



Kurskod: SKPM08  
Termin: VT 2017  
Handledare: Henrik Merckelsen  
Examinator:

*MSc Thesis*  
*MSc in Strategic Public Relations*  
*jointly delivered by the University of Stirling and Lund University*

---

# Citizen Involvement is the New Black

*A qualitative case study of large and small municipalities' social media use*

ANNE BLAUENFELDT

---

Lunds universitet  
Institutionen för strategisk kommunikation

## **Declaration**

- 1) This work is composed by me.
- 2) This work has not been accepted in any of my previous applications for a degree.
- 3) The work of which this is a record is done by me.
- 4) All verbatim extracts have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of my information have been specifically acknowledged.
- 5) I have taken note of the guidelines about plagiarism contained in the Thesis Guidelines.

Signature

Date

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. B.', is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or background.

25 August 2017

## Agreement

I agree to Lund University using my thesis for teaching purposes. I understand my thesis may also be made available to future students in the library.

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alm B.', is written on a light blue rectangular background.

Date

25 August 2017

# Abstract · Summary

---

## **Citizen Involvement is the New Black**

Since the inception of social media, an increasing number of studies have investigated how social media is used the local government level, particularly in light of its perceived democratic potential. Although studies have mainly focused on examining local governments' social media communication, some research argue that it is the organisational structures and practices of local governments affect how local governments use social media. From this perspective, larger local governments are widely believed to be more innovative and engage citizens than smaller sized municipalities; on the contrary, in the practical literature, it is suggested that smaller sized local governments are more successful than their larger counterparts. From a public relations perspective using Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002, 2014) theory of dialogue, this study takes a multiple case study approach to investigate to what extent small and large municipality's use social media in order to increase democratic participation as well as how their organisational structures and practices affect their communication with citizens. Results showed that although both municipalities did not view social media as a platform for political involvement of their citizens but as platforms to manage their image, it was only the smaller municipality that engaged in dialogue on a political level with its citizens. This dialogue, it is argued, was enabled by the support and involvement of the organisations higher-level management and political leadership, which was not present in the larger municipality. It is argued that without the involvement and support of the political leadership, social media is destined to being used as an image management and information dissemination channel with little, if any, political involvement.

*Keywords:* Social media, democracy, citizen involvement, dialogue, municipality, local government, public relations

# Content

---

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 From e-government to government 2.0 .....	4
2.1.1 E-government.....	4
2.1.2 Social media and government 2.0.....	6
2.2 Social media in local government .....	10
2.2.1 Communication content perspective.....	11
2.2.2 Organisational perspective.....	15
<b>3. Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.1 Public relations theory.....	19
3.2 Dialogic communication .....	21
<b>4. Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1 Research paradigm .....	26
4.2 Research design.....	26
4.2.1 Case sampling.....	28
4.2.2 Data collection and analysis.....	30
4.3 Ethical considerations .....	35
<b>5. Analysis.....</b>	<b>37</b>
5.1 Copenhagen municipality.....	37
5.1.1 Image management: “We are up against a rather sad image” .....	37
5.2 Light citizen involvement and Star Wars dialogue.....	45
5.3 The bottom-up approach: Social media as a playground.....	51
5.2 Ringsted municipality .....	55
5.2.1 Reputation management: Telling the “good story”.....	55
5.2.2 Citizen involvement: “The new black” .....	62
5.2.3 Online budget plan meetings .....	65
5.2.4 The top-down approach: Political level support and involvement.....	70
<b>6. Cross-Case Discussion and Practical Implications .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>7. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research.....</b>	<b>78</b>
7.1 Conclusion.....	78
7.2 Limitations and further research.....	79
<b>8. Appendices .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>9. Literature .....</b>	<b>89</b>

# Introduction

---

The rise of Web 2.0, and in particular social media, has helped renew the hopes of a revival of democracy through e-government that the spread of the Internet first spurred in the early 1990s. With the Obama Administration's 2009 Open Government Directive, Government 2.0, as Web 2.0 in government has been called, there was an increase in traction and interest from governments around the world, as well as in academic circles, where the research into the use of social media at the government level has "grown exponentially" (Criado et al., 2013, p. 321) over the past few years. In both the public sector and the academic literature, there is an overwhelming argument that social media holds the potential to increase democratic participation, particularly at the local government level (Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015). Despite this, empirical research shows that the use of social media in local government is mainly for marketing and promotional purposes as well as information dissemination. However, there seems to be broad and varied definitions of what constitutes "successful" local government social media communication, with the measurement of number of likes, shares, and comments being the most common. In addition, frequently used concepts such as "engagement," "involvement," and "dialogue" are rarely fully explicated and are often used interchangeably.

Although less studied, there is research to suggest that it is not social media itself that will increase democratic participation and engage citizens but the organisational structures and practices of the local governments, which is why these are important to study (Mossberger et al., 2013; Mergel, 2013). An organisational fac-

tor that is commonly believed to be a factor for successful social media use is the size of the local government. Early studies suggest that larger municipalities are more innovative in terms of digital reforms, have more resources, and engage citizens to a greater extent on social media than smaller local governments do. This seems to have served as a default argument for many researchers to sample large municipalities in their studies, in the belief that larger municipalities will provide the most fruitful results (i.e., Bonsón et al., 2015; Mossberger et al., 2013). Nevertheless, In Denmark, there seems to be a current in the practical literature on social media use in local governments arguing that smaller municipalities are actually more successful than larger ones (Sørensen, n.d.; Elberth, 2017; “Kommunerne indtager de sociale medier”, 2015).

Based on this case of practice contradiction theory, the main aim of this study is to investigate how small and large municipalities use social media to engage in dialogue with citizens and to what extent they use social media to increase democratic participation. More specifically, through a multiple case study approach, this study will attempt to gain a more holistic and in-depth insight into the use of social media in municipalities of different sizes by examining both the extent to which they engage in dialogue with citizens to increase democratic participation as well as the municipalities’ organisational practices and structures in order to see the way in which these affect their social media communication. To this end, the study will be drawing on public relations theory by using DePaula and Dincelli’s (2016) public sector communication models, which are based on Grunig and Hunt’s four models of public relations, as a framework to analyse the municipalities’ social media communication. Furthermore, based on the literature review, it was deemed necessary explicate the concept of “dialogue” by using Kent and Taylor’s (1998, 2002, 2014) dialogic theory.

For the aim of this study, the following main research questions were developed:

How do small and large municipalities use social media to communicate with their citizens?

- *To what extent do the municipalities use social media to increase the democratic participation of citizens?*
- *How do organisational factors in municipalities of different sizes affect the extent to which social media is used to increase democratic participation?*
- *How and to what extent do the municipalities perceive citizen involvement and dialogue on social media as a way to increase democratic participation?*

# 2. Literature Review

---

## 2.1 From e-government to government 2.0

### *2.1.1 E-government*

Electronic government, or e-government as it is more commonly known, has a wide array of definitions from various disciplines, with some highlighting services, or managerial, or democratic aspects. However, based on a thorough review of the e-government literature, Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2005) argue that a broad definition of e-government “must incorporate at least these four categories: e-services, e-management, e-democracy, and e-policy” (p. 17), and based on this, they define e-government in the following way:

the selection, design, implementation, and use of information and communication technologies in government to provide public services, improve managerial effectiveness, and promote democratic values and participation mechanisms, as well as the development of a legal and regulatory framework that facilitates information intensive initiatives and fosters the knowledge society.

(p. 17)

As the use of the Internet spread to the wider public in the early 1990s, there was a general excitement about its promise and potential for a democratic revitalisation (Joon Kim & Adam, 2011; Margolis & Moreno-Riaño,

2013; Ellison & Hardey, 2014). It was believed that the Internet “could generate a new public space for a true deliberative democracy” (Margolis & Moreno-Riaño, 2013, p. 29) where access to information could establish an “informed citizenry” that could participate fully in political debates and policy-making. As is evident in Gil-Garcia and Pardo’s (2005) definition of e-government above, this sentiment was also acknowledged by governments around the world who were increasingly adopting and using information and communications technology (ICT) in the 1990s. The United States and the United Kingdom were front runners in implementing ICTs in government, which early on consisted of simple, static government agency websites (Chadwick & May, 2003) and then gradually evolved into a wide array of functions from email support to submitting tax returns online (Dixon, 2010). However, although e-government is still viewed as an “important shift in public administration” (“e-government”, 2017), many argue that e-government initiatives from the early 1990s and onwards, as was the case with the Internet in general, did not live up to their democratic potential, and rather than an actual paradigm shift in public administration, e-government initiatives strongly focused on facilitating more efficient internal communication as well as more efficient service delivery reflecting the dominant style of public administration: new public management (NPM) (Chadwick & May, 2003; Brainard & McNutt, 2010; Dixon, 2010; Meijer et al., 2012; “e-government”, 2017).

Emerging in the 1980s and gaining prominence with the Clinton administration in the 1990s, NPM represented a shift in public administration from the old public administration, which was increasingly viewed as too bureaucratic and hierarchical, to a more efficient public administration by turning

to a business-minded approach, which saw increased privatisation of government functions as well as a more transactional client-to-customer-oriented relationship between governments and their citizens (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Brainard & McNutt, 2010). It is argued that it is this market-oriented efficiency logic of NPM that has been prioritised at the expense of the democratic potential of e-government (Chadwick & May, 2003; Dixon, 2010; “e-government”, 2017). For example, examining the development towards e-government in the United States, Britain, and the European Union in 2003, Chadwick and May (2003) argued that in all three cases, e-government’s democratic potential was acknowledged by the governments; however, actual e-government initiatives had mostly taken the form of what the authors termed a “managerial model” that emphasised NPM values such as efficiency, service delivery, and client-customer relationships as opposed to government-citizen ones. At the time, the authors concluded that this managerial model had taken the centre stage in public administration at the expense of e-government’s democratic potential to be more interactive and participatory, which they found “striking” given the “diverse range of interactive behaviour now made possible by ICTs” (Chadwick & May, 2003, p. 293).

### ***2.1.2 Social media and government 2.0***

At the turn of the 21st century, the more interactive and collaborative capabilities of Web 2.0 technologies and social media applications brought about renewed hopes of the democratic potential of the Internet (Carpentier et al., 2013; Ellison & Hardey, 2014).

The concept Web 2.0 and social media are often used interchangeably; however, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that while Web 2.0 constitutes the ideological and technical shift to a more collaborative use of the World Wide Web, social media are the actual “internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 [which] allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (p. 61). The broad concept of Web 2.0 has signalled a shift in the use of the World Wide Web from the retrospectively termed Web 1.0, which consisted mostly of static personal websites and bulletin boards to “networked platforms” such as social networking sites, wikis, content sharing sites, and microblogs that “encourage collaboration in terms of the creation, organization, linking and sharing of content” (Picazo-Vela et al., 2012, p. 505). With regard to social media, there is not one set definition of the term or a set definition of what constitutes a social media platform in the academic literature; however, like Kaplan and Haenlein’s definition above, most of the definitions centre around social media being collaborative, user-centric, and encouraging the creation, distribution, and sharing of user-generated content. For example, Davies and Minzt (2013), have identified the following four characteristics that they argue make social media applications social:

- User-generated social content: Social media enables users to post and share content with other users (i.e., photos, personal information, or comments on other user’s posts).
- Social networking: Users can connect with each other in online groups or relationships (e.g., friends on Facebook or business connections on LinkedIn) and view the personal profiles of the users they are connected to.

- Collaboration: Social media allows users to engage in conversations, co-create content, make collaborative filtering (e.g. recommendations, ratings), and engage in collective action.
- Cross-platform data sharing: Users can share data across different sites.

Davies and Mintz (2013) point out that a social media platform does not need to include all the above characteristics in order to be considered social as long as it “enables visitors, not just site administrators, to contribute some form of content that other users can access” (p. 3).

The adoption and use of these Web 2.0 technologies in governments is commonly referred to as government 2.0. However, as with Web 2.0 in general, the implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in government has meant more than just a change in the use of technology, it is part of a paradigmatic shift toward more open, collaborative, and participatory governance. As Bonsón et al. (2014) point out, the increasing adoption of Web 2.0 technologies in the public sector “must be understood as a part of a larger, ongoing paradigmatic shift toward greater citizen empowerment and participation through government transparency, accountability, and open collaboration” (p. 5). Furthermore, Meijer et al. (2012) argue, that the paradigmatic shift to government 2.0 is used metaphorically to denote a new and better form of (e-)government, one that is “more open, social, communicative, interactive and user-centered” (p. 59) with the “potential to reshape the relationship between government and citizens, in a sense that services, control and policy formulation are designed through a cooperation of citizens, governments and civil society” (p. 59). Thus, it is argued that by engaging citizens through social media, governments can increase transparency by informing

citizens about issues, policies, and activities (Graham, 2014), and by engaging citizens in decision-making processes through discussions and debates on government issues such as service delivery and policies, government officials can get access to citizens' opinions, feedback, and ideas and thus make governments "more informed, responsive, innovative, and citizen-centric" (Bonsón et al., 2014; Bonsón, 2012, p. 131). This kind of citizen participation in decision-making and problem-solving can, for example, be facilitated by online discussion forums, wikis, government blogs, government YouTube channels (Mergel, 2013), or online meetings (Mossberger et al., 2013).

The notion of government 2.0 gained momentum with the first Obama Administration, which had making governance more open and collaborative as one of its key issues, arguing that:

"by harnessing the collaborative nature of the web ... the new Administration has the potential to engage the public like never before. The web can foster better communication and allow people to participate in improving the operations of their government," (Katz et al., 2013, p. 148)

In 2009, the administration announced its Open Government Directive in which transparency, participation, and collaboration were highlighted as the three key principles underpinning open government. As part of the directive, every government agency was assigned an official Open Government website from which government officials could inform citizens as well as receive and respond to citizens' inquiries and feedback (Katz et al., 2013), and each agency were responsible for compiling an Open Government plan de-

tailoring how it, among other things, planned to increase participation and collaboration with citizens through online platforms (“Open Government Directive”, 2009). In 2011, the US along with seven other countries<sup>1</sup> started the Open Government Partnership, an initiative launched to increase government transparency in decision-making and empower citizens through more participation and dialogue with civil society, particularly through digital technology (“Open Government Partnership”, n.d.). The voluntary Open Government Partnership has since been joined by an additional 67 countries around the world.

## **2.2 Social media in local government**

It is widely believed that local government is the level of government that has the most potential for increasing transparency, citizen participation, and collaboration through the use of social media, as this level presents the closest relationship between citizens and their government (Chadwick & May, 2003; Graham & Avery, 2013; Graham, 2014; Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015). As Graham (2014) argues, “it is at the local level of government where citizens often feel the most direct access and potential importance in governance” (p. 362). Similarly, Lev-On and Steinfeld (2015) argue that “nowhere does the promise of interactivity and responsiveness online seem more viable than in the municipal arena” (p. 299). This is no doubt the rea-

---

<sup>1</sup> Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa and the United Kingdom

son why an increasing number of studies on the use of social media in the public sector have been carried out at the local government level in recent years. The academic literature has generally approached the topic from two different perspectives: a communication content perspective and an organisational perspective.

