

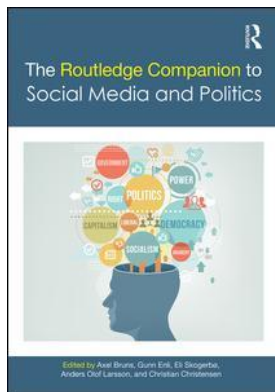
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 23 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics

Axel Bruns, Gunn Enli, Eli Skogerbø, Anders Olof Larsson, Christian Christensen

The Use of Twitter in the Danish EP Elections 2014

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch36>

Jakob Linaa Jensen, Jacob Ørmen, Stine Lomborg

Published online on: 21 Dec 2015

How to cite :- Jakob Linaa Jensen, Jacob Ørmen, Stine Lomborg. 21 Dec 2015, *The Use of Twitter in the Danish EP Elections 2014* from: *The Routledge Companion to Social Media and Politics* Routledge
Accessed on: 23 Sep 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315716299.ch36>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

36

THE USE OF TWITTER IN THE DANISH EP ELECTIONS 2014

*Jakob Linaa Jensen, Jacob Ørmen, and
Stine Lomborg*

Introduction

This chapter analyses the use of Twitter in the Danish election campaign for the European Parliament 2014. It is among the first attempts to analyse political use of Twitter in Denmark, as well as among the first studies of nationally based social media communication in a wider context of a transnational political event, the European Parliament (EP) election of 2014. How and to what extent is the EP election discussed on Twitter among Danish parliament candidates, voters, and other actors? Who are the dominant actors and which discussion patterns and networks are established? Employing descriptive measures and network analysis of the conversation structure, we identify central actors to the Danish portion of this election, leading us to a qualitative analysis of the dialogue and content characterising the debate surrounding two important, yet different, candidates.

The European Parliament Elections and Denmark

Elections to the European Parliament have taken place every four years since 1979. In Europe in general, the voter turnout has been lower than in national and local elections. Furthermore, overall European turnout has decreased over time, from 62 per cent in 1979 to 43 per cent in 2009 and 2014. There are large national differences: in countries with compulsory voting, like Belgium, turnouts are usually above 90 per cent; some countries in central and Eastern Europe report voting attendance below 30 per cent. Although Denmark traditionally has featured relatively high turnouts in national elections, 80–90 per cent, this general European trend can also be found here with turnouts typically 30 per cent lower than during national elections. At the first EU election in 1979, turnout was at 48 per cent, and at the 2014 election 56 per cent. In that respect, the slightly rising turnout in Denmark over time is against the general European trend, although the turnout remains significantly lower for EU elections than for national and local elections (European Parliament, 2009).

The Campaign of 2014

The EU and the European Parliament have often expressed a strong interest in making voters more interested in European affairs and raising the voter turnout (Rittberger, 2005; Hix, Noury, & Roland, 2007). New media have been perceived as a tool for enhancing interest and participation. According to the European Parliament itself, the 2014 campaign was the breakthrough for virtual and viral campaign strategies (European Parliament, 2014). There were more than one million tweets featuring the election hashtag #EP2014, and Twitter directly contributed to the campaign by hosting a banner on their mobile app, urging people to vote.

In Danish politics, even though the Internet has been used in election campaigns since 1997, with social media entering the fray 10 years later, the national election campaign of 2011 was the first where a majority of politicians and candidates used social media. Further, more than one-third of Internet users, about 30 per cent of the voters, used social media in relation to this election (Linaa Jensen, 2013). Therefore, it seems fair to say that from a Danish perspective, the EP election of 2014 was the first with a huge potential for social media for creating interest in the election and facilitating political debates.

Precisely 100 Danish candidates ran for the election in 2014, distributed among seven parties and one movement: the left-wing parties of the Socialist People's Party (SPP) and the Social Democrats (SD); the centre party, the Danish Social Liberal Party (SLP); and the right-wing parties of the Liberal Party (LP), the Conservative People's Party (CPP), Liberal Alliance (LA), and the Danish People's Party (DPP). Further, the cross-political but left-wing-dominated organisation the People's Movement Against EU ran for election.

Regarding social media, many candidates, especially the top candidates, relied on the traditional campaign offices of their parties and their communication advisors. The top candidates, along with the younger cohort of secondary candidates, were particularly well represented on social media. About half of the candidates had a Twitter profile (the focus of this chapter) and the vast majority had a Facebook profile. In the following sections, we will present specific results pertaining to the Twitter use of these and other politicians.

Methods

This chapter focuses on Twitter for three reasons. First, even though Facebook is a much more popular social medium in Denmark (more than three million users compared to 200,000 Twitter users), the Danish Twitter users feature highly influential individuals like journalists, politicians, and opinion leaders, thus making it a potential tool for agenda setting and, as such, interesting from a research perspective.

Second, Twitter is well suited for studying conversations around key issues and events, like elections. The ability to link tweets through hashtags (#s) enables the formation of *ad hoc* publics (Bruns & Moe, 2013), where Twitter users can engage with a common topic without being directly affiliated with each other beforehand.

