

Design-Led Social Innovation for Youth Civic Organizations

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Introduction

Promoting cultural participation among youth is one of the key ways in which cultural institutions fulfil their societal role. Social media, ubiquitous computing, and mobile technologies have increasingly become a central part of social life and work practices for many people and shaped the way they engage as citizens. The ability of social media platforms to facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and socialization is increasingly being recognized by youth organizations as having potential for reshaping and reinvigorating citizenship among youth.

However, there has been a registered change in recent years in the ways young Europeans relate to cultural and political institutions. Youth are moving away from traditional engagement with mainstream politics, such as voting, membership in cultural institutions, petitioning representatives and the like. Young European citizens are increasingly developing a preference for intermittent, non-institutionalized, horizontal forms of engagement in issues that have relevance to their everyday lives (Marsh, O'Toole & Jones 2007; Amnå & Ekman 2014). These changes could be understood as being the result of the increasing individualization of Western societies that has been occurring within the backdrop of a breakdown of traditional social institutions (Giddens 1991; Castells 2010; Sloam 2014). Politically active youth are increasingly finding new ways to voice their opinions and seeking new channels and modes of expression to envision their views (see for example Loader et al. 2014). Loader and his colleagues (2014) have coined the phrase 'networked young citizens' to describe such youth. They describe networking young citizens as being far less inclined to become members of political or civic organizations such as parties or trade unions. They would rather engage in more project-oriented initiatives related to lifestyle politics. They are not dutiful but self-actualizing and enacted through a social media networked environment.

Cultural institutions that see social media as a platform for promoting cultural participation among youth often face significant challenges. When developing projects

to promote cultural participation and citizenship, they seldom fully understand and take into account the changing nature of civic identities among young people and the particularities of youth cultures in relation to social media. Designers and other makers of technology can play a significant role in rethinking how social media might be repurposed to align with the aspirations of the networked young citizens.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the role that design might play in proposing new ways through which cultural institutions could use social media to increase cultural participation by young people. I use examples drawn from a research project titled *DELTA* (a Norwegian term that means ‘participate’), where design students were invited to develop design concepts aimed at helping a local newspaper and a municipal council in the Norwegian town of Kongsvinger to create spaces for local youth citizenship through social media design. This occurred within the context of a master’s level course in interaction design on screen-based interactions. Through the design concepts, the students illustrated new ways in which social media might be designed for the newspaper and the council to engage youth. Based on this, I suggest that it is useful for social media projects developed by cultural institutions to promote youth citizenship to take into account both the changing nature of youth civic identities and their preferences and habits for socializing, collaborating, and interacting through social media. I demonstrate the ways in which design concepts produced by students embody negotiations between different institutional actors, values, interests, and investments with relation to civic social media in a local context. I argue that design provides a form of disruptive innovation that might encourage cultural institutions to develop a new understanding of the meaning of cultural citizenship.

Cultural citizenship

By framing two types of organizations – a local newspaper and the culture and youth activities department of a municipality – as cultural institutions, I wish to place emphasis on one of the social roles that they are perceived to have in a community. Public cultural institutions, one could say, serve the function of enhancing and developing cultural citizenship (Moe 2010).

The sociologist Nick Stevenson (1997: 42) suggests that cultural citizenship is realized when ‘society makes commonly available the semiotic material cultures necessary in order to make social life meaningful, critique practices of domination, and to allow for the recognition of difference under conditions of tolerance and mutual respect’. The desire for cultural institutions such as the news media and municipal bodies to encourage cultural participation among youth is grounded in how they perceive their societal role.

Findings from the Eurobarometer cross-national studies on cultural participation suggest that fewer Europeans are engaging in cultural activities (European Commission 2013). Cultural policy scholars Stevenson, Balling and Kann-Rasmussen (2017)

suggest that the perception of low cultural participation as a ‘problem’ is part of wider institutional discourses common to countries across Europe. I will further suggest that these discourses are a reflection of how the role and function of cultural institutions is understood.

