose's surveys from the early 1990s yielded insignificant coefficients while Gallego's (2007) analysis of 2004 Norwegian ESS data resulted in insignificant negative coefficients.

With regard to *mobilizing agency*, we expect digital networks to play an increasingly important role as a channel of mobilization, alongside traditional mobilizing agencies. Digital networks powered by social media affordances have sharply reduced the costs for organizing and participating in civic and political action. Additionally, they allow people to aggregate their individual actions into broader collective actions without requiring co-presence in time and space (Ear & Kimport, 2011). Finally, the graph management affordance and the networks effect which are associated to it, allow quick, decentralized, unlimited, and costless propagation of information and engagement requests, through networks of "friends". Social media allow communication, coordination, and information sharing at very low costs. They allow coordinated action toward a common goal without co-presence in physical time and space and open up the possibility for initiative-taking and organizing by solo individuals.

It has been argued that social media will make organizations less necessary, by reducing the costs of organizing collective action dramatically (Shirky, 2008). In Norwegian society, civil society organizations have so far played an important role as structures for information spreading and mobilization. It is therefore interesting to ask whether and how the emergence of social media as a mobilizing structure interacts with previously institutionalized structures. Social media affordances and the network logic may be leveraged both by the political and civic establishment: political leaders, political parties and voluntary organizations. On the other hand, social media affordances and network logic may also be leveraged by individual citizens in order to mobilize their co-citizens on an issue they deem important. This possibility creates a new power factor in politics, where individual citizens' grass-root initiative may, by reaching a critical mass, gain influence upon the public and political sphere. Social media therefore open a potential new era of *collaborative democracy* which is not limited to the confrontation of different viewpoints, but seeks to impact on decision-making (Noveck, 2009: 37). Collaborative democracy may have a democratizing effect by giving ordinary citizens, collaborating online, and influence on political decision-making- an influence which traditionally has been reserved to organized lobbies, interest groups, and civil society organizations.

In this paper we use new Norwegian data to estimate whether changes are occurring in how the population is mobilized to participation in demonstrations due to the emergence of social media. We focus on the two levels of agency that have been outlined above: individual agency (motivation and resources) and mobilizing agency (structures for channeling information). The paper thus targets the three following questions:

1. The motivation dimension of mobilization: do social media change the way individuals receive information about and become motivated for participation?
2. The structural dimension of mobilization: Do social media constitute a new structure of information, beside traditional mobilizing agencies?
3. The resources dimension of mobilization: Do social media alter the significance of socio-economic resources for civic and political participation?

Context, methods and data

By means of survey data, we analyze participation in demonstrations in general, using a question concerning participation in demonstrations over the past year. In addition, we examine in more depth data pertaining to the rose processions taking place in the aftermath of the terror attacks in Norway in 2011. Thus, the data allows both an in-depth examination of a specific event as well as a possibility to determine the extent to which this was an exceptional case or rather typical for how such events currently unfold.

The terror attacks preceding the rose processions took place on July 22, when a car bomb was detonated outside the offices housing the central government killing 8, with another 69, mostly teens, brutally massacred at a Labor Party youth camp at Utøya outside Oslo. Social media played an important role, both as the atrocities unfolded and in the following days. The Norwegian national broadcasting network (NRK) collected more than 250,000 tweets which were posted on July 22 in relation to the events.² At the initiative of a private person who set up a Facebook event, a massive manifestation was planned on July 25 in Oslo as well as parallel events all over the country. Voluntary organizations, among which Amnesty International featured most prominently, picked up the idea and helped organize the event. The event was originally planned as a torchlight procession, but due to the massive expected turnout, the police decided that the use of torches was unsafe and participants were

² <http://nrk.no/terrortwitter/>. Accessed November 23, 2011.

encouraged to carry roses, the symbol of the Labor party (hence the term *rosetog* – literally “rose processions”). The Rose marches soon spread to cities, towns and communities throughout the country. As many as 34 per cent of the respondents in our material participated in such demonstrations in the following days.

The data on which the analyses below are based consist of a two-wave web-survey carried out in April and August 2011. The second wave was undertaken between August 12 and August 17, 2011 and designed to capture the role of social and other media in the weeks after the terror as well as possible attitudinal and value changes in the population as a result of the atrocities. The data consisted of two sections: 1) a separate population sample (N=931) and 2) re-interviews of 2,252 of active social media users (Facebook >once a week or Twitter >=once a week) who were interviewed during the first wave in April. 66 per cent of the respondents from the first wave who were re-contacted responded to the second questionnaire. The first data collection was undertaken in March/April 2011 and consisted of three parts: a sample representative of the Internet population aged 16 and over (N=1,127), a sample representative of the population using social media actively (N=4,183) and an extra sample of individuals aged between 16 and 24 (N=427). The response rates of the population samples were 48% at both times.

