Author(s): Sormanen, Niina; Lauk, Epp; Uskali, Turo

Title: Facebook's ad hoc groups: a potential source of communicative power of networked citizens

Year: 2017

Version:

Please cite the original version:

COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

Niina Sormanen
niina.sormanen@jyu.fi
PhD Candidate. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Communication, Finland.

Epp Lauk
epp.lauk@jyu.fi
Professor. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Communication, Finland

Turo Uskali
turo.uskali@jyu.fi
PhD. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Communication, Finland

Facebook's ad hoc groups: a potential source of communicative power of networked citizens

Abstract

Ad hoc groups (sporadically formed on social network sites for achieving particular common objectives) have been seen as a public space for citizen participation and debate. This study focuses on Facebook's *ad hoc* groups in Finland. The aim is to detect the potential of these groups to enhance networked citizens' communicative power for raising societally important issues to public agenda and initiate changes in society. We suggest a categorization of the groups according to their missions, and present their members' specific motivations and objectives through an online survey. Despite the general entertainment-orientation and self-referential nature of social media, the results show that ambitions and objectives of *ad hoc* groups differ notably according to their main mission. Especially clear difference is found between discussion groups and those pursuing societal influence. In addition, media analysis is used to discover how much and for what reasons news media have used the specific groups as news sources. Although not strategically seeking media visibility, the societal influence groups gained larger news coverage, related to their thought-provoking topics, connections to current conditions, group membership size and potential to deal with issues of common concern.

Keywords
Social media, communicative power, *ad hoc* groups, audience-driven agenda setting, Facebook, Fifth Estate, journalism

1. Introduction

Many scholars argue that high levels of social media communication are entertainment-oriented, self-referential and motivated by users' personal fulfillment (e.g. Curran, Fenton & Freedman, 2012) and are even "closer to 'electronic autism' than to actual communication" (Castells, 2007: 247). Nevertheless, also other less selfish objectives exist in Social Network Site usage ranging from community building,

networking and social capital benefits for the society (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009) to forming counter power, which can turn into social movements functioning both online and offline (Castells, 2007; 2012; Bakardjieva, 2011).

Through giving the voice and power to individuals/users, online social networks enable citizens more easily to monitor the public domain of the official and institutional realms (Bruns, 2007; Keane, 2009; Papacharissi, 2009). Thus, *ad hoc* groups (groups and pages formed for a particular purpose) emerging on Social Network Sites (SNS) may, for example, utilize their communicative power when traditional media fails in articulating important issues, and providing people with public space for debate and citizen participation. Even further, Internet and social media have arguably enabled formation of a 'Fifth Estate', referring to "networked individuals" who by sourcing their own information and creating content online, independent from institutions, may become capable of challenging traditional societal power holders such as government, media and corporations (Dutton, 2009; Newman, Dutton & Blank, 2012).

Facebook's *ad hoc* groups are one example of a potential 'Fifth Estate' manifestation in social media (On the concept of the 'Fifth Estate' see more: Dutton, 2007; 2009). These groups may independently act as societal agenda builders as they are able to collect large online memberships around their issues, efficiently exchange information, and even instigate societal change. Some of these groups form around topical societal issues and gain media attention to their cause to emphasize their power, and thus form a potential synergy with the traditional media when they are used as news sources.

We aim to describe and compare Facebook *ad hoc* groups' (AHGs') motivations and objectives in order to detect how their issues and missions range and vary from societal change to entertainment. Thus, we also test the assumption that social media communication is largely oriented to entertainment and socialization against its potential orientation to influence societal agenda and enhance the communicative power of networked citizens. Studying the groups as a source for journalists' news coverage we attempt to demonstrate their potential influence in setting societal agendas through traditional media.

The notion of 'communicative power' was introduced by Habermas (1996) as a further development of Arendt's concept of political power. Habermas distinguishes between communicatively generated power and administratively employed power and discusses the ways communicative power can be transformed into administrative power (by using law as a transformer) (Trejo-Mathys, 2012). During the past decade, social media have permeated all spheres of life and changed the conditions of human (inter)action at both the individual and societal levels. Concomitant to the massive growth of digital networking sites, citizens receive new channels for collective action and expression. Castells (2009) sees this new quality of communication as mass self-communication that the creative audience realizes as an interactive production of meaning, thereby enhancing the communicative power of individuals. As Fenton (2012: 125–126) emphasizes "the act of digital self-communication has become part of many people's everyday rituals". Sormanen and Dutton (2015: 4) define five attributes for identifying one form of online AHGs – Facebook pages and groups – with potential to achieve communicative power and play the role of a Fifth Estate:

> Pages which: 1) were set up by individuals acting with some degree of organization and continuity, 2) use ICTs to enable creation of networks of individuals, 3) work independently, outside of conventional institutional or organizational authorities, 4) use Internet-enabled sourcing and dissemination of information, and 5) were formed for the purpose of challenging, supporting or holding to account a societal authority, institution, or issue (i.e., seeking to effect societal change).

This study uses these criteria to identify groups pursuing societal change and differentiate them from the mere entertainment oriented groups.

Brandtzæg and Heim (2009) argue the most important reasons for using SNSs to be: 1) getting in contact with new people (31%), 2) keeping in touch with their friends (21%), and 3) general socializing (14%). Welser et al. (2007) and Lai and Turban (2008) also list various reasons for people to join online conversations: friendship, debate, knowledge sharing, expressing appreciation or affiliation, building a sense of community, providing and receiving social support, collecting information, and providing answers to questions. These motives and reasons may vary depending on interests, age, educational background and gender. This study investigates the motivations of various groups according to their general mission and/or purpose (e.g. discussion or entertainment vs. striving societal change), focusing on their potentially differing objectives.