One of these common discourses upon which the rhetoric of cultural participation is constructed is related to the discourse of social inclusion and cohesion. This is related to the perceived role that culture has in connecting people as communities. This discourse has gained particular emphasis in a context where multicultural and economic inequalities are increasing, raising concerns about the dissolution of common and shared local and national identities. This discourse suggests that the most likely people to be socially excluded were also most likely to be ‘culturally non-participant’ (Stevenson, Balling & Kann-Rasmussen 2017). Often included in this category are those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, immigrants, and young people. The non-participation of these groups is perceived as being synonymous with evidence of their exclusion. Characteristic of such discourses is the assumption that cultural participation is beneficial to both the individual and to the community in which they live. There is also an assumption that if the barriers that are impeding them from participating in cultural institutions are lifted, they would then naturally want to participate.

Youth and changing civic identities

Cultural citizenship is also closely linked to the organizations’ societal mission to serve democracy, local and national culture and the general public. For private business organizations, this is couched under the language of corporate responsibility, while, for public organizations, it is perceived as important to show a sense of responsibility towards society.

For cultural institutions affiliated to municipalities in Norway, the ability to include all segments of the population in social and cultural life is a central part of how they attain legitimacy. They need this legitimacy partly to fulfil their government mandate and partly to secure future membership. Recent state cultural policy has emphasized the prerogative of cultural organizations to be inclusive of new demographic groups. In 2011, the Norwegian Ministry of Culture presented a white paper with inclusion and participation as key themes, in which they defined one of the main policy goals to be to ‘strengthen inclusion and new voices in the cultural sector’ (Norwegian Ministry of Culture 2011-2012: 9).

The challenge that cultural institutions face is that the way they conceive cultural citizenship and valuable forms of cultural participation is at odds with the way contemporary youth articulate their civic identities. Youth’s understanding of citizenship and cultural participation is being shaped in a context where a widespread social shift away from formal institutions is taking place in many Western democracies. This

is symptomatic of an era of 'late modernity' in which individuals have lost faith in many of the institutions once charged with major social functions (Giddens 1991). Thus, while in modern society individual identity was intrinsically tied to major social institutions (churches, political parties, labour unions, community groups), in late modernity there is a trend towards increasing individualization, where young people are attentively forming their personal identities through social networks. This individualization is manifesting itself through the increasing notoriety of what has been termed as 'lifestyle politics' and 'identity politics' (Loader et al. 2014), signifying more personalized, independent, self-actualizing forms of political engagement and contexts for civic action.

Youth in particular are moving away from traditional engagement and participation in formal cultural and political institutions. Thus, many have observed that young Europeans today prefer forms of engagement that are short term, issue-based, have an informal character, and are organized in non-hierarchical networks (Marsh et al. 2007; Amnå & Ekman 2014). This, some argue, reflects the move away from a type of cultural citizenship that was decided and communicated to the masses in a top-down fashion by cultural institutions, to a type of citizenship where, to a greater degree, civic identities are given shape on the basis of the individual's local interests and private contexts (Loader & Mercea 2011). Young citizens living in the era of social media are increasingly comfortable with replacing old gatekeepers such as journalists, teachers, and officials with crowd-sourced information flows through Wikipedia, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Amazon. These shifts may help account for why many young people see an older civic regime based on membership organizations, public institutions, and officials as hierarchical and artificial. In such a context, the anarchy of the Internet and social media is particularly appealing. These media platforms offer relatively free spaces in which unrestricted creativity and self-forming networks can flourish (Coleman 2008). Such citizens see little need for participating in established state-owned and private institutions, they harbour a high mistrust of politicians and the mass media, prefer loose networks for social action, and communicate through digital media.

Given the increased preference among youth for rejecting membership of organizations in favour of participation in non-hierarchical networks, and self-actualizing forms of citizenship, how can traditional cultural institutions such as local newspapers and municipal bodies position themselves as custodians of youth engagement in civic arenas? How can they negotiate their own legitimacy as arenas that frame youth citizenship?