A large part of the literature has taken a communication perspective that has focused on the way in which local governments communicate with citizens on their social media platforms, examining such things as the level of engagement and content types. In the other hand, the organisational perspective has focused on examining the organisational practices and structures as well as internal opportunities, success criteria, and barriers in the implementation and use of social media in local government.

### ***2.2.1 Communication content perspective***

The terms and concepts that recur in most of the academic and practical literature on social media use in the public sector are engagement, transparency, participation, and collaboration. The main argument being that by engaging citizens through social media, governments can achieve increased transparency, participation, and collaboration in governance. With regard to measuring the level of engagement of social media interaction, DePaula and Dincelli (2016) argue that a number of studies identify the same kinds of interactions which roughly correspond to Mergel's (2013) framework of measuring social media interaction in the public sector: the one-way push, two-way pull, and networking strategy. The goal of the one-way push strategy is to increase the transparency of the organisation by willingly posting government information on social media platforms. The purpose is thus to

inform and educate citizens by releasing government information such as facts, press releases, policy documents, etc. The goal of the two-way pull strategy is to engage citizens and encourage them to contribute with their insights and feedback in order to improve policies, services, and other local government projects. The goal of the final strategy, the networking strategy, is to build interactive and collaborative relationships between local government and citizens. “Collaboration between government and citizens”, Mergel (2013) argues, “indicates a higher level of engagement in a reciprocated relationship by allowing the audiences to directly engage with government content and co-create government innovations” (p. 331). Mergel (2013) further argues that collaboration between governments and citizens is the highest level of engagement a government can reach through social media:

The highest level of engagement ... is collaboration supported by social media. Citizens go beyond simply viewing a government agency's online content or commenting on government posts. They are actively interacting with the content provided and seek future engagement opportunities. ... As soon as citizens are willing to take offline action based on their previous online interactions with government social media accounts, the highest degree of collaboration is reached. Offline actions can include registering to vote, donating and volunteering time to create a public good, reuse government content to engage with issues, or contributing solutions for government problems.

(p. 332)

Using Mergel’s framework in a quantitative case study examining the information exchange on Karlstad municipality’s Facebook page, Bellström

et al. (2016) found that the municipality was mostly using its Facebook page for promotional and informational purposes (i.e., a one-way push strategy), while citizens mostly make use of the Facebook page to reach out and ask the municipality or other citizens questions. As Bellström et al. (2016) point out, this shows that citizens wish to actively engage with the municipality through social media; however, by only making use of a one-way push strategy, they argue that the municipality “fails to fully embrace social media’s ability to spur collaboration, participation and empowerment” (p. 561). Similarly, based on a quantitative survey assessing the activity on local governments’ social media platforms in the UK, Ellison and Hardey (2014) found that they mostly employed a passive strategy for pushing (mirroring Mergel’s one-way push strategy), concluding that “local authority communication strategies remain embedded in assumptions about marketing and publicity anchored to traditional understandings of media practice” (p. 35).

Other studies examining local governments’ use of social media conceptualise and measure the level of engagement between local governments and their citizens in terms of number of followers, likes, comments, and shares as well as content type (Hoffman et al., 2013; Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015; Bonsón et al., 2013, Bonsón et al., 2014; Bonsón et al., 2015). Hoffmann et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative content analysis of German local government Facebook pages to examine content types as well as what makes the local government communication successful. They conceptualised success on social media as awareness and engagement, which they measured in terms of numbers of likes and comments on posts. They found that content in the form of videos and photos as well as posts about leisure activities,

which citizens prefer to announcements on government reports or policies, are the main contributors to successful social media communication.

In a series of quantitative studies using the same sample of 75 municipalities in EU countries, Bonsón and his colleagues examined how the municipalities made use of social media. Bonsón et al. (2014) examined the use of Facebook in the 75 municipalities, considering both the municipalities' activities as well as how citizens engaged with their municipalities on Facebook. They found that citizens' engagement was generally very low with the "liking" of content being the most frequent activity, which they view as the lowest form of engagement. This indicates, they argue, that citizens think content on municipalities' Facebook pages is useful but that they are not interested in engaging in dialogue since under half of the content receives comments or is shared. Based on their findings, Bonsón et al. (2014) conclude that Facebook is an ineffective platform for engaging citizens at the municipal level. In another study, Bonsón et al. (2015) analysed the citizen engagement level of various content types posted on the 75 municipalities' Facebook pages for which they conceptualised engagement in terms of number of likes, comments, and shares of posts. They found that cultural activities and sports, as well as marketing and city promotion, was the type of content most frequently posted on the municipalities' pages; however, citizens engaged more with content types about municipal management such as public transport, housing, and town planning, which made up a very small percentage of the posts. Furthermore, they found that the highest engagement was on pages where citizens were allowed to post on the municipalities' Facebook pages. Lastly, the study found that Nordic and Southern European countries have the most engaged citizens, "almost twice as high en-

agement levels as in the Anglo-Saxon and almost three times higher than in the Germanic municipalities” (p. 57). Based on these findings, Bonsón et al. (2015) point out the importance of municipalities listening to their citizens and asking them about which topics and information they need and are interested in.

### ***2.2.2 Organisational perspective***

There is clearly a broad consensus in the academic literature that despite the potential of social media, it is rarely used for the purposes of increasing citizen participation or engaging in dialogue with citizens. Instead, it is most commonly used as an additional channel to push government information out as well as for marketing and promotional purposes. In several studies, it is pointed out that simply adopting social media will not increase citizen participation and dialogue. As Bonsón et al. (2012) argue, the adoption of social media in local government is about an entirely new approach to government. Similarly, Mossberger et al. (2013) argue that “the barriers may be institutional rather than technical” (p. 356). Similarly, Brooke and Horsley (2007) also point out that public sector communication is influenced by such things as leadership, and managerial and political support. It is therefore internal organisational factors in the adopting organisations, not the technology itself, that can increase citizen participation and dialogue. For this reason, Mergel (2013) argues that is important to study the organisational factors of local governments’ adoption and use of social media platforms. In interviews with local government practitioners, Mergel (2013) herself found that practitioners had a clear objective to use social media more collaboratively; however, they found it very challenging to do this. She argues that

practitioners have “limited reflection to strategically plan out engagement activities beyond pushing government information out through social media channels” (p. 331). Furthermore, the officials in her sample expressed that they did not wish “to create a direct, reciprocated relationship with citizens by following citizens back and have creative conversations online”, and instead they enacted a passive listening strategy to gain “valuable insights” from citizens (Mergel, 2013, p. 331).

In a focus group session with Mexican local government officials, however, Picazo-Vela et al. (2012) found that the practitioners welcomed more conversations with citizens, but an issue they faced was “the lack of organizational capacities to respond to [the] increased communication” (p. 509). Omar et al. (2014) found this to be a similar issue for Australian local government officials who viewed the time and cost of human resources to be an issue rather than the implementation of the technology itself. Consequently, workloads are often being “subsumed into existing workloads with little evidence of responsibilities being formally assigned” (Omar et al., 2014, p. 672). Based on their focus group session with Mexican local government officials, Picazo-Vela et al. (2012) also argue that a social media strategy with clear objectives needs to be developed and corresponding changes made to management and organisational practices to serve this strategy are crucial.

Nevertheless, Mergel and Bretschneider (2013) argue that social media adoption by local governments is most often an experimental, bottom-up approach initiated by entrepreneurial types within the organisation. According to Mergel and Bretschneider (2013), social media adoption by local governments follows a three-stage adoption process which, contrary to other e-government initiatives in the public sector, “is often not a top-down, con-

scious decision sanctioned by high-level management” (p. 393). The first stage of social media adoption is thus characterised by informal experimentation initiated by so-called intrapreneurs. In the second stage, out of the chaos experienced in the first stage, the organisation realises the need for a more regulated approach to social media in the form of guidelines which are based on trial and error experiences. In the third and final stage, formal strategies and policies on social media use are developed based on the “learning by doing” process in the two former stages.

Another organisational factor that seems to have a significant impact on the adoption, use, and citizen engagement levels of e-government initiatives and social media is the size of local governments. There are generally two views pertaining to the relationship between citizen participation and engagement and community size, which are “small is beautiful” and “bigger is better” (Yang & Callahan, 2005). The “small is beautiful” view suggests that citizens in smaller local governments are generally closer to their neighbours as well as to their local politicians and therefore have a greater “sense of community”, are more aware of local government issues, and are thus more inclined to participate (Yang & Callahan, 2005). Similarly, Oliver (2000) argues that the larger the city, the less likely it is that citizens know their neighbours and the less likely it is that they are interested in local government affairs. On the other hand, the “big is better” view, suggests that larger local governments are more resourceful, have more interesting political issues, and more participation as a result of distrust in large bureaucracies (Yang & Callahan, 2005).

In the e-government literature, however, there is broad consensus that larger local governments are more successful in their social media adoption

than smaller local governments. For example, Avery and Graham (2013), found that population size was a “significant predictor of extent of use” (p. 288) of social media in US local governments. Other studies have found that larger local governments are more innovative with regard to adopting and implementing e-government initiatives (Moon, 2002; Yang & Callahan, 2005; Larsson, 2013; Norris & Reddick, 2012). Furthermore, studies have found that larger local governments make use of more citizen engagement initiatives (Yang & Callahan, 2005), activities to involve citizens (Yang & Callahan, 2005), and have more involved citizens in the form of a greater number of posts and comments (Lev-On & Steinfeld, 2015) than smaller local governments. These findings have served as an argument for other studies examining the adoption and use of social media to use a sample of only larger local governments (Mossberger et al., 2013; Bonsón et al., 2012; Bonsón et al., 2014; Bonsón et al., 2015; Martín et al., 2015). For example, Bonsón et al. (2014), sampled larger local governments for their study, arguing that they have been found to be more “innovative in the adoption of technologies, they have more need for greater disclosure and lower relative costs for the implementation of ... new tools” (p. 126).

# 3. Theoretical Framework

---

The present study takes a public relations perspective based on the assumption that a municipality's social media communication efforts can be seen as a public relations activity, since the fundamental purpose of public relations is establishing long-term collaborative relationships with an organisation's publics (Grunig, 1992a; Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Furthermore, in the light of the above literature review, the study will draw on Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002, 2014) theory of dialogic communication in public relations as it was deemed necessary to explicate the concept of "dialogue".

## 3.1 Public relations theory

The turn to Web 2.0 has also had an influence on public relations with many scholars arguing that social media has great potential for both relations-building and dialogical communication and thus presents public relations practitioners with an opportunity to achieve these (Alikilic & Atabek, 2012; Zerfass et al., 2013; Huang & Yang, 2015). Furthermore, the turn to more relational public relations with the emergence of Web 2.0 and, especially, social media, has given governments the opportunity to live up to their democratic responsibilities as well as a better and more effective government (Hong, 2013). However, few studies have examined social media in local government from a public relations perspective (e.g., Avery & Graham, 2013; Graham & Avery, 2013; Graham, 2014; DePaula & Dincelli, 2016). DePaula and Dincelli (2016) used the excellence theory as a theoretic-

cal framework in their study of social media use in U.S municipality departments. They point out that research has shown that local governments often use social media for marketing and promotional purposes, and they therefore suggest an extension of Mergel’s (2013) framework to include an impression management strategy, arguing that the role of publicity also must be considered as a strategy for local governments on social media. They define impression management as only highlighting “favorable publicity as well as content that may be considered ‘friendship performance’ ... that is, fun and friendly content which others find agreeable” (DePaula & Dincelli, 2016, p. 3). With the addition of the impression management strategy, DePaula and Dincelli (2016) argue that the four strategies basically correspond to the four models of public relations (see Table 1)<sup>2</sup>.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Mission</b>
Impression management	Increased appeal
Push / One-way symmetric	Transparency
Pull / Two-way asymmetric	Participation
Networking / Two-way symmetric	Collaboration

*Table 1. Extended Public Sector Communication Models (Source: DePaula & Dincelli, 2016)*

Impression management is related to the press-agentry model of public relations; however, DePaula and Dincelli (2016) point out that the impres-

---

<sup>2</sup> The model in Table 1 is from DePaula and Dincelli’s study; however, it should be noted that this study will use the term “public information” and not “one-way symmetric” as it is in DePaula and Dincelli’s framework, as one-way communication by definition cannot be symmetrical.

sion management strategy should not be viewed in a negative sense as propaganda which the press-agentry model often is, but more simply as a strategy in which favourable publicity is emphasised. As DePaula and Dincelli (2016) point out, it is often “an honest ‘reaching out’ to the community” (p. 7), point out. The one-way push strategy refers to the government providing citizens with information, and therefore it is similar to the public information model. The two-way pull strategy and the two-way asymmetrical model both seek and use input from citizens/stakeholders in the form of feedback and opinions, but dialogue is not initiated. Lastly, the networking strategy and the two-way symmetrical model are similar, as they both seek to engage in dialogue with citizens/stakeholders and actively make use of the feedback gained from it.

### **3.2 Dialogic communication**

For the purposes of this study, it was found necessary to explicate the concepts “dialogue” which are both frequently and variedly used in the academic literature on social media in the public sector as well as excellence theory. As was evident from the literature review, engagement is often conceptualised as following, liking, sharing, or commenting on social media content. Similarly, dialogue and two-way symmetrical communication is often, if at all, conceptualised simply as comments on posts or broadly as conversation between citizens and organisations. For example, in DePaula and Dincelli’s (2016) public sector communication model, dialogue was conceptualised as “[w]hen the organization responds to a user comment on a post (originally posted by the organisation)” (p. 5).

Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002, 2014) have spent the better part of a decade working on a theory of dialogic communication from a public relations perspective in the belief that it is necessary to include and clarify a concept of dialogue in public relations, so that “organizations can build relationships that serve both organizational and public interests” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 21).

Kent and Taylor (2014) also point out that all conversations on social media are not necessarily dialogic such as posting or liking a post on social media. Furthermore, they argue that dialogic and two-way symmetrical communication are similar; however, they see dialogue as “a product of ongoing communication and relationships” and not a process in itself (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 24). Therefore, for them dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders and publics is the outcome or product of practicing the two-way symmetrical model of public relations.

Kent and Taylor (1998) define dialogue as “any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions”, arguing that it:

denotes a communicative give and take and is guided by two principles. First, individuals who engage in dialogue do not necessarily have to agree ... however, what they share is a willingness to try to reach mutually satisfying positions. Although discussants may fail to reach agreement, dialogue is not merely about agreement. Rather, it is about the process of open and negotiated discussion. Second, dialogic communication is about intersubjectivity, and not objective truth, or subjectivity. Because of the nature of dialogic communication and its emphasis on a process of negotiated communication, it is considered to be an especially ethical way of conducting public dialogue and public relations.