Before the Internet era, the news media were seen as the main setters of public agenda, thus determining which issues were societally important and in the public's focus (e.g. McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs, 2005; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). The Internet and social media have transformed the way journalists work, source information, and interact and co-produce with the public (e.g. Allan, 2006; Bruns, 2007; Pöyhtäri, Väliverronen, & Ahva, 2014). Newman et al. (2012) suggest that the Internet and social media have led to a mutually beneficial symbiosis of the Fourth and Fifth Estates, in which networked individuals and the press search for and share content and news, and build on and support each other. Audiences can also set the issue agenda for the media. "Audience-driven agenda setting" is a phenomenon where issues discussed by the public sometimes lead the media to adjust their agenda (Uscinski, 2009). Many studies have found that online channels, such as blogs, can synthesize people's opinions and form public agenda, which through spreading in the Internet influence news coverage of traditional media (e.g. Delwiche, 2005; Kim & Lee, 2006; Wallsten, 2007). When considering the previously noted media's ability to set the issue agenda for the public, audience-driven agenda setting may thus give online audiences more power to even influence wider societal agendas. Online audiences can hence also be seen as active sources in 'agenda building' (e.g. Rogers & Dearing, 1988; Tanner, 2004).

Online networks of individuals, such as Facebook AHGs, can build their communicative power by sourcing, sharing and influencing opinions independent from traditional media. Sharing information, knowledge and opinions are seen as some key features of an AHG, along with encouraging participation. Therefore, AHGs' publicity and presence in traditional media can be seen as effective means of reaching out to a massive number of people and gaining credibility (Nikkanen, 2012: 9). Thus, despite their independence, if AHGs objectives are to venture societal change they may also benefit from wider online and offline activities, including media attention.

All the aforementioned reflections lead us to ask the following questions in this study: 1) How to categorize Facebook's AHGs according to their declared missions? 2) In what do the main motivations and objectives of AHGs differ? 3) Do AHGs provoke traditional media attention to further their objectives? 4) What types of AHGs achieve public coverage through traditional media?

All SNSs, such as Facebook, are seen as venues of equal democratic participation and expression, which create a place for people to communicate and to group with people with similar interests (Lai & Turban, 2008). About a half of the adult Finnish population (aged 16–89 years) have joined an SNS, of which the most popular is Facebook. Since becoming popular in 2007, about three years after its launch in the United States, Facebook is currently used by 95 % of all Finnish users of SNSs. Younger generations are still the most active users but a rapid increase has occurred among elder generations during a few past years (Statistics Finland, 2014). Brandtzæg and Heim (2011) state that smaller communities on SNS, in comparison with large open communities such as YouTube or Wikipedia, may

provide lower thresholds and more intimate spaces for participation/contribution and thus show increased members' activity. Thus, Facebook AHGs may be seen as good targets to investigate networks of online individuals and their motivations.

2. Data and methods

This study makes use of multiple methods. First, an online survey was carried out for receiving information about Facebook AHG members' motives, objectives, perceptions and activities. Second, content analysis of Finnish news media was conducted to detect news stories in which the specific AHGs were presented.

2.1 Online survey of Facebook AHG members

The survey was composed with the aim of revealing AHG members' motivations to join an AHG, the group's shared objectives and individual interests, and estimations of the efficiency of the group's online and offline activities. The survey questions made use of earlier theories of activity and motivations to join and use SNS (e.g. Welser et al., 2007; Lai & Turban, 2008; Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; 2011). The survey, created in the Google survey system, consisted of 33 questions (including Likert scale, multiple choice and open questions). The language of the survey was Finnish as all the target groups were Finnish (the authors are responsible for all translations). The survey was tested before its circulation by the research team and five external volunteers.

The overall sample consisted of 27 open Facebook groups and pages selected according to their different missions. The groups were categorized as: 1) social wellbeing movements (such as the *'875 grams'* community gathering money for prematurely born babies' hospital care), 2) community/discussion groups (such as *'We <3 Kerava'*, a community page for people from a small Finnish town), 3) protest/support movements (such as *'Talvivaara has to be closed'* protesting against a mining company causing environmental damage), 4) ideological movements (such as *'My Finland is International'* promoting acceptance of racial differences), and 5) law initiatives (such as the *'I do 2013'* with a petition to change Finnish law to accept same sex marriages). The categories were based on preliminary observations of the groups and evaluation of their objectives (cf. Welser et al. 2007; Lai & Turban, 2008). The selected groups' administrators were contacted and asked to distribute the survey link to their group members. The respondents were asked to identify themselves with one of the selected 27 groups and answer the survey with their own group in mind. The survey resulted in 712 individual survey responses from 16 groups by the end of December 2013, including 38 respondents who did not identify with any group and 18 respondents not wanting to reveal their group.

Table 1 shows the English translations of the final 16 groups, their assigned respondents, overall number of group members (as of the end of December 2013), the group category they represented, and whether they are Facebook pages or groups.

Table 1. Final selection of 16 Facebook groups of the current study

	Group name English translation [Finnish original]	Number of group members who responded to survey		Total number of group members	Group category	FB page or open group?
		Number	**%**			
1	875 grams [875 grammaa]	221	31	117883	Societal wellbeing movement	Page
2	We <3 Kerava	113	15.9	6203	Community/discussion	Group
3	Former city standers Lappeenranta [Entiset citynseisojat Lappeenranta]	97	13.6	2478	Community/discussion	Group
4	Fur farm free Finland 2025 [Turkistarhaton Suomi 2025]	69	9.7	17541	Protest/support movement	Page
5	My Finland is International [Minun Suomeni on kansainvälinen]	46	6.5	48690	Ideological movement	Page
6	I do 2013 [Tahdon2013]	33	4.6	74935	Law initiative	Page
7	Carpool Rovaniemi-Oulu-Rovaniemi [Kimppakyyti Rovaniemi-Oulu-Rovaniemi]	24	3.4	1508	Community/discussion	Group
8	Finnish Defence League (FDL)	15	2.1	4408	Ideological movement	Page
9	We challenge the government to live on income support for a month [Haastamme hallituksen elämään kuukauden toimeentulotuella]	11	1.5	58326	Protest/support movement	Page
10	Pro gender neutral marital law [Sukupuolineutraalin avioliittolain puolesta]	10	1.4	18020	Ideological movement	Page
11	Say NO to MPs' pay raises [Sano EI kansanedustajien palkankorotuksille]	7	1	35653	Protest/support movement	Page
12	Talvivaara has to be closed [Talvivaara on suljettava]	4	0.7	1454	Protest/support movement	Page
13	Pekka Haavisto for President 2012 [Pekka Haavisto Presidentiksi 2012]	2	0.3	97892	Protest/support movement	Page

14	Sign basic income initiative [Allekirjoita perustulo-kansalaisaloite]	2	0.3	975	Law initiative	Page
15	DogDroppings Into a Bag [KoiranPaskat Pussiin]	1	0.1	67	Societal wellbeing movement	Group
16	Say NO to new TV fee raise [Sano EI uudelle Tv-maksun Korotukselle]	1	0.1	31177	Protest/support movement	Page
	I do not know	38	5.3			
	I do not want to tell	18	2.5			
	Total	712	100	517210		

Table 2 shows how the respondents were divided into the group categories. As this categorization demonstrates, the AHGs fall into different categories according to their ambitions/objectives. The categories present AHGs ranging from more 'serious' aspirations to influence societal issues, such as law initiatives, fulfilling the criteria of the Fifth Estate (see Sormanen & Dutton, 2015) to those having 'softer' objectives of friendship and socialization. The categories are used in this study to compare group members' motives, objectives, behavior and perceptions based on their differing group missions.

