E-ruptions in Party Politics?
The case of Web 2.0 and Norwegian Parties

Øyvind Kalnes

Assistant professor in Political Science at the University College of Lillehammer, Norway.

oyvind.kalnes@hil.no

Abstract

This paper analyses how Norwegian political parties have handled the appearance of Web 2.0. The data consist of samples of the activity of all seven parliamentary parties and four smaller parties, mainly from the blogosphere, Facebook, YouTube as well as Twitter. The central topic is whether Web 2.0 has been a catalyst of "e-ruptive" change towards greater pluralism in the party system or more grassroots participation. The data indicate that the level of party activity on Web 2.0 roughly reflects the party share of votes, while a temporary enhancement of Web 2.0 participation from party grassroots and sympathizers appears to be reversed as the party organizations are now in the process of getting more control.

Key words

Norway, parties, campaigning, Web 2.0, Internet.

Resum

L'article analitza la reacció dels partits polítics noruecs davant l'aparició del Web 2.0. Les dades analitzades són mostres de l'activitat dels set partits amb representació parlamentària i de quatre partits més petits, extretes principalment de la blocosfera, Facebook, YouTube i Twitter. La qüestió central és determinar si el Web 2.0 ha actuat de catalitzador d'una "e-ruptura" que ha fet augmentar el pluralisme en el sistema de partits i la participació de les bases. Les dades indiquen que el nivell d'activitat dels partits en l'entorn del Web 2.0 reflecteix aproximadament el percentatge de vots que tenen, alhora que s'inverteix l'augment temporal de la participació de les bases i dels simpatitzants dels partits en el Web 2.0 a mesura que les organitzacions dels partits en van assumint progressivament el control.

Paraules clau

Noruega, partits, campanya, Web 2.0, Internet.

Introduction

Changes in the media environment of political parties invite speculation and claims about radical changes to the parties and party system. Howard Dean (2007) has, for instance, characterized the Internet "as the most significant tool for building democracy since the invention of the printing press ..(where citizens) can network with like-minded individuals to create a technology-enabled global grassroots movement". His conclusion is that "political parties have to evolve with the times: If we don't, we lose". In short, it works both on the vertical party dimension by empowering common citizens and on the horizontal party system dimension by changing the terms of party competition.

Web 2.0 is shorthand for a new breed of Internet applications for multilateral sharing, discussion and networking.[1] The collective of users becomes content producers, in contrast to Web 1.0 which represents an Internet based on unilateralism and a strict separation between content producers and users. This had led the OECD to use the term "the participative web" in their recent study *Focus on Citizens*, and "Participation 1.0" and "Participation 2.0" to differentiate between models of unilateral and multilateral communication (OECD 2009, 66ff). As

such, websites may be hybrids containing Web 1.0 elements side by side with Web 2.0 elements and be tilted more or less towards one side or the other. This article discusses the Norwegian political parties' adaptation to the Web 2.0 phenomenon, focusing on election campaigning.

In the course of roughly a fifteen year period, these parties have adapted to the rise of the Internet and established their presence on the Web. By 2005 this presence had taken the form of party websites geared towards professional political marketing, conforming to a standard resembling Web 1.0. If this represents a consolidation mirroring the standard business of politics, would it reasonable to expect that a Web 2.0 might trigger changes in how parties and activists operate on the World Wide Web (WWW) - or even how they operate as actual organizations?

Party theory suggests that, due to institutionally conditioned resistance, parties would resist or attempt to add web technologies as another "instrument" grafted onto the party organization. As noted by Harmel & Janda (1994, 265): "Party change does not just happen…", it involves decision-making, often against "a wall of resistance common to large organizations" (1994, 261) … "A high level of institutionalization will therefore tend to stifle the effects of factors promoting change".

However, these institutional effects are balanced against political parties also being geared towards winning elections. They may not be the total opportunistic and single-minded vote maximisers as assumed in the rational choice model of Downs (1957) but the traditional ties between parties and voters have become dramatically weaker over the past 20-30 years. Political parties have therefore become more sensitive to the need to campaign and communicate with voters outside the "classé gardé" of the mass party model conceptualized by Duverger (Duverger 1954). Panebianco (1988) suggests a transformation into "electoral-professional" parties, both focusing on winning elections as well as a professionalization of the party organization by putting more emphasis on specialized skills.

Regarding the political parties' adoption of Web technology, Lusoli (2005) proposes that this is encouraged by what he calls "fluid situations" ("low voter turnout… an unaligned or dealigned political system… a traditional media system more or less in disarray… "). Of course, fluidity is not a sufficient condition in itself, as it has to correlate with widespread Internet access among voters. While this may provide a rationale for political parties to use new communication technologies, it does not necessarily imply any form of transformation of party politics.

Norwegian parties and the World Wide Web

Parties in Norway, as in most other established Western countries, have experienced environmental changes leading to the more "fluid situations" suggested by Lusoli (op.cit.), the most important being the coincidence of political dealignment (Dalton 1988) and increasing non-partisanship in the traditional mass media. The share of Norwegian voters deciding on party choice during the election campaign period rose from about a fifth to more than half from 1985 to 2005 (Aardal 2007a, 20). But as media campaigning has become vital, the parties now have little control over its form and content (Aardal et al. 2004, 17; Allern 2001, 125ff; Bjørklund 1991).[2] With an online population of daily Internet users reaching 66% of all Norwegian adults in 2007 (Norsk Mediebarometer 2007), the Internet offered the parties an attractive channel of direct communication.

By the 2001 election, 20 out of 22 registered parties had established their own website (Hestvik 2004), and the Web was fully integrated as a "normal" part of the parties' organization and communication strategy during the next five years (Saglie 2007, interviews). The development and maintenance of the larger and middle sized party websites were professionalized, while the website managers of the smaller parties were still unpaid activists. In the process, elements of multilateral interactivity via, for instance, open discussion forums were closed down, due to low activity, harassment and a lack of resources for moderation and participation by the party organization (Hestvik2004; Saglie 2007; interviews). What

Panebianco termed "the electoral-professional party" appeared to have found its digital extension as Web 1.0, as a unilateral, professionalized channel through which parties could woo the voters. However, the Internet was regarded by very few voters as an "important source of information", and only 13% of them used party websites to gather information during the 2005 parliamentary election campaign (Karlsen 2007).

