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"It Only Takes Two Minutes" –
The So-called Migration Crisis and Facebook as Civic Infrastructure

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The so-called migration crisis in 2015 has led to challenges in migration destination countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. During this time, volunteer-led initiatives provided urgent relief and played a crucial role in meeting the needs of arriving migrants. The work of the volunteers in central train stations and transition shelters was mainly organised with the help of Facebook, both in terms of inward and outward communication. This chapter examines the role of social media for civic participation via studying Swedish volunteer initiatives that emerged in the context of the "crisis" that reached a peak in 2015. Theoretically, this case study draws on an analytical framework for civic engagement and participation in social media by combining questions of power relations, technological affordances, practices, and discourses. Furthermore, in this chapter, we relate the discussion of civic engagement, participation, and social media to insights from infrastructure studies to theorise the role of Facebook and its implications for volunteer activities. This analysis focuses particularly on temporal affordances of social media in coordinating volunteer work and critically questions the emerging position of Facebook as a civic infrastructure in volunteer organising.

In 2015, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that there are approximately 60 million refugees worldwide (Forsberg 2015). In Sweden, a total of 163,000 people were registered as asylum seekers in 2015. The number of migrants applying for asylum in Sweden reached its peak in November 2015, with almost 40,000 applicants. The same month, Sweden reinstated temporary passport controls at the Danish border, and consequently, these numbers dropped significantly. In November 2016, only around 400 people applied for asylum in Sweden. These numbers, however, do not tell the stories of long journeys involving risky boat trips, long marches across different countries, and the uncertainty of reaching the destination. They also do not speak of the experience of finally arriving in the new country and the first hours and days spent there. At the same time, these numbers are only indicative of how many refugees reached Sweden in 2015, not of how mnay actually stayed, since many refugees never registered and considered Sweden as a transit

country on their way to Finland or Norway. Sweden's status as a transit country contributed to the importance of volunteer initiatives to meet the urgent needs of arriving refugees because state institutions argued that they can only support people who officially registered and applied for asylum in Sweden. Strategic transportation hubs such as the central train stations in Malmö and Stockholm became the physical sites of urgent relief primarily where volunteers, predominantly organized through Facebook groups and pages, provided much needed assistance. Even state officials and municipalities frequently referred arriving migrants to central Facebook groups and pages for urgent help (SOU 2017, 12).

The groups explored in this chapter share this commonality: Facebook was used as an organizational infrastructure to coordinate their volunteering efforts. The reasons for turning to Facebook can be summarized through one telling quote of one of our informants:

> It only takes like two minutes. The thing that took most time was finding a picture. (Interview 2016-09-16)[1]

This is how the initiator of the group *We who welcome refugees at Stockholms central station* describes the initial setting up of the Facebook group. For this young woman, the ease of Facebook in terms of coordination, mobilization, and organization made it an essential infrastructure for her volunteer initiative. Facebook has become part of the everyday life of many Swedes, with 70 percent of Internet users visiting the platform at least from time to time (Findahl and Davidsson 2015). It is therefore not surprising that many initiatives engaged in volunteer refugee activism turned to Facebook as a key platform for coordinating their help efforts. During the interviews that we conducted as part of a larger project on volunteer activism in the context of the so-called migration crisis, it was apparent that Facebook is seen as the only platform where the goals of synchronizing volunteer work and financial donations could be met in a cost and time efficient manner.

Now, two years later, organisers commemorate their work of 2015, partly inspired by Facebook's own memory features such as *on that day*. One post by one organiser reminds her followers, friends and people involved with her Facebook initiative not only of the feelings back then and how the events still have repercussions in her daily life, but also of the entanglement of memories with the Facebook infrastructure:

> Today it has been two years since we started to take care of refugees at Stockholm Central Station. I remember the shock when thousands of people suddenly joined my clumsy little FB-group and through self-organising took care of food, a roof over the

head, transport, clothes, legal advice, train tickets and much more for those who came. And how different media appeared on the first day and I had to stand there and speak in TV and to newspapers and other things, completely unprepared and without make-up and in weird clothes, haha. I remember all the love I got from relatives and friends, and today the comments are re-appearing in my "on-this-day"-feed and warm my heart. (Facebook post, 8 September 2017, shared with friends and tagged people)[2]