(p. 325)

The emphasis in dialogic communication is thus on “on building, nurturing and maintaining relationships” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 23) based on “principles of honesty, trust, and positive regard for the other rather than simply a conception of the public as means to end” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 33). When practicing only promotionally oriented communication, Kent and Taylor (2014) argue that information and feedback is pulled from publics through surveys and focus groups to more effectively reach organisational goals. On the contrary, when practicing dialogic communication, organisations will also have key messages and goals; however, before these goals comes a willingness to understand one’s publics and an openness towards the opportunities and change this might lead to. For dialogue to occur, organisations need to spend time interacting with their publics, and so merely posting, or giving feedback to publics on social media is therefore not considered dialogue (Kent & Taylor, 2014). As with dialogue, the term “engagement” is also frequently and variedly used in the academic literature, and Kent and Taylor (2014) argue that engagement is most often conceptualised as a form of one-way communication that does not entail any form of participatory engagement. They view engagement as a precondition for dialogue and have therefore also worked on clarifying the term within their dialogic framework. In their conceptualisation of engagement, Kent and Taylor (2014) argue that engagement “assumes accessibility, presentness, and a willingness to interact” (p. 387) and “through engagement, organizations and publics can make decisions that create social capital” (p. 384).

One of the most important factors for effective dialogue, however, is dependent on two organisational factors according to Kent and Taylor (2014): First, practitioners within the organisation must receive training in dialogic

communication. Secondly, the dominant coalition must be committed and must accept the value of relationship-building as well as dialogue. Therefore, for an organisation to foster true engagement, and as a result dialogue, it first needs to look at its internal structures.

For the purpose of this paper, a modified version of DePaula and Dincelli's (2016) public sector communication models will be used as a framework to examine municipal social media communication (Table 2, see Appendix 1 for original framework). However, as one of the purposes of this paper is to achieve a clear conceptualisation of "dialogue", DePaula and Dincelli's conceptualisation of dialogue as an organisation replying to a comment from a citizen to a post that the organisation has originally posted has been replaced by Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002, 2014) conceptualisation of dialogue. Furthermore, the framework has also been slightly adjusted to fit a municipal context.

<b>Impression Management</b>	<i>Friendship Performance:</i> Expressing congratulations, gratitude, or condolences. It also includes celebration of holidays, athletic competitions, or trivia questions.
	<i>Marketing:</i> Advertisement of specific products and services.
	<i>Favourable Publicity:</i> Reporting on social activities or providing positive imagery of the municipality. May include self "boasting" (e.g., "we won a prize" or "we have the best...").
	<i>Political Positioning:</i> Taking a stance on a political issue (e.g., "rights of such should be supported").
<b>Push</b>	<i>Public Service Announcements:</i> Providing recommendations for safety, public health, and well-being (e.g., do not drop litter in the park; eat certain vegetables per day).
	<i>News &amp; Announcements:</i> Announcements for future events; news related to programmes, reports, job offers, and policy-related information.
<b>Pull</b>	<i>Feedback:</i> Explicitly asking for feedback on a topic, participation in a survey or poll. Asking for information to address a problem (e.g., find a criminal).
	<i>Fundraising:</i> Posts that ask for donations and contributions to a cause not necessarily related to the municipality's mission.
<b>Networking</b>	<i>Call for Discussion:</i> Event to discuss particular policy issues, creating a forum for discussion, to resolve a specific conflict, or simply for the community to meet and greet.
	<i>Dialogue:</i> According to Kent and Taylor's conceptualisation of dialogue in public relations
	<i>Call for Volunteers:</i> Asking individuals to help carry out an activity.

Table 2. Modified Public Sector Communication Models Framework

# 4. Research Methodology

---

## 4.1 Research paradigm

The ontological and epistemological underpinning of this research is in line with constructivism and the interpretivist approach. Taking an interpretivist approach, a researcher draws on the constructivist notion that reality is not given but is instead thought to be “built up over time through communication, our interactions with those around us, and our shared history” (Daymon & Holloway, 2003, p. 4), and thus the researcher sets out to explore and understand “social reality from the point of view of those in it” (p. 4). In light of this, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it attempts to view the phenomena under study holistically (Creswell, 2014) “focusing on the meaning rather than the measurement of [the] social phenomena” (Archer & Wolf, 2012, p. 95). Furthermore, according to both Creswell (2014) and Daymon and Holloway (2003), the principle of a qualitative research approach is for the researcher to gain rich and in-depth data from a relatively small sample and does not allow for nearly the same level of generalization as a quantitative approach would. However, it is very suitable for the type of research that aims to provide more in-depth knowledge into a particular research area.

## 4.2 Research design

This study will be conducted in the form of a multiple case study. A case study approach was deemed appropriate as its purpose is to “increase

knowledge about real, contemporary communication events in their context” (Daymon & Holloway, 2003, p. 105). The approach offers the researcher the opportunity to conduct an in-depth investigation into a social phenomenon in its real-life context using several different data sources and data collection methods (Yin, 2014; Daymon & Holloway, 2003) and it is particularly useful for research that asks “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1998). Furthermore, as the main purpose of this study is to compare municipalities of different sizes, this study will take a multiple case study approach as opposed to a single case approach. Flyvbjerg (2006) refers to this as a maximum variation case where information is obtained about “the significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome” (p. 230), which in this study are cases that vary significantly in terms of size. Additionally, multiple case studies “enable some measure of generalization to a wider universe” and allow the researcher to “identify distinctive features by exploring similarities and contrasts between cases” (Daymon & Holloway, 2003, p. 108).

However, a disadvantage often pointed out with the use of a case study approach is the lack of generalisability. As case studies usually consist of only a single case or a few, the results of case studies are not generalizable to the same extent as research conducted with broader sample sizes, such as in quantitative research. However, as both Siggelkow (2007) and Yin (2014) argue, making universal generalisations is not necessarily the aim of case studies. On the contrary, Yin (2014) argues that case studies contribute not with statistical but rather analytical generalisations or “conceptual insights” as Siggelkow (2007) terms it. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (2006) quite convincingly argues for the case study’s place in academia, arguing that context-

based “case knowledge is central to human learning” (p. 222). Furthermore, he argues that because “knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society” (p. 227). Therefore, he concludes, both case studies that do not attempt to generalise are needed for scientific development.

#### ***4.2.1 Case sampling***

When it comes to conducting case studies, the sampling of cases should always be purposeful and a rationale for the choice of cases should be given (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). As this study is interested in examining social media in municipalities of different sizes, the main sampling criterion was to sample two municipalities of significantly different sizes. However, to obtain the richest and most comparable data, other significant sampling criteria were access to plenty of data in each municipality and that both municipalities were competent in their use of social media. After a preliminary analysis of Danish municipalities on social media, Copenhagen and Ringsted municipalities were selected on the basis of the above criteria.

#### ***Copenhagen municipality***

Copenhagen municipality (hereafter abbreviated as CM) is Denmark’s largest, with around 606,000 citizens as of early 2017 (“Befolkning og Valg”, n.d.) and more than 45,000 employees spread over various administrations and institutions around the city. The municipality is headed by a municipal council under which a Lord mayor, currently Frank Jensen, and six other mayors each are responsible for managing one of the seven admin-

istrations in the municipality (Appendix 2). The municipality's social media is managed in the Web and Communications Department in the Centre for Digitalisation and Innovation under the Culture- and Leisure Administration. The municipality joined Facebook around five and a half years ago and are today active on five social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn (see Appendix 4 for full list of the platforms' strategic purposes and goals). As of 31 May 2017, CM had 73,074 Facebook followers, which corresponds to 12% of the municipality's citizens. The social media team is made up of two full-time employees, communication consultant Tine Germundsson and her colleague, who together are responsible for managing the municipality's five social media profiles. However, they also have three administrative employees from the citizen service centre who take weekly turns helping them answer citizens' enquiries on their social media platforms.

### ***Ringsted municipality***

Ringsted municipality (hereafter abbreviated as RM) is a medium-sized municipality located on central Zealand, 65 kilometres south west of Copenhagen. As of early 2017, the municipality has 34.308 inhabitants (Befolkning og Valg, n.d.) and approximately 34,000 employees. In RM, the municipal council consists of seven committees that are responsible for the political decision-making. On the administrative side, under the current mayor, Henrik Hvidesten, there is an executive board of four who oversee the eight administrative centres, which are in turn each lead by a centre manager (see Appendix 4 for organisational chart). RM's social media is by managed by Team Communication in the Trade, Leisure, and Communica-

tion Centre. The team consists of one administrative employee, a team coordinator, communication consultant Lotte Holle Schneider who is responsible for the municipality's digital communication which entail intranet, website and the municipality's Facebook page which is her main responsibility and, lastly, a communication consultant responsible for handling press matters who regularly assists Lotte in managing the Facebook page. RM launched their Facebook page in January 2016 and it is the only social media platform the municipality has chosen to be active on. As of 31 May 2017, the page has 2,571 followers, which corresponds to 7.5% of RM's citizens.

#### ***4.2.2 Data collection and analysis***

The strength of case studies is that they allow for a combination of different types of data through different types of data collections methods (Daymon & Holloway, 2003; Yin, 2014). A content analysis of the municipalities' social media profiles was conducted in order to examine how the municipalities use the platforms to communicate with their citizens; however, semi-structured interviews with the municipalities' social media managers as well as an analysis of internal documents collected on site served to supplement the content analysis. Both the interviews and the internal documents provided insights into the adoption and use of social media from an organisational perspective. The aim of employing these three data collection methods was for them to complement each other to achieve a more holistic insight into the use of social media in the municipalities. Furthermore, collecting data from more than one source gives the researcher the opportunity to triangulate the collected data in order to increase the internal validity of the study. With regard to interview data, for example, the interview partici-

pants might adapt their answers to what they think is the “correct” answer or what they believe the researcher wants to hear (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). As Yin (2014) also points out, interviews are one of the key sources for case studies; nevertheless, it is important for the researcher to remain critical and reflexive about the data collected from interviews and not take the participant’s answers at face value (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). Some participants may lie or exaggerate to make themselves look better, and so, as Daymon and Holloway (2003) argue, there may be “discrepancies between what participants say and what they actually do” (p. 184). Collecting data using three different methods was therefore considered crucial to validate the data collected with other sources of evidence such as documents.

### *Content analysis*

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine each municipality’s Facebook page in order to determine how the municipalities are communicating with and the extent to which they are engaging their citizens. The content analysis took the form of a combined deductive and inductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). A deductive approach of a more quantitative nature was first conducted using the modified version of DePaula and Dincelli’s (2016) public sector communication models as a framework, with the purpose of gaining an accurate picture of the extent to which the municipalities apply the different communication strategies on Facebook. However, DePaula and Dincelli’s (2016) modified framework was used as a so-called unconstrained matrix that allows the researcher to combine a deductive approach with an inductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This means that the matrix remained open and flexible to adjust-

ments dependent on the content analysed. In this way, not only the four communication strategies but also an in-depth analysis of the type and quality of the communication and interaction was conducted.

Although CM is currently active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn, it was decided only to conduct the content analysis on the municipalities' Facebook pages. This decision was made after an initial analysis of all five social media platforms, which showed that Facebook was by far the platform with the most activity as well as interactivity between the municipality and its citizens. Furthermore, according to the municipality itself, Facebook serves as their main platform for citizen involvement. Lastly, since Ringsted municipality is only active on Facebook, it also made sense with regard to comparability. Both analyses were conducted from 31 May 2017 and backwards until saturation was reached, and every post or share from the municipalities was treated as one unit of analysis. The analysis of CM led to a total of 411 posts and shares analysed from 1 November 2016 through to 31 May 2017. The analysis of RM's Facebook page resulted in 178 analysed posts and shares from 18 January 2016 through to 31 May 2017.

### *Interviews*

In order to gain insights into the internal organisational side of social media use in the municipalities, semi-structured face-to-face interviews with municipality officials responsible for the social media efforts in each municipality were conducted. Interviews allow the researcher to gain a better and deeper understanding of a phenomenon from the participant's perspective (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). The interviews were conducted as in-depth,

semi-structured interviews. This is a flexible interview strategy, as the researcher has the possibility to follow up and ask interviewees to elaborate on things the researcher finds interesting or unexpected, which is not possible with, for example, quantitative surveys (Daymon & Holloway, 2003). Informed by the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study, an interview guide with overarching themes and example questions was prepared in order to ensure some consistency in the data from the interviewees (see Appendix 5). The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent, and after the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and the data analysed through open coding to identify categorical themes (Graham, 2014). Both interviews were conducted in Danish, with any data selected and used in the results section carefully translated into English to remain as close to the original meaning as possible.

In terms of sampling, a purposive sampling strategy was followed selecting the municipal employees responsible for each municipality's social media on the grounds that they would have the right insights and knowledge for the purpose of this study. From CM, communication consultant Tine Germundsson who is responsible for the municipality's social media was interviewed on 19 June 2017 at her office in Copenhagen. The interview lasted approximately 55 minutes. From RM, communication consultant Lotte Holle Schneider, who is responsible for the municipality's online communication, including social media, was interviewed on 22 June 2017 in her office building in Ringsted. The interview lasted approximately 90 minutes.

### *Document analysis*

Documents from each municipality were collected and analysed to supplement the data collected from both the content analysis and the interviews. Daymon and Holloway (2003) argue that documents are a “rich source of supplementary or primary evidence in research” (p. 216). In this case, they were used as a supplementary data source “to counteract some of the possible biases of other methods such as interviews” (Daymon & Holloway, 2003, p. 218). As Yin (2014) argues, in case study research the most important use of document analysis “is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 107). However, there are also some limitations that need to be taken into consideration when it comes to analysing collected documents. As Yin (2014) points out, it is important “to understand that [documents are] written for some specific purpose and some specific audience other than those of the case study being done” (p. 108), and he therefore argues that documents need to be “cross-checked and triangulated with other sources of data” (p. 107). From CM, five documents were collected: CM’s social media strategy for 2016 – 2018, one Power Point presentations of the CM’s citizen involvement on social media for internal use, one Power Point presentation of the CM’s social media with a particular focus on citizen involvement for external use, one leaflet on how to involve citizens on social media for internal use, and, lastly, an organisational chart of the organisation. From Ringsted municipality, four documents were collected: RM’s social media strategy, a “Plan of Action 2016” strategy document of the municipality’s overall communication and citizen involvement plan, and minutes from RM’s finance committee meeting’s discussion and approval of the communication team’s “Plan of Action 2016” strategy. For full titles and

descriptions of the collected documents from both municipalities, see Appendix 2, 4, and 6.

### *Structure of analysis*

Regarding the presentation of the study's results, Yin's (2014) suggestion to use a comparative structure was followed. When conducting a multiple case study with the aim of comparing the cases, Yin (2014) proposes using a comparative reporting format that first presents each case separately and afterward presents the cross-case analysis of the cases. Furthermore, regarding the structure of the analysis, Siggelkow (2007) argues that when reporting on case studies, it is often necessary to compromise complete transparency of the process of analysis by grouping one's data in order to make sense of the collected data and support one's conceptual argument. To counterbalance this issue of transparency, thorough attention has been paid to complementing the analysis with appendices and referencing data sources throughout the analysis.