In addition to detailed questions about social media use, the questionnaires contained questions about participation in demonstrations, about how respondents first received information about such events and about how they were recruited. In the August survey, we asked these questions specifically in relation to the Rose marches and different types of social media usage during and after the attacks. Respondents more than 60 years old were somewhat overrepresented in the two population samples, while respondents less than 30 years old were underrepresented. The average age was 49 years in the first population sample and 48 years in the second sample, compared to 46 years in the target population. The results for the population samples have been weighted to correct for this slightly skewed distribution, in addition to weighting in the oversampled groups to give a representative picture of the 93% of the population using the Internet (SSB, 2011) where appropriate.

In our analysis the following variables were used in order to capture the different dimensions of mobilization processes:

The core dependent variable was *participation in demonstrations*. In the April/May survey respondents were presented with a list of different political and civic activities and were asked to indicate whether or not they had participated in any of these activities during the past six months. Having participated in an offline demonstration was one of these list items. In the August survey respondents were asked specifically whether they had participated in Rose manifestations of any kind or not.

In order to capture how social media contributes to peoples’ participation in demonstrations through the *motivation* dimension, we needed to assess how social media was used to receive and access information about demonstrations. A question about how demonstration participants *first* received information about a demonstration was used to compare the informational value of different types of media and personal contact. In relation to the Rose marches we also developed a set of more detailed questions about the use of Facebook, Twitter, SMS, e-mail, mainstream media and personal contact for accessing information about events and for more interpersonal purposes such as expressing sympathy or discussing. The analysis of these variables was used as a basis for discussing other aspects of motivation related to interest and self-efficacy.

When analyzing the *social network* dimension of mobilization the point of departure was the assumption that organized civil society constitutes an established network for conferring information to members, and that social media may constitute an alternative structure. In order to assess the impact of these structures, we assessed the embeddedness of participating individuals in these two structures,

by measuring their number of memberships in voluntary organizations and in Facebook groups respectively.

The *resource dimension* was measured through the following individual background variables: age, education level, gender, household (and, in separate analyses, personal) income and urbanity.

Social media and the motivation dimension of mobilization

In the first step of our analysis we seek to examine how social media impact on the individual motivation dimension of mobilization. In order to assess this impact we look at the role of Facebook in conveying information about demonstrations in general and about the rose manifestations in particular, as compared to other channels of information. We then use data on the Rose marches to look at a wider spectrum of functions of different media, both informational and expressive.

From the outset it must be pointed out that internet and social media use is widespread in Norway. As many as 70 per cent among Internet users in our sample had a Facebook account.³ The use of Twitter is less widespread and less important in Norway than in comparable countries. Within our sample, 12 per cent of the population used Twitter. The application is often characterized as an elite medium, confined to the cultural and political elite, but this assertion is only moderately supported by the data.⁴

With our data from March/April 2011 we can assess the relative importance of different media in spreading information about public demonstrations in general, while the August survey includes questions about one specific demonstration, namely the Rose marches of July 25th. The results in Figure 1 make clear that Facebook is an important source of such information in the population as a whole when we look at public demonstrations in general. In relation to the Rose marches Facebook was the dominant channel for information about events.

Table 1 How did you first receive information about the demonstration? Respondents who have taken part in public demonstrations.

	Public demonstrations Per cent (April 2011 survey)	Rose marches Per cent (August 2011 survey)
Facebook	26,0	43,8
Advertising/news coverage in mainstream media	25,4	31,0
Personal contact telephone or face-to-face	27,1	16,1
E-mail	9,6	2,0
SMS	3,4	3,6
Other social media	2,8	,7
Others	5,7	2,8
Total	100,0	100,0
N	434	1021

In the case of the Rose marches, almost 44 per cent of participants first heard about the demonstration through Facebook. Among those aged 40 and younger (age breakdown not shown in table), this applied to 59 per cent of participants, while mainstream media held a similarly dominant position

³ Based on population sample (N=1127).