Obviously, the situation for migrants in Sweden has changed significantly since 2015, and so have the initiatives to support them. Stricter migration policies led to a steep decline in numbers of arriving migrants. As a result, the initiatives that were set up to provide urgent relief had to rethink their missions. At the same time, the public discourse changed considerably since the fall of 2015. Initially, individual stories of migrants arriving in Sweden and presenting the lived experience of the "refugee crisis" were the focus; instead, the discourse now has shifted towards bureaucratic questions on how to handle the influx, which represents a crisis for the Swedish state (Strömbäck 2016).

These shifts and changes over time play a role in this chapter, but rather than asking what has changed in the representation of the refugee crisis, we are interested in the structuring aspects of Facebook as a communication infrastructure for civic engagement and participation. We are drawing on the three fields of infrastructure studies, studies of time and the media, as well as civic engagement research to theorize and empirically investigate the relationship between media infrastructures on the one hand and civic engagement and participation on the other.

Civic Participation, Temporal Affordances, and Facebook as Civic Infrastructure in Post-Migrant Sweden

Before discussing Facebook's role as civic infrastructure, we need to situate volunteer organising for migrants within the realm of civic participation. In the early 2000s, a discourse of civic hibernation was prevalent in studies of civic culture, civic engagement, and participation. Young people in particular seemed to be increasingly passive in relation to politics. However, in the aftermath of the financial crisis starting in 2008, the year 2011 emerged as the year of protest (Kaun 2016) and the 'civic hibernation' of the early 2000s seemed to have ended (Solomon 2011). In reaction to austerity measures implemented to tackle the Euro crisis a wave of civic protests and disobedience washed over Europe. In the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Lithuania, Latvia, and Greece, among others, young and old took to the streets in broad solidarity with economically disenfranchised groups throughout Europe to voice their opinions and contradict the narratives of the 'withdrawn

consumer citizen'. These waves of protest have led to re-thinking civic culture and participation particularly. In that context social media seemed to have lowered the threshold for political action. We welcome the re-evaluation of civic participation, but suggest a more nuanced approach that aligns with an emerging field of critical studies of participation and social media (see for example Dencik and Leistert 2015).

Our approach of studying civic participation and social media is based on the idea that democracy is not understood in its minimalist expression, which starts and ends with electing representatives, but in its 'maximalist' form, namely a balanced relationship between representation and participation. Such a balanced relationship reflects the continuous will to broaden participation, while applying a definition of the *political* as being inherent in the *social*. This suggests multidirectional participation and enhances difference and heterogeneity (Carpentier 2011). Based on that understanding and following Peter Dahlgren (2009), we understand civic engagement as a subjective state that is the prerequisite for participation: "For engagement to become embodied in participation and thereby give rise to civic agency there must be some connection to practical, do-able activities, where citizens can feel empowered" (Dahlgren 2009, 80). This definition of participation includes community-driven initiatives such as print shop collectives, community radio, local energy provision, and protest and peace camps such as *Occupy* and *Greenham Common*, but also NGO campaigning and direct action (Baines 2016; Böhm, Spicer, and Fleming 2008; Cammaerts 2009; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy 2013) as well as the forms of participation we focus on in this chapter, namely volunteering to support arriving migrants. Focusing on volunteering to support arriving migrants allows us to not only capture as specific form of civic participation, but also to explore forms of negotiating the implications of post-migrant societies; namely the development of ways of living together from bottom-up rather than top-down.