Table 2. Respondent frequencies (N=656) according to group categories

Group category type	Frequency	%
Societal wellbeing movement	223	34.1
Community/discussion	233	35.5
Protest/support movement	94	14.3
Ideological movement	71	10.8
Law initiative	35	5.3
Total	656	100
Identification not revealed	56	

The survey responses were analyzed using SPSS by descriptive frequencies, averages/means and analysis of variance by One-Way ANOVA. The data analysis focused on 1) all 712 respondents and 2) comparing the 16 groups based on their category types (e.g. community building, law initiatives etc.). In this study, specific analysis aspects of the survey responses were:

1. General respondent information (age, gender, education and income level).
2. Members' motives to join the group were detected through the following question:
   "How important do you consider the following factors in your decision to join the group?" evaluated on a Likert scale from 1=not important at all to 5=very important.
3. Members' perceptions of group objectives (ranging from information diffusion, discussion, reaching specific societal goals, and group conspicuousness to media visibility) were detected through two questions: 1) "How important do you perceive the following objectives concerning the operations of the group?" evaluated on a Likert scale from 1=not important at all to 5=very important and 2) one open question: "Does the group have any other important objectives?"

4. Perceptions of group information sharing activity and operations online and offline were detected through five questions (to investigate the groups' activities and ambitions in relation to concrete external conspicuousness and media visibility): 1) "Have you shared textual or other group content outside the group on Facebook?", 2) "Have you shared textual or other group content to other platforms online outside of Facebook?", 3) "Have you noticed discussion about the group on other online platforms?", 4) "Has the group organized or planning to organize events offline?", and 5) Have you heard/read about the group from newspapers, radio or TV?"

2.2. Detecting the presence of selected AHGs in Finnish news media

The secondary objective of this study was to collect and analyze news stories in which the specific AHGs were presented. The purpose of this content analysis was to investigate how the groups' purposes and activities were covered in newspapers, which enabled to make conclusions about the AHGs potential to affect media agenda (i.e. audience-driven agenda setting).

The data was collected in June-July 2015, primarily from the ten largest circulation-wise newspapers in Finland (according to the data of Finnish Newspaper Association, 2014). An overview was also conducted on smaller publications (all of them being members of the Finnish Newspaper Association, with online editions and archives). The final sample consisted of 233 newspapers. From the 'lifetime' of each AHG (between 2010 and 2015) all news items clearly dealing with or referring to the AHGs in question were collected using search tools of the newspapers' archives and other search engines. The search was conducted using variants of the groups' names and related terms or topics. Close reading was then used in order to identify the ways, means and purposes of presenting AHGs in traditional news media[1].

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Survey: general respondent information

The general age distribution among the population (N=712) is quite even: 15-25 (18%), 26-35 (23.9%), 36-45 (22.6%), 46-55 (18.4%), and over 56 (17.1%). Bigger differences appear when looking at the distribution of various age groups among the different AHGs (Figure 1). Societal wellbeing issues, protests/support, ideological movements and law initiatives attract younger people (15-35[-45] years old) and community/discussion groups attract elder members ([36-] 46 upwards). Ideological movements are not popular among the youngest age group (15-25), while ideological movements and law initiatives are particularly popular among 26-35 years old.

Figure 1. Percentage of different age group members in the specified group types (N=656)
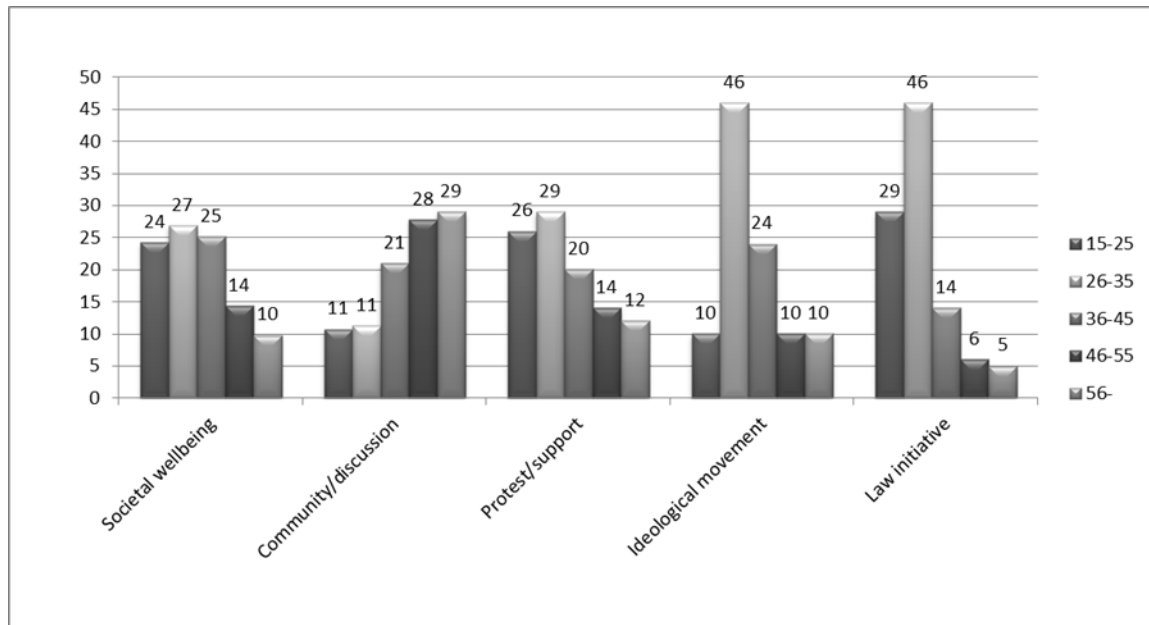
Women respondents dominate in all group types (84.1%) and especially in the AHGs devoted to societal wellbeing (97% women, 3% men). One explanation for these results is that the majority of the members of the largest AHG in our selection – "875 grams" – were women. Men have slightly larger representation in groups focused on community/discussion (75% women, 25% men) and ideological movements (women 66%, men 34%), compared to the protest/support (88% women, 12% men) and law initiative (89% women, 11% men) groups.