## **4.3 Ethical considerations**

With regard to the interviews conducted in this study, both participants were given information about the purpose of the study prior to being interviewed. Informed consent was obtained from both participants before interviewing commenced, and they were informed that participation was voluntary, that withdrawal from the study was possible at any point in time, and that the interviews would be recorded. Furthermore, one participant was sent the interview guide and the other participant was sent the general themes of the interview beforehand, upon request from the interviewees.

Furthermore, the participants both agreed to have their full names published in the study. With regard to the content analysis on the municipalities' Facebook pages, all of the content displayed in the study has been anonymised, as the identity of the citizens are not relevant for the study's purpose.

# 5. Analysis

---

## 5.1 Copenhagen municipality

Overall, the analysis of CM revealed that their Facebook page is neither used nor perceived as a platform to increase the democratic participation of citizens. On the contrary, the content analysis showed that Facebook is mainly used for image management supporting the findings from previous research. Furthermore, although increasing citizen involvement and dialogue as well increasing the presence of democratic processes were part of CM's overall strategic focus, citizens were only involved at a practical level and the term "dialogue" was used unsystematically with little reflection about what it meant. Lastly, although Tine's arguments as to the lack of the democratic involvement of citizens were ambivalent, it is argued that the lack of interest and involvement in the municipality's social media from higher-level management and the political leadership is the reason that social media is mainly used for image management and information dissemination and not for increasing democratic involvement of citizens.

### ***5.1.1 Image management: "We are up against a rather sad image"***

In 2016, CM implemented a new 11-page social media strategy spanning from 2016 to 2018. According to the strategy, the social media platforms are supposed to bring Copenhageners closer to CM and CM closer to the Copenhageners, show new sides of the public sector, reach many citizens at a low cost, support co-creation, and make democratic processes

more present. The social media strategy has the following three overall strategic focus points: citizen involvement and dialogue, service and information, and branding and campaigns. The three overall strategic focus points are elaborated in Table 3.

<b><i>Citizen involvement &amp; dialogue</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better solutions and better service for low cost</li> <li>- User-driven idea development, research, and market research</li> <li>- Through the above, involve citizens in the development of new services and products</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When we use social media, we make ourselves available and invite citizens to participate in dialogue</li> <li>- This dialogue which will bring us closer to the citizens and the citizens closer to us</li> </ul>
<b><i>Service &amp; Information</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Copenhageners should feel well-informed about the many continuous changes that take place in the city</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possibility to clarify and elaborate</li> <li>- Create consensus and understanding of why we do as we do</li> </ul>
<b><i>Branding &amp; Campaigns</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We should show and tell that we are an inclusive big city with a focus on quality of life, that we take care of our citizens and that we are open to change and development</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publicity and invitation to events, openings, and other events</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dissemination to press</li> </ul>

*Table 3. Copenhagen Municipality's Overall Strategic Focus*

Although CM's social media strategy states that the municipality, among other things, wants to invite citizens to engage in dialogue with the municipality and increase the presence of democratic processes, the analysis of the collected data shows that CM's Facebook page is mainly used and perceived as a platform for image management to improve the image that citizens are generally perceived to have of a municipality as an "administratively heavy and non-transparent mess," according to CM's social media strategy. This argument is clearly exemplified when Tine was asked about the purpose of

their social media platforms. She pointed out that the municipality was “up against a rather sad image ... as both a public institution and municipality that just spends a lot of money.” Therefore, Tine saw social media as an important channel for CM to show citizens another side of the municipality and inform them about what they receive for the taxes they pay. “It is completely absurd how many offers there are,” as Tine pointed out.

The argument that Facebook is perceived mainly as a platform for improving CM’s image was further supported by the way Tine spoke about the importance of knowing what works well with one’s followers:

We know exactly what type of content that works well. It’s bridges, it’s garbage and it’s cycles. That’s a hit. That’s a hit every time. That’s definitely sure winners. But then there is also everything from the Social Services and Care administration that shows we are a united municipality that does something for the vulnerable and then you really notice that we live in a left-wing municipality. I mean, when we ride bicycles with the elderly ... or when we have those visiting babies at care homes, I mean, it’s like candy. People absolutely love it. And they really like the diversity and the fact that we help each other.

In the above quote, it is evident how Tine perceived and evaluated social media content on the basis of what type of content that is positively received by citizens. Furthermore, it is also evident that an improved municipality image is an important goal for CM from the way the Facebook presence is evaluated. As Tine explained, they survey whether their Facebook followers’ impressions of CM have changed from before the municipality was active on social media. Their first evaluation, she added, showed that 68% of their followers now had a better image of the municipality.

The content analysis of CM's Facebook page, too, showed that impression management was the municipality's most applied communication strategy on Facebook, with over half of the content categorised as impression management (Table 4). The image management was in the form of storytelling, city and event promotion, and friendship performance content such as weekly quizzes, stories about city monuments and photo competitions.

<p><b>Impression Management</b> (66%)</p>	<p><b>Friendship Performance:</b> Tuesday-quiz, stories from the Monument Man, seasonal greetings (spring, summer, autumn, Christmas, New Year's, April Fool's Day), citizens encouraged to share photos, photo competitions.</p>
	<p><b>Favourable Publicity:</b> #Facesofcph, inspirational stories, boasting (e.g., city landmark nominated for award), city promotion (e.g., videos and photos of Copenhagen's nature and urban areas, particularly Copenhagen as a cycling capital).</p>
	<p><b>Promotion of Cultural &amp; Leisure Events:</b> Concerts and festivals, exhibitions, inaugurations, guided tours, holiday season activities, children's events, sport events.</p>
<p><b>Push</b> (28%)</p>	<p><b>Public Service Announcements:</b> Citizen service announcements (e.g., passport renewal, change of parking zones), safety announcements and campaigns (e.g., traffic and weather updates/warnings, urban theft campaign), health announcements and campaigns (e.g., stop smoking, sexual health campaign, centre for cancer, grief counselling for relatives), environmental announcements (i.e., sorting of waste).</p>
	<p><b>News and Announcements:</b> Invitations to local society, club and association meetings, announcements relating to democratic and political decision-making (e.g. new town hall square, remember to vote, changes to labour market laws, school renovation plans), municipal initiatives (bio-waste initiative).</p>
<p><b>Pull</b> (2,9%)</p>	<p><b>Feedback:</b> Service oriented (feedback on ordering passports, what is good service to you?), city development (what do you think of Copenhagen's Christmas markets?)</p>
	<p><b>Citizen Involvement:</b> Service oriented (ideas for virtual service initiative), city development (what should the new cycle bridge be named, make the city greener: apply for a tree, Copenhagen is planting 100.000 new trees: where should we plant them?, what Copenhagen's new urban forest should look like, ideas for the culture centre in inner Copenhagen, improving pedestrian footpaths, give us your inputs to the new Cycling Priority Plan 2017-2025).</p>
<p><b>Networking</b> (3,1%)</p>	<p><b>Call for Volunteers:</b> Expressing congratulations (e.g. winners of industry awards, association leaders, volunteer music teachers for immigrants, volunteers to clean up garbage in Copenhagen, volunteers for "Cycling has no Age" initiative, volunteers to help immigrants with everyday issues, volunteer grief counselling instructor, general call/encouragement to become community volunteer.</p>
	<p><b>Call for Discussion:</b> Invitations to public meetings (tourism in Copenhagen, nature development in the Damhussø area, future plans of the Palads cinema building, public meeting in Sundby, dialogue meeting on nursery, day-care and schools, dialogue meeting on Bellahøj amphitheatre, public meeting on future public transport in Copenhagen).</p>

Table 4. Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Communication Strategies

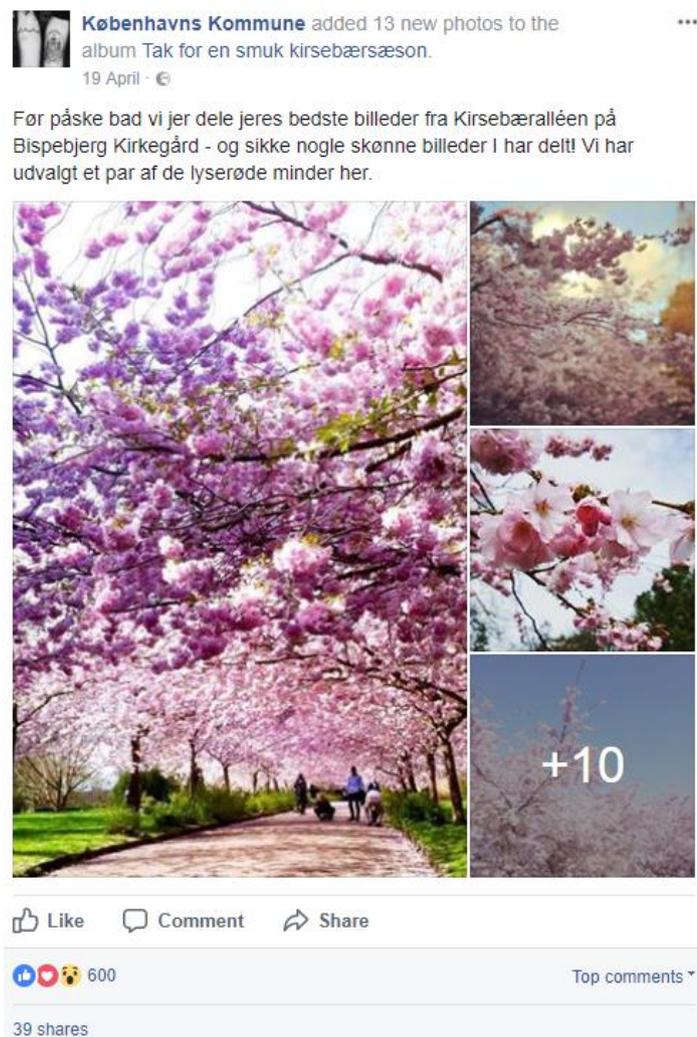
Storytelling in the form of positive and inspirational stories giving an insight into the municipality was one of the ways in which CM attempted to show citizens another side of the municipality. In Figure 1, for example, CM tells the story of how seven care homes in the municipality over a period of six months focused on creating good meal experiences for the elderly in order to improve their quality of life. As Tine mentioned, these kinds of positive and inspirational stories show the municipality as a “good” organisation are like “candy” to their followers.



Figure 1. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page

Another common way that the municipality managed their image was through city and event promotion. CM’s urban spaces were heavily promot-

ed in the form of photos or videos of the municipality's nature and urban spaces. In acts of friendship performance, as DePaula and Dincelli (2016) refer to it, CM often encouraged citizens to post their pictures of the city's nature and green spots. In Figure 2, for example, CM posted a selection of photos that they had previously encouraged citizens to share with them of the city's famous cherry blossom avenue that is only in bloom for three weeks around Easter and attracts around 150,000 Danes and tourists.



*Figure 2. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page*

Promoting Copenhagen as the world's cycling capital was also common on CM's Facebook page such as when CM shared a video from Visit Co-

penhagen's Facebook page that takes the viewer on a guided tour through the cycle lanes of Copenhagen, showing off the city's elaborate cycling infrastructure and many new cycling bridges (Figure 3).



*Figure 3. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page*

As DePaula and Dincelli (2016) argue, applying this kind of image management communication strategy is not in itself a negative thing. On the contrary, they argue that it is “an honest ‘reaching out’ to the community” (p. 7) that can serve to create a sense of community for citizens. Nevertheless, this kind of image management will not help to build the kind of government-citizen relationships that Margolis and Moreno-Riaño (2013) argue will create a more “informed citizenry” that can more easily and more fully participate in political debates and policy-making (p. 29). On the contrary,

considering Tine's own thoughts on the municipality's image, the way the image management strategy is applied on the Facebook page seems closer to an NPM client-customer relationship, with the municipality managing its brand in order to gain a more satisfied customers base.

### ***5.2 Light citizen involvement and Star Wars dialogue***

Although citizen involvement and dialogue were both part of CM's strategic focus, at no point did CM involve or engage citizens in dialogue on a higher political level such as political debates or policy development. Instead, citizen involvement was of a physical nature in the form of inputs for urban development. Furthermore, it was clear that it was used indiscriminately and perceived as any kind of interaction with citizens on the Facebook page and not with the intention of increasing democratic participation.

#### ***Involvement***

CM did occasionally involve citizens on their Facebook page; however, this was only in the form of "light" involvement, as Tine herself put it, by asking for inputs for urban development initiatives. Within the nine-month period analysed, CM involved citizens by asking them to give their input to eight initiatives that mostly related to urban development such as inputs to the municipality's Cycle Priority Plan 2017-2025, naming a new cycle bridge, suggesting where to plant 100,00 new trees, and design ideas for a new urban forest.

In November last year, for example, CM asked citizens to help them improve conditions for cyclists in the municipality's Cycle Priority Plan 2017 – 2025 (Figure 4). The post was a reminder for citizens to use the municipality's interactive map to point out where it was in the city that cycle paths

were missing, where cycle paths should be expanded, as well as where there were traffic light crossings with many cyclists.



Figure 4. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page

Another urban development initiative that CM involved citizens in was the municipality's plan to plant 100,000 trees around the city before the end of 2015 (Figure 5). As with the Cycle Priority Plan above, CM asked citizens to point out where in the city trees were missing on the interactive map the post linked to. In addition to the 196 inputs posted directly in the com-

ment section, CM received 10,000 inputs on the interactive map linked to in the post, according to Tine.



Figure 5. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page

Although the above examples clearly show that citizens were involved and given the opportunity to have their say about the urban spaces they live

in, they also show that it is a fairly low level of involvement that is more of a practical than a political nature. It is also evident that Tine did not see the purpose of involving citizens on Facebook to be on a higher political level, as she argued that, it is “more fun to be involving and a little goofy with things that are just physical”, such as things from the Technical and Environmental Administration, than it is to involve citizens in other “heavier” administrations such as the Social Services and Care Administration. Furthermore, there is an element of NPM thinking in the way CM’s internal leaflet on citizen involvement describes citizens as resources “with valuable knowledge that can help develop public service.” This was also evident in the way Tine viewed citizen involvement as “a really good way to quickly gather some empirical data without having to use lots of money on consultants.”

### *Dialogue*

Although engaging in dialogue with citizens was also part of CM’s strategic focus, it is evident from both internal documents as well as the interview with Tine that dialogue was perceived and used unsystematically, with no clear reflection over what it means to engage in dialogue. In CM’s social media strategy, it is argued that by being present on social media “we make ourselves available, and encourage a dialogue – a dialogue which will bring us closer to citizens and citizens closer to us.” Later in the document, under the headline “Dialogue with Citizens”, it is stated that:

[t]hree employees from the contact centre team take weekly turns handling the dialogue with citizens. They will immediately clarify as much as possible by searching for answers on the municipality website.