Third, more generally, one might expect that Twitter's short-form posting format, unidirectional and non-personal networking and its 'public by default' character to a greater extent than other social media enable users to connect with distant, but like-minded, others.

For data collection, we included the tweets of all Twitter accounts belonging to candidates and parties. Further, relevant hashtags for the Danish context were included. With these guidelines, the data consisted of tweets from 56 candidates, seven political parties, one popular movement (The People's Movement Against EU), running for election. The data also include tweets with the hashtag #ep14dk, the more-or-less official hashtag for the election, #dkpol, the general hashtag for political discussions in Denmark, and #dkmediar, the general hashtag for media-related discussions in Denmark.¹ The latter two are included in order to archive as many relevant tweets as possible. We acknowledge that some tweets with such overall hashtags might be not relevant for this study.

Data collection was done using the online tool yourTwrapperKeeper, archiving all tweets on a local server. The period of harvesting ran from 14 April 2014 to 31 May 2014, with election day taking place on 25 May.

By including hashtags as well as posts sent from individual accounts, we aimed at catching relevant posts outside the sphere of the candidates and other actors but still relevant in the election campaign debate. Subsequent script-based data cleaning ensured that no tweets were included in the final archive more than once.

As for our analysis, our efforts fall in three steps: first, we describe the level of engagement, the number of tweets, and tweeters and other overall patterns of Twitter use during the campaign. Second, we employ a network analysis in order to identify the most active and central candidates, based on posts, retweets, and mentions sent from their accounts. In the subsequent qualitative content analysis, we go in more depth with two central candidates, their use of Twitter, and the conversational patterns of the discussions surrounding these candidates.

Descriptive Analysis

During our studied period, 73,089 tweets related to the election campaign were sent. The tweeting activity increased as election day approached. Indeed, 33 per cent of all tweets were sent in the last week prior to the election, culminating during election day May 25 as the most active date (12.6 per cent of all tweets sent). About half of all tweets were retweets (39,081).

The 73,089 tweets were sent by 11,101 accounts (mean: 6.58 tweets sent, median: 2 tweets sent). About half of the accounts (5,434) only sent one tweet related to the EP election during the period, and almost 9 out of 10 accounts sent less than 10 EP-related tweets. This is illustrated in Table 36.1. The relationship between tweets and accounts is very skewed and roughly follows the Pareto principle, with 20 per cent of accounts sending about 80 per cent of all tweets (Newman, 2005). This suggests that relatively few accounts were instrumental in upholding Twitter conversations about the EP elections, echoing similar findings from national elections on Twitter in Scandinavia (Larsson & Moe, 2013)

Focusing on the most active accounts, it is apparent that accounts affiliated with political actors in Denmark play a prominent role in the Twitter conversations. In the top we find in particular EP candidates, lobbyists (like Je5perl, the chairman of the IT-Political Association of Denmark) official EP accounts (like EPiDanmark), and media professionals (like DRValg and EU_tropolis). For the following analysis, we focus specifically on the candidates and parties running for election.

Table 36.1 Distribution of Twitter Accounts According to the Number of Tweets Sent by Each Account Related to the 2014 EP Election

Tweets sent	1 tweet	2–9 tweets	10–50 tweets	>50 tweets	Total
Number of accounts	5,434 (approx. 49 per cent)	4,310 (approx. 39 per cent)	1,146 (approx. 10 per cent)	206 (approx. 2 per cent)	11,101 (100 per cent)

There were 100 candidates running for the election coming from seven parties and one popular movement (<http://epvalg14.euo.dk/kandidater/alle/>). In total, 45 candidates (45 per cent of all) employed Twitter accounts during the campaign, and all parties, apart from the Danish People's Party, maintained a central party account on Twitter as well. The vast majority accounts, 36 accounts, are within the top 10 per cent of most active accounts (tweeting more than 10 times about the election) and about half, 22 accounts, are within the top 2 per cent (tweeting more than 50 times). Thus, the politicians that did contribute to Twitter, for the most part, constituted central actors in the Twitter conversation around the EU elections.

Party Accounts

There is great variation in the presence and activity of candidates across parties. Table 36.2 provides an overview of the number of accounts and Twitter activity affiliated with each political party and movement. The number of accounts signals the party's readiness to interact on Twitter. Having an account enables you to tweet, of course, but even more importantly, it enables other Twitter users to engage with you by recirculating your messages (through retweets) and directing messages to you (through @mentions).

The Socialist People's Party, the Social Democrats, and the Danish Social Liberal Party maintain the greatest presence on Twitter. Especially the two latter (who constitute the current government coalition) stand out, since all their candidates had an active Twitter account during the campaign. In the bottom of the list we find the two liberal parties, The Danish Liberal Party and Liberal Alliance, as well as the right-wing party, the Danish People's Party, who all have less than a third of their candidates on Twitter. Accordingly, the socialist and centre-left parties appear to be more oriented towards Twitter as a medium in the campaign than the right-wing parties.