Among all the AHG members, lower levels of education slightly prevail (58% have secondary education or lower) and 40% have a University degree. As Figure 2 shows, people with a secondary level education dominate in the societal wellbeing, community/discussion and protest/support groups. Members with the higher educational levels are more attracted to ideological movements and law initiatives.

Figure 2. Proportion (%) of members' educational level among the group types
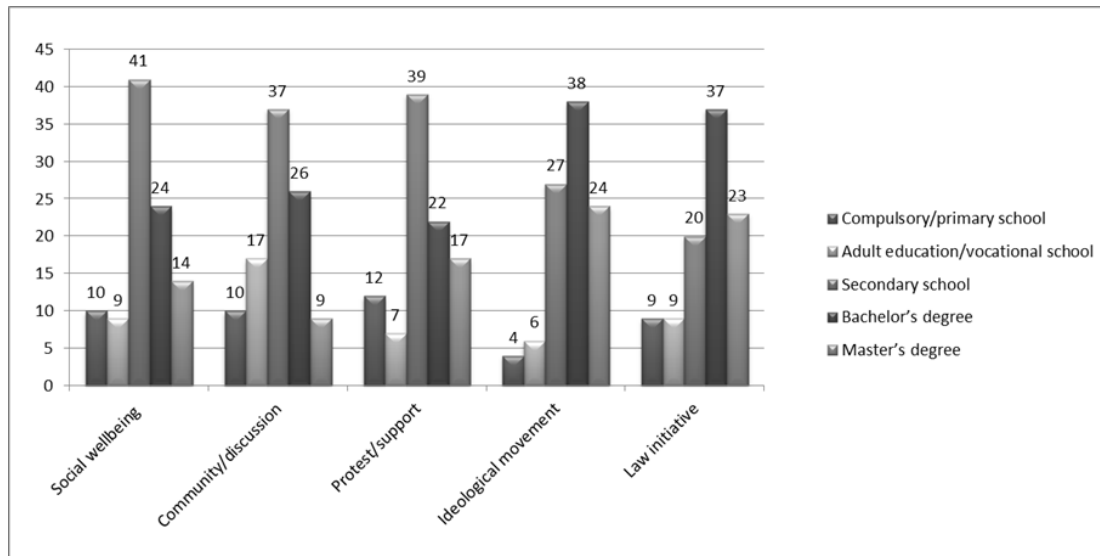
(N=656, excluding 'I don't know' n=6 and 'Other' n=4)

The majority of the respondents earned less than €40 000 per year (71.9%), while 14.2% had income from €40-70 000, and only a few earned more than €70 000 per year (2.5%). Members from the lowest income level (under €10 000) are clearly most interested in the protest/support groups (31%). This is not surprising as amongst these groups are those, which attract people with lower income to protest against the government e.g. the *We challenge the government to live on income support for a month* and *Say NO to MPs' pay rises*.

3.2 Members' motives to join the group

Primary motivation to join a group was to exchange information about the groups'/pages' specific issues. Expectations influencing these issues in society and the possibility to express one's opinion were the second important motivators. Also, individual participation was highly valued. The four least popular of the nine options were related to entertainment, group membership size and friends. (see Table 3). These results generally correlate with earlier SNS motivation studies (Welser et al., 2007; Lai & Turban, 2008; Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; 2011).

Table 3. Group members' motives according to the importance for joining their group (N=712)

Motives in order of importance	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I wanted to get information on the subject	4.07	.997
2. I wanted to share information	3.06	1.297
3. I thought the group to be influential	2.97	1.401
4. I wanted to express my opinion	2.90	1.357
5. I wanted to participate in the discussion about the group's subject	2.88	1.251
6. I thought the group to be entertaining	2.79	1.342
7. My friends were in the group	2.00	1.215
8. The group had a lot of members	1.85	1.129
9. I wanted to get new friends	1.49	.903

One-way ANOVA (p=.00 concerning each 9 motive statements) analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in motivations among the different AHG category types. A

Tukey post hoc test showed the biggest difference between the community/discussion groups and all the other group types in all motivation statements except 'getting information' (p=.00 only between community/discussion and protest/support and p=>.40 between community/discussion and all the other group types) and 'participating in discussion' (p =.01 only between community/discussion and societal wellbeing and p=>.30 between community/discussion and all the other group types).

Closer comparison of the AHG category types by mean values showed that the members of protest/support, ideological movements and law initiatives AHGs were more motivated by the group's potential influence and the possibility of expressing opinion than the members of other groups (see all mean values from Figure 3). Most interested in entertainment, friendships and participation in discussion are the members of community/discussion groups.

Figure 3. Mean values of the importance of various motivators among the different types of groups