We define volunteering as a form of participation that requires civic engagement as a subjective state or form of attention to materialise. Elsewhere (Kaun and Uldam 2017; Uldam and Kaun 2017), we have suggested an analytical model for social media that pays attention to key issues that condition civic engagement and participation. Our aim is to avoid techno-determinism and media-centric focal points. More specifically, the approach we suggest considers the context of civic participation in social media and pays attention to (i) power relations, (ii) affordances, (iii) practices, and (iv) discourses. In doing so, we draw on Nick Couldry's (2012) model of a socially oriented media theory that conceptualises media in the context of other social institutions that shape our sense of reality and that question the media's overemphasized role in constructing social reality. Similar to Couldry's model, the analytics

of social media that we suggest could potentially be applicable to analysing political participation beyond social media, since it is non-media centric.

<Figure 8.1 near here>.
Figure 8.1: An analytical model of civic participation and social media. Photo by authors.

In the analytical part of our chapter, we zoom in on temporal affordances – one of the central aspects in our analytical framework for studying social media and civic engagement – of Facebook's communication infrastructure to explore the possibilities and constraints for civic participation. The assumption is that time as an abstract category needs mediation in order to be experienced (Frabetti 2015). Time-mediating technologies, such as calendars, clocks, and diaries, link the individual and lived experience of time to a shared sense of time as well as to temporal cycles (Lash and Urry 1994; Peters 2015). In that sense, the mediation of temporality includes social and political aspects and consequently needs to be considered critically while studying civic engagement. In the remainder of the chapter, we will introduce different layers of temporality that emerge within Facebook as communicative infrastructure for civic engagement and participation.

Our main theoretical starting point is that we should consider Facebook as an emerging civic infrastructure in order to make sense of the central position it has gained for civil society organising. Infrastructures are commonly understood as "that which runs 'underneath' actual structures – railroad tracks, city plumbing and sewage, electricity, roads and highways, cable wires that connect to the broadcast grid and bring pictures to our TVs. It is that upon which something else rides, or works, a platform of sorts" (Leigh Star and Bowker 2002, 151). Paul Edwards (2003) argues that infrastructures constitute the foundation of modern social worlds by linking macro, meso, and micro scales of temporal, spatial, and social organisation. Infrastructures are, hence, "interrelated social, organizational, and technical components or systems" (Bowker and Leigh Star 1999, 99). Theorists of infrastructures have suggested that these systems are often perceived as taken-for-granted and ready-at-hand. They are mainly invisible until we experience a breakdown, rupture, glitch, or failure. Furthermore, infrastructures are based on large amounts of invisible work that rarely becomes visible. As an approach to study infrastructures, Bowker therefore suggests "infrastructural inversion" (Bowker and Leigh Star 1999). Similar to reverse engineering, this approach foregrounds going backstage and the importance of looking at infrastructures in the making as well as moments of disruption as entry points to develop an understanding of these

complex underlying systems (Gehl 2014). We here do not aim at inverting or reverse engineering Facebook's infrastructure, but investigate the inherent temporality of the platform while considering moments of emergence, failure, and retooling while coordinating remote supporters and the volunteering work of people on the ground. The understanding of infrastructure that we follow is fundamentally relational. It emerges in the practice and activities of people connected to technical structures. Consequently, we are examining with Facebook, often considered a black box and invisible infrastructure, without necessarily exploring it in its technical totality (Bucher 2016). That also means that we understand – following among others Julia Velkova (2017) – infrastructuring as a practice that constantly renegotiates infrastructure. In contrast to Velkova's case, which focused on the development of open source software, our participants have fewer possibilities to influence the overall structure of Facebook as individual users. Instead, the organizers of the initiatives are constantly adapting their ways of using Facebook to the changing context of migration into Sweden, but also in relation to previous failures in using the platform for their work over time.

In the context of social media, Yong-Chan Kim and Sandra Ball-Rokeach (2006) developed a theory of communication infrastructures for community building. Slightly shifting the focus and meaning of infrastructure discussed above, they argue that communication resources such as local newspapers enable storytelling of local communities, which is an essential process in developing and sustaining civic engagement and participation. We, hence, consider Facebook as a communication infrastructure that constitutes a resource or specific communication opportunity structure for civic engagement. Facebook in turn capitalizes on the adaptation of the platform for civic engagement to further its economic interest through data collection. The business model of Facebook relies heavily on the data gathering to improve targeted advertising and content provision. Hence, the platform is built around principles that increase engagement, such as posts, comments, shares, and likes. These economic aspects can lead potentially to conflicts of interest, complicating the use of Facebook as an infrastructure for civic engagement and political participation, an infrastructure that does not necessarily share the primary focus on civic engagement in pages and groups.