Furthermore, when asked what dialogue meant to her, Tine referred to CM's involvement of citizens in urban development saying that "it could be, well it is about the city, when we need some input for something or when we want to develop or further develop." When she was asked to give a concrete example where communication had worked particularly well with citizens, Tine mentioned an episode where she and her team had a humorous "dialogue" revolving around Star Wars with a citizen (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Screenshot from Copenhagen Municipality Facebook Page

In this episode that Tine described as engaging in dialogue, a citizen had posted a picture of a Star Wars lightsabre that had been left behind in a courtyard playground after the annual street festival Distortion. The picture had been accompanied by a humorous comment in which the citizen asked what to do when his apartment building was being plagued by Sith Lords leaving used lightsabres in the courtyard as well as which category to report this plague in the municipality's incident report app. The municipality replied with an equally humorous comment encouraging the citizen to dispose of the lightsabre himself as the app was unfortunately still missing a Star Wars category, ending the comment with a "may the force be with you" greeting. The "Star Wars dialogue" continued between the municipality and citizens and went viral, with over 1,000 shares, almost 5,000 likes and 389 comments and eventually ended up on several national news sites.

The above examples exemplify how the term "dialogue" is broadly perceived as any kind of interaction with citizens from replying to enquiries, asking for input, or having humorous and friendly conversations revolving around Star Wars in order to "meet the citizen where he is," as the municipality puts it in their external Power Point presentation, in which the Star Wars incident is highlighted as an example of engaging in dialogue with citizens.

Although CM was generally very attentive with regard to replying to their citizens' enquiries, concerns, and frustrations, the content analysis showed that none of CM's interactions with citizens on Facebook in the form of answers to enquiries, clarifications, and elaborations, or friendly comments and conversations such as the "Star Wars dialogue" could be defined as dialogue. Engaging in dialogue, as Kent and Taylor (1998) argue,

means engaging in an “exchange of ideas and opinions” through “open and negotiated discussion” (p. 325) between an organisation and its stakeholders. Thus, as was argued in this study’s theoretical framework, for a municipality to simply interact with its citizens on their social media platforms by replying to citizens’ comments, as CM only did, does not automatically constitute dialogic communication.

### *5.3 The bottom-up approach: Social media as a playground*

Overall, the content analysed showed that CM did not use their Facebook page on a higher political level at any point. In fact, the only content relating to democratic processes or political decision-making that was rarely posted were either purely informational or invitations for citizens to attend public meetings (Table 4). However, Tine pointed out that it was due to the organisational complexity of the municipality that the municipality did not mix social media and politics:

We can’t get into any kind of political discussion on any of our social media ... And we can’t do that for one reason: we are too big. Then one mayor has gotten more speaking time than the others and so on. They are not going to use this as a platform for their populist, more or less, propaganda

Despite CM’s Facebook page not being a platform for politics and Tine’s apparent dismissive attitude toward the prospect of involving the municipality’s democratically elected politicians on social media, she nevertheless claimed that she did see the democratic potential of social media, but had

not been able to gain the support of the political leadership to utilise this potential:

We just don't have the focus, you know? ... you also need to have a support base, which I haven't succeeded in ... I tried get hold of the municipal council's secretariat, the ones who serve all the politicians, but they're just too busy to get involved.

Although Tine's argumentation above is ambivalent, her account of the implementation of social media as a bottom-up approach suggests that the use of CM's Facebook page as mainly an image management platform and the lack of political and democratic involvement was a result of CM's high-level management and political leadership's lack of support and interest in the municipality's social media.

Tine's account of the adoption and implementation of social media at CM was a clear example of an experimental, bottom-up approach initiated by entrepreneurial types within the organisation, as Mergel and Bretschneider's (2013) three-stage adoption suggests e-government initiatives usually are. According to Tine, when the prospect of adopting social media was first aired within CM, many employees had been hesitant because they thought the municipality faced enough negative publicity in the media as it was. However, this resistance did not hold Tine's quite "flamboyant" manager back from starting a Facebook page within the Citizen Service Centre instead (that he was managing at the time), which he was able to do without having to gain broad consensus across CM. Behind the decision was an intention of changing the Facebook page to CM's central Facebook page once they could get the seven administrations behind them by showing them how

well the Facebook page worked in the Citizen Service Centre. Tine saw this initial process of adopting Facebook as an experimental phase describing how they “started from scratch and no one really knew anything about anything. ... There were no managers telling us how to do it. It was a playground.”

The proposition to change the Facebook page to CM’s central page was later brought up in and approved by the finance committee. CM’s social media was eventually moved to the Culture and Leisure Administration when this administration merged with the Citizen Service Centre.

Apart from CM’s current social media strategy that was submitted to the communication managers in the seven administrations for approval and the finance committee’s initial approval of a central Facebook page, no other high-level management or political leadership within the organisation were involved in CM’s social media, as Tine explains:

No, I mean, it just needs to run. It’s also pretty cool that you just get to run it by yourself because no one really knows anything about anything. And that has been pretty cool for five years, right? I mean, it has been a playground. We’ve been left free to do all kinds of things.

Finally, Tine and her team have the final say when it comes to managing CM’s social media and do not need to run things past their manager for approval. As she pointed out, her manager “just needs to see a lot of results, then he is happy.”

As argued above, Tine’s account of the implementation of social media in the organisation and the level of higher-level management and political involvement is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, she views Facebook

as a place just for Copenhageners that is free of political propaganda. Additionally, she expressed the great advantage and enjoyment in the autonomy that the lack of interference from higher-level management and the political level of the organisation has given her and her team, describing it as a playground. On the other hand, Tine at the same time claimed that she did see a democratic potential in social media and pointed to the lack of interest and support from the municipality's political leadership as the reason why this democratic potential has not been realised.

Tine's latter argument was supported by the analysis of CM, which suggests that it is due to the higher-level management and political leadership's lack of interest and involvement in the municipality's social media that has led to their Facebook page being a platform mainly for image management and information dissemination. It is therefore not surprising, and to some extent inevitable, that CM's platform was used mainly for image management and information dissemination. As Kent and Taylor (2014) argue, it is crucial that an organisation's dominant coalition recognise the value of building relationships with citizens through social media in order for an organisation to engage in dialogue with its stakeholder, and in the case of a municipality, utilise the potential of social media to increase democratic participation.

## 5.2 Ringsted municipality

Supporting previous research, the collected data from RM showed that Facebook was mainly used and perceived as an image management tool to improve the municipality's reputation through storytelling and not as a platform for the political involvement of citizens. Nevertheless, the content analysis showed that RM did engage in dialogue on a political level with citizens on two occasions. The analysis of the organisational factors suggests that the dialogue was made possible due to the support and involvement of the political and high-level management in the municipality's social media.

### *5.2.1 Reputation management: Telling the "good story"*

Before launching their Facebook page, RM developed a one-page social media strategy with the help of a consultant, who among other things developed a guide for telling a "good story", so they had a good basis to start from. In the social media strategy, it is stated that the three main purposes of the Facebook page are improving the municipality's reputation, increasing citizen participation, and improving citizen service (Table 5).

<b><i>Improve reputation</i></b>	- Positive stories about the municipality (reframing of positive press and successful events)
	- Put a human face on the municipality
	- Engage openly in dialogue with our citizens
<b><i>Increase citizen participation where it makes sense</i></b>	- Ask for input for plans and projects
	- Ask for feedback on municipal events and suggestions for improvements
	- Organise digital public meetings
<b><i>Improved service for Ringsted citizens</i></b>	- Answer simple information enquiries and increase number of instant clarifications
	- Provide co-guidance by guidance of and reference to self-service solutions and <a href="http://www.ringsted.dk">www.ringsted.dk</a>
	- Refer citizens requests that cannot be handled on Facebook to the relevant administration

*Table 5. Main purposes of Ringsted Municipality's Facebook Page*

It was clear from the interview with Lotte that she viewed the main purpose of the municipality's Facebook page as a platform to help combat the general bad reputation that municipalities have. As Lotte argued, the main purpose of their Facebook page is "without a doubt this thing about municipalities being viewed as this big, evil block somewhere. That is the picture people have of municipalities." For this purpose, Lotte pointed out that storytelling was a key component in order to show citizens another side of the municipality by showing them what goes on inside of it:

We want to tell the good stories from the municipality, create another reputation for what a municipality really is ... because there are a lot of good stories. We are doing a lot of great things for different kinds of citizens ... It is these stories that in some way are valuable for the citizens to know about. They are not interested in knowing about the things we are doing in our offices as such ... it is of course important what we are doing, but it is kind of a boring story.

Although citizens should of course receive a lot practical information such as information about garbage collection or reminders of passports renewals, Lotte argued that it was the “good stories” that should make up the majority of the content on their Facebook page. Even when they had to remind citizens to empty their garbage bins, storytelling worked better than pure finger-wagging, she pointed out.

The content analysis showed that impression management was by far the most applied communication strategy on the municipality’s Facebook page (Table 6). This took the form of “friendship performance” such as welcoming new citizens to the municipality, encouraging citizens to compete in photo competitions, or congratulating citizens on achievements, as well as positive stories from the local community and event promotion. A large part of the content was in the form of storytelling with rather long posts telling positive and inspirational stories from within the municipality, particularly stories about children and young people, the elderly, and municipal employees.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Impression Management</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(54,5%)</p>	<p><b>Friendship Performance:</b> Welcoming new citizens, photo competitions, photos of Ringsted “back in the day”, congratulating citizens (e.g., winners of industry award, students, association leaders, municipality employees).</p>
	<p><b>Favourable Publicity:</b> Storytelling (e.g., meet an employee, children’s health project, students first day of school, children’s festival, technology festival, children’s exercise run, new bike for care home for elderly, new ‘sense room’ and dog visiting care home for the elderly), updates on Ringsted as UNICEF city 2016.</p>
	<p><b>Promotion of Cultural &amp; Leisure Events:</b> Holiday and seasonal events and activities (e.g., summer holiday activities, lightning up the Christmas tree, children’s festival, music school, concerts, nature day, nature walk, hiking festival, open air cinema, sport events).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Push</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(37%)</p>	<p><b>Public Service Announcements:</b> Citizen service announcements (e.g., garbage pick-up during Easter/Christmas, school registration, how to avoid rats, do you know when your passport expires?, deadlines for applications), health announcements (e.g., children eat more fish in school, children active 60 minutes a day, new defibrillators around the city, focus on men’s health (health week), Ringsted walking club), environmental (e.g., fight food waste, resource waste event).</p>
	<p><b>News and Announcements:</b> Job opportunities within the municipality, municipal initiatives (e.g., new initiatives for the elderly, better lives for the elderly, food club for the elderly, meeting place for men, fitness classes for men, lung cancer choir health team, digital frontrunners), announcements relating to democratic and political decision-making (upcoming budget meeting on Facebook, budget agreement 2017, final enactment on the future of Torvet).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Pull</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(4%)</p>	<p><b>Citizen Involvement:</b> City development (we need your help to improve traffic safety, invitation to use “give us a hint” app), awards (help us find a winner of Ringsted’s architecture award, help nominate candidates for disabled, integration and volunteer awards), feedback (help us become better on Facebook), suggestions from Ringsted youths: What shall we use DKK 25,000 on?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Networking</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(4,5%)</p>	<p><b>Call for Discussion:</b> Invitations to public meetings (public meeting on temporary immigration housing, public meeting on the future of Ådal, public meeting on Gyrstinge lake, public meeting on the future of Torvet, public meeting on the future of Roskilde road – leave comments on Facebook if you cannot attend).</p>
	<p><b>Dialogue:</b> Online budget meeting 2016, online budget meeting 2017.</p>
	<p><b>Call for Volunteers:</b> Become a volunteer to visit lonely elderly people.</p>

Table 6. Ringsted Municipality Facebook Communication Strategies

One example of this was when RM posted a story about a local trainee Matthias and his participation in the vocational educations' national championship, "DM in Skills", in which he won the title as the best kitchen-assistant in Denmark (Figure 7). The story featured pictures of Matthias as well as a quote in which he expressed his excitement over winning the championship.



Figure 7. Screenshot from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

Another example of favourable publicity through storytelling on RM's Facebook page, was the story about Baloo, a new visiting puppy in one of the municipality's care homes, and Aase, a care home resident, who had become particularly fond of Baloo "even though he [did] bite their fingers a little" (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Screenshot from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

Through storytelling, these kinds of posts are clearly in line with Lotte’s statement that the main purpose of the Facebook page was to show citizens a positive side of the. This is evident from the inspirational stories about Matthias, and Baloo and Aase, which is fun and friendly content that can create a sense of community through “an honest ‘reaching out’ to the community” as DePaula and Dincelli (2016, p. 7) put it. This is evident from the reaction citizens had to the post about Baloo and Aase, which received huge attention on RM’s Facebook page, with over 2,000 likes and 165 comments from citizens filled with emojis and positive declarations praising the idea (Figure 9).

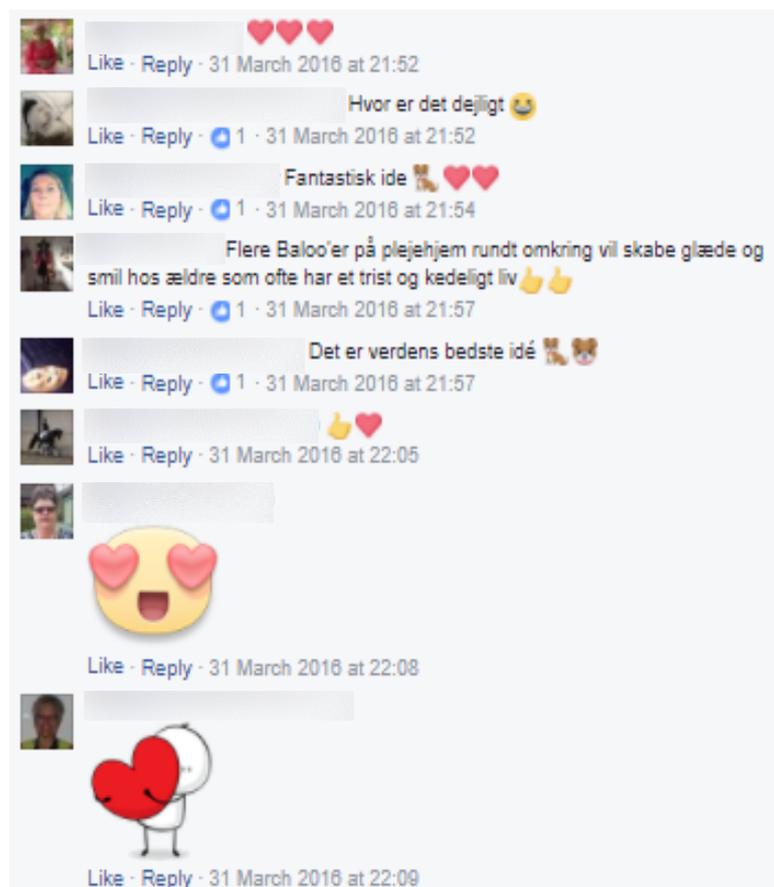


Table 9. Screenshot from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

Generally, these kinds of enthusiastic and positive declarations from citizens to RM's storytelling were common on the Facebook page, particularly when the stories dealt with citizens from the local community (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Screenshots from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

Nevertheless, despite the fact that positive stories from RM clearly seem to be creating a sense of community among RM's Facebook followers, this type of image management will not allow the municipality to build the kind of government-citizen relationships with an "informed citizenry" that can more fully participate in political debates and policy-making as Margolis and Moreno-Riaño (2013, p. 29) argue is possible with e-government initiatives.