The following year the Web 2.0 phenomenon took off. The Alexa list of Norwegian top 100 sites (<http://www.alexa.com/>) in 2007 and 2009 included several Web 2.0 sites, Facebook and YouTube in the top three on both occasions. Flickr and MySpace appeared much lower (50th and 43rd position in 2009), while several blog sites also featured on the list. The major Norwegian social networking site, Nettby.no, figured high on the list, at ninth position in 2009. The much talked about newcomer in 2009 was Twitter, rapidly rising, but in late April still only at the 71st position. Media hype was perhaps as important in focusing politicians and parties on Web 2.0. Figure 1 indicates the accumulated number of articles in the printed press from 2005 through 2009 (estimate of whole year) mentioning a selection of Web 2.0 sites or concepts (Twitter, MySpace Nettby, Flickr, Facebook, YouTube and blog). Given the current trend, this sample of Web 2.0 will get more media attention than the Prime Minister (Jens Stoltenberg) in 2009.

Judging by comments in the press from the party leadership and leaders of the information departments of the major and middle-sized parties, they were all aware of the potential of Web 2.0 but also the costs involved in taking the leap (Aftenposten February 19, 2007; vg.no 2007ab). Questions on Web 2.0, as well as other aspects of the Internet, were included in semi-structured interviews with the web managers of all 11 parties, conducted immediately before or after the elections in 2007 (see the interview list at the end of this article). Information from the interviewed party informants confirmed this ambivalence among the majority of the parties (phrases like "opportunity and nightmare" were common).

Web 2.0: "E-ruptions" or "Web 1.5"?

Two competing scenarios will be used in the following discussion, an e-ruption scenario and a "Web 1.5" scenario. E-ruption rests upon the assumption that there are significant differences between old and new web technologies, as captured by the conceptual division into web 1.0 and Web 2.0. Time Magazine described this in 2006 as being "about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes" (Time Magazine 2006). Pascu et al.'s concept of "e-ruptions" refers to a "potentially disruptive power" contained in Web 2.0 (2007). While not focused on politics in particular, it is hypothesized that these technologies might be stronger agents of change than those

Figure 1. Appearances in printed press 2005-2009 reported by Retriever
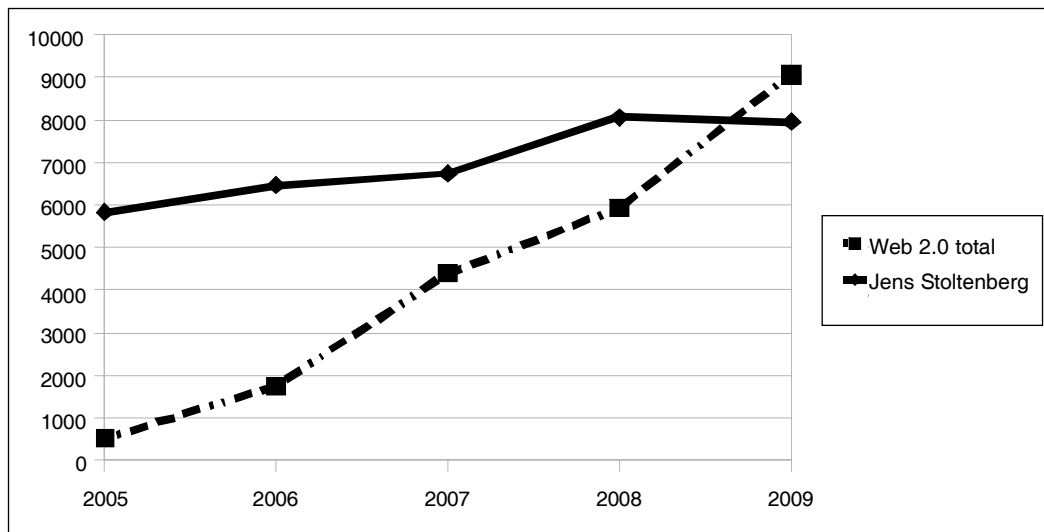
Source: Retriever at https://Web.retriever-info.com/services/archive.html, 24 April, 2009

conceptualized as Web 1.0. A first type of vertical change can be deduced almost by definition, as the user is empowered to produce content, as well as to form or join networks. The second type of change is horizontal, as the technological changes may empower new or previously disadvantaged players. Translated into party politics on the web, the first disruptive effect would be that the national party organizations lose (or abdicate) control to local party branches and activists, the second that new or small parties get a chance to make themselves more visible and attract new supporters.

A less disruptive scenario is suggested through Jackson and Lilleker's analysis of Web 2.0 in the UK (Jackson and Lilleker 2009). Their contribution builds on the assumption that established parties enter Web 2.0 carrying a "mindset" of pre-existing goals and norms. This is not necessarily compatible with the inherent "mindset" of Web 2.0, where user control, participation and openness are norms that appear to be compatible with the technologies. This party "mindset" is the same as identified in the previous section, identifying parties as collective actors geared towards winning elections and as institutions resisting change. Hence parties may very well decide to jump on the Web 2.0 "bandwagon", to woo voters, or simply adapt to the media-generated hype on this phenomenon. But doing so does not necessarily imply yielding to the "Web 2.0" mindset.

As such, the Web 2.0 presence of political parties may indicate a clash of mindsets, as parties incorporate some of the Web 2.0 technology/applications but retain firm control of the user/networking effects. From the UK evidence, Jackson and Lilleker therefore suggest that "Web 1.5" gives a better description, as a hybrid of Web 1.0 regarding control and content and Web 2.0 regarding formal appearance.

For the "e-ruption" hypothesis to have any significance, at least some parties would have to use Web 2.0 elements, either

incorporated into the party websites and/or as profiles or groups on specific Web 2.0 sites. A second and related test regards the reach of these Web 2.0 elements in terms of actual users. If the Web 2.0 elements are present but fail to attract a significant number of users, the validity of the e-ruption thesis is significantly reduced as they still do not fully qualify as e-ruptions. What appear as formal Web 2.0 elements may very well reproduce the existing party system structure, as well as the internal party structure. Of course, a final test would be regarding the actual effects on voting behaviour.

The data presented in this article rely on a quantitative strategy to explore the parties' adoption of Web 2.0, rather than qualitative analysis of content. This strategy admittedly has its limitations in testing only certain aspects of the hypotheses. But it pinpoints some minimal requirements that should be met before entering into deeper qualitative analyses of the content of individual sites. For a given site, e-ruption in the party system structure would at least demand some deviations between party size and party activity on Web 2.0, including the activity triggered by this. Especially smaller and/or less established parties would be expected to use these technologies to make themselves visible and communicate with voters they do not reach through other channels. As for e-ruption in internal party structures, the Web 2.0 activities should be grassroots driven, rather than introduced and managed top down via the established party hierarchy.

Analysis: Political parties on Web 2.0 in Norway

There are now 23 officially registered Norwegian parties (Brønnøysundregistrene 2009). 11 of these are included in our sample; 7 parties are represented in Parliament while 4 are from the most significant parties outside parliament. The sam-

ple provides good variation in background factors, such as party size, ideological position and institutionalization, as summed up in table 1. The data on these parties on Web 2.0 was sampled during the two recent election years of 2007 and 2009, the first being local elections at municipal and county level and the latter being parliamentary elections. The two types of elections alternate regularly in September every second year. It should be noted that the 2009 data are collected at an early stage in the campaign, while the 2007 data reflect the whole campaign.

