

Digital Mentoring of Young People for  
Responsible Citizenship: A Case Study  
of an Organisation Using Twitter

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

February 2020

## Declaration

I, Tomoaki Miyazaki, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Word count (exclusive of references and appendix): 77,341

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## Abstract

This research aims to assess qualitatively a social media strategy employed by a UK-based civil society organisation to mobilise young people to political actions, in particular, voting. Conceptualising democracy as full participation in a decision-making process by members of a society, the project chose the organisation, Bite the Ballot (BtB), which aims to encourage young people to vote. While this research focuses on BtB's Twitter strategy, it is also concerned with how followers learn the importance of voting through their interaction with BtB. To achieve this, an analytical framework was employed to analyse interactions on Twitter. To triangulate the tweet analysis, the research collected two additional data sources: interviews with key informants and document analysis of BtB's output including its website. In addition, network analysis was used to contextualise BtB's strategy within the wider network of youth-led organisations which legitimises the selection of the case for this study.

The research revealed some evidence that BtB has employed an effective approach in developing democratic skills for responsible citizenship among young people on Twitter. As the BtB strategy appears to be based on young people's preference for a horizontal relationship rather than a hierarchical relationship, BtB has adopted a mentoring approach to encourage them to vote after discussion on Twitter. Furthermore, I also found that BtB has developed an unthreatening online environment on Twitter where young people can freely explore and discuss issues with their peers, while BtB acts as their mentor. The analysis of tweets underlines BtB's approach by suggesting that it allows young people potentially to practise their democratic skills on the BtB Twitter account by posting relevant comments to a discussion topic. Drawing on the above, I conclude that BtB's strategy constitutes a promising pedagogic approach in guiding young people to develop their democratic skills through interaction on Twitter.

## Impact Statement

This thesis will make contributions both inside and outside academia with a significant impact to both. While the main academic contribution of this thesis is the illustration of a method of assessment for online interaction and online engagement by a civil society organisation, non-academic fields can benefit from the contribution for their own activities.

In academia, researchers will benefit from the contribution which addressed the issue of assessment of online learning in citizenship education provided by a non-school organisation. The studies to date has focused on activities within school settings in relation to citizenship education, which has a solid set of assessment criteria and a curriculum for teachers to follow. This thesis has investigated how a civil society organisation, a non-school organisation, engages in citizenship education through its activities to encourage young people to participate in voting, one of the essential citizenship practices. In particular, this thesis showed the organisation's good practice in its interaction with young people on social media. Since online behaviour is also a subject of study in academia, this thesis would be useful as a reference point for the practice. The contribution is also applicable to similar organisations which are independent of schools and the national curriculum, in order to assess their activities. Furthermore, other organisations across the world would equally benefit from the outcome of this thesis, as long as they use social media for their activities. These two significant factors – the non-school context and internationality – will guide studies on assessment for non-school activities.

The non-academic field will also benefit from the contribution. In particular, political parties will learn how to encourage young people to vote through use of social media. As long as they need to retain their seats in parliament, they need votes from many people, and in particular, votes from young people would signal that parties have the support of the entire country, not just a certain generation. This would further improve the impression they give, since a number of votes from youth will justify their image effectively. In addition, civil society organisations can learn how to assess their own activities using social media. Social media interaction analysis will be particularly useful to evaluate the degree of engagement with young participants. Since social media and

online tools are so popular among young people, they use these online tools without any difficulty. As such, an assessment of online interaction is a requirement for civil society organisations to achieve their mandate.

As described above, this thesis will contribute both inside and outside academia. Academia will learn how educational practice in a non-school context could be assessed, while non-academic fields can benefit from online interaction assessment of their activities. While the impact may appear only after years in some cases, there is no doubt of the importance of familiarity with social media strategies: these arguably contain the real voice of the people. In short, this thesis illuminates a way to make real voices on the Internet into usable information for academic and non-academic activities.

## Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my huge appreciation to my primary supervisor, Professor Hugh Starkey, for his patience, kindness and unwavering belief in me. His input and comments have been so valuable that I could see the progress I was making every time. Through supervision, he always gave me inspiring ideas which steered my studies in the right direction and because of his stable, professional guidance, I could grasp the entire overview of the thesis. Moreover, he introduced me to the academic network of the citizenship education field, where I had opportunities to discuss my research with colleagues. Without this, I could not have adequately developed my research.

My thanks also go to my second supervisor, Dr Avril Keating, for her constructive, professional criticism, which made me think in more depth and detail, and took me in the right direction toward the completion of my PhD studies. Her professionalism always helped me to write so as to communicate my ideas academically. I could see how her criticism was embedded in a framework and thus I could always learn a lot from her comments. She always showed different perspectives and highlighted various ways to discuss an issue.

I would like to express my appreciation for my colleagues and friends in Japan and UK. It was always good to have a conversation with them when my studies reached peak intensity; they remained positive and continuously supported me even when they were away from the UK. I should mention that going to the pub with them relieved me from stress! In particular, I am grateful to all my music friends who played with me in Fidelio Orchestra. We certainly made a change on the music scene in London while I pursued my PhD studies.

I would also like to say a huge 'thank you' to my parents and grandfather in Japan who helped me during my studies at UCL. Without their support, my research would not have been completed and would not have been published. I am especially and humbly grateful to my two grandmothers, who passed away before I came to the UK.

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## Acronyms

BtB	Bite the Ballot
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Disengagement from Voting among Young People: A Classic Yet New Problem in Elections

This PhD thesis aims to assess the social media strategy employed by a civil society organisation to mobilise young people into being politically active. It uses as a case study the organisation Bite the Ballot (BtB), whose aim is to encourage young people to vote.

The reasons why young people appear reluctant to vote have attracted interest from the academic community. Some scholars argue that educational history and background could be key factors in whether young people are likely to become politically engaged (e.g. Ma, 2017). It is contended that the longer students study in a formal educational setting, the more they become willing to participate in political activity, such as voting; however, this finding is based on a study in Ireland, and cannot necessarily generalise to young people in other countries (ibid). An anecdotal explanation, with little evidence behind it, is that young people are simply apathetic and not interested in politics at all. However, young people are often interested in politics, but may prefer alternative forms of participation, such as demonstrations and protests (Sloam, 2012b, 2013b, 2014a). Thus, they are according to the evidence we have, reluctant to vote than other age groups (Dempsey, 2017); yet, unlike alternative forms of participation, the results of elections are definitive and can even decide the fate of a state.

Voting is not just a privilege as a citizen of a state; it is one of the universal human rights. In democratic decision-making, citizens participate in discussions on many subjects and approve policies to rule their country, city or community (Urbinati, 2006). Since these policies may affect individuals' lives, it is important that voters have the opportunity to discuss the issues before making their decision. In a sense, the act of voting is a way of protecting their 'humanity' as a responsible, mature person (see Chapter 3 for further discussion on this). Voters are exercising their basic human rights in a democratic society, which enables all citizens, regardless of their gender, race or sexual orientation, to participate in politics. Furthermore, these rights are affirmed in the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) which enshrines citizens' rights to express their opinions and take part in the government of their country. Voting is a tangible example of the individual's rights to participate in society and to defend their human rights. However, such human rights, particularly suffrage, were not always granted to everyone.

Historically, it was common that women were not allowed to vote in many countries, particularly before World War II (Ridley, 2017). For example, in the UK, a petition to give unmarried women the right to vote was started in 1866, and eventually succeeded in 1918, when women over 30 years old became eligible to vote. The eligible age was subsequently lowered to 21 in 1928 (Ridley, 2017). In addition, even where men had the right to vote, some struggled to be able to do so: for example, in the US in the 1950s, African-Americans were often barred from exercising their rights despite their eligibility, because of their race (McCool et al., 2007). Where the qualifying standard for voting is based on gender or race, human rights are restricted and, subsequently, democracy damaged. In such circumstances, the biased eligibility criteria for voting make it less likely that people participate in a decision-making process. Moreover, it will not be able to redress the injustice.

The significance of article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the United Nation's declaration that suffrage is a human right and recognised as such (United Nations, 1948). Such enshrinement further endorses a universal entitlement for everyone to exercise e human rights. The aim of voting, particularly in a representative democracy, is for citizens to elect their representatives to government, thus securing their own participation. On this point, some people are complacent, thinking the right to vote is given to them as a matter of course, and taking it for granted (Ridley, 2017). Such views may be considered irresponsible and lacking in a sense of duty, ignoring as they do the historical struggle shown above; indeed they undermine the nature of democracy and politics. Given that politics is a process of negotiation, and of constant changes in tension between stakeholders (Mouffe, 2005a), participation in decision-making processes increases the ability to change an imperfect situation. In a democratic society, it is considered that the aim of such participation is ultimately to defend and protect people's human rights and freedom (cf. Mouffe, 2005a; United Nations, 1948).

While young people may be reluctant to vote, studies to date have implied that many young people are in fact ready to exercise their rights through voting. These studies found that young people are interested in politics when they can participate in an alternative way e.g. signing a petition, wearing a badge etc (Sloam, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b). These forms of participation are regarded as 'issue-based' participation, through which young people show their concern about issues in their society (Sloam, 2012b). It is clear therefore that young people are interested in politics, and enthusiastically demonstrate this interest in alternative ways, which raises the main question of this thesis: how can we take these young political enthusiasts to polling stations to vote?

On this point, the use of social media to encourage political participation might be the key to facilitate youth engagement (see section 1.5 for further discussion). The Internet has become a social infrastructure which people use for many purposes, from business and academic study to ordering delivery of dinner. While an exact number of Internet users is not available, Pew Research Centre claimed that, in the US, 89% of adults used the Internet in 2018 (Pew Research Centre Internet and Technology, 2018). Furthermore, they found that 98% of people aged 18 to 29 used the Internet, compared with 66% of those aged 65 or older (ibid). These findings match my own experience in UCL and other locations in London: people use the Internet and social media as part of their daily life. The choice of the Internet or social media as a means of guiding young people towards political engagement is, therefore, not a surprising one.