Cultural institutions in media and local government

The culture and youth activities department of the Kongsvinger municipal council had described the problem of low cultural participation as being particularly acute among young people. The council had a long history of developing initiatives to engage youth

in the political and social affairs of the town and, like other local political and cultural institutions, they had looked with optimism and hope at the potential of social media for engaging local youth. The council had previously developed a number of different initiatives for engaging youth through social media – strategies had involved attempts at engaging youth to participate in discussions on the council’s Facebook pages and collaborating with popular young bloggers from the area. These initiatives had enjoyed only limited success. ‘I would rather die than become friends with Kongsvinger Municipal Council on Facebook,’ a member of staff from the Kongsvinger municipal council was told in a conversation with young people. These initiatives had failed partly because the youth in the area considered such institutionalized forms of participation as inauthentic and irrelevant.

Skogerbø and Winsvold (2011) have suggested that, in Norway, there seems to be tendency towards revalorising local communities: a counter-urbanization in which local newspapers are playing a key role in preserving a sense of community. Local newspapers have traditionally played a key civic role in the communities they serve, providing critical information to citizens and serving as vital watchdogs of local government. Newspaper readership is an important means through which citizens articulate community participation and belonging (Hoffman & Eveland 2010). When inhabitants of a local town or region share the experience of reading the same local newspaper or comment on news stories on the newspaper’s website, it serves to promote a sense of community belonging and civic participation (Shaker 2014). By being able to attract readers from all age groups, local newspapers fulfil a vital function as one of the institutions of local democracy. In addition, they provide arenas for public debate and interaction among local community members. However, in the case of the local newspaper discussed in this chapter, the challenge was that local youth expressed little interest in reading the local newspaper or posting comments on the newspaper’s website. They were interested in what was going on locally but preferred social media such as Facebook as a source of local news. They considered the newspaper to be something their parents read, but not a medium that reflected their interests or preoccupations.

Civic social media and design

In recent years, several projects have aimed at exploring the potential of e-participation and e-deliberation environments. These projects have often been promoted by mainly local public institutions and adopt a top-down approach (De Cindio & Peraboni 2014). These initiatives aim to use technology to open channels for participation in the democratic process, enabling citizens to connect with each other and with elected representatives and local government. So, for example, there are a series of e-deliberation environments created with the goal of providing tools to support public debate among citizens and public bodies in order to find solutions to specific problems (see, for example, Coleman 2004; Loader 2007).

Besides traditional forms of political activism, there exist other forms of civic action performed by hackers, artists, designers, engineers, self-organized crafters, scientists and activists who redeploy and repurpose corporately produced content or create novel properties of their own, often outside the standard system of production and consumption. These groups use social media to exchange sewing patterns, technical data, circuit layouts, YouTube videos of technical tutorials, and guides to scientific experiments. We are seeing complementary realms of civic engagement being defined around issues such as food, gardening, climate change, citizen science, and activism.

Citizen action is becoming increasingly diverse, participatory, and located in unexpected places. One major challenge facing cultural institution such as local newspapers and municipal bodies is how to relate to these developing practices. These different forms of civic action (unstructured, grassroots, and voluntary versus structured and institutional) are characterised by different interactional models and tools. Thus, the question of how to reconcile the innovation approaches of grassroots 'DIY citizens' with the designed social media environments created by public institutions to support citizen participation is important. It is also important to consider what types of social media platforms and technologies local newspapers and local municipal bodies should develop in order to promote the types of civic action that reflect young people's perspectives and aspirations.

Designers and other makers of technology can play a role in thinking how social media might be reframed and embedded to align with the aspirations of networked young citizens. Design approaches and interventions offer a valuable way of learning about, and informing the development of, youth civic spaces in social media in institutional settings. Design is about the conception of ideas, and developing their form, structure and function.

Designing typically involves different actors or stakeholders with different values and understandings of the world (Balsamo 2010). Changing understandings of social norms and youth identities offers opportunities for designers to rethink how social media might be reframed and embedded to align with the aspirations of networked young citizens. Design innovations in civic social media have moved away from the approach of providing an 'anytime anywhere' access approach to data, information and networks towards the integration of technologies into meaningful cultural practices contextualized in specific communities. Loader and Mercea (2011) argue that one impact of social media on democratic innovation has been its disruptive capacity for traditional political practices and institutions. One example of this disruption has been the blurring of the division between mainstream news media and citizen-user content generated as news. The concepts can also be seen as having potential as disruptive innovation (Christensen 1997; Dyer et al. 2011) or paradigm innovation (Francis & Bessant 2005), within the context of youth-related civic practices in relation to cultural institutions.