The horizontal dimension

In 2005 there were no signs of any Web 2.0 elements, apart from RSS-feeds on a couple of sites. By the local elections in 2007 most parties had started to at least try out the new technologies. But few apparently felt confident enough to market them on the main site. The exception that stood out was the Labour Party, who advertised their official presence on Facebook, VG-Blog, YouTube and Flickr. Most of the other parties were more cautious and advertised a single element, either Facebook or blogs, although other data indicate that they were present elsewhere as well. Only the Progress Party, the Pensioners' Party and Coastal Party did not advertise anything on Web 2.0. Table 2 indicates how far the parties have come in developing Web 2.0 as officially sanctioned instruments by 17 May 2009, 1 indicating presence and 0 non-presence.

These 35 Web 2.0 elements represent a considerable leap from the 12 elements registered in 2007. The Labour party

organization is still at the forefront but others have been catching up. At the other end, the smallest non-socialist parties, as well the Progress Party and partly the Christian People's Party, appear to be as hesitant as in 2007. This and the relatively strong official presence of other medium sized or small parties suggest that party size only matters in the sense of acting as a minimum threshold below the 1.9% of Red. Above that threshold it is a matter of taking a strategic decision concerning whether Web 2.0 is important enough to dedicate one's resources to.

Some key indicators on the political parties' relative shares of the most important Web 2.0 sites or activities are presented in table 3. While these indicators are crude and superficial measures, they reveal significant variations among parties, as well as among activities. There are five parties with roughly 10% or more of the activity each, Labour dominating by far. In total these 5 parties have 87.29 % of the activity, leaving slightly more than 12 % to the remaining 6 parties.

That the parties' share of Web 2.0 activity corresponds closely to share of votes ($r^2=0.79$), is not unexpected, Hence, the e-ruption thesis should perhaps be immediately regarded as disproved.

But there are variations that indicate different strategic choices about Web 2.0 activity and variations in the ability to mobilize. A simple measure would be the relation of Web 2.0 share to the share of votes, a score of more than 1 meaning a greater Web 2.0 share than predicted by share of votes and less than 1 a lower share. As plotted onto figure 2, it appears that 1 out

Table 1. Norwegian political parties sampled

Party	Votes (%) in 2007 municipal elections	Year of party establishment	Ideological position
Parliamentary parties			
Labour Party	29.6	1887	Left
Conservative Party	19.3	1884	Right
Progress Party	17.5	1973*	Right
Centre Party	8.0	1920*	Centre
Christian People's Party	6.4	1933	Centre
Socialist Left Party	6.2	1961*	Left
Liberal Party	5.9	1884	Centre
Non-parliamentary parties			
Red	1.9	1973*	Left
Pensioners' Party	0.9	1985	Centre
Coastal Party	0.2	1999	Centre
Democrats	0.2	2002	Right

*   Party has changed name since year of establishment and/or merged with other parties.

Source: Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet: http://www.regjeringen.no/krd/html/valg2007/bk5.html

Table 2. Web 2.0 elements on front page of party website, 17 May 2009

Party	Facebook	Twitter	Blogs	YouTube	Flickr	Other	TOTAL
Labour Party	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Socialist Left Party	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Liberal Party	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Conservative Party	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Red Electoral Alliance	1	1	0	1	1	1	5
Centre Party	1	1	0	0	1	1	4
Christian People's Party	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Progress Party	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Coastal Party	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Pensioners' Party	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Democrats	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	6	6	5	6	7	6	35

Source: authors' own

of 3 of the larger parties (>15%), 2 out of 4 of the medium sized (5-10%) and 3 out of 4 of the small parties (<5%) are doing better than expected. Labour, the Liberals, the Socialist Left Party and Red were the parties with the most conscious Web 2.0 strategy, also supported by the evidence from promotion on the party website. In all, the negative relation between size and relative mobilization is strong (r^2=-0.4). But while two of the three smallest parties are doing much better than expected, they still fall far below the other parties on almost all measures due to their low share of votes in the first instance. There appears to be a certain minimum threshold for disruptive Web 2.0 mobilization below the 1.9% level of Red. Above that, parties may mobilize and cause disruption, in which Red and the Liberals have been the most successful, although the sheer size of the Labour Party implies that it is also possible for large parties to use Web 2.0 to dominate.

But, as indicated in the introduction on parties as institutionalized organizations, one should not simply assume that the Web 2.0 is automatically adopted as an instrument. As indicated by two of the oldest parties (Labour and Liberals) being eager Web 2.0 users, established parties do not necessarily resist the type of change related to Web 2.0. Among newer parties, the Progress Party and the Pensioners' Party appear to be Web 2.0 resistant - or at least hesitant. Figure 4 uses the same measure of Web 2.0 activity relative to party size on the y-axis and year of party establishment on the x-axis. It appears to be a curve-linear relation between party age and Web 2.0 adoption, although parties established after 1960 are more eager to use Web 2.0. Using simple rank correlation, a Kendall's tau at -0.27 seems to confirm this pattern.

As for ideological effects, figure 5 indicates that all parties on the left appeared to have embraced Web 2.0, while the parties at the centre and right side of the spectrum were more ambivalent or hesitant. Using rank ordering on both the ideological and activism dimension, we arrive at a Kendall's' tau of

0.55. This may indicate that the leftist ideological mindset is closer to the Web 2.0 mindset, although it does not appear to be a necessary condition, bearing the Web 2.0 activity of the Liberals in mind. However, the ideological position of the Liberals is also ambiguous, being a declared non-socialist party but also devoted to classic post-materialist issues of environmentalism and anti-authoritarianism, which puts them closer to the left of the Labour Party. If so, then Web 2.0 would be the expression of New Left values, which makes sense in terms of what is defined as the "Web 2.0 mindset".

The vertical dimension
During spring 2007 there was frenetic activity at the grassroots level. Local activists, party branches and sympathizers were establishing blogs and Facebook groups and uploading self-made videos. As for the party organization, interviews with the party website managers in 2007 indicated a more professionalized "Web 1.0" mindset. They were concerned about control and resources for quality assurance, in the sense that Web 2.0 activities should not be bad publicity for the party in question. But the party organizations hesitated to interfere and no one expected to fully monitor or control developments. Web 2.0 technologies made it easy for individuals and groups to establish a presence using the name - and even logos - of the parties, without the party's knowledge or consent.[3] Even the web manager of the Liberals, the party that appeared to be the most enthusiastic about Web 2.0, was concerned that:

Until two years ago we thought it would suffice to own the domain name but now new places appear every day, using our name and even our logo. A lot of the people behind this are probably (party) members with good intentions, but the result is that we have no control.