The purpose of this research is thus to assess the social media strategy: whether it is in fact an effective approach for increasing political participation by young people. To achieve this purpose, this research took a case study of a CSO called Bite the Ballot, which worked for young people's political participation, particularly voting. I analysed Twitter interaction between BtB and young people (followers of BtB's Twitter account); interviews with key informants, document analysis, and social network analysis were also conducted in order to support the data analysis result of the Twitter interaction (see Chapter 4 for the detail).

The next section explains why political disengagement among young people is a problem, from the perspective of voting as a human right.

## 1.2 The Importance of the Study I: Participation in Political Action as a Reminder of Human Rights

This section problematises disengagement from political actions in relation to human rights. A significant focus of this project is examining the ongoing shift in the nature of political participation among young people. As mentioned above, in most democratic societies, human rights are acknowledged and guaranteed by governments and enshrined in law. Yet, voting, one of these human rights, appears unpopular among young people, although alternative forms of political participation remain popular. Organisations often help young people to be involved in demonstrations and protests, while, sometimes, young people themselves launch a group to lead these actions (see Chapter 2 for further detail). Given that participation in political actions is itself a form of exercising human rights, civil society organisations could play an educational role here – teaching and reminding young people of the human rights they already have, and adapting their communication strategy when targeting young people.

The Internet is a popular tool for mobilising these young people and teaching them about democratic practice. Academic studies to date have mainly focused on participants in social movements – why they participate, how they decide to participate, and how they learn about democracy on the Internet (e.g. Hao et al., 2014; Theocharis et al., 2015, 2017; Vilchis et al., 2015). In contrast, there is comparatively little written on how organisations use the Internet to communicate with young people to mobilise them (but see Seongyi and Woo-Young, 2011). Since the Internet offers innumerable online interactive platforms, some educational institutions offer online courses in which students are able to learn about multiple topics (e.g. Coursera and FutureLearn). Moreover, bulletin board systems (BBS), such as Reddit and 4chan.org, allow people to discuss topics which interest them while remaining anonymous. Despite this level of general discussion, the question remains as to how educators (schools, NGOs, etc) could use the Internet effectively to involve young people in political participation, and specifically voting.

In this PhD project, my focus is on the social media strategy employed by the civil society organisation, Bite the Ballot (BtB), to see whether online

interaction can mobilise young people into voting and, if so, to what extent it can do so. To situate the study, this project is embedded in the context of digital citizenship, in particular, in the exercise of human rights and online learning. The next subsection will review the basic concepts on which the conceptual framework will be developed (see also Chapter 3).

### 1.3 The Importance of the Study II: Researching Digital Citizenship and Democracy

This section reviews some key concepts – digital citizenship, democracy, and the community. Digital citizenship is a form of citizenship which has been well argued by Osler and Starkey (2005, 2010): their concept of citizenship stresses the notion of a global family, based on a sense of solidarity, that is, an emotional attachment to humanity (Osler and Starkey, 2005). This inclusive view of citizenship leads on to the argument that all people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, and national identity, are entitled to exercise their right to maintain their dignity (ibid). In other words, it is an act of empowerment for people to commit to the improvement of society by acknowledging the diversity within it and advancing mutual understanding. Their notion of citizenship is based on the idea of cosmopolitanism, rather than the civic republican approach which emphasises responsibility and duty among citizens to maintain an institutional framework, e.g. the nation state.

There is another aspect to this cosmopolitan idea of citizenship: to resist an aggressive globalisation that restricts the potential and freedom of individuals and reduces their ability to make their own decisions (Osler and Starkey, 2005). In a globalised world, they contend, financial institutions (e.g. investment banks) and global corporates work across the world, in ways which may not take account of local practices (ibid). These aggressive actions may increase inequality among people by placing socially and financially vulnerable people at a disadvantage (ibid). On this point, I argue that the Internet has the potential to give people power to resist such change. For example, a university may decide to introduce an online application system, instead of a paper-based application, for a new academic year. The electronic system would be beneficial particularly for international prospective students, and would thus help the

healthy globalisation of their campus by increasing the number of international students. In this situation, individuals have a certain “power” (cf. Osler and Starkey, 2005: 28) to resist globalisation, though the university may need to develop mutual understanding between home and international students.

The likelihood of being able to change such unequal situations is determined by the degree of participation in the decision-making process (Ober, 2000; Osler and Starkey, 2005). As Ober argued, democracy is characterised by participation, as manifested in involvement in the decision-making process (Ober, 2000). Such participation will strengthen the merit of a legal framework (ibid: 28) which also provides protection for citizens’ human rights (Osler and Starkey, 2005). The notion of citizenship is thus linked with practice, not just theory, but it needs to be implemented offline in a face-to-face environment. For example, Starkey (2005) suggested that learning another language would be a useful practice of citizenship, as it might potentially develop respect for others. Similarly, Alred and Byram (2002) reported that studying in a foreign country would facilitate interaction between a student’s home and host countries. While language-learning and studying abroad are certainly examples of citizenship practices aiming to promote intercultural exchange with mutual respect, this thesis argues that such practices may not always be sufficient to support citizenship practice in full. The question to be asked is how society can include people with different views.

Nowadays citizenship practice is observed on the Internet. Since its emergence in 1995, the Internet has become a popular tool, particularly with young people, to live, socialise, and share information. In particular, the emergence of social networking sites has impacted on the nature of social interaction. For example, Facebook launched in 2004, aimed at university graduates wanting to maintain contact with each other after their studies. Twitter became popular for its short strings of text with 140 characters (increased to 240 characters in 2019). It is common for young people to use Facebook and Twitter for online social networking, for example, to interact with their friends from ‘real life’. There is no doubt that the Internet has established itself within the infrastructure of our society. Grocery shopping, travel arrangements, tax payments, and even job-hunting can be done on the Internet with just one click. The convenience the Internet brought arguably attracted young people, who



now use it in their everyday life. Furthermore, these networks now function as a platform for political activity (see Chapter 2 for further discussion).

As social media gained popularity among young people, academics have been interested in the potential of citizenship practice on the Internet. Such online citizenship practice is termed digital citizenship (Isin and Ruppert, 2015). Isin and Ruppert contended that the Internet has particularly changed the nature of political activity among people, with both positive and detrimental effects (ibid: 2). For example, the Internet can potentially record our daily activities, such as items we buy in a shop, or posts we make in Social Networking Sites (SNS) as part of big data initiatives. Isin and Ruppert argue this ability provokes a new paradigm in politics, enabling the monitoring of a community (ibid). In fact, some countries carry out online surveillance to monitor and, if necessary, to arrest those people who post negative opinions of their country. For example, the Chinese government monitors people whose views are critical of the authorities (Liang and Lu 2010; Yang 2014). As Isin and Ruppert rightly suggested, it is a fact that authorities could use the Internet to control their citizens in order to 'protect' their community.

Contrary however to Isin and Ruppert, use of the Internet for political purposes was expected from its advent. Many researchers hoped and argued that the Internet would change aspects of political participation in future (e.g. Buchstein, 1997; Dahlgren, 2000), such as voting behaviour (e.g. online voting in elections), and expressing political opinions (e.g. online discussion and joining protests). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, online political participation was widespread: see discussions on US tax policy by President Bush (Price et al., 2006), policies in the European Union (Karlsson, 2012), and the US presidential election in 2008 (Liang, 2013). While these discussions took in place in specifically designed online discussion boards, called bulletin board systems (BBS), people can discuss issues on any discussion websites. In addition, as social media emerged from 2004 to 2008, these platforms gradually became a place to encourage young people in particular to participate in a range of political activity, including voting (Robertson, 2018). It is noted that various social media platforms were used to share information about revolution (Lotan et al., 2011; Robertson, 2018) which subsequently led the success of the Arab Spring.

However, academic studies disagree as to whether use of the Internet in fact promotes political participation and hence democracy, and if so, how long this takes to have effect. A study has suggested that online political participation will take adolescents to offline political participation years afterwards (Kim et al., 2017). Authors further stressed that, while the Internet has facilitated political participation for young people, it has primarily been a sphere for them to familiarise themselves with political participation (ibid). Oser et al., (2013) partly supported the study by Kim et al., suggesting that offline political participants tend to be older (see the subsection below for the age categories), since the older generation is not accustomed to use the Internet as a gateway for political participation. In contrast, Vihma claimed that online usage is not related to political participation (Vihma, 2016). Vihma concluded that the determining factors in political participation were mindset and attitudes to politics and social movements, not usage of the Internet itself.

Furthermore, digital citizenship appears to assume a professional use of the Internet in which experts exchange opinions in a professional manner. An example of international medical cooperation using the Internet represents best practice (Isin and Ruppert, 2015). The reality is that the Internet is also open to the general public who may be professional but do not necessarily behave in a professional manner (cf. Goffman, 1969). Misbehaviour in the online community is termed online incivility (Papacharissi, 2004), and includes the posting of hostile comments, remarks ridiculing another person, and discriminatory remarks (see 2.2.3 for further discussion). However, it is possible for citizens to use the Internet to improve their community. Key to this would be defining ones identity in terms of membership of an online community (Starkey and Savvides, 2009). Such a development would require respect for other members in the online environment, in which their opinions and views would be regarded as important and valued (ibid). In other words, the Internet could be used to create a new type of democracy which could accommodate more people in the community (see Chapter 3 for a review on the concept of democracy).

Developing this idea further, the Internet could develop the sense of belonging (Osler and Starkey, 2005) which is necessary for citizenship. Furthermore, it would help those seeking a new place to live, such as refugees and asylum seekers, to become part of the new community as newly joined

members and to exercise their rights there (see Benhabib, 2010). The study by Starkey and Savvides (2009) suggested that the Internet could help the development of a sense of belonging by providing an alternative way of connecting, and the construction of a social network. In other words, educational and democratising organisations are able to use the Internet as a tool to manage their activity. If this is the case, such organisations could encourage young people to participate in democratic processes. The question is how could they use the Internet to make them participate in these processes?