Designing for youth citizenship

In the rest of the chapter, I will present and discuss the two cases drawn from the *DELTA* project, where design students worked on developing design concepts for helping the cultural activities unit of the Kongsvinger municipality, and the local newspaper in Kongsvinger create spaces for youth citizenship through social media design. In the following I describe the design process that led to the two concepts the students developed and analyse the possible implications of implementing these concepts for reframing the organizations' role as civic actors.

Design students as cultural intermediaries

Cultural studies scholar Paul du Gay and his colleagues (2013) describe designers as cultural intermediaries. In the process of developing products and services, designers embody culture in the things they design. Designed artefacts are inscribed with meanings as well as uses and design produces meaning through the way it encodes artefacts and services with symbolic significance. In addition to creating services and artefacts with specific functions, 'design produces meaning through encoding artefacts with symbolic significance; it gives functional artefacts a symbolic form', as Paul du Gay and his colleagues point out (2013: 62). In the case of cultural institutions, through the choices made when designing social media, they implicitly inscribe these artefacts with particular meanings that might shape the way citizenship is practised. I will argue that, as young designers, the students that were part of this project were ideally positioned to serve as cultural intermediaries.

First, they were highly skilled users and makers of social media and, thus, were in a good position to critically evaluate the existing social media platforms of the media organizations and propose solutions for redeploying these to match the desired civic goals. Second, they belonged to the same demographic as the youth that the organizations were calling upon to participate in their social media platforms. One of the students had grown up in the town where the local newspaper was based and could therefore share insider knowledge of the youth experience of the area.

Thus, in addition to other young people consulted during the design process, the design students were ideally positioned to provide a youth perspective. They were inherently more familiar with the social media practices of their peers, and had an intimate understanding of networked culture and the civic practices of the young.

#aPepper

This case focused on the local newspaper in Kongsvinger first established in 1926 and with a circulation of about 16,000 copies at the time of writing. Although the newspaper attracted some young readers, youth in the area mostly resorted to Facebook as their main information and interaction medium. In addition, the only forms of interaction possible on the newspaper's website and Facebook page was reading the information

and writing comments. The newspaper had a youth news section that published news relevant to youth, run by a small editorial team headed by an older journalist and young assistants. In its desire to create new spaces for youth civic engagement, the newspaper sought ideas for attracting more active participation among young readers.

The *DELTA* project challenged a class of master's level interaction design students to develop design concepts for encouraging youth participation in local news arenas connected to the newspaper. The students received a brief in which they were asked to develop a concept for engaging youth in local news through the platform of the local newspaper. The task was to develop this concept through a prototype for digital interaction aimed at young people in the areas where the newspaper is distributed, but the prototype should also be applicable for other groups. The students were to make their design concepts compatible with smartphones, iPads and PCs.

After the first week of lectures the whole class went on an excursion to Kongsvinger, during which they were taken on a tour of the newspaper's offices and were introduced to the editorial staff. Through discussions with the newspaper staff they gained insight of the newspaper's operations, especially with regard to the production of news aimed at youth. At this point, the students were already thinking of the design challenges that might arise in developing concepts to encourage participation among young online-newspaper users.

After the tour, the students split into groups and conducted mini informal ethnographic fieldwork at different venues in the town centre where they got to practice some of the research methods on research and modes of inquiry they had been introduced to earlier. They strolled along the main streets at the town centre and did some short informal interviews with young people they found hanging around. In addition, the groups did some further research centred specifically on their chosen design concepts.

I particularly followed two students who had listened very closely to what the young people from the town had told them. These two decided to follow up the accounts by examining what had been posted on popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and had hashtags that were directly related to the town and activities going on there. Within a week, they had found a considerable amount of online content about the area generated by local youth in the form of blog entries, pictures, videos, and information about local events and activities.

There was a general reaction of surprise when the two students presented the results of their online search to the rest of the class, as the local teens they had talked to described the town as 'boring' and 'dead,' giving the impression of not much around to do. As the students found out, the volume of online content about everyday activities posted by youth contrasted with a widespread belief among locals that the place offered little in the way of out-of-school activities. Was the problem that youth in the area did not know about all the activities their peers were participating in? Was it that they did not find these activities interesting or exciting enough?