As reported in the previous section, the party organizations

Table 3. Parties' activity on Web 2.0, spring 2009

|	Blogs[1]		Twitter[2]		Facebook[3]		YouTube[4]		Average
	Politicians	Leader	Politicians	Followers	Groups	Members	Videos	Views	
Labour Party	20,83	29,70	47,69	50,69	17,31	24,99	36,89	92,96	40,13
Progress Party	8,33	22,17	1,92	1,45	12,06	20,82	1,87	0,18	8,60
Conservatives	15,97	14,13	11,54	15,13	34,16	21,87	13,00	0,81	15,83
Centre Party	5,56	5,68	5,00	2,45	5,26	3,50	3,41	0,60	3,93
Christian People's Party	12,5	3,86	2,69	2,23	2,16	3,61	0,22	0	3,41
Socialist Left Party	11,81	15,73	15,00	14,76	8,96	7,08	3,52	0,11	9,62
Liberals	12,5	5,66	10,77	8,82	13,6	11,10	30,07	2,29	11,85
Red	11,11	1,42	5,38	4,48	4,79	5,32	7,60	0,87	5,12
Pensioners' Party	0	0,01	NA	NA	0,15	0,01	0,33	0	0,06
Democrats	0	1,59	NA	NA	0,77	0,92	0,99	1,88	0,77
Coastal Party	1,39	0,05	NA	NA	0,77	0,80	0,99	0,31	0,54
TOTAL	**100**	**100**	**99,99**	**100,01**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**99,86**
N	**144**	**85098**	**260**	**55503**	**647**	**45766**	**908**	**189316**	

1   Blogs –active politician bloggers (http://valgprat.no/bloggoversikt/) 2 July 2009. No categories for Democrats and Pensioners' Party. Mentions of party leader in blogosphere (http://blogsearch.google.com/). 10 April 2009

2   Twitter – Number of politicians and their followers. Source Twittertinget http://www.twittertinget.no/, 19 May 2009. No records for 3 smallest parties. However, a search on party names revealed there is a small group for Democrats with 55 followers.

3   Facebook – Search on party name and abbreviation 9 April 2009

4   YouTube - Search under "News & Politics, Nonprofits & Activism", 9 April 2009

Source: authors' own.

Figure 2. Share of Web 2.0 activity in 2009 and votes in 2007
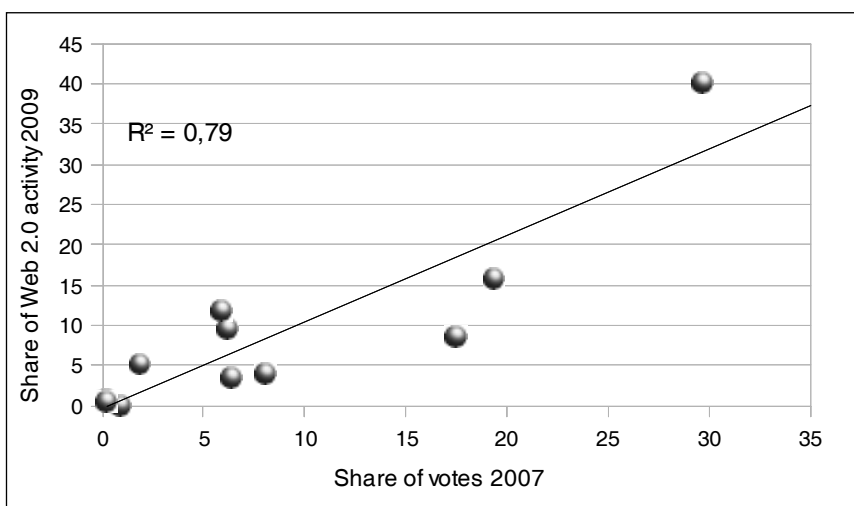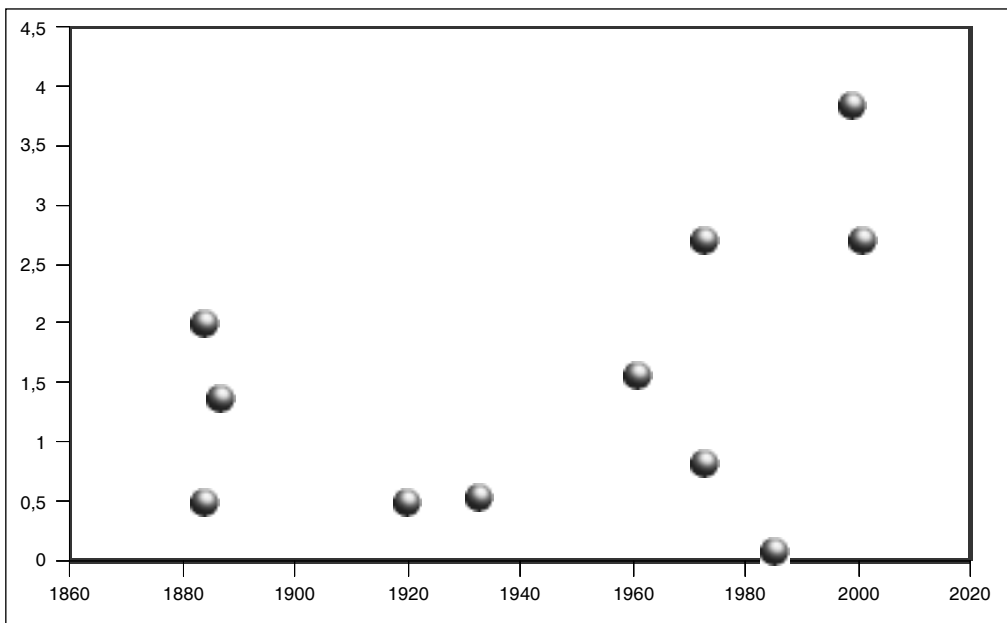