The activity of the parties tells us something about how much each candidate and party seeks to contribute to the conversation about themselves and other parties. When we aggregate tweets on party level, the Danish Social Liberal Party remains by far the most active, with 1,990 tweets. This is largely due to one candidate, Karen Melchior, who sent out more than a 1,000 tweets during the campaign and was the second most active of all accounts in the dataset (only surpassed by ep14dk who predominantly retweeted others). The Social Democrats and Socialist People's Party are also in top in terms of activity, but so is the Conservative People's Party.

Most parties had a single candidate, who provided the majority of all their tweets. These turn out to be for the most part lower-level politicians that have not established a strong figure in public yet (i.e. Kathrine Alexandrowiz from SD, Karen Melchior from

Table 36.2 Twitter Activity of Political Parties

<i>Political party/ movement (abbreviation)</i>	<i>Candidate with Twitter accounts</i>	<i>Tweets sent by candidates</i>	<i>Most active candidate (tweets in parentheses)</i>
The Social Democrats (SD)	9 (100 per cent)	880	Kathrine Alexandrowiz (339)
The Socialist People's Party (SPP)	9 (ca. 43 per cent)	483	Margrethe Auken (149)
The Danish Social Liberal Party (SLP)	8 (100 per cent)	1990	Karen Melchior (1,018)
The People's Movement Against EU	7 (ca. 33 per cent)	280	Party Account (91)
The Conservative People's Party (CPP)	6 (ca 55 per cent)	527	Nichlas Vind (329)
The Danish Liberal Party (LP)	5 (ca. 30 per cent)	137	Jens Rohde (91)
Liberal Alliance (LA)	4 (ca 40 per cent)	296	Niels Westy (151)
Danish People's Party (DPP)	4 (ca 36 per cent)	327	Morten Messerschmidt (196)

Note: Parties were allowed to list maximum 20 candidates to the election. Most parties listed fewer. The list of accounts includes the main account of the party (if such existed).

SLP, Nichlas Vind from CPP, and Niels Westy from LA). This underscores the opportunities of Twitter to engage in public debate, particularly for politicians who might not have the same access to traditional media or large town-hall meetings as the top candidates. Interestingly, only two of the leading candidates, Margrethe Auken from SPP and Morten Messerschmidt from DPP, were top contributors from their respective parties.

The Social Liberal Party had many active candidates; they are the most active party even without Melchior. Because they were a kind of 'Twitter first mover' among Danish political parties and since they cater specifically to the well-educated part of the population, it is not surprising that they maintain a strong position both in terms of presence and activity during the campaign. The Social Democrats, the traditionally grand party in national and EP elections with a strong party organisation and currently heading the government coalition, might also be expected to have a noticeable presence on Twitter.

From this analysis of the presence and activity of parties, it is clear that even though politicians play an active role in the EP 2014 debate in general, there are variations

across parties. To look closer at how central various candidates were in the conversations around the election, we now turn to a network analysis of the interactions between the politicians and the greater public on Twitter.

Network Analysis

In this section, we analyse the interactions between candidates and party accounts on one hand and regular users on the other hand. The conversation network consists therefore of those tweets where one user either recirculates other users' messages (by retweeting) or addresses other users directly (by mentioning). To analyse this, we mapped the whole network of mentions and retweets using the software Gephi. The actors (or nodes) represent Twitter user accounts while the ties (edges) are tweets by one account mentioning (appearing in Twitter as '@[account name]') or retweeting ([appearing as 'RT @[account name]') another account.

Thus, mentions and retweets are treated as a similar form of communication between users in this analysis; together they comprise a conversation network. To assist interpretation, we have labelled the user accounts with an in-degree (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) greater than 500, meaning that more than 500 other users have mentioned the accounts or retweeted their messages once or more during the study period. The result is shown in Figure 36.1. Accordingly, these actors occupy a central position in the conversation network, because they attract the attention of the greatest number of other actors in the network. The relative distance between the actors in the network signals the similarity in list of actors interacting with them. Thus, if two accounts are positioned close to each other, they share many of the accounts pointing to them through either retweets or mentions, and vice versa.

The conversation network (see Figure 36.1) reveals a network of dense interactions forming a tight central community around almost all the labelled actors. This means that these actors both are referenced by many users each and by a large share of the same users.