### 5.2.2 Citizen involvement: "The new black"

Apart from improving the municipality's reputation, Lotte pointed out that the purpose of their Facebook page was also to involve citizens and make the municipality more accessible to them. However, the content analysis showed that when RM occasionally did involve their citizens, it was

most often of a more practical nature by asking them for their inputs to urban development initiatives (Table 6). An example of this was when RM last year encouraged citizens to give their inputs to improve the traffic safety in the municipality (Figure 11). The post linked to a survey in which citizens could give their input to where the traffic could be improved and where they, as road users, felt unsafe in the municipality. Lotte pointed out that these kinds of inputs were valuable to the municipality because citizens were the ones out there on the streets and therefore had first-hand knowledge that civil servants within RM could compare with their own facts and data and in the end, achieve better results.



Figure 11. Screenshot from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

Another way in which RM involved their citizens was to ask them for input to Ringsted Municipality's Architecture Award 2016, by submitting their suggestion on the best piece of architecture or most well-renovated building in Ringsted, which the committee then took into consideration in their assessment (Figure 12).



*Figure 12. Screenshot from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page*

As the examples above show, RM did involve their citizens on Facebook, and while Lotte clearly saw the value of gathering citizens' input, it was nevertheless involvement at a very low political level. Lotte pointed

this out herself when she talked about the municipality's citizen involvement:

It tends to be very practical examples we talk about, like if we can make some of it fun and something the citizens want to get involved in, but it is not on some higher political level.

Both of the above examples from RM's Facebook page as well as Lotte's statement exemplify that Facebook is only used and perceived of citizen involvement in a practical nature and as something that should be entertaining for citizens. This point was also made clear when Lotte pointed out that citizen involvement was "the new black," suggesting that citizen involvement is perceived as the latest fashion in the public sector that should be adopted because "everyone else is doing it".

### ***5.2.3 Online budget plan meetings***

Even though Lotte perceived dialogue as the involvement of citizens by asking for input as well as encouraging citizens to help out in their community, the content analysis showed that RM did in fact engage in a political dialogue with citizens on Facebook twice in the form of online meetings with the municipal council to discuss the municipality's coming years' budget plans in both 2016 and 2017.

When Lotte was asked to give an example where she felt she had engaged in dialogue with citizens on Facebook, Lotte viewed dialogue as asking citizens for input or encouraging them to help out in the community. As she argued, dialogue is "it's all this about us wanting citizens to help each other or help us with something, like traffic safety." Another similar exam-

ple of engaging in dialogue that Lotte brought up was when they asked citizens for input to the local architecture competition discussed previously. Lastly, Lotte viewed that they had engaged in dialogue with citizens when RM had posted a story about a loneliness project for the elderly that had not been successful in finding volunteers through other channels. After they had been informed about the project's upcoming information meeting, five of the seven citizens that showed up had heard about the project on Facebook, according to Lotte who added that "there were definitely two or three who ended up signing up for the project as volunteers and that's amazing!" Although, citizens taking action offline after online interaction on a municipality's Facebook page, such as helping out in the community by volunteering, is considered one of the highest forms of collaboration between citizens and municipalities according to Mergel (2013), it is not a case of engaging in dialogue with citizens online, it cannot be considered to be on a political level.

The content analysis showed that citizens were only occasionally informed about democratic processes and political decision-making, and occasionally invited to discuss issues through invitations to public meetings. However, it also showed that RM did engage in dialogue with citizens twice in the form of two-hour online budget plan meetings in both 2016 and 2017 (Figure 13). The meetings took place on the RM's Facebook page, as can be seen in Figure 13, where citizens were welcomed by the mayor to discuss and ask questions about RM's budget plan for the coming year in the posts' comment section to the participating municipal council politicians. At both meetings, around a third of the municipal council participated. From examining both posts, it was clear that citizens welcomed the initiative, with 48 discussion topics and 148 discussion replies in 2016 and 26 discussion top-

ics and 148 discussion replies in 2017. The citizens clearly utilized the meeting to gain clarifications from, debate decisions with, and give inputs to the politicians.

Although both politicians and citizens often did not agree with one another and the politicians both used the meeting to justify the budget plan decisions as well as air their own political stand points, the meeting was conducted in a sober tone and the politicians took their time to engaging with citizens and ‘listened’ and responded to them as the comment thread in Appendix 7 shows.

Overall the concept worked surprisingly well and managed to involve citizens at the political level by engaging them in an “negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions”, as Kent and Taylor (1998, p. 325) argue constitutes dialogue. with many citizens both thanking and praising the politicians for their involvement and the municipality for the initiative. Lotte also explained how the meetings were very value to the citizens. She first pointed out that citizens have another voice on Facebook because they are not “on the spot” in the same way as they would be at a traditional public meeting. Secondly, she argued that there is a lot less action involved in attending a public meeting online than in attending a traditional public meeting in person. Most significantly, however, Lotte explained that there had been one issue in this year’s online debate that was on the citizens’ minds:

There were definitely some citizens who had clearly decided to put the issue on the agenda, and I think they actually succeeded. I don’t know where else they could have done that.

**Ringsted Kommune**  
25 May 2016 · 🌐

Er I klar derude? Har I en holdning til næste års budget?  
Jeg vil gerne byde velkommen til politikerchat om budget 2017.  
Vi er 14 af Byrådets 21 medlemmer, der er klar til at svare på jeres spørgsmål og høre jeres kommentarer:  
Line Lynnerup, Per Roos, Timo Jensen, Pia Fussing, Finn Andersen, Torben Løllike, Britta Nielsen, Per Flor, Benny Christensen, Lisbeth Andersen, Mette Ahm-Petersen, Kisser Franciska Lehnert, Sadik Topcu og undertegnede.  
Vi er godt i gang med at lægge budgettet for næste år– og vil gerne høre dine kommentarer til de konkrete forslag til budget 2017, som nu er i høring. Og vi vil selvfølgelig også gerne høre, hvis du har idéer til nye budgetforslag.  
Har du et spørgsmål eller en kommentar til os? Så skriv til os her i tråden!  
Mange hilsner  
Henrik Hvidesten  
Borgmester



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

👍❤️ 67    Chronological ▾

3 shares

View previous comments    2 of 56

**Ringsted Kommune**  
31 May · 🌐

Er I klar derude? Har I en holdning til næste års budget?  
Jeg vil gerne byde velkommen til politikerchat om budget 2018.  
Vi er 15 af Byrådets 21 medlemmer, der er klar til at svare på jeres spørgsmål og høre jeres kommentarer:  
Line Lynnerup, Klaus Hansen, Per Roos, Johnny Dahlgaard, Pia Fussing, Per Nørhave, Daniel Nørhave, Finn Andersen, Britta Nielsen, Sadik Topcu, Per Flor, Benny Christensen, Mette Ahm-Petersen, Kisser Franciska Lehnert og undertegnede.  
Vi er godt i gang med at lægge budgettet for næste år– og vil gerne høre dine kommentarer til de konkrete forslag til budget 2018, som nu er i høring. Og vi vil selvfølgelig også gerne høre, hvis du har idéer til nye budgetforslag 😊  
Har du et spørgsmål eller en kommentar til os? Så skriv til os her i tråden!  
Mange hilsner  
Henrik Hvidesten  
Borgmester



👍 Like    💬 Comment    ➦ Share

👍❤️ 45    Chronological ▾

15 shares

View 30 more comments

*Figure 13. Screenshots from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page*

Furthermore, Lotte pointed out how the online budget plan meetings had proven to be a valuable initiative for RM’s politicians too. The politicians were happy with the meetings because they recognised the value of gaining input from citizens who they would otherwise not reach. In fact, according to Lotte, it was most likely the mayor who had pushed the initiative through at the political level. Furthermore, Lotte was convinced that the online

budget meetings had given the politicians a chance to reach citizens who would not usually show up to a public meeting:

It is another segment that shows up on Facebook than at the public meetings [and] there are a lot of other people out there watching the debate than just participating in it, and that is also where we think there could be some value in getting out there.

Even though Lotte was clear about the value of the online budget plan meetings for both citizens and the politicians, she nevertheless argued that it was not the purpose of the Facebook page to carry out politics:

It is not a platform for politicians to run election campaigns and discuss back and forth ... It can quickly become messy. They are politicians and we are civil servants, I mean, we reply to the professional questions we can and as soon as it gets political we refer to the political level.

Although Lotte did view the online budget plan meetings as being of a political nature, she described her and her team's role as facilitatory in the sense that they "just" took care of practical things such as keeping a proper tone during the debate and helping politicians to keep track of the citizens' comments:

Basically, we are just opening up the possibility for citizens and politicians to meet at certain times. It is a way to involve citizens ... But we don't interfere. We are just providing a channel ... We don't check up on them [the politicians] afterwards and assess whether they've followed up on the things they are promising in the Facebook debate. That's where it's politics.

Even though Lotte did not view the online budget meeting as engaging in politics and viewed her and her team's role as only facilitatory, it is evident that the municipality engaged in dialogue with citizens on a political level through the online budget plan meetings. The dialogue between citizens and politicians, and consequently an increase in democratic participation, seems to be a result of the RM's political leadership's strategic involvement in the municipality's Facebook page.

#### ***5.2.4 The top-down approach: Political level support and involvement***

The above argument that the political dialogue on Facebook was due to higher-level organisational and political involvement is further supported by Lotte's account of the implementation and management of RM's Facebook page, which, unlike bottom-up approach suggested Mergel and Bretschneider (2013), has been closer to a top-down approach, with high involvement from both the organisation's higher-level management and political leadership, with the current mayor leading the way.

The day-to-day management and decision-making regarding Facebook is down to Lotte and her team; as Lotte points out, they are the ones who "have received the training and there is a lot of trust from the organisation that we are doing it properly." Nevertheless, both RM's higher-level management and politicians were involved in the municipality's social media from the beginning, according to Lotte. In fact, she pointed out that it was RM's current mayor, Henrik Hvidesten, who first started talking about an RM Facebook page a few years before they launched one. When they began talking seriously about the prospect of a Facebook page within the organisa-

tion, it took around a year of preparation time before they finally launched it, as Lotte explains:

We have always thought it was a good idea. We just wanted it to do it in the right way [...] We just wanted to think carefully about it first. Why does it that have value to be on Facebook? So, we have been preparing for a long time and really considered what we wanted out of being on Facebook, writing it down, and then we took the plunge.

Before the launch, the Communication Department's "Plan of Action 2016 - Communication and Citizen Participation" was brought up at a finance committee meeting in November 2015, and the establishment of a Facebook page was approved, with a remark stating that it was "not an aim in itself to improve the municipality's reputation, but an aim to create easy and quick access to the municipality as well as good and credible dialogue with the citizens" (minutes from finance committee meeting).

The Communication Department meets with the board of managers once a year to update them about where the team is at with the Facebook page, whether they are following their social media strategy as well as the goals for the coming year; however, as Lotte argued, the organisation is not as complex as larger municipalities, and therefore there is not a long way from the communication team up to the administrative and political leadership, which makes it easier to "develop good ideas and say 'yes, let's try that'." Lastly, Lotte explained that the politicians have responded well to the initiative by often liking and sharing content on Facebook, "especially our mayor" she pointed out, "he's really leading the way with [Facebook]."

Despite Lotte perceiving the main purpose of RM's Facebook page as a non-political platform for image management and information dissemination, the above account shows how the board of managers and political leadership's interest and involvement in RM's Facebook page was crucial in lifting it from mainly image management to a platform that also facilitated a political dialogue between citizens and the municipality's politicians.

In RM's case, the politicians, and especially the current mayor, clearly saw the value in utilising the Facebook page's potential to engage in dialogue with citizens and thus increase democratic participation. Although Lotte, as a practitioner, was also clearly aware of the value for both citizens and politicians, it is clear that without the support and involvement of the municipality's politicians and higher-level management, RM's Facebook page would have been limited to being a platform for image management and information dissemination.

## 6. Cross-Case Discussion and Practical Implications

---

Overall, CM and RM communicated with their citizens and perceived the purpose of their municipalities' Facebook pages in very similar ways.

Both municipalities used Facebook mainly to their image by communicating favourable publicity, promoting events, and interacting with citizens in a fun and friendly manner, for example, through photo competitions. This was in line with both Lotte and Tine's view of the purpose of Facebook. For both practitioners, the municipality's image was a central component. They viewed Facebook as a platform for improving the bad image that citizens were perceived to have of municipalities and public institutions in general. Portraying another side of the municipalities, generally favourable publicity and especially through positive and inspirational storytelling, was a key focus for both municipalities. Particularly in RM, the use of positive storytelling seemed to be part of creating a sense of community between its followers.

As was argued in both case analyses, the municipalities' image management should not necessarily be viewed as insignificant or negative in itself, but more as "an honest "reaching out" to the community" (DePaula & Dincelli, 2016, p. 7). DePaula and Dincelli (2016) point out that this kind of image management is most likely a defence mechanism employed by the municipalities because "the public sector often needs to defend the value of its activities and compete in the market for resources" (p. 7). This kind of NPM mentality was particularly present in CM when Tine pointed out that it

was important for CM to show citizens how the money from their taxes was used and how many municipal offers were available as well as when she pointed out that their citizen involvement saved them a lot of money on hiring consultants when they were developing public campaigns.

Furthermore, another clear similarity between the two municipalities was the ambivalence both practitioners expressed with regard about the use of social media for democratic and political purposes. On the one hand, they both claimed to see the democratic potential of Facebook and were clear about the value of involving citizens and engaging in dialogue, which was also central focus points in both municipalities' social media strategies. On the other hand, as practitioners, they clearly did not view Facebook as a platform for political involvement; as they both argued, their municipality did not mix Facebook and politics. In this regard, it was interesting how they both viewed "being political" (particularly by the municipal politicians) on Facebook in a rather negative sense. It almost seemed as if they believed they were saving citizens from the politicians' "propaganda." As Tine herself put it, the politicians should not use CM's Facebook page "for their populist, more or less, propaganda", which seems to be an odd attitude to have towards a municipality's democratically elected politicians. In contrast, both Tine and Lotte saw the involvement of and dialogue with citizens on Facebook as something that should be fun and of a practical, not political, nature; as Lotte argued, citizens are not "interested in knowing about the things [they] are doing in [their] offices as such ... it is of course important what [they] are doing, but it is kind of a boring story."

Based on the analysis of the interviews and the internal documents, it is obvious that there was a clear awareness of Government 2.0 concepts such

as “citizen involvement”, “engagement”, “dialogue”, and “two-way communication” in both municipalities; however, the way in which these concepts were perceived by Tine and Lotte as well as the way in which the municipalities communicated with citizens on Facebook suggest that these concepts are to some extent mere buzzwords adopted and used by the municipalities’ because they are “the new black,” as Lotte put it. This supports Chadwick and May’s (2003) argument that even though the democratic and dialogic potential of social media is acknowledged, public institution’s e-government initiatives most often “managerial model” that emphasises NPM client-customer relationships as opposed to government-citizen.