Later in this chapter is a description of the design concept developed by the students to develop a prototype of an application for collecting, editing, and publishing

feeds from social media platforms. The main premise, from the students' perspective, was that the meaning of 'news' and what it means to be engaged in news needed re-framing. Their online research had revealed that the youth of the town were already actively participating in activities they considered as being relevant forms of civic engagement. They found masses of evidence of this through the videos and pictures posted by young people involved in sports and other cultural activities. The problem, according to the two students, was that this was not visible enough, as it only existed in the semi-private online social networks of Kongsvinger youth.

Thus, the students decided to develop a concept that proposed a means of making the social-media presence of the Kongsvinger youth more visible by adding the proposed application to the local newspaper. Making such an application a feature of the local newspaper represented a significant way of moving the voices of the local youth from the peripheries of semi-private online arenas to the centre. The idea behind the application, according to the students, was 'to use this content as news' – to make it possible to highlight, distribute, and profile this content in the local newspaper. Explaining the idea behind the application, the students said: 'We want the youth to be storytellers of issues that concern them – the things they did, are doing or will do [and] that they would like other people to know'.



Image 1. Mobile app prototype

A screen grab from the students' keynote presentation showing the prototype of the mobile version of the application, with menu function icons in red.

A typical scenario would start with someone in Kongsvinger posting a picture, video, or written comment on any of the popular social media with the hashtag #aPepper. After that, an editorial team would collect all posts using this hashtag, such as Tweets or Instagram feeds and publish it in the newspaper.

1. Share it in FB (brag about it)



*FB!
and save
favourites!*

Image 2. Facebook sharing feature

A screen grab from the students' presentation showing the Facebook sharing feature of the app.

The editorial team would then proceed to select content daily and publish it on the application. This selected content would be published in a special column of the newspaper created especially for the app.

2. Landscapeview of most popular posts



*Most commented
in the last days!*

Image 3. Comment feature

One feature of the app was a graph where one could see the authors of the posts that had received the most comments.

The app would be designed so that users would be able to share content generated under the hashtag on social media such as Facebook. The app would make it possible for users to track postings to see those that receive the most comments.

For most Norwegian towns the size of Kongsvinger, the local newspaper constitutes a central arena for what might be considered the local public sphere. The teens that the students on the field trip talked to expressed little interest in reading the local newspaper or posting comments on the newspaper's website. They considered the newspaper to be something their parents read and did not reflect their interests and preoccupations. By introducing a service for highlighting the content produced by youth on social media in the newspaper, the creators of the concept saw this as a good way of making the youths' voices heard and giving them the feeling that their voices mattered, which could help attract young people to the newspaper's website to read, watch, and comment. The proposed concept could also help construct the newspaper as a new arena as a civic-engagement space where youths' voices could be heard.

After the course had finished, the two students were invited to present this concept to the staff of the research and development department of the company that owned the Kongsvinger newspaper and, a few months later, to present their projects at a national conference of newspapers that had young readers as its main theme.

#OurKongsvinger

The second case originated from the work of two students on a master's course in service design at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design. As part of their curriculum for the learning of co-design methods they were given a two-week long task to design tools for the culture and recreational activities department of the Kongsvinger municipal council to facilitate dialogue and communication between the municipality and local citizens, especially the youth.

These tools were particularly important for the municipal council because they were developing several projects aimed at building public meeting places for local inhabitants, for which they considered citizen participation to be key. Amongst these projects was an activity park – planned to serve all age groups, from children to the elderly – in the neighbourhood of Vennersberg.

In order for the locals to feel a greater sense of ownership, the group working on the project wanted to include local inhabitants as much as possible. Thus, the task we proposed to the students was to provide tools and methods that participants in projects such as this could use for involving locals throughout the project, especially in the idea-generation phase.

The teachers and the students began the week by going to Kongsvinger, where they held a workshop with a group of inhabitants. The participants were aged from 12 to 50 years. This was the third of a series of workshops that the *DELTA* project had organized in Kongsvinger and the workshop was a cultural mapping exercise to gain

insight into the participants' everyday outdoor social activities and the geographical locations in which they carried out these activities.