⁴ There is only weak correlation between education and Twitter usage (.06, $p \leq .001$, N=5727), which increases when controlled for age (partial correlation .09, $p \leq .001$). However, the partial correlation coefficient between Facebook usage and education controlling for age is almost identical (.08).

among those aged 55 and above. While the Rose marches were extraordinary events, this recruitment pattern does not appear completely anomalous in comparison with other recent demonstrations and manifestations. In the April survey 26 per cent state that they first received information about the demonstration they last participated in through Facebook, 25 per cent state that this first information was received through mass media (newspapers, online newspapers, TV, radio). Other digital media were less important – e-mail accounted for 10 per cent, while other social media accounted for 2 per cent. In these more regular demonstrations personal contact also played a major role.

The particularly strong importance of Facebook in relation to the Rose marches is not surprising in light of the Facebook origin of the initiative, and the very rapid and spontaneous mobilization process that unfolded. In more general terms, we would like to argue that these findings show that whether we look at demonstrations and public manifestations in general or at the rose manifestations in particular, Facebook emerges as a highly important structure for mobilization in Norwegian society. This is a remarkable development considering that the short history of this social media site – at the time of the survey less than five years had passed since Facebook was made generally available to Norwegian users.

The surveys conducted after the 22/7 terrorist attacks allows us to examine the role of different media within different groups in the population in greater depth. Even though the Rose marches on July 25th mobilized a much larger proportion of the population than demonstrations normally do, the patterns for media use in this case may still reveal important aspects of the roles of social media in mobilization processes. First, we take a look at the general picture, i.e. how different media, both mass media and social media were used in relation to the terror attacks on July 22.

Table 2 Which media were the most important to you during the events for these listed functions? Maximum of two alternatives possible, per cent.

	Access updated news	Disseminate updated news	Discuss causes and consequences
TV and radio	80	17	7
Internet news media	58	14	6
Newspapers	35	7	3
Facebook	10	11	9
Twitter	4	1	0,7
Blogs	0,8	0,6	1
Irrelevant	2	64	78
N			3,048

Our post-22/7 survey showed that traditional mass media were far more important than any social media as sources of updated news during the events (Table 2). 80 per cent ranked TV and radio as one of their two main news sources after the attacks, while 58 per cent identified news media on the Internet. Only 10 per cent mentioned Facebook. Based on this we conclude that neither Facebook, nor other social media did replace the news function of the traditional media if we look at the population as a whole. A more likely hypothesis is that traditional and new media complemented each other, and that people used them interchangeably. One increasingly important function of social media is that they channel news search online. According to Hitwise (<http://weblogs.hitwise.com/>) Facebook has surpassed Google search internationally when it comes to finding online news.

Leaving the comparison with other media aside, a closer look at how different social media users used specific social media in the aftermath of the events reveals that both Facebook and Twitter

did play significant roles for their specific sets of users. Table 3 shows the uses of Facebook and Twitter during the events among the part of the population who uses these applications.

Table 3: Use of Facebook and Twitter for different purposes by age. Percentage of Facebook and Twitter users responding “to a large degree” or “to a very large degree”. Panel and population survey combined.

	Facebook						Twitter				
	18-24	25-39	40-54	55-69	70+	Total	18-24	25-39	40-54	55-69	Total
Access/disseminate news about the events	32	23	17	10	12	19	48	30	25	11	30
Express support to victims and relatives	33	24	26	22	17	25	13	7	6	2	7
Talk about events, work through grief	15	9	11	11	10	11	4	3	2	2	3
Information on events and manifestations	45	32	21	15	13	26	13	6	8	5	7
Discuss causes and consequences	12	8	9	9	16	9	8	5	6	2	5
N (min.)	331	924	721	628	125	2727	91	265	122	65	551

NOTE: 8 Twitter users above 70 not shown in table.

Table 3 reconfirms that Facebook played a pivotal role as an infrastructure for mobilizing to the rose processions, and that this was much more pronounced among the younger age groups. However, the table also shows that Facebook also fulfilled a more expressive function for many people of all ages; through Facebook users could convey support to those bereaved and work through own experiences of grief and loss.

In general, however, younger social media users rated Facebook and Twitter as more important on all counts. Aside from the mobilization function, the most pronounced differences are found with regard to accessing and disseminating news and information, where Facebook, and even more so, Twitter, was generally more important to younger users. Compared to Facebook, Twitter played a limited role in spreading information about the Rose marches, but was a highly significant source of news about the terrorist attacks. These results indicate that even though Twitter is a less widespread social medium than Facebook, it may play a significant role in relation to public events, in particular in spreading news. A particular feature of news spreading through Twitter is the use of re-tweets, which allows for users to make clear that they attach importance to a piece of news. Popular tweets thus spread very quickly through cascades.