Source: authors' own

Figure 3. Relative Web 2.0 mobilization
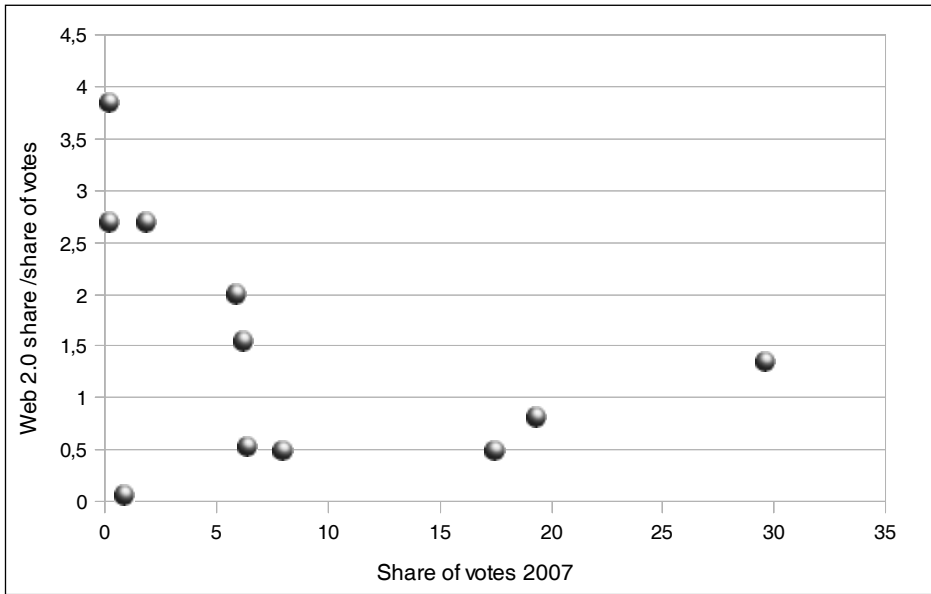
Source: authors' own.

Figure 4. Relative Web 2.0 activity and year of party establishment

Source: authors' own.

became increasingly proactive on Web 2.0 from 2007 to 2009, establishing official sites or pages they could control, and they felt assured enough to advertise. Still, below this official Web 2.0 layer, the large unofficial and unadvertised layer established from the start has continued to exist.

Blogging is perhaps the most vital part of this layer, being the strictest individual and personal element in the Web 2.0 "mindset". The party informants recognized this and felt blogging was something the party organization should not interfere with. On the other they were concerned that blog readers could mistake individual opinions for official party policy. As such, this expresses awareness of the principal differences between Web 1.0 and 2.0.

The exact number of party political blogs is not known but the most comprehensive Norwegian site on the subject (Valgprat.no 2009) has registered 5,675 posts and 173 political blogs which can be categorized under distinct parties. Party leaders appear mostly as reluctant bloggers. Since the election campaign in 2005, the media has set up dedicated blogging forums for the parties, leaving them very little choice. VG-Blog in the Web edition of VG has been the most important and by 2009 all party leaders, except the leader of the Pensioners' Party, had their own blogs here. But apart from the leaders of the Liberals and partly the Conservatives, the Democrats and the Coastal Party, the level of activity has been low since the end of the election campaign in 2007.

Furthermore, only three parties (the Liberals, the Conservatives and the Christian People's Party) found it worthwhile to link to their leader's blog on VG-blog or elsewhere. This may be a reflection of the problem of blogging on behalf of institutions such as political parties. Besides the obvious bad publicity of not having time to update, an individual blogger like the party leader also acts as the representative of the institution. This is restrictive for the blogger role but, for the party, a blogger uninhibited by such restrictions may appear as a loose cannon. Of course, a depersonalized or (self)censored form of blogging is probably not very attractive for blog readers.

While at least 5 blogs In the Twingly Top 100 of Norwegian blogs could be identified with politicians from specific parties, none of these were party leader blogs. Four of them had ten times as many reported links on the WWW as the most popular party leader blog, and the fifth still outperformed all the party leader blogs added together (347 versus 256 links) (Google Web). Hence blog successes of other party politicians lower in the ranks indicate the potential for getting exposure, providing one dedicates time to updating and conforms more to the Web 2.0 mindset. Still, there is a considerable focus on party leaders among bloggers,[4] closely correlated with party size (r^2=0.85). While party leader position is no guarantee for success as a blogger, such success is not a necessary condition for party leaders to get attention in the blogosphere. The party leader position in itself and size of the party in question is what decides.

In 2009 microblogging, and Twitter in particular, became the fastest growing member community on the WWW in Norway and globally (Nielsen 2009, Tvitre.no 2009). On Twitter the party organizations apparently have taken a pro-active approach from the start. By May 2009, 9 of the 11 parties in the sample were already established with an official profile for the party, the party leader, or both, 6 of these linked to the party website. These 11 profiles had 30% of all 65,235 followers of the 260 party politicians with registered Twitter profiles (Twittertinget 2009). However, they had just posted 6.27% of the tweets, so Twitter was a considerable outlet for other than the party organization and/or leader as such, although the attention is skewed in favour of the leader and the organization.

Figure 5. Relative party Web 2.0 activity and party ideology
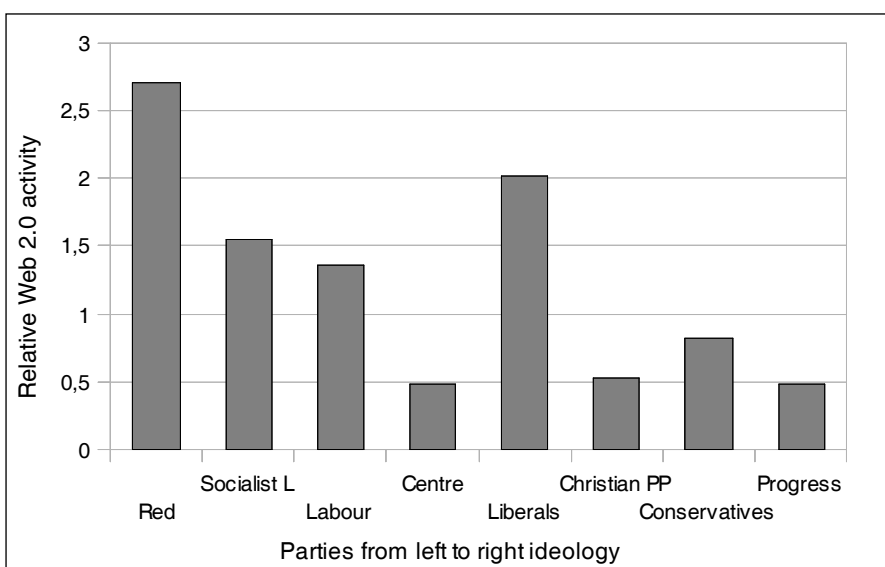
Source: authors' own.

As for online party political videos, by the start of the 2007 election campaign YouTube was the leading website. But in 2007 other sites provided by national media, such as the VG-owned snutter.no and Nettavisen Video (http://www.2play.no/) were important video outlets dominated by local branches, candidates and activists. By 2009 YouTube's role appears even stronger, through more activity from the national party organizations, while local activity on the other sites appeared more or less to be dormant after the local elections. Five national party organizations; the Liberals, Labour, the Conservatives, the Centre Party and Red, established official channels on YouTube five months or less before the 2007 election and, by April 2009, only the Pensioners' Party and the Christian People's Party were absent. That only 1 out of 5 channels were linked from the party website in 2007, compared with 6 out of 9 in 2009, further indicates that YouTube is well on its way to becoming an established part of the parties' communication strategies. Still, searches on party name indicate that the number of videos related to the parties outside the official channels at least matches the 268 and 420 videos found there in 2007 and 2009.