Approaching Volunteering for Migrants

For this case study, we combined an analysis of Facebook pages and groups with in-depth interviews with central organizers of key volunteer initiatives in Sweden. The choice of initiatives was based on an analysis of mainstream newspapers. We included organizations

that featured prominently in the reporting. The Facebook pages and groups were monitored over the course of three months during December 2015 to March 2016. We focused on the main activities of members and moderators as well as the structure of the conversations featured. We also conducted an automated, quantitative analysis of the engagements with posts on the Facebook pages for which – in contrast to groups – analytical tools are available. The practices within the groups were analysed in relation to the more general structure of Facebook, for example differences between Facebook pages and groups. During the interviews, we discussed the findings from the page analysis with the organizers. We interviewed the person who set up the Facebook presence and mainly maintained it throughout the most intense working period. The interview material was then transcribed, and we conducted a theme-based analysis following the categories of our four-dimensional model. The interviews were conducted throughout August until November 2016 and addressed the development of the groups since their inception in 2015. As the number of newly arriving migrants decreased dramatically, the groups had to reconsider their status and, in some cases, change their mission. This is also reflected in their social media practices.

Al Tadamon

The group *Al Tadamon* – solidarity in Arabic – was set up in May 2015 with the aim to provide urgent help for one of the biggest shelters in Sweden, situated in a Southern suburb of Stockholm. The group mainly coordinated the collection and distribution of clothes and necessities for the people living in the shelter. In October 2015, the group secured a large room that served as a storage and distribution centre. The Facebook group was mainly used to coordinate the collection of specific products, to collect financial donations, and to invite volunteers to sorting and distribution sessions at the shelter. The group collaborated with the Swedish Migration Agency and partly took responsibility to supply newly arrived asylum seekers with necessities, which normally is the agency's responsibility. The group still exists, but its clothes shop closed due to the restructuring of the shelter. Most of the residents have been moved either to other shelters in Sweden or to their own apartments. *Al Tadamon* is currently reconsidering its mission.

Vi som tar emot flyktingar på Stockholms central (Vi som tar emot…) / We who welcome Refugees at Stockholm's Central Station

This Facebook group was started in September 2015 with the aim of coordinating urgent relief for arriving and transiting migrants in Stockholm's central train station. The group grew

rapidly over its first few days, reaching more than 17,000 members, and coordinated the collection and distribution of food and clothes, the collection of money to buy tickets for additional travel, transportation to transit shelters, and legal support. The group was initially set up as a public group. Anybody who was added could post and comment on threads. However, this setting was changed after a number of problems with keeping an orderly thread structure occurred. Several other initiatives grew out of this page, including Refugees Welcome Stockholm.

Refugees Welcome Stockholm (RWS)

This group emerged as the main coordinator of relief work at the central train station. Volunteers set up their own transit shelter in a former night club and offered help for refugees who needed to rest during their journey through the country while not wanting to register as refugees in Sweden. After the major influx of migrants decreased, when the Swedish borders closed, the group's mission shifted. Currently, the group organizes the community centre Rosa Station (pink station) in the Northern part of the city centre of Stockholm, offering language training and social activities. The group is still very active on Facebook and mainly engages in discussions about migration policies. RWS also continues to support protests against the new and stricter migration law that was introduced in the summer of 2016.