During the workshop, the participants were first asked to talk generally about the town from their personal experience. Afterwards, they were asked to draw on poster-size sheets of paper. For the council staff from the activity park project, the workshop served as a starting point for collecting ideas about the park and for recruiting future ambassadors and collaborators for the project. For the service design students, all of whom were in Kongsvinger for the first time, this was an opportunity to meet some of the local people. It was also an opportunity to understand the potential issues related to communication between the authorities and the different age groups from the local population. After the workshop, the participants gave the students a tour of the surrounding neighbourhood. The students were then divided into groups and each group was asked to develop a design concept that could help the council to promote citizen participation in local activities of benefit to the community.

In the following, I will present a design concept that one of the student groups developed, based on the idea of a tool designed to facilitate communication between local citizens and municipal authorities.



Image 4. Mobile mailbox

A picture of the mobile mailbox installation placed outside on the street.

Image 4 shows the picture of the prototype of the concept developed by the students: a 'mobile message box balloon monument' that aimed to serve as a tool for collecting feedback from the local population on propositions, ideas, or impending decisions by the municipal council. The tool could also be used by any other group, such as

youth organizations, sporting associations, or people working together, who wanted to consult the general public on any project they were working on.

The mobile message box balloon monument, as seen in the picture comprised a white cardboard with a small slot for posting pieces of paper, and a bright red balloon attached to the cardboard box. The students chose the colour red for the balloon to represent one of the colours of the official seal of the town council and because the brightness of the colour would catch the attention of passers-by. The balloon box would be placed in locations where there would be direct interaction with passers-by, so the municipal council could, for example, attach a message to the box, such as: 'The town authorities want your opinion on where we should build a new activity park.' Likewise, a local group of young skaters might post a message in reply to a request such as: 'We want your suggestions on what to name the newly built skate park in our neighbourhood.' People would be invited to respond either by posting a letter into the box or by posting a comment digitally on the box's profile page on social media. The students suggested the hashtag #OurKongsvinger.

The idea behind this concept could be likened to what one civic designer and organizer defined as 'civic hacking', which he defined as 'the act of quickly improving the processes and systems of local government with new tools or approaches, conducted with cities, by citizens, as an act of citizenship' (Levitas 2013).

In the next two sections, I will take up some key themes from the two design examples described above. In doing so, I wish to highlight the ways in which design can play a role in helping cultural institutions generate spaces for civic participation of youth through social media.

Disruptions

The design concept of a mobile app that highlights content posted by Kongsvinger youth on social media challenges the status of the newspaper as the sole curator of the content of youth civic engagement and the space where civic participation happens. The concept suggests a means of making the online presence of the youth visible in the institutionalized public sphere that the newspaper represents. It proposes a means of transposing the voices of the youth from the semi-public online social networks. The Kongsvinger youth that the design students spoke to during their field trip expressed little interest in reading the local newspaper or posting comments on the newspaper's website. They considered the newspaper to be something their parents read; something that did not reflect their interests and preoccupations. We can interpret the idea of introducing the app as a way of bringing to the fore the interest-driven participation of young people in peripheral spaces on social media. This could help attract the youth to the newspaper's website to read, watch, and comment, thus disrupting the idea of the newspaper as a space where only dutiful forms of citizenship happens.

One can also consider the second case as a form of disruptive innovation. The

hype around the civic potential of social media such as Facebook and Twitter has encouraged institutions of local democracy to see them as a magic solution for encouraging youth citizenship. As I have explained earlier, all previous attempts by the council to engage youth through social media had met with only slim success. The concept proposed by the students disrupted the idea of social media as exclusively digital. The mobile message box concept in this sense could be considered as an analogue form of social media. It would enable the sharing of information among Kongsvinger residents, facilitate co-operation during the execution of local projects, and thus facilitate collective action. Despite previous efforts having failed, the municipal officials we collaborated with in the project still held the firm belief that the best approach to reaching youth lay in the form of digital social media. The solution proposed was the creation of what in essence was a social medium. However, the social medium was not in the form expected by the municipality, which was that the concepts would be in the form of social media in digital form. Thus, the students disrupted the notion that civic engagement through social media could only happen in the digital realm.