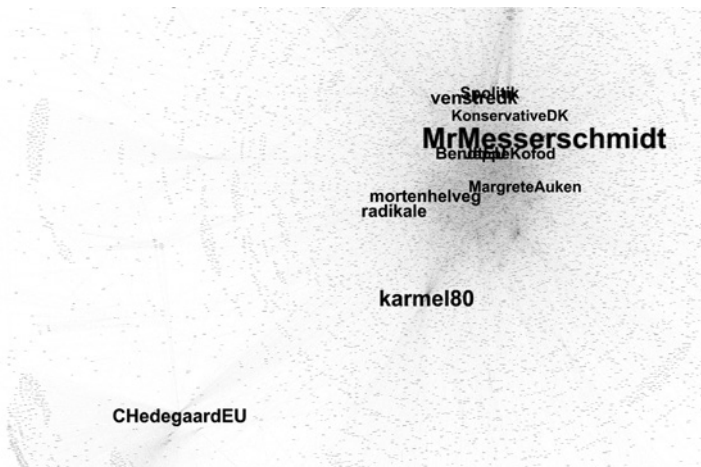


Figure 36.1 Conversation Network with >500 In-Degree Accounts Labelled

However, two labelled accounts stand out. One (karmel80) is slightly below the dense cloud of interactions and seems to be affiliated with both the central community and with another community (visible by the heavy amount of interactions extending both towards and away from the central community). We return to karmel80 shortly. The other actor (CHedegaardEU) is visible in the lower left corner. CHedegaardEU, was EU Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, appointed by the former Danish government. She turns out to be closely affiliated with cross-European politicians and international lobbyists and less so with the Danish EP candidates or parties. She is indeed an EU politician (from the Conservative People's Party) but not a candidate for the election. The Twitter conversation around her mostly concerns broader EU issues and not the Danish election campaign. As such, even though she is a central actor in the general Twitter conversation about EU matters, her presence here is not relevant for our current efforts, and we will therefore exclude her for our subsequent analyses.

To assist the interpretation of the network visualisation we have listed particularly relevant centrality measures for the remaining 10 actors with in-degree greater than 500 in Table 36.3.

Table 36.3 includes many of the central actors in the election campaign—the leading candidates from the Danish People's Party (MrMesserschmidt), the Danish Social Liberal Party (mortenhelveg), the Socialist People's Party (MargreteAuken), the Conservative People's Party (BendtEU), and the Social Democratic Party (JeppeKofod). We also see party accounts for the Social Democrats (Spolitik), Conservatives (Kon-servativeDK), the liberal party (venstredk), and the social liberals (radikale), and one ordinary candidate for the Danish Social Liberal Party, Karen Melchior (karmel80). However, no candidates from the Danish Liberal Party—the biggest party in the Danish Parliament—could be found in the network. As mentioned earlier, their leading candidate (Ulla Tørnæs) did not have a Twitter account at all, and the party was the least active of all Danish parties on Twitter.

When we take both the network in Figure 36.1 and Table 36.3 into consideration, two actors in particular stand out: MrMesserschmidt and karmel80. The leading candidate for the Danish People's Party Morten Messerschmidt (MrMesserschmidt) obtains a particularly important position in the network, leaving the party in an unprecedented central position in the political landscape on Twitter. The in-degree scores show that Morten Messerschmidt garnered interest from the largest public (2010 unique accounts mentioned him throughout the period). Furthermore, his high PageRank score—a widely used measure for how popular the accounts interacting with him is—suggests that he also managed to attract the attention of more influential accounts than the rest. When measuring the number of other accounts with which he is connecting Messerschmidt appears as the most popular actor in the network, connecting both highly important and less noticeable nodes.

Karen Melchior (karmel80) also occupies a central position in the network. Melchior is seen slightly below the centre of the network connecting to both the center of the network and of a separate, ICT-related cluster. She plays a bridging function in the network because she connects a range of otherwise weakly connected nodes to the network (Granovetter, 1983). This is also supported by her high betweenness centrality score (the highest in the network), suggesting that she performed the most important function as connection point between actors in the whole network. Melchior also managed to attract the attention of 1,343 unique accounts and was the most active tweeter in the network (writing more than 1,000 tweets related to the campaign). A peculiar

Table 36.3 Centrality Measures for EP Candidate Twitter Accounts with In-Degree >500 (Highest values highlighted)

Politician/ party [@account]	Description (party abbreviations in parentheses)	In-degree of account	Mentions of account] in total	Tweets by account	Page Rank ²	Between- ness centrality ³
MrMesserschmidt	Leading candidate (DPP)	2010 accounts	5,353 mentions	196 tweets	0.024	2021,929
karmel80	Candidate (SLP)	1343 accounts	6,745 mentions	1,018 tweets	0.017	3459,921
venstredk	Party Account (LP)	945 accounts	2,019 mentions	10 tweets	0.011	77,706
radikale	Party Account (SLP)	813 accounts	2,328 mentions	330 tweets	0.008	493,0908
mortenhelveg	Leading candidate (SLP)	776 accounts	2149 mentions	140 tweets	0.009	350,849
BendtEU	Leading candidate (CPP)	753 accounts	1915 mentions	60 tweets	0,009	253,905
Spolitik	Party Account (SD)	704 accounts	1,469 mentions	16 tweets	0.006	251,931
JeppeKofod	Leading candidate (SD)	635 accounts	1,610 mentions	94 tweets	0.009	415,376
MargreteAuken	Leading candidate (SPP)	589 accounts	1,123 mentions	149 tweets	0.007	915,768
KonservativeDK	Party Account (CPP)	541 accounts	1,401 mentions	103 tweets	0.004	214,312

finding here is that she achieves a much better PageRank than both the leading candidate of her party (Morten Helveg) and the official party account (radikale), meaning that Melchior reaches a broader group of influential accounts than these two.