This PhD project will focus on how a civil society organisation encourages people to go in person to a polling station in an election. Although voting is only one type of active participation, it is one often neglected by young people (see Sloam, 2012b). While the UK has a postal vote system as an alternative for those who cannot go in person to a polling station, this additional method of voting appears unsuccessful in mobilising young people either to attend or to post their ballot paper. Therefore, the literature review chapter (Chapter 2) will focus on how the Internet, and in particular SNS, have contributed to citizenship practice, and to social and political participation. It will also discuss how people participating in political movements and demonstrations have used SNS in these activities.

The next section highlights an issue of representative democracy that raises questions about the political literacy education currently in place.

## 1.4 Theoretical Rationale: Problems with Representative Democracy

Democracy is understood as rule by the common people involving a decision-making process through which policies are agreed by members of society (Beetham, 1999; Urbinati, 2006). Democracy, as its etymology suggests, concerns people (*demos*) in a ruling process of a society. As a means of decision-making, it requires a meeting of people in a place, and discussion on a topic to ascertain the people's view (Urbinati, 2006). In reality, it is impractical to gather everyone in a country to one place to discuss a policy (Schmitt, 1988); therefore, many countries employ representative democracy. Under this system, all members of a country choose their agents to represent

their interests and opinions during a debate in the decision-making place (e.g. Parliament, the Diet, or Congress). The main duty of these representatives is to ensure their constituents' interests are reflected and, some cases, debated within parliament (ibid). In theory, through the actions of these representatives, the decisions should reflect the people's views and concerns so that they benefit therefrom.

Participation in an election is in fact an indication of the membership of a community (Mouffe, 2005b; Schmitt, 1988). Schmitt argued that democracy by its nature excludes foreigners, i.e. it allows only members of its own society to exercise their political rights (Schmitt, 1988). Furthermore, their membership of the society justifies and legitimises their participation (ibid). This bureaucratic criteria of membership in a representative democracy has caused criticism, with some arguing that the legitimacy of the membership is based on a feeling of belonging to the community (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Osler and Starkey believed that if people feel such a sense of belonging, they will participate in their community (ibid). Their criticism acknowledges the respect due to each community member and emphasises the ethical value of 'being a member' of the community. As such, it is necessary to facilitate participation so that every person who wishes to do so can join the community (ibid). As participation in the decision-making process is a demonstration of membership in a community (Mouffe, 2005b), Osler and Starkey's argument is significant in representative democracy, since, under this system, the way a people votes sends a strong signal in expressing its opinion both domestically and internationally.

In order to facilitate participation, education - and particularly political education is needed to address the issue of political literacy. It is often the case that people are misinformed on an issue by propaganda or other information (Schmitt, 1988). For example, spreading views which are not based in fact, or which are designed to appeal to emotions, could mobilise politically marginalised people to vote for populist politicians (Bakir and Mcstay, 2018a; Müller, 2017). This often happens when representatives do not work effectively, when they are regarded as an 'elite' who are privileged and free from any struggles, although this is not necessarily true in all cases (Müller, 2017). Populism, as Muller argued, is a shadow of representative democracy, appealing to the moral sensitivity of citizens by labelling an opponent as an

‘enemy’ of ordinary people (ibid). However, it is not straightforward to make a moral judgement on a person, since it involves multiple considerations of values and ideologies (cf. Starkey, 1992). In contrast, it might be feasible to educate people, particularly young people, to develop the skills to assess a political argument.

The aim of such education may include a civics curriculum to develop a sense of being a participant of a country. As stated earlier, democracy is the rule by people whose decisions are based on rules, and thus their participation in deciding the rules gives legitimacy to the decisions made by their representatives (Urbinati, 2006). In a sense, they are the ‘authority’ who are ultimately responsible for their decision. At the end of this thesis, I will also address how people can be responsible to their decision.

The next section introduces real examples of my earlier interaction with apathetic young people.

## 1.5 Personal Rationale

I decided to work on this project for two reasons. The first and foremost reason is that I am from Japan – where there was a long-standing debate over lowering the voting age. In 2000, a young man launched a campaign to lower the voting age from 20 years to 18 years. I still remember that I was not convinced by his argument, which stipulated that a lower voting age would encourage interest in politics among young people. I believed then, and still believe now, that reducing the voting age alone will not develop political consciousness among young people, but that an educational approach might be helpful. Whether due to his faulty logic or not, his campaign did not gain a following for many years in Japan – it was 2016 when the voting age was finally lowered to 18 years.

Second, the public response to the results of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 in the UK, and the US presidential election in November 2016, made me think again about the effectiveness of alternative forms of political participation. I was in the UK when both elections took place, the results of which triggered, in the case of the first, demands to re-run the referendum, to hold a second referendum and, in the second, brought a series of protests

against the then president-elect of the US. Although the aim of this project is not to assess the degree of legitimacy and rigour around such discussions, the aftermath of these elections made me consider the tension between emotion among citizens and the rule of law. The idea of the rule of law is to reduce the chance of arbitrary decisions and thus to maintain a transparent decision-making process (Schmitt, 1988) in democracy. The anger at the (so far) legitimate results of the EU referendum and the US presidential election appear therefore to be an attempt to violate democratic principles.

My experience in the UK strengthened the driving force for this thesis when I met young British people who did not vote in the referendum on leaving the EU, but complained about the result. Such an irresponsible attitude to elections undermines the legitimacy of democracy, and results in damaging the reputation of the UK. Political education, thus, plays a key role in guiding these young people in how they can participate in politics and act as responsible citizens.

To address the issues above, the next section lays out the theoretical approach taken by this research.

## 1.6 Theoretical Approach

Based on the argument in subsections 1.4 and 1.5, I used Osler and Starkey's citizenship theory, German and Sünker's political socialisation theory, Mouffe's the political theory and learning theory by Dewey and Freire to develop understanding of citizenship and democracy among young people. As argued earlier, democracy is all about rule by the people; however, *people* are different from each other and hence they do not necessarily share an opinion or agree unanimously on a view (this derives from the political theory: see also subsections 1.3 and 3.2.1). Since the Internet has offered numerous services, young people who are online-savvy can develop their awareness of diversity in their society through online interaction. This awareness plays an important role when they participate in their society. In my understanding, the notion of citizenship is an emotional sense of belonging (see subsection 1.4) that is rooted in the concept of solidarity, which emphasises the idea of the human family (see subsection 3.2.2). In reality, it is impossible to meet or know all the

people in a society; however, the Internet can enhance the opportunity to meet those whom the young people would not otherwise meet in a face-to-face context (i.e. socialisation: see subsection 2.3.1).

Online interaction can bring both positive and negative experiences to young people. Studies have revealed abusive behaviour among online users which runs opposite to the concept of citizenship (see subsection 2.4). To mitigate such negativity, I refer to the concept of a mentor for positive and constructive online learning (see Chapter 8 for further detail). The basic idea of a mentor is to guide a person to explore their issues by themselves while allowing them to make mistakes. In this project, the mentor will help young people's online self-study by encouraging further exploration on issues, facilitating political socialisation on the Internet. This mentoring approach has the capacity to strengthen awareness among young people about society through facilitating political socialisation with other online users. This may also bring about further understanding by young people of the diversity in their society. In short, the online mentoring approach intends to widen the opportunity for young people to learn about diversity through online discussion and exploration of issues which they may otherwise overlook in face-to-face context.

This research employs a theoretical framework based on four theoretical paradigms. Citizenship education theory by Osler and Starkey is the most fundamental for this research; political socialisation theory explains how online discussion would provide a socialising opportunity for young people on the Internet; Mouffe's the political theory affirms diversity among people in the society; and the learning theory by Dewey and Freire gives pedagogical justification for a mentoring approach in online discussions.

## 1.7 Definitions

This subsection provides definitions for key terms. They are: young people, Social Network Sites (SNS), Digital Citizenship, and online learning.

### 1.7.1 Young People

In this project, young people are defined as those aged 16 to 24 years old,

primarily because this is the definition used by BtB. (Executive Assistant, 2018). Academic studies on elections in Europe tend to define young people as 18 to 24 or 31 years old, since 18 is the minimum voting age in the UK and most European countries (see Prosser et al., 2018). In contrast, studies on citizenship practice in schools can include children of 14 and 15 years, depending on the school curriculum and education system they look at. For example, pupils aged 7 to 14 years study in primary school in Brazil (Schugurensky and Madjidi, 2008), while those 13 to 15 years old study in junior high schools in Japan. As such, it is almost impossible to have a solid definition of 'young people' based solely on age. The definition needs to be context-dependent and adequately justified.

In this thesis, I defined 'young people' based on BtB's definition and the following factors:

1. Registration age

In the UK, the minimum voting age is set by law at 18 years old. However, potential voters must complete a registration process in order to vote, requiring a National Insurance Number (NI), sent to them just a few days before their sixteenth birthday. This means that a British citizen who is 16 years old can register to vote, but must wait a further two years to be old enough to vote. The two-year gap appears long enough to learn about democracy, and develop the appropriate mindset as a citizen to have an interest in and to explore political issues.

2. Some experiences in society

Statistical analyses on voter turnouts tend to group 18 to 24-year-olds together (Dempsey, 2017). By the age of 24, they are likely to have finished their undergraduate studies, and spent more than one year in their first career. Although this is a simplified, speculative, and optimistic life model, they will have experienced dramatic change in their lives between 18 and 24 years. In addition, since 24-year-olds will develop their career further, they may wish to learn about their potential future from others. In other words, people who are 24 years old have some experience of life, and have firm ideas about their career and life already.



### 1.7.2 Social Network Sites (SNS)

There is no single definition of social network sites (SNS). From a functional aspect, these websites maintain social networks which already exist face-to-face. Their main purpose is to record updated information about a user, particularly of their life events. As Thorson (2014) mentioned, a user will have their 'friends' in SNS from their life so far, such as classmates from primary school or university, or workplace colleagues. This is particularly significant in Facebook which originally aimed to maintain the face-to-face social networks developed at university. Therefore, the function of SNS is to update, and perhaps distribute, information about a user to share life events with their 'friends'.