Despite the many similarities between the municipalities, the one crucial difference between the two, was that unlike CM, due to the involvement and support from RM’s higher-level management and municipal politicians, the municipality managed to engage their citizens a political dialogue about RM’s budget plan two years in a row. According to both Tine and Lotte, the size and complexity of the municipality played a role in this regard. As Tine pointed out, the only reason the municipality did not engage in political debates on their social media was due to the organisational complexity of CM which has seven mayors. Furthermore, when Tine approached the political level of the organisation in an attempt to involve them in the municipality’s social media, she argued that they were simply too busy to get involved. In RM, on the other hand, it seemed that the short organisational distances between the levels within the municipality made it possible for Lotte and her team to involve the board of directors and the political level of the municipality, and made it easier, as Lotte put it, to “develop good ideas and say ‘yes, let’s try that’.”

The analysis of the two municipalities rightly suggests, as Mossberger et al. (2013) argue, that the barriers to using social media to increase democratic participation seem to “be institutional rather than technical” (p. 356); however, more specifically, this study’s two case studies show how a crucial organisational barrier for the use of social media in engaging in dialogue and increasing democratic participation, was the lack of support, involvement, and commitment from the political leadership and higher-level management in the municipality’s social media. In the case of RM, the political dialogue that politicians and citizens engaged in was a result of the strategic involvement of the municipality’s political leadership as well as the politicians’ recognition of the value of engaging in dialogue with citizens and commitment in the municipality’s Facebook page. This supports Kent and Taylor’s (2014) argument that an organisation’s dominant coalition must be committed and accept the value of relationship-building in order to foster true engagement and dialogue.

Furthermore, as Lotte rightly pointed out, her and her communication team facilitated the dialogue between the politicians and the citizens on the municipality’s Facebook page, which suggests that rather than being a question of time, resources, social media training, and carefully planned out social media strategies, the strategic involvement of a municipality’s high-level management, and particularly political leadership, is crucial for achieving increased democratic participation through dialogue. As a result of this, the municipality comes a step closer to building government-citizen relationships, as opposed to the client-customer relationships that are strongly guided by a branding and marketing mentality. Without this involvement and support from higher-level management and political leadership, it seems

that social media is inevitably destined to remain a “playground” for image management and information dissemination, as was the case in CM. Even despite practitioners’ awareness of the democratic potential and will to use social media to achieve increased democratic participation of citizens, this study suggests that they will find it difficult to build relationships with citizens that extend beyond impression management without the involvement and backing of at least the political level of the organisation.

## 7. Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research

---

### 7.1 Conclusion

In light of the apparent discrepancy between practice and theory, this study set out to investigate how small and large municipalities differ in their use of social media to communicate with their citizens as well as to what extent this communication increased democratic participation. It was found that the municipalities' social media communication was incredibly similarly. Both Facebook pages were mainly used to manage the municipalities' images and they rarely informed, or engaged with, citizens on a political level.

Although both practitioners showed an awareness of the democratic potential of social media as well as concepts such as "citizen involvement" and "dialogue", they both argued that their municipality Facebook page was not a platform for engaging with the citizens politically. Furthermore, it was argued that the concepts "dialogue" and "involvement" were perceived interchangeably as friendly, fun and practical interaction with the citizens, such as involvement in urban development, suggesting that these concepts to an extent are used as buzzwords in the municipalities because these are "fashionable" in the public sector.

However, despite these similarities, contrary to the findings suggesting that larger municipalities are more engaging than smaller municipalities, this study found that the less complex organisational structures of the smaller Ringsted municipality enabled the engagement of citizens in political dia-

logue on Facebook. Furthermore, it was found that the strategic involvement and support from the municipality's higher-level management and, in particular, political leadership, were crucial in enabling this dialogue. In Ringsted municipality, contrary to Copenhagen municipality, the politicians clearly recognised the value of utilising the democratic potential of social media. This suggests that with the involvement and commitment of a municipality's political leadership, there is concrete potential for increasing the democratic participation of citizens through dialogue on social media.

## **7.2 Limitations and further research**

As this study was conducted as a multiple case study, it is therefore not possible to draw general conclusion based on the results of the case analyses. Nevertheless, the results of this study provide some interesting insights into the use of social media in municipalities of different sizes from an organisational perspective, which contradict the current view in the academic literature. It would be useful for further research to conduct similar studies in other countries as well as with a broader range of municipality sizes to gain further insights into municipalities of different sizes. Furthermore, since the scope of this paper was limited to the municipalities' social media communication, and not the citizens' use and perception of social media, further research could investigate the wants, needs and expectations citizens' have of their municipalities as well as whether citizens in fact want to engage in political dialogue with their municipalities on social media.

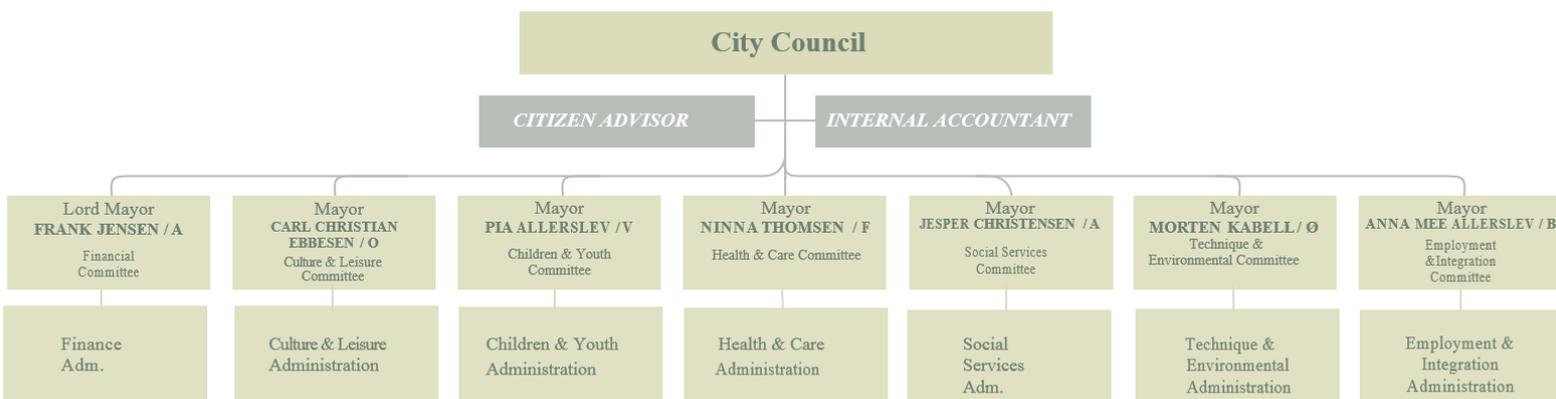
## 8. Appendices

---

### *Appendix 1: DePaula and Dincelli's Original Public Sector Communication Models*

<b>Impression Management</b>	<b>Friendship Performance:</b> Expressing congratulations, gratitude, or condolences. It also includes celebration of holidays, athletic competitions or trivia questions.
	<b>Marketing:</b> Advertisement of specific products and services.
	<b>Favorable Publicity:</b> Reporting on social activities of department officials or providing positive imagery of department officials with community members. May include self "boasting" (e.g. "we won a prize" or "we have the best".)
	<b>Political Positioning:</b> Taking a stance on a political issue (e.g. "rights of such should be supported").
<b>Push</b>	<b>Public Service Announcements:</b> Providing recommendations for safety, public health and well-being (e.g. do not litter in the park; eat certain vegetables per day).
	<b>News &amp; Announcements:</b> Department related announcements for future events; news related to department programs, reports, job offers and policy related information.
<b>Pull</b>	<b>Feedback:</b> Explicitly asking for feedback on a topic, participation in a survey or poll. Asking for information to address a problem (e.g. find a criminal).
	<b>Fundraising:</b> Posts that ask for donations and contributions to a cause not necessarily related to the agency's mission.
<b>Networking</b>	<b>Call for Discussion:</b> Event to discuss particular policy issues, creating a forum for discussion, to resolve a specific conflict or simply for community to meet and greet and dialogue.
	<b>Online Dialogue:</b> When the organization responds to a user comment on a post (originally posted by the organization).
	<b>Call for Volunteers:</b> Asking individuals to help carry out an activity.

## Appendix 2: Simplified Organisational Chart of Copenhagen Municipality

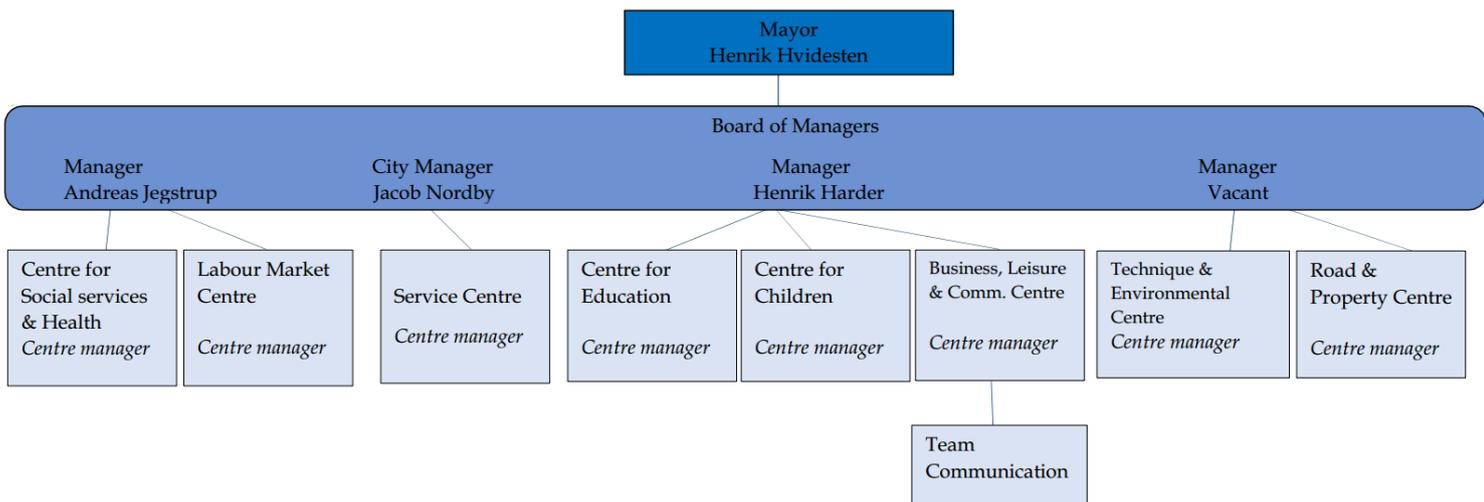


## Appendix 3: List of Copenhagen Municipality's Social Media Platforms' Strategic Purposes and Goals

Social Media Platform	Purpose	Goals
<b>Facebook</b>	Citizen service, news from Copenhagen angle, posts on urban development, municipality events, inaugurations and other events, crisis management, presentation of Copenhagen municipality employees, campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Primary citizen involvement channel</li> <li>- Primary citizen service channel</li> </ul>
<b>Twitter</b>	News, videos and photos of Copenhagen, urban development, citizen involvement campaign booster, branding, survey "talk of the town", strategic press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitator of citizen involvement methods</li> <li>- International outlook / branding</li> <li>- Strategic press handling: involvement of key people from different administrations</li> </ul>

<b><i>Instagram</i></b>	Pictures of urban spaces and construction projects, museum exhibitions, employees, town hall, selected campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A strong aesthetic profile that strengthens the municipality's cultural brand</li> <li>- Active community who use our #ourcph and strengthens the bond between city and citizen</li> <li>- Innovative and exciting Instawalks that show the municipality's facilities from new angles</li> </ul>
<b><i>Snapchat</i></b>	Pilot project with pictures and videos of everyday life in the big city, behind the scenes of the municipality, branding, citizen involvement particularly for younger citizens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Takeovers from youths who will support citizen involvement</li> <li>- Continuous concept development, particularly of citizen involvement methods</li> </ul>

***Appendix 4: Simplified Organisational Chart of Ringsted Municipality***



**Appendix 5: Interview Guide (translated from Danish to English)**

Themes	Example questions
Adoption, purpose, risks/benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you tell me about what considerations you had before deciding to adopt social media?</li> <li>- Could you tell me about your main purposes of being active on social media are?</li> <li>- What would you say you have gained by adopting social media?</li> <li>- What are the downsides and risks of being present on social media as a municipality?</li> <li>- What are the main benefits of being present on social media for you as a municipality?</li> </ul>
Social media strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you tell me about social media strategy?</li> <li>- Who was involved in developing your strategy?</li> <li>- To what extent does your social media strategy reflect and support the municipality's organisational strategy?</li> <li>- Do you have any success criteria?</li> <li>- How do you measure and evaluate your social media efforts?</li> <li>- Have you developed any guidelines for the use of your social media?</li> </ul>

<p>Departmental/organisational factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could you tell me a bit about your department?</li> <li>- Where do you belong in the organisation?</li> <li>- Does your department only manage the municipality's social media?</li> <li>- How do you manage your internal areas of responsibility and tasks?</li> <li>- Do you have set processes of the who, what and when when you communicate something on social media?</li> <li>- To what extend is your department strategically involved on a higher management level?</li> <li>- Could you tell me a bit about how other departments across the organisations are involved in the municipality's social media?</li> <li>- How does it affect your communication and decision-making processes that the organisation has many</li> <li>- How is the political level of the organisation involved in municipality's social media?</li> </ul>
<p>Citizen involvement and dialogue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you work with involving citizens on social media?</li> <li>- What possibilities do you see in terms of involvement and dialogue between citizens and the municipality through social media?</li> <li>- What does it mean for you to engage in dialogue with citizens on social media?</li> <li>- Do you have any good examples of engaging in dialogue with your citizens on social media?</li> <li>- Do you see any connection between or possibilities with regard to strengthening democratic processes by using social media in the municipality? (For example, involving citizens in municipal decision-making)</li> </ul>

**Appendix 6:** *List of Collected Documents (with translation from Danish to English)*

**Copenhagen Municipality:**

Original Document Title	Translated Document Title	Document Description
'Københavns Kommunes strategi for sociale medier 2016-2018'	'Copenhagen Municipality Social Media Strategy 2016-2018'	Eleven-page social media strategy
'Borgerinddragelse på Sociale Medier'	'Citizen Involvement on Social media'	PowerPoint presentation of the municipality's citizen involvement for internal educational purposes
'Involver Københavnerne på de Sociale Medier'	'Involve Copenhageners on Social Media'	Internal leaflet on how to involve citizens on social media
'Sociale Medier i KK'	'Social Media in Copenhagen Municipality'	PowerPoint presentation of the municipality's social media use for external educational purposes

**Ringsted Municipality:**

Original Document Title	Translated Document Title	Document Description
'Strategi for kommunal Facebook-side'	'Strategy for municipal Facebook site'	One-page Facebook strategy
'Handlingsplan 2016 - kommunikation og borgerinddragelse'	'Plan of Action 2016 - communication and citizen participation'	Strategy document for the municipality's overall 2016 communication and citizen involvement plan

'Punkt 7: Handlingsplan for kommunikation og borgerinddragelse 2016'	'Article 7: Plan of Action for communication and citizen involvement 2016'	Minutes from finance committee meeting on 30 November 2015 where the Plan of Action 2016 was up for discussion and approval
----------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Appendix 7: Comment Thread from Ringsted Municipality Facebook Page

 **Lisbeth** Jeg kunne godt tænke mig at høre jeres begrundelser for, hvorfor at børne- og unge området skal stå for halvdelen af besparelserne i budget 2017.