Apart from these two extraordinary accounts, there are a few noticeable features of this elite group. The liberal party account achieves a high in-degree level even though they contributed very little (only 10 tweets) and received a poor betweenness score,

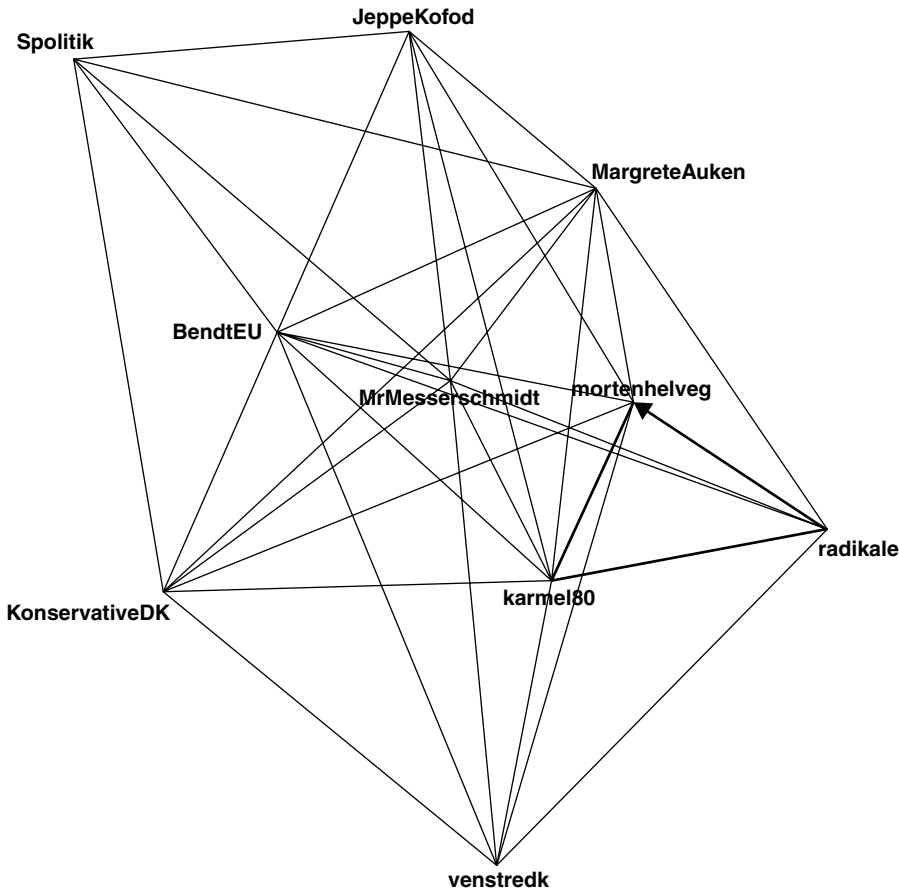


Figure 36.2 Network of Interactions between >500 In-Degree Accounts (edges are weighted by amounts of retweets and mentions)

suggesting that they played a diminutive role in sustaining communication throughout the network. They were frequently addressed but almost never responded. The remaining accounts seem to cluster somewhat in the middle of the network around Messerschmidt and all contribute quite a lot to the conversation. To get a clearer picture of the relationship between the elite we visualised solely the ties between them in Figure 36.2.

The partial (elite) network proves to be quite different from the full network. BendtEU is the most central measured by in-degree with everybody apart from venstredk referring to him, followed by MrMesserschmidt with everybody apart from venstredk and BendtEU referring to him. The Danish Social Liberal Party (radikale, mortenhelveg, karmel80) form a coherent network of consistent internal linking in the triad, known in the literature as homophily (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The thickness of edges here reveals high degrees of reciprocal mentioning, especially between radikale and mortenhelveg. Whereas Melchior functions as a bridge between a cluster of IT-policy actors and other tweeters outside the political domain, Helveg predominantly attracts the attention of loyal party troopers. Likewise, the conservative dyad of KonservativeDK

and BendtEU also forms a small internal community in the network. In comparison, karmel80 does not occupy a central position in the political elite network outside this Social Liberal triadic cluster. She is the least popular politician; only MrMesserschmidt and MargreteAuken mention her apart from her party allies—even though she reaches out to almost everybody else. This type of aspirational linking where a person lower in the hierarchy (in this instance the political elite) links to others higher up without receiving reciprocal ties has been observed in the network literature on multiple accounts (see discussion in Ørmen, 2012).

Taken together, the network analysis has identified a Twitter conversation network around the election that predominantly revolves around the leading candidates and parties with one particular outlier, karmel80. Especially, the two accounts operated by politicians karmel80 and MrMesserschmidt stand out as central cases. Karmel80 is a very active politician who contributes a lot to the conversation and bridges connections between different types of actors in the network. MrMesserschmidt on the other hand is an established politician and incumbent EP member with a strong media persona. In these ways, these two politicians showcase different prototypes—in a structural sense—of Twitter use in an election campaign. Therefore, we now go a bit deeper into the conversations surrounding these two accounts.