Yet, these 'friends' are not necessarily real friends they have met in person. It is often the case that users connect to strangers whom they have not met before. The reasons for this vary, ranging from professional to personal. From my experience, professional connections are made with future benefit in mind, while personal connections can result simply from an enjoyable online chat.

SNS are thus websites which connect one person with another on the Internet. The reasons for connection vary widely, and some connections may never actually have met, enabling people to expand their social network extensively.

### 1.7.3 Online Learning – possible or just impossible?

Learning is defined as autonomous and continuous development as a human, to maintain a community (Dewey, 1916). Dewey argued that, as long as people live in a group, they need to change continuously in order to live with many others (ibid). During their life in the group, people interact with others, gaining the opportunity to learn from them. People have their own unique experiences through their life. Therefore, Dewey contended that learning is fundamental to a democratic society, through the sharing of experience between its members (ibid). The degree of democracy indicates the degree of learning and tolerance to others' experience. Schools are suitable institutions to

develop students' moral values aligning to a society's expectation (Dewey, 1926).

Giroux (1997) shared Dewey's position, contending that school is in fact a place to learn how to live in an uncertain society through interacting with others. Uncertainty is one of the key features of society: no one can exactly predict what will happen the next day. As such, being able to think independently is more important than seeking a 'right' answer for life in such an unstable environment (ibid). The notion of independent thinking underlines constructivist learning perspectives, which allow students to make mistakes during the learning process in order to succeed in uncertain situations (Gagnon and Collay, 2001). In contrast, simply being given the right answer will hinder development of the students' own ideas, by not enabling them to attempt independent learning, and hence making them unthinkingly obedient to authority. The blind thinking which results from this will damage the sustainability of their community. To overcome such a risk, Giroux declared that all stakeholders of schools: students and teachers, should listen carefully to others, especially to those who might be marginalised in society (ibid: pp.131-132). Students and teachers could practise this in schools, to prepare for life in society.

Now that the Internet has become an everyday tool, it can be useful for educational purposes. Yet, information circulating on the Internet is not always accurate. It is thus advisable to examine whether such online information is reliable or not before using it. Avoiding the use of information without examining its accuracy is also well argued by Freire as a concept of banking, as it seeks the 'right answer' (Freire, 2017). Freire warned that merely memorising facts risked being a constraint to knowledge through simply binding oneself to an established thought. He argues persuasively that every person is free by nature, and thus that their ideas should be liberated from any consensus predetermined by knowledge, bias or authority (ibid). Instead, Freire encourages looking critically at information, in particular, at the reliability of its source, and how it was discovered. Drawing from Freire's discussion, it is important to judge which information is credible, particularly in the online environment.

To respond to Freire's argument above, my previous work (Miyazaki, 2016) and Hipp et al., (2015) suggested that, in online discussion, people tend to rely on personal anecdote when they make a particular claim, rather than on an authoritative source or reference. Although these two studies did not detail a cause or mechanism of overt use of anecdote in online discussion, it is noteworthy to mention that the degree of reliance on authoritative sources is not high. As such, online learning is, for now, defined as any act of learning from others' experience which takes place on the Internet. Because of this, learning can take place on any online platform, such as SNS, BBS, and online courses provided by higher education institutions. While there are no previous studies on learning in SNS and BBS, Starkey and Savvides (2009) confirmed that students in an online course provided by a UK university could learn from the experiences of their course-mates through discussions. The successful outcome was partially because students were screened prior to their enrolment on the course.

In this thesis, learning is defined as an activity to develop political positions and perspectives among young people, while involved in an online discussion on Twitter (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). The definition is underpinned by constructivist learning theory, to allow young people to make mistakes and develop their democratic skills in an online environment, which allows some chaotic situations to emerge (cf. Gagnon and Collay, 2001; Illeris, 2017). Young people develop their political beliefs while they engage in online discussion forums by asking questions about claims made by other users. As argued earlier, this thesis does not consider the quality of the claims (i.e. whether they are anecdotal or evidence-based); however, it does consider the quality of question and response to it. Although researchers argued that learning is in fact a process of producing knowledge (a constructivist view), such an argument lies outside the scope of this thesis. The aim of this project is to assess the digital strategy of BtB and how young people can learn from BtB's tweets. Thus, its focus is on the interaction between BtB and young people (for detail, see Chapter 4).

## 1.8 Research Questions

Based on the above sections, this PhD project has one main research

question (MRQ) and two sub research questions (SRQs) as follows:

- MRQ: How does a civil society organisation promote voting and political learning with using social media?
- SRQ1: What social media strategies does BtB use?
- SRQ2: What evidence is there that young people learn about democracy by engaging with BtB on Twitter?

The MRQ is the overarching research question of this thesis, focused on the strategy of using Twitter which BtB employs. The two SRQs have different aims, respectively. SRQ1 aims to investigate which elements of their tweets retain the young audience's attention. SRQ2 focuses, in contrast, on the young people, how those participating in discussions with BtB learn about democracy and what evidence there is to indicate successful learning.

## 1.9 Research Method

This project takes Bite the Ballot (BtB) as a case study. BtB is a non-partisan educational organisation working on democracy, youth participation, and, in particular, encouraging young people to go to polling stations through using social media. As a data collection method, it employs a classic copy-and-paste method to collect BtB tweets (see Chapter 4 for further detail). In particular, I have monitored their tweets without logging in so that I can collect only publicly available tweets (see further detail in Chapter 4). The period of observation ran from 20 February 2016 to 10 August 2017. I decided to start on 20 February because it was the day of the announcement of the EU Referendum, which took place on 23 June 2016. The last day of the observation was determined in order to include the aftermath of the UK general election in 2017, and a period during which BtB was very active on Twitter.

I developed the analytical framework specifically for online discourse informed by Miyazaki (2016). In my earlier work, I reported that in an online environment, people use anecdotes as a rhetorical device in discussion (ibid). My finding was drawn from the online discussion about the UK general election in 2015, in which people referred to their findings and experience during the election campaign period. Yet, given that it is online, people could refer to other websites as evidence to support their claims. Therefore, I used 'reference'

criteria to include any evidence to support the users claim. This reference could include any anecdote, weblink or written material, whether it is on academic or general topics.

In addition to the above approach, I conducted interviews with key informants and used a follow-up questionnaire (see subsection 4.3.4). The aim of the interview and questionnaire was to collect information which supports my argument as evidence. Since Twitter data is not sufficient and does not provide rich information, the interviews aimed to gain further insight and to uncover the underlying principles of BtB's strategy. Having such insight will advance the understanding of the organisation but also will help to interpret the Twitter data during the analytical process.

With its analytical approach, this project does not take any judgmental position (see subsection 4.5 for further detail). For example, this project will not give any value judgment on any comments collected. This is not only to respect contributors' political positioning and their effort to engage in political discussion, but also because it is impossible to verify the genuineness of information (cf. Jowett, 2015). In addition, this project will not make any judgment on which party people would vote for or support. The primary purpose of the project is to explore how people would like to participate in elections, not which political party or candidate they wish to support.

## 1.10 Main Argument

The overarching argument I will address in this thesis is that a mentoring approach is effective when engaging with young people on Twitter. This is particularly effective in attracting more young people who are already interested in political issues, but are not yet ready to be involved in formal democratic processes. The aim of political participation is to make an actual change by bringing about a tangible result, and alternative forms of participation do not necessarily bring a clear change to society. To encourage young people to be politically active, BtB used Twitter to offer different perspectives so that young people can explore a political issue which concerns them. The social media strategy employed by BtB provided two learning elements for citizenship education studies.

First, mentoring and nurturing young people to be responsible citizens is the new challenge for civil society organisations. Since young people are already interested in democratic processes, they are prepared to learn about voting, election campaigns, and related social issues. Yet they need guidance to explore the political issues which interest them, due to their underdeveloped awareness of issues. Moreover, it is not surprising that young people wish to be treated as independent people. As Osler and Starkey (2005, 2010) strongly emphasised, treating young people as responsible citizens will develop their emotional adherence and subsequently enable their spontaneous commitment to the community. Their claim is rooted in a view of 'respect' to others (Starkey, 1992), which is the driving force for contributing to life in a community. By treating its participants respectfully, as independent adults, they could retain their interest in others and, more broadly, in their country as responsible citizens (cf. Crick, 2003, 2004). This type of education is underlined in BtB's Twitter strategy which will eventually support and sustain rule by the common people i.e. democracy.

Second, the Internet is a useful tool in mentoring participants in learning about political issues. It offers a large amount of information, which participants can use as the basis of their claims during the online discussion. Although discussion is a key factor in maintaining a democratic society (Habermas, 1989), online political discussion does not always show well-formulated opinions. While Habermas argued the importance of constructive discussions in a public forum (ibid), several studies (e.g. Hmielowski et al., 2014; Hughey and Daniels, 2013; McLelland, 2008; Papacharissi, 2004) have reported abusive behaviour by users in publicly accessible discussion forums (see subsection 2.4 for examples of abusive use of the Internet). This is due to the nature of the Internet, and its broad accessibility to the public: the tone of discussion is likely to be less formal. However, people can use the Internet as a learning tool for democratic practice with guidance or mentoring from other members in the sphere who have the appropriate knowledge. Since the Internet enables people to connect easily with new people, they can learn about good practice in an online environment as they socialise.

In Chapter 8, I shall indicate that the quality of democracy is measured against the degree of meaningful participation. The Internet can act as a tool to

facilitate such participation, with the assistance of mentors working in a democratising campaign organisation.