In tandem with the general explosive growth of Facebook in Norway in 2007, at least 326 groups with 21,721 members sympathizing with particular Norwegian parties were established within a few months leading up to the local elections in September.[5] Only the Conservatives, the Labour Party and the Centre Party established groups to represent the national party organizations,[6] sanctioned through a link from the main party website. By April 2009, as the parties were preparing for the parliamentary campaign, this situation changed somewhat. 5 parties now had an official national page or group, visibly linked from the party website, and all parties had supporter groups on Facebook. The number of party-relevant groups and their membership has more than doubled, to at least 647 groups with 45,766 members. Another important change on Facebook in 2009 was the 6 official supporter groups or pages for the leaders of all the major or medium parties, except the Christian People's Party and the Socialist Left Party, as well as one for the leader of the Democrats. These had 39,439 members or followers, which accounted for almost as much as membership in party groups.

Norwegian social networking sites contain little party political activity compared to Facebook. The generally popular Nettby.no had 38 local and unofficial groups with 2,780 members, supporting almost all political parties. However, the much smaller network site Origo.no (http://origo.no/) is more interesting, as it may indicate a new direction towards an integrated and national party web strategy. 7 national political parties have recently established their own "zones", which may include blogs, collaborative tools, calendars or traditional web pages, also incorporating the activities of local branches and individual politicians. By 23 June 2009 these 7 "zones" had 1,145 members, the Labour Party once more dominant with 961 of these members in their "zone". Due to the few members, Origo.no may appear insignificant in the short run but points to a future trend of greater integration, with the Labour Party leading the way. They are clearly inspired by Obama, even imitating the approach by the address and name, which translates to mylabourparty.no.

As the overall party political activity on Web 2.0 probably has more than doubled from 2007 and 2009, the national party organizations are now well on their way towards coordinating the activity. The ad hoc and somewhat chaotic characteristics from the Web 2.0 campaign of 2007 are being ironed out. Most national party websites give clear cues as to the official presence of the party on Web 2.0 and top politicians are more established through blogs, profiles and official fan pages. Furthermore, as noted, the use of Origo.no points to an ambition of greater integration of Web activities. The very nature of Web 2.0 means that there still is – and will be - a myriad of independent political blogs, Twitter profiles, unofficial Facebook groups and YouTube channels. But overall the signs of a moderate vertical e-ruption in 2007, triggered by the rapid introduction of new technology under the particular circumstances of local rather than national elections, have now weakened.

Discussion and conclusion

As indicated earlier in this article, the development of the Web (1.0) suggests that, after a period of transition, political parties adapt new technology according to the "electoral-professional" party model. As for Web 2.0, the "e-ruption scenario" of Pascu et al. (2007) suggested that these particular technologies might be stronger agents of change than those conceptualized as Web 1.0, while the "Web 1.5" scenario suggested that technologies would be adapted to existing party models.

For all its limitations, the material presented here on the Norwegian case indicates weak e-ruptions, first and foremost in the pioneering phase of the political application Web 2.0 technology. E-ruptions on the horizontal dimension should be evident due to the fact that new or small parties in the party system get a chance to make themselves more visible and attract new supporters, at the expense of larger and more established parties. There are some trends in this direction, indicating that, given a minimum of resources, parties and activists can decide to be "big in Web 2.0 politics" - or decide not to. Still, the parties' share of activities on Web 2.0 has mainly followed what might be expected from their share of votes in 2007. The deviations are probably too small to significantly offset the competition for votes. Furthermore, some of the previously hesitant larger parties seemed to have become more proactive by 2009, indicating that any modest disruptive effect may be reduced over time. On the vertical dimension, one disruptive effect would be if the national party organizations lost (or abdicated) control to local party branches and activists. The material suggests that the role of the national party organizations and their leaders has increased significant-

ly from 2007 to 2009. The situation in 2007 may partly be interpreted as ad hoc anarchy due to the sudden introduction of new technologies combined with it being a local election year. However, over time the local versus national elections 2-year cycles in themselves will probably continue to have an effect. But this activity cycle will probably take place within a more integrated and proactive party strategy, as indicated by the guidance and cues provided on party websites, as well as setting up party specific networks or "zones" on places like Origo.no.

The developments analyzed indicate that the potential of e-ruptions is contained and has not changed over time, at least in our particular case. The less disruptive scenario of Jackson and Lilleker's Web 1.5 (2009) appears to be the most realistic. Established parties may indeed enter Web 2.0 carrying the "mindset" of pre-existing goals and norms, inherent to institutionalized organizations. Although deviating from the alleged Web 2.0 "mindset" of user control, participation and openness, parties jump on "the bandwagon" without necessarily implies yielding to this. Of course, this also may lead to questions about the actual validity of the assumptions that there is such a distinct Web 2.0 "mindset" in the first place. As parties incorporate some of the Web 2.0 technology/applications but retain firm control of the user/networking effects, this indicates the technological determinism behind such assumptions.

However, Web 2.0 may have little political significance, both in its "e-ruption" or Web 1.5 format, given its modest reach in terms of actual users. Of course this is most serious for the overall validity of the e-ruption thesis, as even an actual e-ruption within the Web 2.0-sphere would have a small effect on changing actual voting behaviour or more demanding political activism. For any e-ruption to spill over into electoral politics, Web 2.0 elements have to attract – and influence the decisions of - a significant number of the 3.5 million Norwegian voters. Although the party political Web 2.0 has grown significantly since 2007, by April 2009 it still only consists of, for instance, 55,503 followers of politicians on Twitter, 45,766 members of party political groups on Facebook, while the videos on the party channels on YouTube had a total of 189,316 views. Activity will undoubtedly increase, especially during the months leading up to the elections in September 2009. But for now, the "potential disruptive power" attributed to Web 2.0 by the "e-ruption" thesis should at best be regarded as a potential yet to be fulfilled on the horizontal dimension of party competition. The Progress Party's strategy of almost neglecting Web 2.0 in favour of established mass media and the party web site seems rational, at least in the short term.

One possible qualification to this argument, which has not been examined here, is that the viral quality attributed to Web 2.0 need not be limited to Web 2.0 itself. This qualification builds partially on the two-step hypothesis formulated by Lazarsfeld and his collaborators (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944, Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955). According to the Lazarsfeld thesis, the voting decisions of relatively few voters may change directly as the result of mediated messages. But substantial effects may still occur if the few active media users act as opinion leaders within their own social networks. Furthermore, we may also add an indirect two-step effect through the established mass media, as journalists report on parties' use of Web 2.0, retrieve information from Web 2.0 sites such as Twitter, or may even become more sympathetic to parties through such sites. Hence the minority that participates in the digital social networks on Web 2.0 may act as hubs, interconnecting these with actual social networks or the public at large. The Lazarsfeld thesis is a reminder that the importance of Web 2.0 may be underestimated as a tool for mobilizing or organizing voters and activists in actual social networks. But it should be added that, as Web 2.0 stands for multilateral communication, it will also intermediate support or opposition from these networks.