Beyond Tie Structures: Conversation and Content

In this section, we aim to take a close look at the content and degree of reciprocity in conversation of the tweets that form the @mention networks of MrMesserschmidt and karmel80. Specifically, we explore (a) the degree of conversation in the Twitter communication of which the two candidates are part (whether the candidates are engaged in ongoing political dialogue with fellow users or whether Twitter mainly serves other purposes for the candidate) and (b) the characteristics of the content of their respective Twitter communication: what do they tweet about, and how are they depicted in tweets mentioning them?

As already touched upon in the previous section, what is distinct about MrMesserschmidt's conversation network is the relatively moderate tweeting activity by the user himself, combined with a very lively and widespread conversation around him. For karmel80, the picture is different: she is highly active in tweeting herself and she also receives many mentions, although from a comparably smaller set of users (with 1,343 accounts mentioning her and 6,745 mentions of her in the data set). Hence, she appears to be more committed to reciprocity in conversation. These basic tendencies indicate different types of engagement and perhaps different degrees of authority in the network for the two candidates. The qualitative content analysis allows us to examine what the figures are actually hiding along the lines of authority and engagement.

When looking at the candidates' tweets intended to initiate conversation with others, it is evident that karmel80 is far more likely to initiate conversations with others than is MrMesserschmidt: almost all her tweets have an addressee, and on several occasions she seeks to leverage her Twitter network to inform her political agenda (e.g. asking their advice on what is important when discussion EU and politics of education). Furthermore, almost half of her tweets (445) are RTs of others' tweets, including not only tweets directly related to her own campaign (e.g., media presence) and that of her party but also political 'food for thought' and humouristic tweets generated by others. Through this practice of retweeting, irrespective of immediate relevance to her

campaign, she acknowledges and sanctions the contributions of others to the overall conversation (cf. Lomborg, 2012, 2014). Overall, karmel80's conversational inclinations on Twitter indicate that a prime purpose of her presence is to have a political discussion and engage others in it too.

MrMesserschmidt also has some tweets with addressee, but it is not his predominant type of activity. He mainly tweets about his media presence and about his election campaign, including RTs of other users advertising his media presence. That is to say, MrMesserschmidt's Twitter profile is very much a vehicle for self-promotion in other media.

When looking at the content of the two candidates' tweets beyond self-promotion, both candidates address political topics and issues that were on top of the election agenda. MrMesserschmidt's tweeting is largely concentrated on these topics, which are typically framed as critical remarks addressed at candidates from pro-EU parties. A few of these tweets are part of regular debate with specific candidates (e.g., Ida Auken May 7 and Jeppe Kofod May 9). This indicates a very purposeful engagement with Twitter to promote topics that are key to his election campaign and thereby sharply profile and position himself in the political landscape. In contrast, karmel80 additionally tweets about a wide set of political topics, including educational politics, data security, discrimination, and gender equality and the overall importance of EU for Denmark. Furthermore, the political topics are debated not primarily with other candidates but more often with ordinary Twitter users who have no official political or commercial affiliation. Her involvement on Twitter may be said to reflect a broader purpose: namely, to debate the role of EU politics along more general lines, again underlining her use of Twitter for the purpose of leveraging political discussion.

Given that the nationally held elections are for a transnational political body and that at least some candidates are already members of the European Parliament, one might expect to find that they tweet in diverse languages, even if pro-European candidates may be more likely to locate themselves in an international network on Twitter. Analysing the two candidates' language use on Twitter, we find that both are primarily oriented towards the Danish national scene. However, whereas MrMesserschmidt only tweets in Danish, and karmel80 mainly tweets in Danish, she also retweets and responds to tweets in other European languages, including English, German, French, and Swedish. This mix of languages gives her account a more distinct international profile and suggests that she actively attempts to link the national and the transnational political discussion.

Finally, both candidates to varying degrees embrace the 'personal' style of communication on social media by offering tweets of a more private nature (Lomborg, 2014). MrMesserschmidt sends three discernible personal tweets related to the campaign, for example, a tweet about relaxing at the workplace of his partner. For karmel80, personal tweets focus on for instance the Eurovision song contest, a highly and internationally tweeted event (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013). Her way of personalising tweets does not so much concern the topics that she tweets but more her conversational style, which is light and informal and sometimes humorous, echoing what appears to be the accepted style of regular Twitter users in Denmark (cf. Lomborg, 2014).

Overall, the content and directionality of the candidates' own tweets elaborate the finding from the network analysis that MrMesserschmidt is very much tied to a political elite network. He shows limited investment in dialogue on Twitter and mainly uses Twitter as a channel for political promotion and positioning vis-à-vis other candidates

by tweeting about his campaign. By contrast, karmel80 seems oriented towards political discussion in the broad sense, bridging between the political elite and the regular Twitter user by way of her conversational engagement.