## 1.11 Outline of the Thesis

The outline of this thesis is as follows: in Chapter 2, I review related literature on citizenship, political participation among young people, and abuse of the Internet. I particularly focus on how the Internet has contributed to a form of political participation among young people and how it has transformed citizenship practice. Chapter 3 is a literature review for the conceptual framework, where I will triangulate notions of democracy, Internet use by civil society organisations (CSOs), and political socialisation as a learning process in political participation. In Chapter 4, I discuss the research method to justify the selection of the case study, and provide discussions on data collection and analysis, as well as discussing ethical issues in online studies. Chapter 5 will give an overview of an organisation, Bite the Ballot, based on the documentation analysis. Chapters 6 and 7 concern data analysis of tweets: while Chapter 6 focusses on the role of BtB in twitter discussion, Chapter 7 highlights their strategy to maintain democratic discussion and draws conceptual conclusions based on the analysis. Chapter 8 develops reflective arguments, referring to political socialisation theory to indicate how participation could promote diversity in a democratic society. Chapter 9 concludes this thesis.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces how the Internet can be used for citizenship practices. To achieve this, I review a range of studies covering the following topics: citizenship practices in a face-to-face context; the role of social media (and the Internet) in political actions; and abuse on the Internet and its negative impact on citizenship practice. The focus of the review is thus on citizenship practice and digital citizenship to link the fields of citizenship, online political participation and online political socialisation. It is notable that studies to date have focused on citizenship education and practices in schools, rather than outside schools (but see Couldry et al., 2014). The ultimate aim of this review is to establish to what degree it is possible to utilise the Internet to promote and enrich the practice of citizenship by using social media and, more widely, the Internet.

To date, much of the literature in the field has investigated how people perceive and practise the concept of citizenship in both face-to-face and online contexts (see subsections 2.2 and 2.3). These studies, however, have suggested different types of practice between the two contexts. In a face-to-face context, emotional attachment to a community or society is necessary to ensure and retain diversified society through such practices. For example, assisting orphans who need help to integrate into society requires emotional care and continuous encouragement, as well as financial assistance (Raghallaigh and Thornton, 2017). This is particularly the case in schools, where students are taught how to engage in democratic processes through learning democratic skills. In order to live in a democratic society, the concept of citizenship stresses a moral element: that is, respect to others is key to securing these practices by encouraging and promoting these positive acts. As such, democracy, underpinned by these citizenship practices, is seen at a higher level as a governing concept to allow people to practise without unreasonable intervention from the government.

Citizenship in an online context has also been an important field to investigate, though studies found both encouraging and worrying actions. Now



that the Internet has become a social infrastructure supporting everyday life among people, it offers innumerable platforms for interaction with other people. Because of its popularity among young people, civil society organisations use online platforms, including social media, to encourage young people to participate in political actions (see below). However, use of the Internet does not necessarily lead to an encouraging result for citizenship practice. Studies have reported that people behave in an unacceptable manner in the online environment, and distribute false information (see subsection 2.3). The former is labelled as 'incivility' which includes online bullying and posting discriminatory comments based on race or nationality (see 2.3.1). The latter relates to fake news, which is considered fundamentally false information that is further divided into misinformation and disinformation (see 2.3.2). From a learning perspective, while it is possible for people to learn something on the Internet, it remains unanswered as to how this is possible and in particular, what elements enable online learning for citizenship practice.

Therefore, the literature this chapter will review includes studies relating to assessment of citizenship as taught in schools, the role of civil society organisations supporting democratic functions in society, and online interaction among citizens. Reviewing those studies will clarify the gap between citizenship education in schools and the nature of the citizenship programme offered by non-school organisations. In particular, schools need to assess students' performance in the subject, although such a practice may be incompatible with the overarching idea of citizenship. The idea of citizenship focusses on development of a mindset and behaviour among people to support a community, which is not measurable via conventional assessment standards. Studies on online interaction show both the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet for citizenship education in schools and citizenship programmes in non-school organisations. In this thesis, I will focus on these issues, rather than accessibility and digital divide issues, although I address these wherever it is appropriate to do so.

The next section will present an overview of studies on citizenship practice and education in the UK, with particular emphasis on living together as proposed by Osler and Starkey (2005).

## 2.2 Citizenship in Practice

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of citizenship practice and its education in the UK. To this end, I review literature investigating how people practise the notion of citizenship in both face-to-face and online contexts, particularly from a notion of 'living together' (Osler and Starkey, 2005; Starkey, 2012). In a real society, the backgrounds of its residents are diverse, representing differences in cultural background, customs, religious beliefs, and so on. As such, they might have different interests, hobbies and political leanings, even within the same community. This implies that there are 'different people' even within a same group, although this might not be clearly recognised. For example, the presence of international students on a university campus does not guarantee an opportunity for students from the host country to be familiar with them, unless they have an opportunity to communicate with them. Without such interaction, it is impossible to develop a 'sense of belonging' (Starkey, 2007: 56), i.e. the essential part of citizenship. In other words, the interaction with many people in a community will convert the theory of citizenship into an actual, tangible form.

Citizenship education in the UK underlines democratic participation and emphasises critical and independent thinking by citizens (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Crick, 2003). The foremost stress is on the 'participation to society': it was common for the UK education curriculum to focus on 'leadership' rather than participation (Crick, 2003). Unlike leadership, which demands strong determination by a leader, participation requires a sense of 'responsibility' which demands citizens to consider their own behaviour and its consequences (Crick, 2004). Crick's notion of citizenship is strongly linked to the idea of participatory democracy: it is citizens who decide about their own community (Grasso, 2016). Yet, participation *per se* will not automatically guarantee the healthy function of participatory democracy in a society; it appears necessary for people to participate responsibly. Yet, no one can teach children or young people how to learn and develop a sense of responsibility: it is for them to learn as they experience participation in democratic processes (Crick, 2004).

Learning through participation can be conceptualised as active participation in community. As Simo et al., contended that being a citizen in a

community meant active participation (ibid), their stance is to support people's participation in the creation and development of their own community (i.e. democracy as participation). Their stance is also in line with Osler and Starkey (2005) that active participation in a community would develop their 'sense of belonging' – the assumption here is that if they do not feel part of their community, they would not participate in any communal activities. Yet, their cosmopolitan view (ibid) may negate any possibility of obstacles which emerge as people participate in society. In addition, citizens are requested to consider the ways in which they participate, otherwise they will, collectively, face the opposite result from what they expected (i.e. paradox: Crick, 2004). Since schools are institutions to educate students, it is unsurprising that academia is interested in *how* to make students active in their community (e.g. classrooms, etc.).

Discussion and negotiation skills are elements schools can teach students as part of citizenship education and as part of a classroom activity. These are skills to maintain a healthy democratic society which are also transferable to other academic subjects and many occasions in everyday life (Jerome and Algarra, 2005). However, this notion triggers two problems: firstly, how can teachers teach these skills and, secondly, how can they assess students' engagement in discussion. Assessment itself means a measurement against an outcome or result of an action (Reeves, 2000). Furthermore, an assessment should be a comparison against an objective measurement (Dewey, 1926), though it is not always straightforward. While assessment in an objective manner is appropriate in the context, for example, of a quiz or test with true or false answers, it might be inappropriate for the citizenship curriculum, which contains multiple perspectives (Oxley and Morris, 2013). In other words, assessing students' performance in citizenship is, if not impossible, difficult, and needs further consideration (Jerome, 2008).

This is due to a conceptual tension of citizenship about being a 'good citizen' and what counts as 'good practice'. These criteria involve moral and value judgements which can be perceived differently by different people and communities (Sim et al., 2017). For example, a study by Sim et al., illustrated that teachers in Singapore characterised good citizens as 'loyalty, resilience, and kindness' (ibid: 96) – a somewhat ideological and normative view. This is

the very key to understanding the issue of citizenship education: notions of good vary from area to area, and there is no single definition of 'good' or 'bad' (see Hinde, 2002). As there are different codes on good behaviour in religion and philosophy (ibid), overt emphasis on one set of values could lead to what Kaldor (2003) criticised as "compellance" (ibid: 1-2): imposition of an idea on other countries. In citizenship education, it could place students in a pre-established framework, compelled to accept one teacher's values.

The above concerns are from studies within a school context. However, schools are not the only places or institutions which provide opportunities for young people to learn participatory democracy. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can be the providers too.

CSOs are active groups playing an important role in supporting democratic practices. A CSO is defined as a non-governmental group engaging in an activity of social interest (Rodekamp, 2014). As Rodekamp outlined, such groups work in areas of interest about which members of society care; therefore, their fields of activity range widely from social welfare to advocacy i.e. social good (ibid). They are, however, characterised as a partner of a government to achieve social good, in stark difference from lobbying groups, whose aim is to work for their own special interest (ibid). Therefore, the role of civil society organisations arguably has a strong link with the concept of democracy. While there is no agreed concept of democracy (Beetham, 1999), participation in the process appears an essential element of its function (van Deth, 2014). The form of participation is not prescriptive, as long as it promotes the participation itself (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). The role of CSOs is therefore considered to facilitate and encourage people to participate in democratic processes, to keep society as democratic as possible.

CSOs' field of activities is wide and covers huge areas in society, although their common functional aim is, in principle, to fill a gap in society where government cannot work sufficiently. For example, helping orphaned children who need legal assistance is to fill a gap caused by failure in a country's welfare system (Raghallaigh and Thornton, 2017), such as when those children reach the age of majority i.e. they are legally adults, but often need financial assistance so that they can finish their final year of studies in secondary school

(ibid). In contrast, another type of activity CSOs could engage in is to facilitate socialisation between young and old people. A CSO assisted the development of trust between young and old people through various activities (Couldry et al., 2014). Young people taught old people how they could use computers – something young people are good at – while old people, in return, taught them how to use cameras (ibid). These activities do not relate to a legal system; however, CSOs work to improve society by facilitating face-to-face communication between young and old people.

To encourage participation, CSOs often use the Internet, yet whether their use of the Internet succeeds seems to depend on the quality of their online strategy. In order to succeed, CSOs need to consider quality and use of information, choice of platform, and clear goals (Dennis, 2019). An example of a successful strategy led one CSO to conduct a critical discussion on information based on multiple sources, with a solid aim to mobilise people through a social media platform (ibid). Similarly, a team of protest organisers in South Korea used a social media platform in order to discuss logistics for their own protest e.g. how they could call for participants, and the contents of the agenda (Seongyi and Woo-Young, 2011). A similar use can be found in the case of People's Assembly which used Twitter to announce their activity and mobilise participants (Mercea and Yilmaz, 2018). Using a social media platform aimed to mobilise people, particularly young people, because social media is very popular among them (see Scaramuzzino and Scaramuzzino, 2017). In other words, if the audience does not use social media platforms and, in the worst case, the Internet, there is little reason for CSOs to use social media to mobilise people.