Vi gör vad vi kan – **We Do What We Can**

This initiative was co-founded by playwright and director Paula Stenström Öhman and PR-strategist Petra Kauraisa. Initially, they aimed to collect 500,000 SEK. This money was meant for travel with necessities to Lesvos in Greece to provide urgent relief for migrants arriving there. The initial goal was quickly reached. Overall, the initiative collected almost 11 million SEK and 250 tons of clothes and other non-food items such as shoes, hygiene kits, tents, and sleeping bags. *Vi gör vad vi kan* emerged as one of the most successful donation campaigns related to the migration crisis in 2015.

<Table 8.1 near here>
Table 8.1: Overview initiatives considered. Constructed by authors.

Temporal Affordances of Facebook

The organisers of volunteer initiatives whom we have interviewed reacted almost surprised when we asked them why they have turned to Facebook to start their initiative. For them, it

was a natural choice, partly related to the speed with which groups and pages are set up and gain visibility. This naturalisation of Facebook as a communicative infrastructure for civic initiatives will be analysed through the lens of temporality in the following section. The focus on temporality foregrounds one of the key characteristics of infrastructures, namely providing a, in this case temporal, mediation between technological artefacts and human actors. In the material and in relation to previous research on infrastructures, three major tropes emerged: permanent flow, real-timeness, and synchronicity. All three tropes are identified as three interrelated temporal layers emerging within Facebook.

Permanent Flow

The administrator and founder of *Al Tadamon* emphasises the need to constantly be active or present within the group even though the initiative is currently rethinking its mission since the rescue shelter was closed. She argues

> It is fairly easy to get a group with many members, but to keep it active is much harder. And this is what you actually want, you don't want to have a dead group with some thousand members, this is little bit the case now. It is a little bit like people gave up, but it is a job to keep the activity up. And this is what you want, you want to have up to 100 likes for a post and this is what we got when we were the most active, like between 200 to 400 per post. (Interview 2016-08-26)

The temporal logic of Facebook is based on its business model that emphasises permanent updates, hence creating pressure for the group to constantly upload new content by, for example, sharing success stories or any kind of engagement to remain relevant. and keep its status as an active group. The alternative is to disappear from the newsfeed and loose the potential visibility with more than 4,000 members. In that sense, the exchange and posting of messages is foregrounded rather than the content and mission of the initiative as such. Jodi Dean (2008) has discussed this tendency of social media as contributing to the ideology of communicative capitalism, emphasizing exchange value over use value. This is particularly difficult during the tricky period of reformulating the mission, which created tensions as the administrators confirmed (Kaun and Uldam 2017; Uldam and Kaun 2017). At the same time, the constitutive elements of Facebook as an infrastructure are difficult to change by individual users. For example, the platform does not allow for the adaptation to organizational evolution, which is captured in the following quote by *Al Tadamon's* founding member of:

> The only thing that I experienced as a constraint was that we started as group and then

we had so many members and we realized that it would have been better to have a page instead…We didn't know that we would become an organization with a budget and everything. (Interview 2016-08-26)

The distinction between pages and groups has significant implications in terms of visibility. Since Facebook pages were created mainly with brands and commercial entities in mind, they gain more visibility on the platform; the same is true for open groups. However, since there are potential dangers for both volunteers and migrants connected with visibility in social media, openness was, in some cases, regulated externally. The shelter's management in Stockholm, for example, implemented a strict media protocol, including restricted access for media to the building as well as posts on social media. This had implications for outreach and possibilities to engage broader publics in *Al Tadamon's* relief work as they were not allowed to post pictures of the building, the clothes shop, or residents in the public group on Facebook. Furthermore, the structure of pages and groups privileges the visibility of administrator posts over posts by members and followers. This asymmetrical visibility establishes another layer in terms of power relations within the platform. It gives voice to the ones who organize relief while marginalizing the voice of the recipients, the refugees, who are also members of these groups. As an organization in transition, *Al Tadamon* had to decide to either loose more than 4,000 members by starting a new page or remain a group, a difficult choice. Finally, *Al Tadamon* remained a Facebook group, accepting potentially less visibility and technical difficulties of linking to the Facebook group on external websites.