Design as social negotiation

Media and cultural studies scholar Anne Balsamo (2011) describes designing as a process of ‘negotiated achievements’. She notes that design solutions are often the outcome of social interactions and a process of meaning-making and negotiation. Because the design process involves human actors representing different stakes and interests, designers play a valuable role in negotiating shared understandings and meanings. The designs proposed by the students in the two cases embodied this process of negotiation and meaning-making.

First, the designs embodied negotiations among stakeholders with different interests and perspectives. At one end of the spectrum we have the interests and perspectives of representatives of institutions, the municipal council and the newspaper, whose interest was in creating spaces for local citizenship where youth were invited to participate. At the other end we have the youth, who generally considered participation in spaces controlled by such institutional bodies as not relevant to them.

Second, the designs embodied negotiations between different models of citizenship. They represented negotiations between institutional and non-institutional, hierarchical and non-hierarchical, traditionally politically- and interest-driven forms of civic participation. The local newspaper’s participation in this project was premised on the basis that Kongsvinger youth needed to be more civically engaged and that the newspaper could provide a space for this engagement. For a small town like Kongsvinger, the local newspaper constituted an important part of the institutionalized public sphere, where local youth could read the news and post comments on the news stories. However, the design students found that the youth of Kongsvinger were

instead actively participating in sharing videos, posting blog entries, status updates and other information about sports, popular culture and other events and everyday life with their peers on social media. These types of online participation are typical of non-institutional and non-hierarchical online networks, where the issues are defined by youth themselves. These activities are what some authors have termed ‘interest driven’ and ‘friendship driven’ online participation (see, for example, Ito et al. 2009; Jenkins et al. 2009; Livingstone & Brake 2009). Kahne, Lee & Feezell (2013) argue that, although not focused on traditional politics, such activities could help youth develop valuable skills, agency, and norms for group action, which in turn could facilitate other kinds of civic participation.

Third, in the case of the newspaper, the designs also embodied negotiation between commercial and civic imperatives. For a business organization like the newspaper, it involved reconciling conflicting concerns: on one hand, there was the newspaper’s role as a constitutive part of the local public sphere, curating a space of democratic deliberation. On the other, there was the newspaper’s position as a commercial actor, with the ultimate aim of increasing readership and augmenting advertising revenue. The question at the centre was whether the design solutions proposed would position the youth as customers or as civic actors and whether these two are compatible.

In both cases, the design students served as cultural intermediaries in the sense that they materially reproduced and codified in their design concepts all these negotiations between diverging interests, values, and actors.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine the role design innovation can play in helping Norwegian-based cultural institutions to create spaces for civic engagement among youth through social media. In this chapter, I have shown how the process and the outcomes of designs for civic social media can embody negotiations between different civic actors, values, interests, and investments. I have also shown how the process of designing can open up a space where understandings of the meaning of civic engagement, forms of youth participation and social media can be renegotiated, revised, and re-inscribed in proposed technological solutions.

It is worthwhile to point out that the design concepts developed by students described above have not yet been implemented. Thus, it is difficult to assess the potential of such proposals as civic innovations with regard to these specific cultural institutions. In the case of the local newspaper, management was generally positive about the concepts and found the suggestions useful. However, they pointed out that in order to carry out the changes suggested by the students, they would have to engage in a complicated negotiation process with the organizational hierarchy. In the case of the municipal council, representatives expressed enthusiasm at the concept of the mobile message balloon and even invited the students to fully develop and implement the

concepts in Kongsvinger. Unfortunately, the students were not able to do this because of their tight course schedule.

Nevertheless, the changing preferences among youth may be seen as bringing forth a possible new conjuncture for civic practices in cultural institutions. In this conjuncture, civic and political organizations might be encouraged to engage youth in ways that are more sensitive to their needs. Young citizens desire new ways to voice their opinions and seek new channels and modes of expression to communicate their perspectives. Cultural institutions that are sensitive to these desires may have a greater chance of actually engaging networked young citizens.

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