Verba et al. (1995) emphasize motivation as an important element of individual agency in relation to civic mobilization. Since social media fulfilled a number of functions during and after the attacks, including allowing users to express emotions and sympathy publicly, it is reasonable to assume that social media usage raised individual motivation for participating in public manifestations. In this context, is interesting to note that heavy social media expressed the strongest sentiments about post-22/7 Norwegian society; they felt society was much more characterized by “community and togetherness” than did less active users, at the same time as they expressed more fear and concern about future attacks.⁵ Social media may have amplified sentiments in the aftermath of 22/7, thus increasing individual motivation for participation in organized events.

⁵ 29 per cent of those using social media more than 2.5 hours on a normal day (N=248) are “very” or “quite” concerned that future terror acts may harm «you, your family or your friends». By comparison, 17 per cent of those using social media less than 30 minutes per day (N=1814) agree and 16 per cent of non-users (N=387). 34 per cent of heavy social media users thought Norway was “much more” characterized by community and

Our analysis of the importance of different media in the period around the Rose marches shows that Facebook played a key role in providing the first information about the events and in providing a space for the expression of support. The data collected in March/April on the general pattern of demonstrations confirm that Facebook has become a highly important channel for informing about offline demonstrations in Norwegian society. From the comparison among different media in relation to the Rose marches it is clear that social media did not replace the news function of mainstream media. Rather, we conclude that social media supplemented mainstream media. Twitter, in particular, seems to have an important news function for those who use this medium.

Our analysis so far indicates that social media have an important impact at the level of individual agency in civic and political mobilization. In the first instance, this impact is visible in relation to the motivational aspects of individual agency, i.e. information, interest and self-efficacy (Verba et al. 1995). According to our analysis social media stand out as efficient channels for information about events for large groups of the population. To this information are attached possibilities for interactivity and for observing the actions of others, which may be thought to have an impact on the interest to participate. A major question is whether these effects serve to level out inequalities in resources and motivation among individuals. If so, social media may transform civic and political mobilization more fundamentally. One important precondition for such a change may according to our model be in changes in mobilizing agencies, that is, in the structures for conferring information about events. In the next section we explore the relationship between political and civic organizations and social media as channels for spreading information about demonstrations.

Do social media replace or complement established mobilizing agencies?

Theories of mobilizing agencies emphasize the use of networks as important preconditions for reaching citizens with information and for inducing them to participate in civic events (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003). Traditionally civil society organizations and political parties have been important structures in this context, because of the networks that they create through membership and affiliation. Civil society organizations and political parties establish information and communication structures to their constituency, which enables them to reach them quickly. In the relationship between organizations and members one might also assume an amount of trust, which makes calls for mobilization on behalf of the organization legitimate in the eyes of their constituency. Civil society organizations and political parties may therefore have particular resources for mobilizing the population, because they combine networks, legitimacy and a set of mutual normative expectations.

An important question when analyzing the impact of social media in processes of mobilization is whether they challenge, replace or supplement such established structures. As described above, social media contains affordances that allow for managing networks through friends lists. Such networks are both structures of information and structures for giving support and legitimacy to different causes. In addition to person-to-person relations, some social media, such as Facebook allow for the creation of “groups” or “pages”, which we in the following refer to with “groups” as convenient shorthand.⁶ Facebook groups may either be affiliated to an existing, offline organization or they may exist online only. We assume that these Facebook groups may function as online

togetherness after the attacks, compared to 14 per cent among non-users and 20 per cent of moderate users (<30 minutes).

⁶ Facebook has changed the technical functionality of groups and pages several times. At the time of conducting this research, organizations and groups used both formats in order to communicate with members and rally support. We therefore made no distinction between groups and pages in the questionnaire and will treat them as a singular concept in the analyses and text to follow.

organizations, that propagate certain standpoints and that are linked to a network of followers. Given the network functionalities of Facebook all those within a person's individual network can observe the support that that person gives to a given Facebook group, and this information may subsequently be spread through these individual networks.

In what follows we will examine the relative importance of different factors in relation to participation in demonstrations. In table 4 we present four different models that assess the impact of background variables, of memberships in offline voluntary organizations and in political and civic Facebook groups. We focus specifically on offline organizations and Facebook groups that have a political purpose, in abroad interpretation of the word that includes social and humanitarian organizations and unions. The composite indices measuring number of different Facebook group memberships and organizational memberships have been standardized in order to better compare effects. It should be noted that we here focus on voluntary organization memberships, Facebook group memberships and demonstration participation in general using the April 2011 survey, as the second wave of the survey did not include questions about Facebook group memberships. The following analyses do not pertain to the specific events in the days after July 22nd.