Facebook's infrastructure presents difficulties to adapt to future developments as well as to represent the past. As Kaun (Kaun and Stiernstedt, 2014) has discussed earlier, Facebook has added some memory features such as "on that day", but the platform does not invite engaging with "old" content, and then only if this leads to new engagement in the form of likes, shares, and comments. The newsfeed and the organisation of Facebook groups and pages hardly allows to go back in time, at least not very far into the past. In that sense, Facebook encourages and contributes to an experience of immediacy, flow, and presentness. This means that posts that articulated specific needs, but gained, for certain reasons, little to no visibility, have disappeared unanswered in the Facebook stream.

Real-timeness

Social media platforms have often been heralded for allowing exchanges over vast distances in real-time. This makes it possible to capture behaviour and environmental data as they are happening and allows for immediate response. It has, for example, been argued that Twitter

data can be used to detect natural catastrophes such as earthquakes in real-time by analysing user posts and exchanges (Kryvasheyeu et al. 2016). However, there are different stages of real-time data processing, namely receiving data, processing data, and returning the analysis. Hence, Weltevrede et al. argue that "media do not operate in real-time, devices and their cultures operate as pacers of real-time" (2014, 127). The authors suggest speaking of real-timeness instead, which foregrounds the production of real-time as part of the platform infrastructure. Suggesting the notion of real-timeness allows us, the authors argue, to take into account the politics of real-time instead of taking it for granted.

When it comes to Facebook's real-timeness in terms of volunteer organizing, we have seen cases where the temporal logics of the platform has created problems for the activists. The Facebook algorithm privileges interaction over recency, which means that posts that trigger new replies gain more visibility, despite their datedness. This has implications for the possibility to coordinate people and help efforts. Carefully curated threads and posts might be messed up because of comments on older posts that give the impression that these are the most recent and most urgent requests. The curated thread structure (see figure 1) was particularly important for the group *Vi som tar emot* since this was the only way to make a distinction between different needs and areas of works.

Some of the initiatives made a considerable investment both in form of time and financial resources in producing the feeling of real-timeness when engaging with stakeholders. One of the initiators of *Vi gör vad vi kan* describes how she and other organisers worked more than full-time with the initiative during peak times. Much of the time invested was dedicated to coordination issues in and through Facebook and Instagram. On Facebook, the initiatives were confronted with numerous inquiries that were pouring in as comments, emails, and private messages. During the most turbulent period, *Vi gör vad vi kan* hired one person who only took care of communication with stakeholders (mainly donors and potential volunteers) on social media. Similarly, *Refugees Welcome Stockholm (RWS)* relied on a software package *Relation Desk* to coordinate all Facebook communications, including private messages, comments, and replies to own posts. The software allowed them to forward and distribute messages between different volunteers who were divided into different communication teams. The software also included automated messaging to users, trying to get in touch with the group until they could reach out personally. The explicit goal of *RWS'* communications team was to reply to any engagement on their social media channels as quickly as possible. This professionalized way of handling communications was initially set up by one person who was also responsible for training sessions for new communication volunteers. Similarly, *Vi gör*

vad vi kan engaged a volunteer to handle all Facebook communication, including messages and comments, as well as emails during the initiative's most intense period. The outspoken aim was to answer any inquiry as soon as possible, creating a discourse of real-timeness within the organization in relation to their followers.

Synchronicity

In contrast to the notion of real-timeness that implies immediate capture, processing, and response, synchronicity refers to the coincidence or simultaneity of meaningful events. During the interviews, the organisers of the different volunteer initiatives often referred to the advantages of coordinating people, goods, and money over time and space with the help of Facebook. The coordination of different elements is one of the fundamental functions of infrastructures and therefore interesting for our discussion (Lash and Urry 1994; Peters 2015). One of the initiators of *Vi gör vad vi kan* argued, for example. that the majority of exchanges in their social media channels was concerned with logistics. People were wondering how to correctly pack clothes or other things for transport and where exactly to drop them off. However, Facebook contributes to a layering of time that is not always in sync. Digitizing and processing takes time; certain food or clothes that might have been urgently needed at some point, but might not be required any more once the Facebook post gained high visibility in the groups or pages. For example, one post in the group *Vi som tar emot…* urgently requested eggs for one of the stations that provided food for arriving migrants. After the post gained a lot of visibility on the platform, the station was flooded with egg donations and had difficulties to stop more deliveries. Our interviewee described the situation as follows:

> We tried to limit the number of different threads within the group. But in between different events people started writing in different threads, like for example one would start writing in the thread on the Mosque and then people started replying to the initial question, but the posts developed into something very general that had nothing to do with the Mosque anymore. Like for example, "We have a lot of eggs, what should we do with them?" It was just not very easy to guide folk to write in the right place. Everybody is just writing were people have been active the last time. (Interview 2016-09-16)

Consequently, the administrators put extensive efforts in constantly posting updates on what was required and what not. However, individual posts with certain requests were circulated individually without feedback from people at the station, making synchronization difficult. Hence, the latency of the digital created smaller and larger problems in terms of

synchronizing needs with volunteering commitments.

John Durham Peters (2015) argues that new media are pushing the logistical aspects of media back to centre stage. The perspective of considering media as infrastructures emphasizes understanding them as logistical. In contrast to recording media that have compressed time and transmitting media that have compressed space, logistical media such as Facebook focus on organizing and orienting as they arrange people and things in time and space. They have the job of ordering things and fundamental units (Peters 2015). Peters goes on to analyse classical examples of coordinating and synchronizing people such as calendars, clocks, and towers. He argues that calendars, clocks, and towers provide shared temporal and spatial orientations. While calendars and clocks serve primarily for temporal synchronization, towers orient people in space and serve as points of observation and control. Similarly, social networking sites such as Facebook provide an infrastructure of coordinating and orienting people. In contrast to calendars, clocks, and towers, however, Facebook still achieves the status of an unquestioned and seamlessly working infrastructure for organizing people in time and space. The examples of failure in coordination are expressions of this on-going process of claiming the function as a civic infrastructure, while still grappling with characteristics that work against its functionality for civic engagement as exemplified above.

Facebook as Infrastructure for Civic Engagement and Participation in Post-migrant Societies?

This chapter situated volunteering for arriving migrants in the realm of civic engagement and participation and explores the role of social media for coordinating such volunteer work in the Swedish context. Applying a complex analytical model including discourses, power relations, and practices while zooming in on temporal affordance, this chapter examined the ambivalent character of Facebook as it both enables and constraints civic participation. At the same time, Facebook has emerged as a crucial civic infrastructure that takes an important position in coordinating civic participation. We considered this emerging role of Facebook as civic infrastructure through the lens of temporal affordances by scrutinising volunteer initiatives in the context of the so-called migration crisis in 2015. We discussed the consequences of the tendency of these civic initiatives to rely on an infrastructure that is built according to a specific business model, namely the exploitation of user engagement in form of user data (Kaun and Stiernstedt 2014). By focusing on the case of volunteering for migrants, we aimed at showing the practices of infrastructuring. Infrastructuring here is understood as a practice of adaptation and adoption in order to overcome constraints and failures of an infrastructure

that is comparatively stable or hard to change by individual users. Instead, users invent small ways to improve infrastructures for their purposes. We discussed, for example. how administrators implemented thread rules to maintain order according to their understanding and needs despite Facebook's algorithm following other principles. The main finding of our exploration is that volunteer activism on Facebook is characterised by a dynamic interplay between Facebook as an emerging civic infrastructure and practices by users employing the infrastructure for civic participation in slightly unexpected ways. However, the agency and possibilities to alter the platform by users is limited, and we therefore need to critically consider the increasingly dominant position of Facebook when it comes to civic engagement, particularly the specific temporal affordances inherent to the platform that constrain and make civic participation difficult.

Notes

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[1] All interviews were conducted in Swedish. Quotes have been translated by the authors.

[2] This post was translated from Swedish by the authors and is reproduced with the permission of the informant.