I wanted to get information on the subject
I wanted to share information
I though the group to be influential
I wanted to express my opinion
I wanted to participate in the discussion about the group's subject
I thought the group to be entertaining
My friends were in the group
The group had a lot of members
I wanted to get new friends
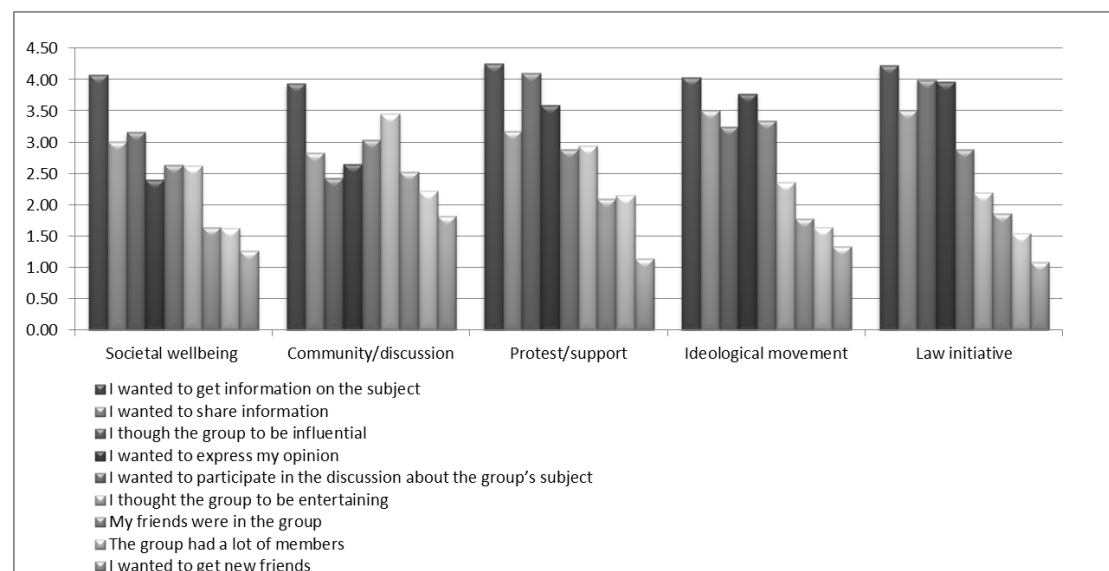
(1=not important at all, 5=very important) (N=656)

3.3. Members' perceptions of group objectives

While the primary motive for joining an AHG was exchange of information about the issues important to the group, the primary perceived objective of the AHGs was sharing the groups' information. The second important objective was aspiring people to discuss, participate and act. Also, contributing to achieving common goals appears as an important objective. The members of the groups were less concerned about general conspicuousness and media visibility of their groups (see Table 4), which seems a bit surprising as public popularity potentially supports their aspirations.

**Table 4.** Evaluation of the importance of group's objectives (N=712)

Objectives in order of importance	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Information sharing	4.17	1.011
2. Activating people	3.85	1.182
3. Discussion	3.77	1.135
4. Reaching a specific goal	3.55	1.323
5. Bringing people together	3.47	1.257
6. General conspicuousness of the group	3.07	1.369
7. Media visibility	2.91	1.408

In addition, open answers emphasized the specific missions and operational objectives of the groups, such as increasing the awareness of animal abuse, keeping in touch with childhood friends, forming networks, and fundraising for an incubator for premature babies.

A statistically significant difference was found between the objectives of all the AHG category types by using one-way ANOVA analysis (p=.00), except concerning objectives of 'bringing people together' (p=>.60) and 'discussion' (p=>.52). A Tukey post hoc test revealed most similarities (p=>.10) among objectives of the AHG groups focused on law initiatives, ideological movements and also protest/support movements. Clear differences appeared among those and the community/discussion groups.

A closer comparison of group category types by mean values (see Figure 4) shows that groups with ambitions of a broader societal influence (law initiatives, ideological and protest/support groups) rate information dissemination higher and are more interested in activating people to achieve common goals and encouraging discussion than the other groups. The community/discussion groups' members are not as interested in reaching specific goals, conspicuousness of the group or media visibility and rate all these objectives lower than the aforementioned groups. Interestingly, also societal wellbeing groups rate the objectives somewhat lower than the other groups, nonetheless giving more emphasis to reaching group goals.

Figure 4. Mean values of the importance of various objectives (1=not important at all, 5=very important) between group types (N=656)
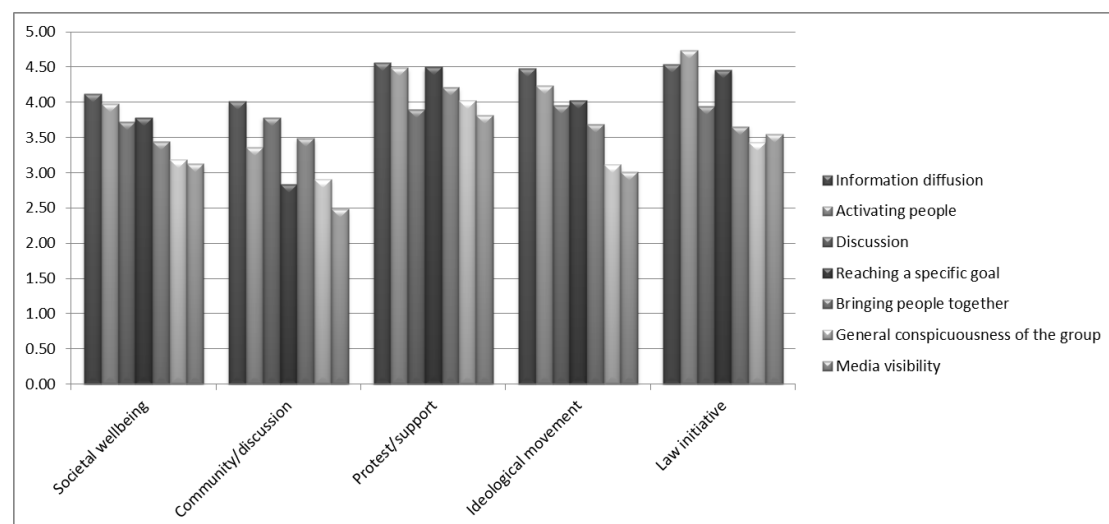
3.4 Ad hoc groups' online and offline activity, objectives, and presence in Finnish news media

It seems logical to expect that distributing information and acting outside the space of their own groups or even offline would be important for the members in achieving the groups' goals (e.g. Castells, 2007; 2012; Nikkanen, 2012). However, dissemination of the information about the groups is less active than could be expected, since less than a half of respondents (48%) have shared some information about the group on Facebook (outside their own group) and 6% have done it outside Facebook on other platforms (most often on Twitter). A small majority of group members (53.7%) state that the groups have organized or are planning to organize activities offline. Most of these are celebrations/parties (22%), meetings (14%) and demonstrations (12%). Close to half of group members (45.8%) have noticed discussions about the groups on other Internet platforms, mostly blogs and discussion sites. It could be concluded that the groups are not very efficient in disseminating their issues on the Internet and offline, yet there are signs of purposeful information distribution and organized activities.

Concerning traditional media attention, group members report mostly receiving information about their particular groups from newspapers (see Table 5).