In model 1 we assess the effect of different background variables on the likelihood to participate in at least one demonstration during the past six months. Having participated in a demonstration is negatively associated with age and positively associated with education. The model hence shows that younger and more highly educated people are more likely to participate in demonstrations than the rest of the population. Women are also slightly more likely to have participated in demonstrations than men. The positive effect of education is in line with other analyses of participation in demonstrations in Norway and in other European countries.

Table 4: Participation in most recent demonstration (logistic regression).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Political, humanitarian vol. organization memberships (max 4, standardized)		.652***	.515***	
- Other political organization				1.305***
- Union				.573***
- Social and humanitarian				.310*
- Political party				.009
-				
Religious organization				.039
Other organization memberships (0-4)				-.037
FB groups, politics, protest & organizations (max 7, standardized)			.413***	
- Local protest group				.487**
- Political party				.548**
- International protest group				.515**
- Local politician				.445*
- National protest group				.262
- Top politician				.202
- Voluntary organization				.028
Other Facebook groups (0-7)				-.111**
City dweller (0-1)	.069	.080	.077	.054
Age (years)	-.019***	-.029***	-.020***	-.020***
Household income (1-8)	-.018	-.019	-.016	-.009

Women (0-1)	.246*	.166	.171	.165
Education (1-4)	.254***	.122	.173*	.161*
Constant	-2.765***	-2.067***	-2.652***	-3.186***
Nagelkerke r ²	.023	.096	.128	.151
N				5,053

In model 2, we examine the relative impact of memberships in offline voluntary organizations on participation in demonstration activities, when controlled for background variables. The analysis shows that membership in political and humanitarian voluntary organizations has a strong and positive predictive power on participation in demonstrations. In this analysis age remains significant, while education and gender loses significance.

In model 3 we include memberships in political and protest Facebook groups and evaluate the predictive power of this variable on demonstration participation. As is shown, memberships in offline political and humanitarian organizations and membership in Facebook groups have strong and almost equal predictive power in relation to participation in offline demonstrations, when controlled for background variables. The impact of voluntary organization memberships in model 2 is only slightly weakened when Facebook groups are introduced in model 3, and the explained variance increases substantially.

This analysis supports the argument that Facebook has an independent effect on mobilization, and thus supplements established civil society as a structure for mobilization. When we look at different types of political and civil society organizations and different types of Facebook groups more specifically, as is done in model 4, it is clear that the mobilizing effect of different types of memberships varies greatly. Among established organizations, membership in political organizations other than political parties stand out with the by far strongest predictive power, a category where most (new) social movements including environmental, peace, human rights and feminist organizations would be placed. Membership in unions and social and humanitarian organizations also increase the probability of demonstration participation. Among Facebook groups, memberships in local and international protest groups, in political parties and in local politician groups have effect. Even though the effects of membership in political parties and in local politicians Facebook groups are rather weak, it is still interesting to note that affiliation to such organization has an effect on Facebook, but not when linked to offline membership. Membership in other Facebook groups, i.e. groups without any political purpose at all is weakly, but significantly negatively related to demonstration participation.

Based on our analysis, we conclude that Facebook supplements traditional organizational society as a mobilizing structure related to demonstrations, and that the predictive powers of voluntary organization membership and Facebook group membership are of comparable sizes. A major question is if the emergence of this complementary structure contributes to changing the social composition of participants. It is to this question that we turn in the last empirical section of this paper.

Are new groups mobilized through social media?

At the core of resource mobilization theory is the idea of inequalities between citizens in *resources* (education, income, skills) and in *motivation* (political interest, information, self-efficacy). A central question is whether social media as a complementary mobilizing structure contributes to leveling out such inequalities by being accessible to new groups. We approach this question through two different angles. First, we take one step backwards examine relations between background variables, Facebook group memberships and organizational memberships. Second, we compare the social profiles of

demonstration participants that are recruited through different channels: social media, personal contact and mainstream media.⁷

Table 5 shows that politically relevant voluntary organization memberships and Facebook group memberships have different socio-demographic profiles. Column 1 demonstrates that voluntary organization members are generally older and higher educated; they have higher household income and are more often female. As shown in column 2 Facebook group members, by contrast, are younger and there is no tendency towards over-representation of persons with high socioeconomic status. On the contrary, political Facebook group members have significantly lower household income. It should be noted that using personal income instead of household income yields comparable effects (β -.041, $p \leq .01$) (analyses not shown in table). In the analysis presented in column 3 we take account of the fact that some Facebook group memberships reflect offline organizational engagement, as organization members will frequently join an online corollary of the offline organization.⁸ When entering politically relevant organization memberships into the equation, thus attempting to isolate the phenomenon of joining political Facebook groups as something other than a mere reflection of being a member in an offline organization, an even sharper social profile emerges. In addition to low household income, low education is now also significant and the coefficients of low age and income are higher.