A practical issue for CSOs using social media is the burden on financial spending to keep their social media accounts and website updated. Since many CSOs are not financially healthy, they tend to spend more funds on activities from which they can expect the best return (Armstrong and Butcher, 2018). This implies a need to consider the return on investment and thus further implies a business element even in civil society organisations. The elements to consider could include a thorough examination of geographical conditions, prevalence of technology, and demographic background of population. In suburban areas, use of the Internet does not lead to further participation, because the Internet is

unpopular in those areas, unlike in a developed city (Shi, 2013). In these areas, use of social media for mobilisation can even facilitate communication between citizens and politicians so that they can influence politics at the state level (Scaramuzzino and Scaramuzzino, 2017). Still, the choice of online platform will determine the success rates of a potential campaign. In short, CSOs need to consider which online platform can attract more citizens to gain the maximum impact from their own campaign.

Answering the above question would be a key to measure the impact of CSOs' work. On this point, current studies have not agreed on the extent to which social media mobilised people into their movement. The prominent studies by Mercea and Yilmaz (2018) and Seongyi and Woo-Young (2011) did not attempt to measure impacts of movements. In fact, it is necessary to assess to what extent use of social media is successful to mobilise people. For example, while people could tweet on Twitter during the election campaign, it does not mean political parties chose this platform in order to increase their presence and to reach potential supporters (cf. Larsson and Hallvard, 2014). Since it is an undeniable fact that the organisers of protest and social movements use the Internet for mobilising people, it is worth considering what element could be a reference point to assess its impact. To measure their online activity, it is worth considering how organisers communicate with potential participants, and what platform would be most useful to support communication.

One interesting study investigated the communication between social movement organisers and its participants. Mercea et al., (2018) looked at the flow of information between the organiser of the People's Assembly against austerity (PA) and its participants. An organiser of the PA used Twitter to announce its activity, and participants share information with other fellow participants. This interaction is rather one-way communication (i.e. from organisers to participants) and there seems to be no discussion or interaction between them (ibid). While such one-way communication implies a hierarchical relationship between organisers and participants, it is impossible to assert this is the case. Online activism is often a unified form of separate movements all of which have something in common. In Spain, separate protests against privatisation of education and a sanction against a school teacher connected on

social media for increased impact (Saura et al., 2017). If this is the case, the movement itself may not be structured rigidly; rather it relies on participants' autonomous enthusiasm and actions. In fact, PA has a clear agenda i.e. to oppose austerity policy, and a group of individual supporters, although it is unclear how they position themselves within the UK.

A further advantage of using online platforms is to enable participants' self-governance of the movement. An informative study by Theocharis et al., (2015) showed people participating in the protests in Spain used Twitter to distribute information about the protest they were taking part in; however, they did not call for further action or discuss how the protests should be managed. While the study by Theocharis et al., did suggest participants' effort to maintain the protest, it did not reveal the type of information people distributed. However, Penney and Dadas (2014) explicitly described that, in the Occupy Wall Street protest, participants updated information about food, donations, and police movements. The strategy employed by participants was seemingly aimed at sharing logistical information for them to maintain their autonomy (so that participants could manage the protest by themselves). Moreover, it functioned as a self-defence mechanism by sharing information about police movement (ibid). Therefore, it suggests a good use by participants for a self-governance purpose. Yet, studies by Theocharis et al., and Penney and Dadas overlooked how organisers used the platform to lead a movement.

While some participants share information to protect themselves in a protest, other participants use the online platform to report the situation to the general public directly as an insider. It often happens when mainstream media, such as TV and newspapers, do not report 'insider information' but report an official announcement from government or police (Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018). Such use of social media – posting a video clip taken during the protest – can work as a live stream from inside the protest, which can reflect the situation more accurately. This is an inspiring media strategy for CSOs to support the protest and other activities by providing a perspective from the participants view, but not the organisers. As reviewed earlier, CSOs need to focus on an activity which could bring the best outcome: attracting more people to their activity could be one of the metrics. In fact, the organisers have opportunities to tell their agenda in front of media, while it is rare for participants

to have such opportunities. Showing the participants' viewpoint could help mobilise more people from outside of the organisation.

As reviewed above, it is noteworthy that the Internet has certainly played a central role not only for participants but also for organisers to use various online platforms for their social movements. Online platforms have facilitated the expression of political opinion and, as a result, have promoted political participation (Mihailidis, 2014) particularly among young people. As the study by Seongyi and Woo-Young found, the organisers of the demonstration used online forums in Korea. SNS, such as Facebook and Twitter, can be used to mobilise young people. In fact, Thorson (2014) argued Facebook could be a good place for young people to discuss political issues. While the primary aim of Facebook is to retain links with classmates from university, Thorson claimed it is now a place to express views on political events or social issues (ibid). As such, there seems to be a space for organisers to mobilise people online, since there would certainly be a number of people who are interested in the issues. Therefore, the Internet has arguably offered countless possible meeting spaces for organisers to discuss agendas and protocols.

It is, however, controversial to assert that online platforms have helped further mobilisation of people. A study concerning this issue suggested a weak or, at best, indicative, trend in the relationship between use of social media and possibility of political participation (Boulianne, 2015). The study found a contradictory trend between different samples e.g. general population or selected people (ibid). In the UK, US, and Australia, the more time young people spend on SNS, the more likely it is they will engage in political participation (Xenos et al., 2014), although the selection criteria of those 'young people' are questionable. If they are from a privileged family background, or their schools are regarded as 'good', they can be much more politically aware (German, 2014). Even if SNS do not directly mobilise young people to political activities (Theocharis and Quintelier, 2016), and they use SNS often, the reason of weak mobilisation could be their age e.g. they are too young. As such, SNS could be potentially a useful tool for mobilising people, particularly young people, but it may need to understand who and what kind of people they are.



The above studies suggest the strong potential of the Internet, in particular, how it can contribute to mobilising people into political action and how it allows participants autonomy. To achieve their aim to improve society, CSOs can benefit from reaching potential participants via SNS by employing a strategy which is appropriate to their goal. Participants can use SNS to post their live film from inside the demonstrations as if they were acting as a 'journalist'. Yet, it is impossible to assert that the Internet and SNS would guarantee further mobilisation of people, particularly from outside the organisation. CSOs need to consider the background of potential people to mobilise, and whether they use the same SNS channel as the CSO so that they can reach these people. While the Internet has certainly strengthened the democratic function in society, it does not guarantee the success of political activities. Moreover, CSOs and people should use the Internet in an appropriate way.

A key to understanding appropriate use of the Internet relates to a particular form of interaction: how to give advice to people. In addition to some abusive online behaviour (see 2.4 for detail), CSOs could lead young people to mobilise their peers without forcing their own opinions on them. Several studies highlight the issue within an assessment of citizenship education in UK schools.

The assessment for citizenship is to assess students' ideas or thoughts through self-reflection. As such, the assessment criteria should focus on citizenship participation by students and their self-reflection on it (Jerome, 2008). This framework guides teachers to assess students' thoughts not against certain criteria but to assess how they can develop their ideas or reflect their participation in an activity (ibid). This framework, therefore, demands that teachers carefully observe students' behaviour from the beginning of an activity (ibid). However, such work may be challenging to some teachers who are not enthusiastic about citizenship education (Jerome, 2012). The assessors (or examiners) are accountable for their assessment yet they often do not have a credible source on which to base their assessment, hence they tend to rely on their own experience and, in the worst case, bias. (Ennis, 2015: 35). An inappropriate assessment result would lead to disengagement from participating in the community, and thus would have the opposite consequence from the aim of citizenship education (Jerome, 2008). As such, within the context of schools,

assessment for citizenship education has been regarded as difficult, if not impossible, and thus requires further study.

The above studies focused on the assessment issues in the context of an educational institution. They need rigorous standards and criteria in order to keep their credibility and maintain trust in their assessment process. However, use of the Internet for extra-curricular activity does not necessitate such assessment criteria. In other words, in order to assess the learning outcome, we need another type of assessment which measures understanding of a narrative on the Internet. Choi et al., (2017) suggest the Digital Citizenship Scale to measure the degree of citizenship practice which takes place on the Internet. The prominent scale emphasises online political activities such as attending a meeting via the Internet. A significant aspect of the scale is that Choi et al., included a critical perspective in interaction with other people on the Internet. For example, having the opportunity to reflect one's belief on an issue is a very critical activity against common sense or to raise a question (ibid). While they did not mention it, it is notable that the Internet has false or misleading information which people cannot rely on as trustworthy. To mitigate this, CSOs could guide young people in examining information, given they are already interested in political issues (Sloam, 2012a).

Based on the studies above, the present research therefore limits the scope of activities CSOs could pursue to any CSO whose aim is to encourage young people to participate in political activity, whether this be a demonstration, protest, or voting. As argued in the above sections, citizenship practice is inseparable from the concept of democracy and political participation. In the present research, I argue that CSOs can help young people to develop their understanding of society, in particular how it works, and can guide them to participate in society. In practice, the organisations would encourage young people in various ways – using social media, word of mouth, etc.

Drawing from the above discussion, the next section introduces how young people engage in political actions via online platforms.