Table 5. Proportions (%) of traditional media channels from which groups' members have got news/information about their groups (adjusted to group membership counts: group result frequency / group member count = %)

Group type	Newspaper	Radio	TV	Cannot say
Societal wellbeing movement	**80**	49	68	1
Community/discussion	**55**	6	2	0
Protest/support movement	**48**	15	23	5
Ideological movement	**32**	8	23	4
Law initiative	**83**	40	54	9

The analysis of the newspaper texts showed that ten out of the sixteen groups (63%) had received publicity in newspapers. The groups focused on societal wellbeing, protest/support, law initiative and ideological movements received most of the media coverage. 94 news out of all 97 concerned these societal influence oriented groups. The *875 grams* group ranked highest in news coverage appearing in 13 different newspapers and with the highest number of individual news (40), followed by *Pekka Haavisto for president 2012* (12 newspapers, 22 news items) and *I do 2013* (8, 10). See Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of newspaper coverage frequencies and total number of news per group and group type from the time period of 2010-2015

Group name	Group category	Coverage in different newspapers	Total number of news
875 grams	**Societal wellbeing**	**13**	**40**
Pekka Haavisto for president 2012	**Protest/support**	**12**	**22**
I do 2013	**Law initiative**	**8**	**10**
Dog droppings into a bag	Societal wellbeing	6	**7**
Finnish Defence League (FDL)	Ideological movement	4	6
We challenge the government to live on income support for a month	Protest/support	3	5
We <3 Kerava	Community/discussion	2	2
Fur farm free Finland 2025	Ideological movement	2	2
My Finland is International	Ideological movement	2	2
Former city standers Lappeenranta	Community/discussion	1	1
Carpool Rovaniemi-Oulu-Rovaniemi	Community/discussion	0	0
Pro gender neutral marital law	Ideological movement	0	0
Say NO to MPs' pay raises	Protest/support	0	0
Talvivaara has to be closed	Protest/support	0	0
Sign basic income initiative	Law initiative	0	0
Say NO to the new TV fee raise	Protest/support	0	0
Total		53	97

The analysis shows that the groups with higher aspirations for visibility in society and media (protest/support groups, societal wellbeing, law initiative and ideological movements) also get more coverage in the newspapers (see Table 7).

Table 7. Comparison of group types' news coverage frequencies from the media analysis and mean values of traditional media visibility and conspicuousness objectives from the survey results

Group category type	Objective of media visibility (mean 1-5)	Total number of news (frequency)	Objective of conspicuousness (mean 1-5)
Protest/support	3.81	27	4.02
Law initiative	3.54	10	3.43
Societal wellbeing	3.13	47	3.18
Ideological movement	3.01	10	3.11
Community/discussion	2.48	3	2.90

Also, there seems to be a certain correlation between the amount of news items in the newspapers and the number of the members of the groups: bigger groups (*875 grams*, *Pekka Haavisto for president 2012*, *I do 2013* and *We challenge the government*) tend to receive more media coverage (see Table 8).

Table 8. Comparison of selected groups by number of news and AHGs' followers/membership

Ranking by number of followers	Group name	Number of news items	Number of followers
1.	875 grams	40	118000
2.	Pekka Haavisto for president 2012	22	98000
3.	I do 2013	10	75000
4.	We challenge the government to live on income support for a month	7	58000
16.	Dog droppings into a bag	6	670
11.	Finnish Defence League (FDL)	5	4000
6.	Say NO to MPs' pay raises	0	36000
7.	Say NO to the new TV fee raise	0	31000

We also found an unexpected amount of media interest towards the groups with small membership, the 16th ranked *Dog droppings into a bag* and 11th ranked *Finnish Defense League*. The size of membership, though, does not guarantee large news coverage, as both 'Say NO' groups (ranked 6th and 7th by the number of members) received no coverage whatsoever.

Although some correlation exists between the amount of news and the total number of members on Facebook, mere size does not seem to explain why and how certain groups become addressed in traditional news media. Part of the reason probably lies within the group's general topic and in the possible transition of group activities out into the "real world". For instance, the topic of the group *875 grams* is very touching, and the news media like emotive stories. Shoemaker and Reese (1996: 106) have specified six different values which define the newsworthiness of a certain topic or text – importance, interest, controversy, the unusual, timeliness and proximity. Most of these criteria are met in the news coverage of the groups. The AHGs with the most news coverage (*875 grams, Pekka Haavisto for president 2012* and *I do 2013*) had especially moving or divisive topics, and the strongest effect on public societal issues. They were also the ones with the highest number of members on Facebook. Connections to current events or conditions were also a major contributor to the activity and magnitude of news coverage in all cases.

4. Conclusions and discussion

As the first step, a description of socio-demographic characteristics of the AHGs gave us a background for studying the motivations of the members and objectives of these groups as potential Fifth Estate agents. Although the younger generations are usually the dominant age-groups on the social media scene, they do not dominate, according to our results, in the Facebook AHGs. The youth's social media usage is moving towards 'chat' based platforms like WhatsApp and Snapchat. Increasingly, the elder generations are adopting social media, especially Facebook for communication, and AHGs create an easy venue to express one's voice in an intimate space (see Brandtzæg & Heim, 2011).

Surprisingly, elder people appear to be especially more attracted to discussion/community type groups (those considered as more 'light subject areas') and younger people are drawn to the other types. The 26-35 year old age-cohort is particularly attracted to ideological movements and law initiatives. These group types also attract more educated people. The educated over-30 year-olds may represent a specific part of society who are both interested in being active in meaningful societal issues (compared to younger people in general) and also very settled in the societal media scene (vs. older people). Another interesting result is the dominance of women in all group categories, although there are no major gender differences in the use of SNS in general in Finland. Overall age

and education level appear to be factors most predicting association with different types of AHGs.

The motivators for people to join an AHG fall into two clusters. The first is related to the cause's success and prominence through information dissemination, discussion and influence, especially concerning groups related to societal change/influence (protest/support, law initiative, ideological). The second includes socializing, entertainment and making friends (motivations of mainly discussion/entertainment groups). This division supports the thesis that society uses SNS, such as Facebook, for much more than mere entertainment (cf. e.g. Curran et al., 2012; Castells, 2007).