Table 5 Politically relevant voluntary organization and Facebook group memberships. OLS regression.

	Dependent variable		
	Political, humanitarian vol. organization memberships	FB group memberships: politics, protest & organizations	FB group memberships: politics, protest & organizations
	1	2	3
Political, humanitarian vol. organization memberships (max 4, standardized)			.456***
City dweller (0-1)	-.041	-.009	.028
Age (years)	.011***	-.023***	-.028***
Household income (1-8)	.008	-.040**	-.044**
Women (0-1)	.093***	.123**	.079
Education (1-4)	.193***	.000	-.088**
Constant	-.152**	2.096***	2.165***
R2	.072	.050	.113
N=5089			

Thus, the analysis demonstrates two quite distinct circuits related to affiliation to offline organizations and to Facebook groups. As pointed out above, both organization memberships and Facebook memberships increase the probability of demonstration participation. However, these

⁷ We also conducted a formal path analysis using the unweighted data using the SPSS software AMOS, yielding similar results to those shown in the tables. As AMOS does not allow weighting, which is necessary due to the structure of the data, we chose not to include these results here.

⁸ A positive correlation between organizational and Facebook group membership could also be interpreted as a re-enforcement effect (Norris, 2001), i.e. a situation where the use of digital tools re-enforces the political engagement of those who are already engaged.

“institutions” affiliate groups with diametrically opposite characteristics. While members of traditional organizations tend to have a higher socio-economic status, higher education and higher age, members of political Facebook groups tend to have a lower socio-economic status, lower education and to be younger.

We have so far established politically relevant Facebook memberships and voluntary organizations have diametrically opposite social profiles, but that members are as likely to take part in demonstrations. However, the recruitment of demonstration participants may well occur through other channels, such as offline social networks or mainstream media, even among those who are very active on Facebook. In order to more accurately assess the potential for mobilization of different social groups through social media, as compared to traditional channels, it is therefore appropriate to compare the profiles of groups that received information about demonstrations through different channels. In table 6 we have analyzed the groups that received information through social media, personal contact, mainstream media and e-mail/sms respectively. We show both the most recent demonstration in which the respondent reported participation and the Rose marches.

Table 6 How did you first receive information about the demonstration?

	Recruitment mode							
	Recruitment to most recent demonstration (April)				Rose marches (August)			
	Social media	Personal contact	Mainstream media	E-mail/SMS	Social media	Personal contact	Mainstream media	E-mail/SMS
City dweller (=1)	.276	-.063	.219	-.509	.341***	-.143	.150	-.364
Age (years)	-.063***	-.009	.008	-.009	-.045***	-.010	.025***	.028**
Household income (1-8)	-.160*	.154*	.074	-.145	-.053	-.010	.049	-.042
Women (=1)	.039	.900***	.003	-.235	.365**	-.346	-.075	.615*
Education (1-4)	.002	.472**	.099	.612***	.095	.203	.151	.046
Constant	-1.195*	-6.958***	-4.868***	-4.867***	-.664*	-2.455***	-3.821***	-6.136***
Nagelkerke r2	.098	.048	.006	.025	.114	.011	.033	.037
N	5090				2749			

NOTE: City dweller: Living in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim or Stavanger.

The regression analysis above shows the probability of any individual to be recruited to participate in demonstrations through different channels. The results show that the group which is mobilized through social media channels is distinct from those recruited through personal contact and mainstream media. In addition to and controlled for young age, those with low household income are more likely to be recruited to demonstrations through social media networks. Similar results are obtained when substituting household income with alternative measures of socioeconomic status such as personal income (β -.192, $p \leq .01$) and fulltime employment (β -.881, $p \leq .001$). By contrast, the higher educated are more likely to be recruited through personal contact or through e-mails or SMS and older respondents are more likely to be recruited through mainstream media.