## 2.3 Political Participation among Young People: Apathy or New Form of Participation?

This section reviews the studies on political participation and use of the Internet by young people, in particular teenagers. The aim is to provide a clear picture of how young people use the Internet to engage in social movements and political participation. To achieve the aim, this section conceptualises political participation as an actual engagement in a political act, such as voting, discussion on an event, joining a political party (Best and Krueger, 2005; van Deth, 2014), while it also acknowledges that there is no consensus on its conceptualisation (see van Deth, 2014). Democracy is a mechanism underlining people's participation in a decision-making process (see Chapter 3 for further discussion). Drawing from the underlining idea, Best and Krueger argue that political participation is a civil act influencing a collective decision, highlighting the principle of equality among people in a decision-making process (Best and Krueger, 2005). Their emphasis is particularly on an actual impact on a decision as a result of citizen's action. Similarly, Di Gennaro and Dutton contend that a commitment to discussion and interaction with other people is imperative in maintaining a participatory discipline of democracy (Di Gennaro and Dutton, 2006). As such, there is no doubt that political participation needs actual commitment. Based on the discussion, the ultimate goal of this section is to explore how young people use the Internet and their conceptualisation of the Internet.

### 2.3.1 The Impact of Digitally Transformed Political Participation

Many people believe that young people do not join, or participate in, political activities. However, some scholars (e.g. Anstead and O'Loughlin, 2015; Sloam, 2012b, 2014b) contend that this is untrue. Moreover, researchers in the citizenship field believe online political activities contribute to the improvement of citizenship education (Franch, 2013; Xenos et al., 2014). Sloam (2014b) showed that young people do attend and participate in alternative forms of political action such as protests and demonstrations. Similarly, they tend to march (as part of a protest), help electoral candidates, and boycott products to express their anger at a particular company (Sloam, 2014a). On this point, Kim

et al., (2017) argued that offline and online political participation coincide: if a person is involved in political activity offline, they will also be involved online. Furthermore, Oser et al., (2013) asserted that the Internet has certainly impacted on the way of social movements operate, including mobilisation of participants and information distribution among them. Therefore, the Internet might strengthen and encourage people to engage in political and social activity.

However, it is inconclusive whether Internet or social media use could actually help young people to engage in political activity (Mihailidis, 2014; Theocharis and Quintelier, 2016). If the aim of using social media is merely to check whether friends are online/log-in (Mihailidis, 2014), or to seek entertainment elements in political action (Theocharis and Quintelier, 2016), social media does not lead to further political engagement – it only offers an introductory phase for it. In fact, Facebook was developed to maintain contact with university classmates after graduation, partly because most of international students would return home after their studies (cf. Thorson, 2014). An assumption of ‘good use’ of the Internet has in fact allowed the circulation of fake news in social media platforms, which has given false information about politics and caused miscommunication among people (Carlson, 2018). In return, social media could play the role of the guide for novices and beginners to engage in political actions (Boulianne, 2016). Given that different social media platforms have different designs and audiences, it is necessary to consider what type of social media would be most beneficial for citizenship practice (Robertson, 2018).

At the advent of the Internet, some academics optimistically believed that it would encourage people to participate in politics as it would enlighten and make numerous apathetic people to participate in political actions (e.g. Buchstein, 1997). Such an optimistic view was justified in that the world wide web (WWW) has certainly increased ways of participation in politics: several online petition and online fund raising websites started on the Internet (Boulianne, 2018). Mercea (2011) found that young people use the Internet in political participation as a source of information to decide whether to attend a protest. However, the study did not mention which online service the organisers used to mobilise its participants. In fact, it is reported that there are clear

demographic differences (such as age, gender) between different online platforms. For example, most users of Reddit, an online discussion forum, are reportedly young males aged 18-29 (Duggan and Smith, 2013). In contrast, Academia.edu might attract academic researchers and postgraduate students, because its purpose is to strengthen networks among academics. As such, the expectations from Internet users might differ between online platforms.

I reframe the above expectation among users of online platforms as a normative perception, that is, 'how they think it should be' (see Oser et al., 2013), which would vastly differ between generations. The Internet became open to public use in 1995; it further became popular and affordable in the early 2000s. Therefore, those who were born in the early 1980s might not have had opportunity to experience the Internet in their homes, high schools and universities in their teenage years. In contrast, people born in the late 1990s have grown up with the Internet – when they were in high school, Youtube (launched in 2005) and Facebook (launched in 2004) were already in service. The above difference might well impact on the use of the Internet for social movement. Oser et al., (2013) confirmed that using the Internet for political activity is appealing to young people – particularly those born after 2000, but not for those who were born in or before the 1980s. While Oser et al., argued that those older generations were not eager to use the Internet for political activities (ibid), perhaps this is because it had not been part of their early life.

In addition, this difference would impact on organising online social movement. Vihma (2016) illustrated how different conceptualisations from individual users affected the management methods of online social movement groups. According to Vihma, if members of the group think the Internet is merely a 'tool' for individuals to use in everyday life, for which they take responsibility, the group tends to be a platform for information exchange (ibid). The group tend to emphasise individual responsibility for how its members use the Internet and the subsequent results but not to admit the collective responsibility of the group. Members of such a group are typically IT professionals or working in the IT industry: they know how to use the Internet for their career and/or life (ibid: 73). Their notion of responsibility is defined in terms of individual capacity – hence it dismisses collective responsibility as a group, which emphasises a lack of solidarity with other members. It further appears incompatible with certain

notions of citizenship which appraise using individuals' skills to build a community (see Tocqueville, 1840).

In contrast, members of another group saw online social movement as a form of lobbying – a classic style of social movement (Vihma, 2016). With this belief, they tend to invest much time in communicating with a wider audience on the Internet to achieve their aim. Frequent exchange of information appears to highlight online political socialisation (see Dekker, 1991; German, 2014). Dekker argued political socialisation is a concept illustrating how people develop political knowledge, political views, and political leanings while they socialise with other people (Dekker, 1991). Dekker further pointed out that the role of the 'influencer', who has considerable power to influence others' political thoughts, is important in understanding the process of socialisation (ibid). On this point, Gilbert stressed that expectations from other people have further importance, arguing they exert pressure (Gilbert, 2004). If expectation is important, as Gilbert believes, members of the communities in the Vihma study might unknowingly develop the atmosphere to impose ideas (individual responsibility and social movement as lobbying) on other members, whether their understanding is right or wrong.

The above example from the Vihma study underlines the need to consider members' background and thoughts. It seems that their understanding of the Internet may well play a significant role in determining the movement's direction and its organisation. The classic style lobbyist in Vihma's study might think the Internet is a 'tool' for their movement and use it as part of the campaign process for their movement. In contrast, another group seems to consider the Internet as a 'distribution platform of information' but its use should be at its members' own responsibility.

Despite the above, as the Internet has developed and become popular, both organisers and participants in political actions have started to use online platforms. With this change in mind, CSOs have adopted online campaign strategies to drive their activities effectively. Overall, the literature to date has focused on two aspects, namely, either (a) how participants of a social movement use an online platform or (b) how organisers (e.g. steering committees) use an online platform to manage their movement. As argued

earlier, it is not clear to what extent social media would increase political participation among young people. However, it is almost certain that social media does increase the number of channels and opportunities for them to begin their participation in political activities (Theocharis et al., 2015; Theocharis and van Deth, 2016). Therefore, the review in this subsection focusses on advantages of using social media for CSOs and their participants while also highlighting potential pitfalls with the use of social media channels.

Studies focussing on participants mainly report how they use social media during their involvement in a political activity (e.g. Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018; Khondker, 2011; Penney and Dadas, 2014). For example, Penney and Dadas (2014) reported that participants of Occupy Wall Street used Twitter to update information for fellow participants, including provision of food and movement of police. Unlike relying on verbal rumour, using Twitter could provide more timely updates, particularly on police movements. In addition, Khondker (2011) argued that use of the Internet enabled vivid reporting from inside the demonstrations, which informs people in other parts of the world. Moreover, such updates might tell the facts which would otherwise remain unreported by mainstream media (Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018). Their social media use appears to have two functions. One of them is to update participants. It can work as an announcement from an organiser and update on a police movement (see Penney and Dadas, 2014). Another is a live update from inside the political action so that any news not covered by mainstream media can be reported online (e.g. Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018). Social media has certainly played a role as a communication tool among participants in protests (Robertson, 2018).

In theory, social media has an advantage for newly established CSOs which use the Internet extensively to reach young people (Bennett, 2007; Bennett et al., 2011). In their prominent study, Bennett (2007) and Bennett et al., (2011) argued that social media is a form of what they conceptualised as Actualizing Citizenship (AC), which asserts an emphasis on participation through expression of interest in a peer group (ibid). AC is a form of political participation preferred by young people as it affirms their flexibility and autonomy in participation, while demanding less loyalty to political institutions (Collin, 2015). The stress on fewer demands and responsibility to participate

coincidentally matches the nature of social media: its primary purpose is to maintain their face-to-face friendship in an online environment. It is thus unsurprising that social media has played a role as a platform for political participation while it retains its function as a peer network. Since young people prefer to participate in political activities through an informal, less institutionalised, and more personalised form (Collin, 2015; Dahlgren, 2007), social media could guide them to such informal political participation.

As such, social media has strong potential for CSOs in recruiting and reaching potential participants in their campaigns and events. Meta-analysis of academic studies on the use of social media and predictability of political participation concluded that a degree of exposure to social media (e.g. duration spent on social media) could predict the probability of the user's political participation among young people (Boulianne, 2015, 2016) i.e. the longer people use social media, the more likely they are to participate in a political activity (ibid). The conclusion is that social media works as a news source on politics, and thus increases political awareness among people (Boulianne, 2016). Awareness of political issues is also key in attracting young people to participate in political actions; they are more likely to be attracted by issues, than driven by duty or responsibility to their nation (Collin, 2015). However, some people may not be interested in politics even though they use social media: the reason for which may lie in their socio-economic status (see 8.2.2.1 for further discussion).

Because they are driven primarily by issues, young people are not motivated to vote or affiliated to a political party (Dahlgren, 2007). Instead, they prefer to join demonstrations and marches to protest against social injustice, while using their social media accounts during the event. Subsection 2.3.3 will discuss such usage further.