To complement and further contextualise the analysis of the candidates' tweets, it is crucial to look at how others try to engage, frame, and position the candidates. Hence, we looked at the @mentions of MrMesserschmidt and karmel80 with regard to their content and style.

The discussion mentioning MrMesserschmidt involves a wealth of users, featuring not only the political elite network and the mass media but also local Danish People's Party supporters and other regular Twitter users. While all kinds of individuals try to initiate conversation with MrMesserschmidt, he prioritises to engage with the political and media establishment. This finding echoes the tendency of hierarchical linking mentioned in the network analysis above.

Concerning the content of tweets mentioning MrMesserschmidt, the majority are tweets discussing specific political matters: the dominant subject matter is the Unified Patent Court, but MrMesserschmidt is also addressed regarding social dumping, border control, the Banking Union, and LGBT rights. In addition to substantial political debate, there is quite a large group of tweets that could be said to be more person focused. These involve satirical commenting on his choice of clothes at media appearances, his election tour bus, and his musical productions. In some instances these tweets take the form of personal attacks from critics as well as supportive messages.

When looking at the RTs involving MrMesserschmidt, many of these receive a number of additional RTs. The tweets receiving the most RTs are critical of him and his candidature, and they come from both political opponents and regular Twitter users. For instance, the Social Democrat BennyEngelbrech tweets that MrMesserschmidt has apparently flip-flopped on the issue of the Unified Patent Court, a tweet that is retweeted 115 times. In comparison, MrMesserschmidt's own tweets are typically retweeted only a handful of times and typically by his few eager Twitter supporters. The exceptions here are MrMesserschmidt's own tweet of the election results ('4 mandater') and his tweet calling for people to vote, which receive RTs from critics and supporters alike. There are only few RTs of the personal tweets about MrMesserschmidt. Hence, the framing of MrMesserschmidt is predominantly negative but sober in the sense that his political success at the election is acknowledged, and personally focused tweets are not deemed worthy of a RT.

Turning to karmel80, her @mentions reflect what was also seen in the analysis of her own tweets, namely a lively conversation characterised by brief exchanges. Given the large topical scope of karmel80's own tweets it is perhaps surprising that the topical focus of her mentions are quite narrowly focused on the Unified Patent Court as well as ICT- and data politics (e.g. data protection, the EU data retention directive, and various applications that raise questions of digital surveillance). This functions to position Karmel80 as a candidate with specific focus on advancing an ICT-political agenda in the EU, a central element of her campaign. Further, she received many mentions about her election campaign. In addition to @mentions related to the elections, many address karmel80 with other issues, some of which are politically related, while others seem to concern personal coordination (e.g. meet-ups with friends). Hence, her Twitter mentions underscores the impression of a candidate with a highly expansive, activated, and lively Twitter network that is leveraged for her campaign, but which also stretches beyond the campaign into everyday life.

In contrast to MrMesserschmidt, there are no negative tweets mentioning karmel80. Moreover, many international Twitter users ask karmel80 about her election results and extend their support for her candidature. That is to say, she appears as uniformly sanctioned as someone to listen to and possibly vote for by her Twitter network. Almost all mentions are factual rather than personal, contrary to MrMesserschmidt. This popularity in the network to some extent spilled over to the election result, which was surprisingly good for a secondary candidate from one of the smaller parties, although it did not secure karmel80 a seat in the parliament.

Finally, when looking at the RTs in which karmel80 is mentioned, the picture is very diverse. In contrast to MrMesserschmidt, each RT only travels a limited way. In terms of content, her network retweets her regarding issues of ICT policy, as well as her comments on the election in other countries. Furthermore, her Danish network retweets tweets from her about non-political issues, again indicating that she is considered part of a Twitter network that is not issue specific and reaches well beyond the political elections.

A final note regarding the content: the political debate related to both candidates appears to be very sober and focused on topic rather than person. This is interesting, given the character of the platform used for discussion. Twitter is to a large extent person-centred in that it is built around individual profiles, with brief and informal exchanges among them and no centralised editing and moderation of communication. This result is remarkable also since MrMesserschmidt is established as a controversial figure in Danish politics. However, it appears as if the network of users discussing the elections regulates and polices itself. For instance, the few users attacking MrMesserschmidt through offensive tweets are not retweeted, but rather ignored: this collective ‘muting’ of inappropriate tweets, in turn, serves to ensure that disagreement does not turn into verbal fights.

Conclusions

In this chapter we have analysed a national Twitter network in an international context, the debate surrounding the EP elections of 2014. While though Twitter is still a small phenomenon in Denmark, we have seen that it is widely used among politicians, candidates and other societal elites. Most main candidates and almost all parties had Twitter accounts, that were used with varying frequency. The most frequent users constituted a mix of established politicians and young upcoming candidates, showing that Twitter can be a medium for both well-known and unknown candidates, contrary to early hypotheses that the Internet mainly benefitted those who did not normally get access to established media (see for instance Davis, 1999).