Nednormeringer og forringelserne rammer de såkaldte varme hænder. Vi bør da investere i vores børn, da de i fremtiden skal bære vores samfund videre.

Tidlig læring og indsatser er da vejen frem.

Like · Reply ·  8 · 25 May 2016 at 19:52

^ Hide 11 Replies

 **Lisbeth K. Andersen** Hej Lisbeth. Jeg er meget enig med dig om at vigtig at investere i vores børn og unge. Med desværre har den nuværende regering besluttet at Ringsted kommune skal spare 14 mio og da Børn og unge området sammen med ældre området har de største budgetter, vil det være svært at finde alle pengene i de andre udvalg. Allehelst så jeg gerne at det forhadte ompriorerings bidrag sløjfes, men det er jo op til dem som bestemmer inde på borgeren. Mvh Lisbeth

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:11 · Edited

 **Sadik Topcu** Hej Lisbeth - vi kan sagtens blive enige i at vi ikke skulle spare på området, men da området fylder ca. 25% kan vi nok ikke helt undgå det.

Hilsen Sadik(S)

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:08

 **Per Flor** Hej Lisbeth

Et er hvad der er lagt op til, noget andet er hvad der sker under budgetforhandlingerne.

Men der er jo altid nogen der er gode ved et regnark, men at friholde børneområdet helt bliver nok ikke let.

Men min holdning er den at vi fra soc. demokraternes side vil gå rigtig langt, for at friholde kernevelfærdsområderne mest muligt.

Når det så er sagt, så er det jo ikke Byrådets skyld, men regeringens, så send dem en kærlig tanke!

Mvh.

Per Flor , soc.dem

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:08

 **Britta Nielsen** Helt enig i, at det er rigtig ærgerligt, at vi er nødt til at se på besparelser på børne- og ungeområdet - specielt når vi gennem flere år har haft fokus på at gøre forholdene bedre på området (og er lykkedes med det), men hvis vi skal finde 14 mio til en omprioreringspulje, der skal fjernes fra budgettet, så er vi også nødt til at se på et så stort område som børne- og ungeområdet. Mvh Britta (F)

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:10



**Kisser Franciska Lehnert** Hej Lisbeth - Det er jo et af de største budget områder og derfor vil det naturligvis også være her der kan flyttes flest penge. Men ja det er ikke sjovt at skulle sætte dette område under "kniven" igen igen og det bliver en af de helt store kampe der kommer til at stå her i forhandlingerne ingen tvivl om det. vh Kisser - Løsgænger

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:11



**Lisbeth** **Sadik** og Lisbeth jeg forstår selvfølgelig godt at med regeringens beslutning om omprioritering af midler at vi skal finde besparelser. Børneområdet er selvfølgelig et stort område. Nu ved jeg ikke hvor stor en procentdel området udgør af kommunens samlede budget. Det ved i nok. Men det undre mig at det er halvdelen af besparelserne i 2017 som skal komme fra børneområdet. Vi ser gang på gang besparelser her. Og der har været en del de sidste par år.

Hvis udviklingen fortsætter er der stor risiko for at skoler, SFO og daginstitutionerne bliver ren opbevaring i stedet for læring.

Hvis der forsvinder flere ressourcer fra dette område, hvordan vil I så sikre det faglige niveau?

Byskovskolen har skulle spare en hel del på budgetterne fremadrettet de næste par år.

Nu vil I også lukke Børnegården hvor der både er SFO 1 og 2. Stedet giver børnene en masse muligheder for læring uden for skoletid.

Er der kigget på andre alternativer i forhold til forslaget om lukning af Børnegården?

Besparelsen ved dette ser jeg som meget lille i forhold til at man skal have omplaceret ca 100 børn til andre lokaler. Jeg vil mene at der pt. ikke er plads i de nuværende lokaler.

Omkostningerne til dette ser jeg ikke medtaget?

Like · Reply · 1 · 25 May 2016 at 20:21



**Sadik Topcu** Hej Lisbeth - Børne og Undervisningsudvalgets budget er på ca. 25%.

Det er jo heller ikke sikkert at ALLE besparelser på området skal effektueres, det håber jeg ikke. Jeg er også enig i dine betragtninger vedr Børnegården. Men helt at friholde området tror jeg næppe på. Spørgsmålet er mere hvilke forslag ikke skal vedtages.

Hilsen Sadik(S)

Like · Reply · 1 · 25 May 2016 at 20:27



**Lisbeth** leg ved at det er et stort og utaknemmeligt job at skulle finde besparelserne. Og regeringerne modtager absolut ikke ros for dette.

Jeg håber at i finder nogle alternativer i forhold til at børneområdet igen skal holde hårdt for.

Der må være nogle områder som rammer de få i stedet for de mange.

Det kunne være kommunens støtte til fx TMS eller lignende. De har mulighed for at søge støtte mange andre steder!

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:37 · Edited



**Bodil** Meget enig med Lisbeth: det må være muligt at finde besparelser på forhold, der ikke rammer kernevelfærden. Den entydige holdning fremgår jo også helt klart af borgerpanelets besvarelse.

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 20:46



**David** Kære politikere

Jeg er nysgerrig på om det overhovedet er nødvendigt at finde besparelser for at dække omprioriterings bidraget. Ringsted har det seneste fire år haft betydelige overskud på driften. Godt nok kun 17 mill. i 2015, hvor alle enheder blev bedt om at holde igen da udsigten til et stort underskud lå forude. Trods en gentagelse af dette et bekymringsår, ville 17 mill. vel dække udgiften til regeringens omprioritering?

Like · Reply ·  3 · 25 May 2016 at 20:48



**Kisser Franciska Lehnert** JA det ville det faktisk kunne da vi skal spare 14 mil.

Like · Reply · 25 May 2016 at 21:23

## 9. Literature

---

- Alikilic, O., & Atabek, U. (2012). Social media adoption among Turkish public relations professionals: A survey of practitioners. *Public Relations Review*, 38(1), 56-63.
- Archer, C., & Wolf, K. (2012) Shifting online: An exploratory study into PR consultants' attitudes towards new media. *Journal of Media and Communication*, 4(1), 91-103.
- Avery, E.J., & Graham, M. (2013). Political public relations and the promotion of participatory, transparent government through social media. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 7, 274-291.
- “Befolkning og Valg”. (n.d.). *Danmarks Statistik*. Retrived from <http://www.Statistikbanken.dk/10021>
- Bellström, P., Magnusson, M., Pettersson, J.S., & Thorén, C. (2016). Facebook usage in a local government: A content analysis of page owner posts and user posts. *Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy*, 10(4), 548-567.
- Bonsón, E., Torres, L., Royo, S., & Flores, F. (2012). Local e-government 2.0: Social media and corporate transparency in municipalities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 123-132.
- Bonsón, E., Royo, S., & Ratkai, M. (2014). Facebook practices in Western European municipalities: An empirical analysis of activity and citizens' engagement. *Administration & Society*, 1-28.
- Bonsón, E., Royo, S., & Ratkai, M. (2015). Citizens' engagement on local governments' Facebook sites. An empirical analysis: The impact of different media and content types in Western Europe. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32, 52-62.
- Bortree, D., & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 317–319.

- Brainard, L., & McNutt, J. (2010). Virtual government – citizen relations: Informational, transactional, or collaborative? *Administration & Society*, 42(7), 836-858.
- Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews : Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Brooke, L., & Horsley, J.S. (2007). The government communication decision wheel: Toward a public relations model for the public sector. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19(4), 377-393.
- Brown, R.E. (2010). Symmetry and its critics: Antecedents, prospects, and implications for symmetry in a postsymmetry era. Heath, R.L. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations* (p. 277-292), Los Angeles: Sage Publishing.
- Carpentier, N., Dahlgren, P., & Pasquali, F. (2013). Waves of media democratization: A brief history of contemporary participatory practices in the media sphere. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 19(3), 287-294.
- Chadwick, A., & May, C. (2003). Interaction between states and citizens in the age of the internet: “e-government” in the United States, Britain, and the European Union. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, 16(2), 271-300.
- Chun, S. A., & Luna-Reyes, L. (2012). Social media in government. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 441-445.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative, & mixed methods approaches*. London: Sage.
- Criado, J.I., Sandoval-Almazan, R. & Gil-Garcia, J.R (2013). Government innovation through social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 319-326.
- Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2003). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*. Routledge, London: United Kingdom.
- Davies, T., & Mintz, M. D. (2013). Design features for the social web: The architecture of deme. Proceedings of 8th Int'l Workshop on Web-Oriented Software Technologies, p. 1-12. Retrieved from <https://arxiv.org/abs/1302.4765>?
- Denhardt, J., & Denhardt, R. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6), 549-559.

- DePaula, N., & Dincelli, E. (2016). An empirical analysis of local government social media communication: Models of e-government interactivity and public relations. ACM Press the 17th International Digital Government Research Conference - Shanghai, China, 2016. Retrieved from <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?Id=2912174>
- Dixon, B. (2010). Towards e-government 2.0: An assessment of where e-government 2.0 is and where it is headed. *Public Administration & Management*, 15(2), 418-454.
- “e-government” (2017). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://academic.eb.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/levels/collegiate/article/e-government/600905#>
- Elberth, B. R. (January, 2017). Elberth: Her er kommunen, der knækkede Facebook-koden. Retrieved from <http://www.altinget.dk/artikel/elberth-her-er-kommunen-der-knaekkede-facebook-koden>
- Ellison, N., & Hardey, M. (2014). Social media and local government: Citizenship, consumption and democracy. *Local Government Studies*, 40(1), 21-40.
- Elo, S. & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62,1,107–115.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006) Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.
- Gil-Garcia, J. R. (2012). *Enacting Electronic Government Success: An Integrative Study of Government-wide Websites, Organizational Capabilities, and Institutions*. Boston, MA: Springer US
- Gil-Garcia, J.R., & Pardo, T.A. (2005). E-government success factors: Mapping practical tools to theoretical foundations. *Government Information Quarterly*, 22, 187-216.
- Graham, M. (2014). Government communication in the digital age: Social media’s effect on local government public relations. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 3(3), 361-376.
- Graham, M., & Avery, E.J. (2013). Government public relations and social media: An analysis of the perceptions and trends of social media use at the local government level. *Public Relations Journal*, 7(4), 1-21.

- Grunig, J. E. (1992a). What is excellence in management? Grunig, J.E. (Ed.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (p. 219-250), Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J. E. & Grunig, L. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. Grunig, J.E. (Eds.), *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management* (p. 285-325), Lawrence Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.
- Hoffmann, S., Beverungen, D., Räckers, M., & Becker, J. (2013). Government innovation through social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 319-326.
- Hong, H. (2013). Government websites and social media's' influence on government-public relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 39, 346-356.
- Huang, J., & Yang, A. (2015). Implementing dialogic communication: A survey of IPR, PRSA, and IABC members. *Public Relations Review*, 41(1), 376-377.
- Joon Kim, B., & Adam, F. (2011). Social media, social design and social construction: A dialectic approach for the use of social media in the public sector. *International Journal of Technology, Knowledge & Society*, 7(3), 65-78.
- Kaplan, A., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizon*, 53, 59-68.
- Katz, J., Barris, M., & Jain, A. (2013). *The Social Media President: Barack Obama and the Politics of Digital Engagement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kent, M., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the world wide web. *Public Relations Review*, 24(3), 321-334.
- Kent, M., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 21-37.
- Kent, M., & Taylor, M. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26, 384-398.
- “Kommunerne indtager de sociale medier” (February, 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.kl.dk/Kommunikation/Kommunerne-indtager-de-sociale-medier-id173479/>
- Larsson, A. (2013). Bringing it all back home? Social media practices by Swedish municipalities. *European Journal of Communication*, 28(6), 681-695.

- Lev-On, A., & Steinfeld, N. (2015). Local engagement online: Municipal Facebook pages as hubs of interaction. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32, 299-307.
- Margolis, M., & Moreno-Riaño (2013). *The Prospect of Internet Democracy*. United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- Martín, A.S, & De Rosario, A., & Pérez, M. (2015). Using Twitter for dialogic communication: Local government strategies in the European Union. *Local Government Studies*, 41(3), 421-444.
- Meijer, A. J., Koops, B., Pieterse, W., Overman, S., & ten Tije, S. (2012). Government 2.0: Key challenges to its realization. *Electronic Journal of E-Government*, 10(1), 59-69.
- Mergel, I. (2013). A framework for interpreting social media interactions in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 327-334.
- Mergel, I., & Bretschneider, S. (2013). A three-stage adoption process for social media use in government. *Public Administration Review*, 73(3), 390-400.
- Moon, M. J. (2002). The evolution of e-government among municipalities: Rhetoric or reality? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 424-433.
- Mossberger, K., Wu, Y., & Crawford, J. (2013). Connecting citizens and local governments? Social media and interactivity in major U.S. cities. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 351-358.
- Norris, D., & Reddick, C. (2012). Local e-government in the United States: Transformation or incremental change? *Public Administration Review*, 73(1), 165-175.
- Oliver, J.E. (2000). City size and civic involvement in metropolitan America. *American Political Science Review*, 94(2), 361-373.
- Omar, K., Stockdale, R. & Scheepers, H. (2014). Social media use in local government: An Australian perspective. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 37, 666-675.
- “Open Government Directive” (2009, December 8). Retrieved from <https://obama.whitehouse.archives.gov/open/documents/open-government-directive>.
- “Open Government Partnership”. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.digst.dk/ServiceMenu/English/Policy-and-Strategy/Open-Government>.

- Picazo-Vela, S., Gutiérrez-Martínez, I., & Luna-Reyes, L.F. (2012). Understanding risks, benefits, and strategic alternatives of social media applications in the public sector. *Government Information Quarterly*, 29, 504-511.
- Siggelkow, N. (2007). Persuasion with case studies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 20-24.
- Sørensen, E. W. (n.d.) Her er de fem bedste kommuner på Facebook. Retrieved from <https://www.operate.dk/zoom/fem-bedste-kommuner-paa-facebook>
- Yang, K., & Callahan, K. (2005). Assessing citizen involvement efforts by local governments. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 29(2), 191-216.
- Yin, R. K. (1998). The abridged version of case study research: Design and method. In B. Leonard (Ed.) & D. J. Rog (Ed.). *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*. (p. 229-259). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Zerfass, A., Moreno, A., Tench, R., Verčič, D., & Verhoeven, P. (2013). *European Communication Monitor 2013. A Changing Landscape – Managing Crises, Digital Communication and CEO Positioning in Europe. Results of a Survey in 43 Countries*. Brussels: EACD/EUPRERA, Helios Media.