Clear differences appear between the group categories when comparing the prominence of the groups' objectives for the group members. Although all group types emphasize the objectives such as information diffusion, discussion and activating people (seen as quite typical to SNS groups in general) these are more important for the societal influence groups. This aspect combined with emphasis on reaching specific goals indicates that their discussion and activities are more firmly related to the groups' mission in comparison to community/discussion groups.

Thus, the overall aggregate of the group members' motivations and objectives shows that the groups classified into different categories clearly have variance in their concrete motivations and objectives – ranging from those with objectives closer to the 'Fifth Estate' aspirations, such as societal change, to those that have 'softer' objectives of friendship and socialization. The results also verify the initial group categories formed and introduced in the Methods section.

Some researchers have doubted whether the concern for public issues of 'networked citizens' is merely "an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group" (Morozov, 2009; see also Karpf, 2010). However, our research shows that groups that have socially oriented missions are also stronger motivated in striving for their objectives. This does not prove that the activities in online networks are sufficient means to achieve these goals and objectives. Figure 5 displays evaluation of the group types presenting them on a scale from the softer motivations (5) to the more societal influence oriented ones (1).

Figure 5. AHG categories on a scale presenting their motivations/objectives and media visibility
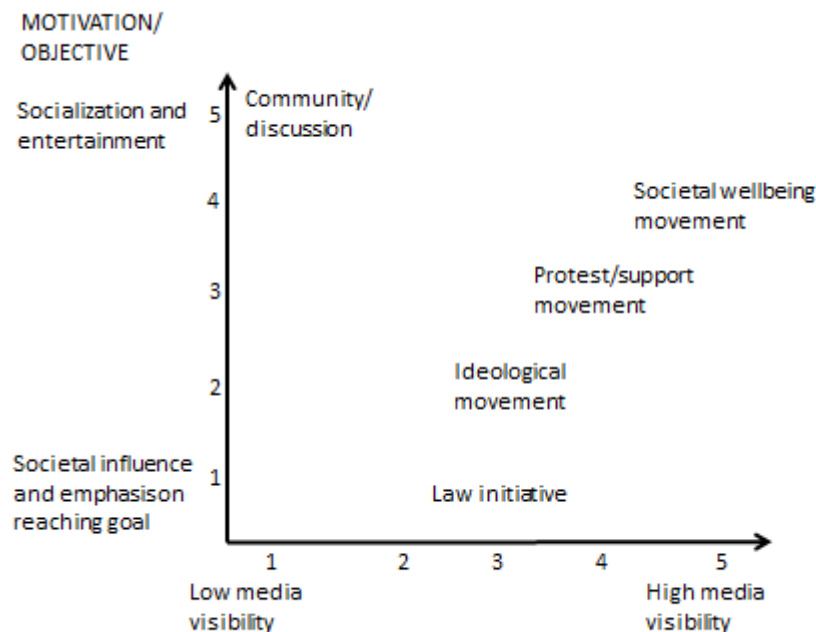
Unexpectedly, most of the societal influence groups did not emphasize media visibility and general conspicuousness quite as much in their objective evaluations, although generally traditional media is viewed as the setter of societal public agendas (e.g. McCombs, 2005; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Their presence in media may be an effective means of reaching a massive number of people and gaining credibility (Nikkanen, 2012), thus increasing the possibility of reaching the groups' goals. It is also possible that 'leaders' of AHG missions are the ones aspiring media and public attention, rather than the members (i.e. survey respondents of this study) and thus, the members do not even share much group information outside the group, and are not interested in media relations. The members rely on or still need a leader to manage the missions' strategic aspects. Nonetheless, the results show that the members of all the societal influence oriented groups thought that their group had achieved a noticeable media attention.

As a secondary objective, this study examined how the AHGs were presented in news media. Although the top three individual news coverage AHGs of this study can be evaluated to have obtained (merely) moderate media visibility and although it may be quite common today for media to use topics and issues found from social media as their news sources (see e.g. Sormanen & Dutton, 2015), it is not that common for traditional media to use precisely the groups, not only their issues, as news topics. When the particular AHGs are the focus of the news, they may be seen more clearly as the initiators of and reasons for agenda building or setting.

Interestingly, the groups pursuing societal change/influence, not those more oriented to entertaining topics, were the ones gaining the largest news media coverage (see Figure 5). In general, the most essential factors in shaping news coverage appear to be the AHG's emotive and thought-provoking topics, connections to current events or conditions, group membership size and capability to exert influence on issues of common concern. It still demands further research which qualities truly make an AHG stand out from the crowd and become an interest for traditional news media, and of which magnitude.

The overall results of this study support the assumption that clearly identifiable categories of AHGs form in the social media, which differ significantly in their missions and more specific motivations and objectives. The groups range from those striving to enlarge their communicative power in order to initiate changes in society (i.e. Fifth Estate) to those seeking mere socialization and entertainment. The groups aspiring societal change are the ones gaining traditional media's attention and thus can also reach wider audiences and potentially wider societal influence. As Gosher and Gosher (2013) in their study on reciprocal agenda-setting effects (between social media and traditional media) demonstrate, the potential for SNS to directly shape media agendas does exist, though to a limited extent, and certain social networking sites have the potential to shape traditional elite media agendas. However, the actual impact and audience-driven agenda setting capability still need further investigation.

In the future it is important to add other levels to the study of AHGs' communicative power, such as the ways the groups use online news links as a part of their missions, and thus form additional potential synergy level with traditional media. Moreover, this study focused on quantitative aspects and gives only indications about the agenda setting capabilities of the AHGs. There is a need to go deeper into the motivations of AHG members and leaders, and the reasons why journalists use the groups as news sources. This may be achieved by doing qualitative content analysis of Facebook groups' discussions and comparing societal events and group activity with media stories. Another avenue would be doing interviews among AHGs and journalists. The quantitative findings of this study raise many new questions and form a good basis for further analysis.

References

Allan, S. (2006). *Online news: Journalism and the Internet.* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Bakardjieva, M (2011). Reconfiguring the mediapolis: New media and civic agency. *New Media & Society 14*(1) 63-67, DOI: 10.1177/1461444811410398

Brandtzæg, P. B., & Heim, J. (2009). Why people use social networking sites. In A. A. Ozok, & P. Zaphiris (Eds.), *Online Communities* (pp. 143–152). Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag.