Success stories of Internet campaigning, and especially the campaigns of Howard Dean and recently Barack Obama, have had a significant impact on Norwegian media and party strategists (Digi.no 2008ab). Comments like the one quoted below are quite common:

Norwegian politicians have a lot to learn from Obama and his staff when it comes to running electoral campaigns. In particular, they should notice his priority of digital media, a part of the campaign which can be run without especially high costs. (Digi.no 2008a, my translation)

But some vital contextual differences between the American and Norwegian party systems should be noted. The party system and the party organizations in the USA and Norway are quite simply different entities. The size and diversity of both population and territory place different demands on local networking and autonomy, as well as effective coordination and communication between the localities. Furthermore, American parties have a much looser organizational structure, with relatively few members and often dormant local branches. Norwegian parties on the other hand are still relatively strong organizations and less reliant on ad hoc networking. Thirdly, American elections are candidate-centred, in contrast to the party-centred approach found in Norway. These differences may be reduced over time, as Norway – along with other European countries – is approaching a model with detached local branches, disloyal voters, fewer members and more focus on individual leaders. But they are still significant enough to warrant the question as to whether Web 2.0 is more functional for American parties and therefore more "rational" to use for winning elections, exactly because these parties are more like network parties in the first place (Anstead & Chadwick 2008).

Notes

1 Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) has a thorough discussion of Web 2.0, as opposed to Web 1.0

2 The lack of control in the Norwegian case is amplified by a long-standing ban on political advertising on TV. This ban may be lifted after a recent judgment by the European Court of Human Rights (2008).

3 When party informants were asked about activity on Web 2.0. "...as far as I know" was a frequent addition to their statements.

4 Mentions of party leader (full name) on blogs per 10 April 2009, according to Google Blogsearch

5 Search on party name and -abbreviation on 15 August 2007

6 Facebook group IDs; Conservatives: 2431161089, Labour Party 2421715973 and Centre Party 2256306844.

References

AALEN, I. "Deler og deltar". In: *Aftenposten Morgen*, 8 May 2009.

AARDAL, B. "Velgere på evig vandring?". In: AARDAL, B. (ed.) *Norske velgere.* Oslo: Damm, 2007a, p. 13-40.

AARDAL, B. *Table on Internet use*, 2007b. [Online] <http://home.online.no/~b-aardal/vedlegg.pdf> (Visited 13 July 2008).

AARDAL, B.; KROGSTAD, A.; NARUD, H. M.; WALDAHL, R. "Strategisk kommunikasjon og politisk usikkerhet". In: AARDAL, B.; KROGSTAD, A.; NARUD, H. M. (ed.) *I valgkampens hete. Strategisk kommunikasjon og politisk usikkerhet*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2004, p. 13-32.

AARDAL, B.; STAVN, G. "Enda flere skifter parti". In: *Samfunnsspeilet*. 2006, vol. 20, num. 6, p. 2-8.

ABCNYHETER. *Facebook kan avgjøre valget.* Oslo: ABCNyheter, 2007. [Online] <http://www.abcnyheter.no/node/46264> (Visited 18 May 2007).

AFTENPOSTEN (2007). "Få toppolitikere bruker blogger - . . . men alle er enige om at Internett blir viktigere". *Aftenposten Morning Edition*, 19 February 2007.

AFTENPOSTEN (2009). *Unge fjes går for Facebook*. Oslo: Aftenposten.no, 2009. <http://www.aftenposten.no/kul_und/article3019774.ece> (Visited 10 April 2009).

ALLERN, S. *Flokkdyr på Løvebakken: søkelys på Stortingets presselosje og politikkens medierammer*. Oslo: Pax, 2001.

ANDERSON, N. *Tim Berners-Lee on Web 2.0: "nobody even knows what it means"*. [Online]. Place: Ars Technica, 2006. <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20060901-7650.html> (Visited 25 February 2008).

ANSTEAD, N.; CHADWICK, A. "Parties, Election Campaigning and the Internet: Toward a Comparative Institutional Approach". In: CHADWICK, A.; HOWARD, P. N. (ed.) *The Handbook of Internet Politics*. Routledge, 2008, p. 56-71.

AURA AVIS. *Tar valgkampen på nett.* [Online]. Place: Aura Avis, 2009. <http://www.auraavis.no/lokale_nyheter/article4417799.ece> (Visited 23 June 2009).

BARNETT, S. "New media, old problems: New technology and the political process". In: *European Journal of Communication.* Becker, G.S. 1997, vol. 12, num 2, p. 193-218, 1997.

BJØRKLUND, T. "Election campaigns in post-war Norway (1945-1989): From party-controlled to media-driven campaigns". In: *Scandinavian Political Studies*. 1991, vol. 14, num. 3, p. 279-302, 2001.

BRØNNØYSUNDREGISTRENE. *Partiregisteret.* Brønnøysund: Brønnøysundregistrene, 2009. [Online] <http://w2.brreg.no/partireg/> (Visited 9 June 2009).

CORMODE, G.; KRISHNAMURTHY, B. *Key differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0.* [Online]. Chicago: First Monday, 2008. <http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2125/1972> (Visited 13 August 2008).

DAGBLADET. *Election pages.* [Online]. Oslo: Dagbladet.no, 2007. <http://www.dagbladet.no/valg2007/resultater/?fk=K&fylke=&r=05&vis=2> (Visited 15 May 2008).

DALTON, R. *Citizen politics in Western democracies.* Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1988.

DEAN, H. *Wikipartia. How the Web is restoring democracy to politics.* [Online]. Place: Forbes.com, 2007. <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2007/0507/094.html> (Visited 7 July 2009).

DIGI.NO. *Nettet avgjør valget i 2009*. [Online]. Oslo: Digi.no, 2008a. <http://www.digi.no/php/art.php?id=786162> (Visited 15 September 2008).

DIGI.NO. *Slik skal Arbeiderpartiet vinne nettvalget.* [Online]. Oslo: Digi.no, 2008b. <http://www.digi.no/787118/slik-skal-arbeiderpartiet-vinne-nettvalget> (Visited 20 September 2008).

DIGI.NO. *IT-ledere må delta i nettsamfunn*. [Online]. Oslo: Digi.no, 2009. <http://www.digi.no/812799/it-ledere-maa-delta-i-nettsamfunn> (Visited 10 May 2009).

DOWNS, A. *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1957.