Although focused on an international event, the EP election, the network did not show strong coherence with international actors and debates; language- and topic-wise, the debate was focused on Denmark, with the Danish EU Commissioner Connie Hedegaard and the debate surrounding her constituting an important exception. Thus, even though the debate of the EP election has a potential to facilitate a move towards a joint European public sphere, the case of Denmark indicates that debates remain within the national domain. Future analysis, encompassing debates of more countries will reveal, whether this tendency is general or particular to Denmark.

The Twitter network of the debates revealed, however, that some of the dominant candidates in the general election also achieved central positions in the network.

A surprising conclusion is that MrMesserschmidt, the top candidate from the Danish People's Party, a party that has been discursively marginalised in other election campaigns, take the most central position in the network.

The other dominant candidate, karmel80, is a totally different case. An upcoming candidate of the Danish Social Liberal party, she used Twitter as a way of getting known by a wider audience. Further, her conversation patterns and topics of discussion were more conversational and combined everyday talk and political discourse, compared to MrMesserschmidt who mainly used Twitter as a mass medium, for self-promotion and raising awareness about his presence in other media.

Even though we have identified two very distinct types of Twitter politicians, further empirical work is needed to examine the relations between structural positions in the conversational network and purposes of politicians' communication on Twitter.

Notes

- 1 For the cross-national study we also archived tweets with several pan-European hashtags, like #EU, #EPP, #EP14, and #EU2014. However, we deemed them not necessary in this study as explorative readings demonstrated that the Danish tweets including such generic hashtags also included more specific Danish hashtags or accounts and thus were included in the study.
- 2 PageRank is an alternative measure to estimate an account's centrality in the network. It a build-in feature in Gephi using the methodology outlined in Brin and Page (1998). It is an effective way to estimate the importance of a given account by calculating the importance of all the accounts mentioning that particular account.
- 3 Betweenness centrality is an indicator of a node's, here a person's, centrality in the network. Mathematically it denotes the number of shortest paths from other nodes that pass through the present node. A high betweenness centrality indicates that a person has a large influence on transfers through the network. The concept was developed by Freeman (1977).

References

- Brin, S., and Page, L. (1998) "The Anatomy of a Large-Scale Hypertextual Web Search Engine." Seventh International World-Wide Web Conference (WWW 1998), 14–18 April 1998, Brisbane, Australia.
- Bruns, A. & Moe, H. (2013) Structural Layers of Communication on Twitter. In: Weller, Katrin, Bruns, Axel, Burgess, Jean, Mahrt, Merja, & Puschmann, Cornelius (Eds.) *Twitter and Society*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 15–28.
- Davis, Richard (1999) *The Web of Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- European Parliament (2009) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/da/000cdcd9d4/Valgdeltagelse-\(1979-2009\).html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/da/000cdcd9d4/Valgdeltagelse-(1979-2009).html)
- European Parliament (2014) <http://www.elections2014.eu/da/news-room/content/20140603STO48801/html/Sociale-medier-under-EP-valgene-virtuel-kampagne-virkelig-effekt>
- Freeman, L. (1977) A Set of Measures of Centrality Based on Betweenness. *Sociometry*, 40, 35–41.
- Granovetter, M. (1983) The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited. *Sociological Theory*(1), 201–233.
- Highfield, T., Harrington, S., & Bruns, A. (2013) Twitter as a Technology for Audiencing and Fandom: The #Eurovision Phenomenon. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(3), 315–339.
- Hix, S., Noury, A. G., & Roland, G. (2007) *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Larsson, A. (Forthcoming) Going Viral? Comparing Parties on Social Media during the 2014 Swedish Election. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, pre-print version. Available at: http://www.academia.edu/10383362/Going_Viral_Comparing_Parties_on_Social_Media_During_the_2014_Swedish_Election

- Larsson, A. & Moe, H. (2013) Twitter in Politics and Elections: Insights from Scandinavia. In: Weller, K., Bruns, A., Burgess, J., Mahrt, M., & Puschmann, C. (Eds.) *Twitter and Society*. New York: Peter Lang, pp. 321–330.
- Linaa Jensen, J. (2013) Politisk deltagelse online i folketingsvalget 2011. In: Jensen, J.L., Hoff, J., & Klastrup, L. *Internettet og folketingsvalget 2011*. Copenhagen: Danske Medier.
- Lomborg, S. (2012) Becoming a ‘Tweep’: Networks of Affiliation and Relational Pressures on Twitter. *OBS—Observatorio*, 6(1), 111–127.
- Lomborg, S. (2014) *Social Media—Social Genres : Making Sense of the Ordinary*. London: Routledge
- Newman, M.E.J. (2005) Power Laws, Pareto Distributions and Zipf’s Law. *Contemporary Physics* 46, 323–351.
- Rittberger, B. (2005) *Building Europe’s Parliament: Democratic Representation beyond the Nation State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wasserman, S. & Faust, K. (1994) *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ørmen, J. (2012) The Issue Network as a Deliberative Space: A Case Study of the Danish Asylum Issue on the Internet. *CEU Political Science Journal*, 7(1), 1–31.