Brandtzæg, P. B., & Heim, J. (2011). A typology of social networking sites users. *Int. J. Web Based Communities 7*(1), 28–51.

Bruns, A. (2007). Produsage: Towards a broader framework for user-led content creation. *Proceedings Creativity & Cognition 6.* Retrieved from http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00006623/01/6623.pdf

Castells, M. (2007). Communication, power and counter-power in the network society. *International Journal of Communication 1*, 238–266. doi: 1932-8036/20070238

Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age.* Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Curran, J., Fenton, N., & Freedman, D. (2012). *Misunderstanding the Internet.* New York: Routledge.

Dutton, W. (2007). Through the network of networks: The Fifth Estate. Oxford: Oxford University Internet Institute.

Dutton, W. H. (2009). The Fifth Estate emerging through the network of networks. *Prometheus 27*(1), 1–15.Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1167502

Delwiche, A. (2005). Agenda setting, opinion leadership and the world of web logs. *First Monday 10*(12). Retrieved Sept 2, 2016, from http://ojs-prod-lib.cc.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1300/1220

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 12*(4), 1143–1168. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Fenton, N. (2012). The Internet and social networking. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman (Eds.), *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 123–148). New York: Routledge.

Finnish Newspapers Association. (2014). *Suomen 10 suurinta sanomalehteä vuoden 2014 painetun lehden levikin mukaan [10 largest newspapers in Finland by circulation].* Retrieved June 4, 2015, from http://www.sanomalehdet.fi/sanomalehtitieto/levikki/suomen_10_suurinta_sanomaleh tea_levikin_mukaan

Groshek, J. & Groshek Clough, M. (2013). Agenda trending: Reciprocity and the predictive capacity of social networking sites in intermedia agenda setting across topics over time. *Media and Communication 1*(1), 15–27. doi: 10.12924/mac2013.01010015

Habermas, J. (1996). *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a discourse theory of law and democracy.* [W. Rehg, Trans.] Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Karpf, D. (2010). Online political mobilization from the advocacy groups' perspective: Looking beyond clicktivism. *Policy & Internet 2*(4). Article 2. DOI: 10.2202/1944-2866.1098 Available at: http://www.psocommons.org/policyandinternet/vol2/iss4/art2

Keane, J. (2009). *The life and death of democracy.* London: Simon and Schuster.

Kim, S. T. & Lee, Y. H. (2006). New functions of Internet mediated agenda-setting: Agenda-rippling and reversed agenda-setting. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies 50*(3), 175–205.

Lai, L. S. L., & Turban, E. (2008). Group formation and operations in the Web 2.0 environment and social networks. *Group Decision and negotiation 17*(5), 387–402. doi: 10.1007/s10726-008-9113-2

McCombs M, Shaw D. (1972). The Agenda-setting Function of the Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly 36*(2), 176–185.

McCombs, M. (2005). A look at agenda-setting: Past, present and future. *Journalism Studies 6*(4), 543–557.

Morozov, E. (2009). The Brave New World of Slacktivism. Foreign Policy (19 May), Available online: http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-new-world-of-slacktivism/ (Accessed Nov. 23, 2016)

Newman, N. (2011). Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of social discovery. Report. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism: Oxford.

Newman, N., Dutton, W. H., & Blank, G. (2012). Social media in the changing ecology of news: The fourth and fifth estates in Britain. *International Journal of Internet Science 7*(1), 6–22. Retrieved from http://www.ijis.net/ijis7_1/ijis7_1_newman_et_al.pdf

Nikkanen, H. (2012). Sikatehtaat: Ulkoistettua tutkivaa journalismia [Pig factories: Outsourced investigative journalism]. In J. Vehkoo (Ed.), *Media & Viestintä* (pp. 8–13). Tampere: Tammerprint Oy.

Papacharissi, Z. (2009). The virtual geographies of social networks: A comparative analysis of Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld. *New Media & Society 11*(1-2), 199–220.

Pöyhtäri, R., Väliverronen, J., & Ahva, L. (2014). *Mistä on suomalainen toimittaja tehty? Worlds of Journalism -surveyn tuloksia Suomesta [What is a Finnish journalist made of? Results from the Worlds of Journalism survey results].* Research report, May 2014. ISBN 978-951-44-9506-9. Retrieved July 20, 2015, from https://tampub.uta.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/95342/mista_on_suomalainen_2014.pdf?s equence=1

Rogers, E. M. & Dearing, J. W. (1988). Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going? *Annals of the International Communication Association 11*(1), 555–594.

Shoemaker, P., & Reese, S. (1996). *Mediating the message. Theories of influences on mass media content.* New York: Longman.

Sormanen, N., & Dutton, W. H. (2015). The role of social media in societal change: Cases in Finland of Fifth Estate activity on Facebook. *Social Media + Society,* July-December 2015, 1–16. doi: 10.1177/2056305115612782

Statistics Finland. (2014). *Use of information and communications technology by individuals. One half of Finnish residents participate in social network services.* Retrieved February 4, 2014, from http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2014/sutivi_2014_2014-11-06_tie_001_en.html

Tanner, A. H. (2004). Agenda building, source selection, and health news at local television stations. A nationwide survey of local television health reporters. *Science Communication June 25*(4), 350-363. doi: 10.1177/1075547004265127

Trejo-Mathys, J. (2012). Transnationalizing communicative power: The case of the Anti-SweatshopMovement. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/1651212/Transnationalizing_Communicative_Power_The_Case_of_the_Anti-Sweatshop_Movement

Uscinski, J. (2009). When does the public's issue agenda affect the media's issue agenda (and vice-versa)? Developing a framework for media-public influence. *Social Science Quarterly 90*(4), 796–815.

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 14*(4), 875–901. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01474.x

Walgrave, S., & Aelst, P. V. (2006). The contingency of the mass media's political agenda setting power: Toward a preliminary theory. *Journal of Communication 56*, 88–109.

Wallsten, K. (2007). Agenda setting and the blogosphere: An analysis of the relationship between mainstream media and political blogs. *Review of Policy Research 24*(6), 567–587

Welser, H. T., Gleave, E., Fisher, D., & Smith, M. (2007). Visualizing the signatures of social roles in online discussion groups. *Journal of Social Structure 8*(2). Retrieved from http://www.cmu.edu/joss/content/articles/volume8/Welser/