With regard to the Rose marches, the pattern is less pronounced. Age remains significant and negative, while the variables measuring socioeconomic status were insignificant. If substituting household income with full time employment, the coefficient indicates a weak, but significant negative relationship with social media recruitment (β -.271, $p \leq .05$). One interpretation of these results is linked to the particularly high turnout at these manifestations and to the fact that Facebook was such a dominant medium for channeling information. One may hypothesize that on this occasion the socio-economic profile of Facebook as an information channel was less pronounced because the channel was used by such a large proportion of the population.

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper we have analyzed a set of questions related to the role of social media in civic and political mobilization processes. Based on a view of mobilization that combines individual level characteristics (individual agency) with a structural view (mobilizing agency), we have asked what changes the emergence of social media entailed at these two levels. The results indicate quite profound individual and structural level changes; social media mobilize specific socio-demographic segments, they change how individuals are informed and motivated to participate and they constitute a new form of mobilizing agency that neither simply reflects nor crowds out existing formalized and established structures. Participation in Facebook groups has strong and independent effect on mobilization, and social media such as Facebook must therefore be conceived as supplements both to established organizational society and to mainstream media as information structures for mobilization.

A core question is whether these changes in individual and mobilizing agency have effects on the scope and the breadth of mobilization and hence may serve to level out socio-economic differences. Our analysis shows that there are significant differences between those who are mobilized to demonstrations through social media and those who are mobilized through established civil society and political organizations. Participants mobilized through social media are characterized by lower socio-economic status and younger age than those who are mobilized through established civil society organizations. When compared to mobilization through mainstream and other media, there is a similar pattern: social media recruits tend to have a lower income, to be younger and be less likely to have a full time job than the rest of the population. It is a question whether mobilization through social media changes the scope of mobilization processes. This question cannot be answered through the present data, since they do not represent development over time. Still, it is an interesting point that the socio-economic profile of participants recruited through social media differs from the profile that has been shown to dominate in earlier studies of political mobilization in the Norwegian context. In particular, earlier studies have shown a tendency for the more highly educated to be more active in demonstrations (Pettersen & Rose, 1996; Aardal, 2007). Social media therefore seems to represent a channel that supplements established political and civil society organizations, by reaching different and less privileged groups.

Based on our findings we therefore argue that what we might see is the beginning of a transformation of civic and political mobilization. Social media seem to represent an alternative structure alongside mainstream media and established political and civil society that recruits in different ways and different types of people. If so, this is a different finding from what has been concluded in relation to the impact of the Internet, where the hypothesis that the Internet will serve to empower those who are already politically engaged has so far received quite substantial support (Norris, 2001; Di Maggio et al. 2004).

Two factors may be important in order to explain why we find a more transformative potential in our study. First, the affordances of social media and the web 2.0 are fundamentally different from the affordances of the web 1.0 and the Internet in general. Collaborative democracy through social media is enabled by a combination of technical architecture (the social media affordances), network structure and effects, and cooperation-enabling social norms widespread among social media users. The technical architectures and social dynamics of information that characterize the production and exchange of information through social media are modular, flexible, mobile, and decentralized. This allows many people to act in combination and to coordinate their actions which cohere and aggregate, by the play of information cascade across digital networks, into mass mobilization or protest which manifest both online and in the real world. Second, the social dynamics related to spontaneous mobilization may be other than the dynamics related to civic and political engagement through institutionalized structures such as civil society organizations and political parties.

Can we then conclude that Facebook networks over time will assume the role traditionally played by voluntary organizations, social movements and political parties as channels of mobilization? Will the initiative be transferred from institutionalized actors towards individuals creating groups and mobilizing networks? The experiences from the Rose marches show that it may not be quite as simple. The power of the mobilization lay in the *combination* of the bottom-up private initiative and Amnesty International Norway's role as co-organizer. Amnesty possesses an established organizational apparatus and expertise which made an event of the size we witnessed in Oslo possible. Without the backing of a highly esteemed and neutral organization, it is doubtful whether leading public figures including the prime minister and the crown prince would have delivered keynote addresses. Amnesty also provided legitimacy to the many local events across the country, and acted as a guarantor for their political neutrality. Amnesty also offered platforms for information gathering and dissemination, both by individuals who could disseminate information about local events. Both their website, Facebook page and the existing channels of communication with members were used for these purposes.