DUVERGER, M. *Political parties: Their organization and activity in the modern state.* Londres: Methuen, 1954.

European Court of Human Rights (2008), *Chamber Judgment. TV Vest AS & Rogaland Pensjonistparti vs. Norway, Press release issued by the Registrar.* 11 December 2008.

European Social Survey. *Dataset on trust.* [Online]. Bergen: NSD, 2007.
<http://essedunet.nsd.uib.no/cms/data/statdata/TrustData.exe> [Visited 15 May 2008].

Fenn, J.; Linden, A. *Gartner's hype cycle special report for 2005*. [Online]. Place: Gartner Group, 2005.
<http://www.gartner.com/resources/130100/130115/gartners_hype_c.pdf> (Visited 20 April 2007).

Gartner Group. *Understanding hype cycles.* [Online]. Place: Gartner Group, 2007.
<http://www.gartner.com/pages/story.php.id.8795.s.8.jsp> (Visited 20 April 2007).

Harmel, R.; Janda, K. "An integrated theory of party goals and party change". In: *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 1994, vol. 6, num. 3, p. 259-287, 1994.

Hestvik, H. "«valgkamp2001.no» Partier, velgere og nye medier. Ny kommunikasjon?". In: Aardal, B.; Krogstad, A.; Narud, H. M. (ed.) *I valgkampens hete. Strategisk kommunikasjon og politisk usikkerhet.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2004, p. 230-252.

Jackson, N. A.; Lilleker, D. G. "Building an Architecture of Participation? Political Parties and Web 2.0 in Britain". In: *Journal of Information Technology & Politics. Xx, xx*, 2009, vol. 6, num. 3, p. 232–250.

Kalnes, Ø. "Norwegian Parties and Web 2.0". In: *Journal of Information Technology & Politics,* Vol. 6, num. 3-4, p. 251–266, 2009.

Karlsen, R. "Den første Internettvalgkampen? Velgernes informasjonskilder". In: Aardal, B., ed. *Norske velgere*. Oslo: Damm, 2007, p. 281-302.

Katz, R. S.; Mair, P. "Changing models of party organization and party democracy. The emergence of the cartel party". In: *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, num. 1, p. 5-28, 1995.

Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet. *Resultats electorals 2007.* [Online]. Oslo: Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet, 2007.
<http://www.regjeringen.no/krd/html/valg2007/bk5.html> (Visited 25 November 2007).

Katz, E.; Lazarsfeld, P.F. *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication.* New York: The Free Press, 1955.

Lazarsfeld, P. F.; Berelson, B.; Gaudet, H. *The People's Choice: How The Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.

Lusoli, W. "A second-order medium? The Internet as a source of electoral information in 25 European countries". In: *Information Polity*. vol. 10, num. 3-4, p. 247–265, 2005.

Nettavisen, *Se valgvideoene ekspertene slakter*. [Online]. Oslo: Nettavisen, 2007.
<http://pub.tv2.no/nettavisen/innenriks/valg07/article1266375.ece> (Visited 9 November 2007).

Nielsen. *Twitter's Tweet Smell Of Success*. [Online]. Place here: Nielsen Wire, 2009.
<http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/twitters-tweet-smell-of-success/> (Visited 2 April 2008).

Statistisk Sentralbyrå. *Norsk mediebarometer Internett.* [Online]. Oslo: Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2007.
<http://www.ssb.no/emner/07/02/30/medie/sa86/Internett.pdf> (Visited 27 February 2008).

OECD Focus on Citizens. *Public Engagement for Better Policy and Services.* OECD Studies on Public Engagement. OECD Publishing, 2009.

O'Reilly, T. *What is Web 2.0. Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software*. [Online]. Place here: O'Reilly, 2005.
<http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-Web-20.html> (Visited 27 February, 2008).

Panebianco, A. *Political parties: organization and power.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Pascu, C.; Osimo, D.; Ulbrich, M.; Turlea, G.; Burgelman, J. C. *The potential disruptive impact of Internet 2 based technologies*. [Online]. Chicago: First Monday, 2007.
<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1630/> (Visited 13 November 2008).

Propaganda, *Valgkampen kjempes på nettet*. [Online]. Oslo: Propaganda, 2005.
<http://www.propaganda-as.no/php/art.php?id=116753> (Visited 20 April 2005).

SAGLIE, J. "Massepartier i cyberspace? Om bruk av IKT i norske partier". In: *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift*. Num. 2, p. 123-144, 2007.

SAGLIE, J.; VABO, S. I. "Elektronisk politisk deltakelse - en aktivitet for de få?". In: SAGLIE, J.; BJØRKLUND, T. (ed.) *Lokalvalg og lokalt folkestyre.* Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2005, p. 161-177.

SCARROW, S.E. "Parties without members? Party organization in a changing electoral environment". In: DALTON, R. J.; WATTENBERG, M. P. (ed.) *Parties without Partisans. Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 79-101.

TVITRE.NO. *Statistikk.* [Online]. Place here: Tvitre.no, 2009.
<http://tvitre.no/stats>
(Visited 19 May 2009).

VALGPRAT.NO. T*wittertoppen - lynmeldinger fra Norges politikere*. [Online]. Place here: Valgprat.no, 2009.
<http://valgprat.no/twittertoppen>
(Visited 18 May 2009).

VG.NO, *Jens åpnet Ap-kanal på YouTube*. [Online]. Oslo: Vg.no, 2007a.
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/norsk-politikk/artikkel.php?artid=172252>
(Visited 6 November 2007).

VG.NO, *Uten nettsatsing mister du velgere.* [Online]. Oslo: Vg.no, 2007b.
<http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/norsk-politikk/artikkel.php?artid=144597>
(Visited 10 October 2007).

Interviews with party informants

- Ingrid Sagranden, Web manager Labour Party, Oslo 12 July 2007.
- Frode Fjeldstad, information adviser and Web manager, Liberals, Oslo 12 July 2007.
- Jan Kenrick Glad Jackson, Web manager Red (Red Electoral Alliance), Oslo 12 July 2007.
- Sunniva Flakstad Ihle, Web manager Conservatives, Oslo 9 August 2007.
- Ole Martin Nicolaisen, editor of party paper Fremskritt and news editor of party website, Oslo, 9 August 2007.
- Arun Gosh, information adviser and Web manager Socialist Left Party, Oslo, 18 September 2007.
- Ragnar Kvåle, information adviser and Web manager Centre party, Oslo, 18 September 2007.
- Christen Krogvig, Web manager Democrats, Oslo, 28 September 2007.
- John Herfindal, Web manager Christian People's Party, Oslo, 4 October 2007.
- Mona Berg Brustad, Web manager Pensioners' party, telephone, 9 October 2007.
- Kjell Ivar Vestå, party leader and Web manager Coastal Party, telephone, 26 September 2007.