First and foremost, the transformation of civic and political mobilization illustrated by the experience of July 25 and documented by this paper's data on demonstrations in general herald a new role for established organizations. Increasingly, they are likely to log onto individual and local initiatives. Many national organizations have long since adopted social media channels to try to reach out with information to its members and to strengthen its public relations, but seem to be struggling to utilize the mobilizing potential in Facebook and social media in the day to day interaction with members. Members do not increase their engagement in organizational debates or turn up to participate in activities, even though these are announced via Facebook. Given the difficulties in successfully acting as an institution in social media, it is a likely scenario that voluntary organizations will have the greatest impact not as mobilizers, but as institutions that can capture and provide direction to the many initiatives from below.

While there are many examples of established organizations failing to mobilize through social media, the examples of Facebook mobilizations failing to spill over into physical manifestations are too numerous to count. For example, even though Facebook group advocating the abolition of the public fee financing the national broadcasting company has rallied the support of 245,000 Norwegian members, it has not succeeded in organizing a single physical demonstration. When a popular and historical fresh fish outlet in Bergen was forced to close in 2009, a Facebook group was initiated which quickly gathered the support of 15,000 people. When the group attempted to organize a support demonstration, only two elderly ladies turned out. Without clear direction, legitimacy and organizational capacity, pure Facebook initiatives often fizzle out.

The results of our analysis indicate that a process is under way in which social networking sites transform the conditions of political and civic mobilization. However, this transformation does not render institutionalized civil society actors redundant; rather, we are dealing with complementarity and mutual dependency.

References

- Barrabási, A.L., 2003, *Linked*. New York: Penguin.
- Baym, N.K., 2010, *Personal connections in the digital age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Benkler, Y., 2006, *The wealth of networks*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Berglund, F., Kleven, Ø, & Ringdal, K. «Political activism». In: Ervasti, H., Fridberg, T., Hjerem, M. & Ringdal, K. (Eds.): *Nordic Attitudes in a European Perspective*. Cheltenham/Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

- boyd, d. & Ellison, N., 2007, "Social network sites: definition, history, and scholarship". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13,11.
- boyd, d. 2011 "Social network sites as networked publics. Affordances, dynamics and implications". in Papacharissi, Z. (ed.), 2011, *A networked self. Identity, community and culture on social network sites*. New York: Routledge.
- Burt, R.S., 1992, *Structural holes. The social structure of competition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Dahlgren, P., 2009, *Media and political engagement. Citizens, communication and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dayan, D., 2005, "Mothers, midwives and abortionists: genealogy, obstetrics, audiences and publics." In S. Livingstone, (ed.), *Audiences and publics: when cultural engagement matters for the public sphere*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Earl, J., & Kimport, K., 2011, *Digitally enabled social change. Activism in the Internet age*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gallego, A. 2007. "Inequality in Political Participation: Contemporary Patterns in European Countries". Center for the Study of Democracy. Paper 07-10
- Granovetter, M. ,1973, "The strength of weak ties". *American Journal of Sociology*, 78:1360 -1380.
- Jenkins, H., 2006, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.
- Lewis, T., G., 2009, *Network science*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Meyrowitz, J., 1985, *No sense of place. The impact of electronic media on social behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Newman, M., Barabási, A.L., & Watts, D.J., 2006, *The structure and dynamics of networks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Norris, P., 2002, *Democratic Phoenix. Reinventing political activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P., Walgrave, S. & van Aelst, P. 2005. "Who Demonstrates? Antistate Rebels, Conventional Participants, or Everyone?". *Comparative Politics*, 37(2), 189-205.
- Noveck, B.S., 2009, *Wiki government*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Olsen, J.P. & Sætnen, H. 1980. *Aksjoner og demokrati*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Papacharissi, Z.A, 2010, *A private sphere. Democracy in a digital age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pettersen, P.A. & Rose, L. 1996. Participation in local politics in Norway: Some do, some don't; some will, some won't. *Political Behavior*, 18(1), 51-97.
- Pool, I., 1983, *Technologies of freedom*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Rosenstone, S.J. & Hansen, J.M., 2003, *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. New York: Longman.
- Schäfer, A. 2010. Consequences of social inequality for democracy in Western Europe. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*. DOI: 10.1007/s12286-010-0086-6
- Shirky, C., 2008, *Here comes everybody. The power of organizing without organizations*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Verba, S., Scholzman, K.L., & Bradey, H.E., 1995, *Voice and equality. Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Watts, D.J., 1999, *Small worlds. The dynamics of networks between order and randomness*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Aardal, B. 2007. *Norske velgere, En studie av stortingsvalget i 2005*. Oslo: N.W.Damm & Søn.