### 2.3.2 Young People, the Internet, and Participating in Political Actions

There are many forms of political participation: from voting to protesting, from discussing a political issue with neighbours to helping an electoral candidate. There is no doubt that these participations require people. However,



several academic studies, as well as reports from the mass media, have reported a contradictory result: some studies found more young people join these political activities (Sloam, 2012b, 2014a, 2014b, 2016a) and others report a declining rate of participation (Keating and Janmaat, 2016). The difference comes from calculations based on different statistical surveys.

Some studies argue that many young people have shifted their participatory method from face-to-face to online (Bastos and Mercea, 2016; Loader et al., 2014, 2016; Loader and Mercea, 2011; Mercea and Yilmaz, 2018; Sloam, 2014b). For example, Mercea (2011) pointed out that organisers of demonstrations use the Internet to recruit participants. While his study did not specify which online service the organisers used, Bastos and Mercea (2016) surveyed political expressions made on Twitter. Their findings suggest that the more politically conscious people are, the more they tweet with a particular hashtag (ibid: 2364). Based on their argument, I contend the Internet is now strengthening these alternative forms of participation. For example, the Arab Spring in 2010-2011 saw a number of protests against oppressive regimes, images of which appeared on Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter (Khondker, 2011). Khondker contended that online media made a significant contribution to the movement by broadcasting its legitimacy and seeking support from world.

Use of online platforms for a social movement certainly changes the nature of its organisation. Bosch (2017) reported how university students used Twitter to discuss a historic statue of Cecil Rhodes, a British colonialist, in the University of Cape Town, South Africa, labelling it as a symbol of institutional racism. Bosch found that a hashtag, one word with a hash (#), worked to gather discussion on Twitter, and enabled communication among people (ibid: 226). However, Bosch did not specify who the Twitter users were. While the movement originated from the debate on the university statue and its students' action, it is possible that people from outside the university saw the hashtag and became involved in the discussion. In fact, Bosch mentioned that the discussion provoked subtopics, including who Rhodes was, and what Rhodes did (ibid). These subtopics suggested the involvement of people outside the university who did not know who the key person was. Yet it might for technical reasons be difficult to specify who participates in Twitter discussions.

The above study by Bosch focused on how participants in a social movement used Twitter. Similarly, other studies have used the same perspective – how participants used the Internet for political activities. Bennett (2012) argues that young people use SNS (particularly Facebook) as a platform for political discussion. For example, there is evidence that they used Blackberry messenger during riots in London in August 2011 to exchange information about the protest (Bennett, 2013). Taking part in a demonstration or protest is certainly a form of political participation (van Deth, 2014); furthermore, it is notable that people use the Internet during their participation, including to exchange information and resources.

In contrast to the above, it cannot be always the case that participants use social media with good intentions. While Hermida and Hernandez-Santaolalla argue that the distribution of insider information would challenge the mainstream mass media (Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018), it is worth pointing out that participants do not need to pass a prior check by any person before they post online. In traditional forms of media, it is common practice that editors check the article (including a photograph) before it is published. In contrast, participants in a political action, such as a demonstration, are private individuals and not necessarily professional journalists. Therefore, they can post whatever they want in their social media account, even if the post itself is inaccurate. This can be problematic since the Internet is well connected, and by nature information will circulate quickly (see subsection 2.4 for further discussion). As a result, the Internet has arguably changed citizenship practice by offering wider options for participants and publicising hidden facts.

In contrast, digital citizenship practice can appear in a professional context, rather than among the general public. A good example of professional use of the Internet was demonstrated by Zuckerman, who illustrated how medical professionals successfully worked to deal with SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome): the Internet enabled a quick response to the global disease (Zuckerman, 2013). The example in Zuckerman showed how professionals – medical doctors and researchers – worked together to discuss a professional issue (ibid). Another example occurs in an online course offered by a higher education institution (Starkey and Savvides, 2009). In their inspiring study, students on the online course could contribute to the development of

both friendship and studentship as learners even though their geographical locations were hugely disparate (ibid). The study even informs the community of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) from an online perspective – it is possible for students to demonstrate their learning enthusiasm and encouragement to their fellows even in an online environment (Starkey and Savvides, 2009). Yet, both studies by Starkey and Savvides, and Zuckerman, have something in common – the environment sets clear expectations from colleagues (in the Zuckerman case) or course leaders (in the case of Starkey and Savvides).

The existence of expectation has a dominant power in any community or social network. It is a powerful influence on behaviour and in determining a standard to judge whether such behaviour is acceptable or not (Gee, 2010; also see Luhmann, 1995). As such, people behave in a way which aligns with societal factors such as relationships among people, place, purpose of interaction, as well as particular choices for a specific interaction (Luhmann, 1995). For example, a person would behave as a son in front of his parents, when talking about his experience in school, while he would behave a classmate in front of his teachers and fellow students in the school (Gee, 2010). However, in the digital sphere, such expectations are not always clear: for example, a person can maintain an online network including both classmates from his primary school and colleagues in his workplace, which in return complicates expectations from these people (Thorson, 2014). Classmates from school may not expect to hear about his current job and political views, while his colleagues may wish to discuss these, if his job relates to politics (ibid).

While the digital public sphere can have ambiguous, unclear expectations, it can at least sometimes be effective in the context of political participation. The case of the Arab Spring uprisings suggested such potential, in which people used the Internet for citizenship practice, yet arguably at an unprofessional level. They exchanged information on the protest, and posted a film of the march on Youtube (Khondker, 2011: 677–678) to call for support. Such use of the Internet is certainly not seen in Zuckerman's and Hermes' studies. People involved in the Arab Spring were not necessarily professionals, but also members of general public; moreover, it is unclear what viewers of their posts would expect. Yet, the role of social media (Twitter in this case) appears to fit with the nature of such a movement. Twitter is a feature of slacktivism (Dennis,

2019; Murthy, 2013) which enables strangers to connect with one click. The study by Khondker (2011) did not specify a profession but it does depict the Arab Spring as a mass movement including people across the professions. In this term, social media, Twitter in particular, could be a suitable means of political participation among young people.

However, there is a critical question to be answered: how do people identify whether information is reliable? It is not always possible for the general public to assess online information as credible/reliable or false/unreliable.

Such a question demands further investigation as to how members of the public can process online information and use it for society. As the European Council published in their handbook for online literacy, it can lead, in the worst case scenario, to a violation of human rights (Hargrave et al., 2007). Yet it is common to see inaccurate information circulating on the Internet. For example, giving anecdotal evidence during online discussion is a frequent occurrence (Hipp et al., 2015; Miyazaki, 2016). Hearsay evidence is not rigorous enough to be a basis of judgement – anecdote is, at best, a personal statement. In some protests, people posted short films on Youtube or other social media which contributed to delivering the reality other news agencies would otherwise overlook (Hermida and Hernández-Santaolalla, 2018). It is then questionable how people online respond to such vaguely grounded statements only with texts when they are to make a decision. In other words, handling information for decision-making in the wrong way will lead to the wrong decision.

In short, the Internet has arguably reshaped the nature of political activity – in aiding communication among participants, and attracting wider support. As argued above, participants in political actions use social media to report as if they were broadcasting a livestream from inside the action. As such, the Internet might even have changed the concept of citizenship in some ways, yet it is inconclusive to assert the degree of such change. While the Internet has helped to connect people, their use of the Internet does not always reflect the concept of citizenship. In some cases, they violate human rights or circulate inaccurate and unreliable information which may have serious consequences.

The next section reviews how the Internet has an impact on political participation, an important mode of participation in democracy, including voting, joining protests, and participating in discussion.

## 2.4 Abuse on the Internet: its Negative Impact on Citizenship Practice

### 2.4.1 Challenges to Democratic Society: Online Bullying

While people practised citizenship to transform society, its practice in an online context sometimes seems different from its face-to-face context. As the argument below shows, racial and discriminatory expressions are often seen on the Internet (cf. Anderson et al., 2014; McLelland, 2008; Papacharissi, 2004), which contradict the concept of citizenship and its education. In this section, these unacceptable comments are seen as a challenge to democratic society and democracy itself (see Chapter 3 for concept of democracy).

One of the features of online interaction is a frequent use of racist or misogynist expressions, which would not be accepted in public. Papacharissi (2004) and McLelland (2008) found that racist comments in open online discussion forums are a warning sign of a lack of civility in a discussion place. While there is an argument that racism is not theoretically grounded but is an outcome of interaction (Nayak, 2006; Pilkington, 2016), it is not something that the general public expect to see in their daily life. From any ethical perspective, it is not good practice to stigmatise and discriminate against someone on account of their ethnic origin or skin colour. Yet, as the above studies found, branding and humiliating others is a pervasive issue in online interaction. It can and does happen in online communications, be it on social media, BBS, or chatrooms.

The various online disputes shown above are categorised as “flaming” and “incivility”, which are popular topics in online studies. Flaming is a term indicating a continuous exchange of hostile expressions during, in particular, online interactions (Lee, 2005: 385). Lee (ibid: 388-389) explains flaming starts when a person ignores a suggestion made in an online forum. There follows an exchange of messages with swearing and writing in capital letters (ibid). Since,

in English, people perceive writing in capitals as shouting (King, 2001: 416), they would feel uncomfortable. Similarly, Blom et al., (2014) defined online flaming as a verbal attack with an intention to offend other people (ibid: 5). For example, a description such as “this editorial was written by a complete idiot” (ibid: 8) is, according to Blom et al., (ibid), an example of online flaming. The description lacks reasoning and supporting evidence to prove its validity. From the perspective of critical thinking, any statement is subject to be examined as to its proof and logicity (Ennis, 2015). Therefore, both examples given by Lee (2005) and Blom et al., (2014) seem to suggest that it might be common to offend others without any consideration of possible perception (writing in capital letters implying shouting; insulting others without factual basis).

While flaming denotes a series of exchanges containing offensive words, incivility is considered as one element of flaming in online interaction. However, opinions vary slightly on the notion of incivility. While Papacharissi (2004) regards use of an offensive expression as incivility, some studies specifically define a frequent use of racial expressions (e.g. Hughey and Daniels, 2013; McLelland, 2008), dominating a forum (e.g. Karlsson, 2012), and online bullying (Erdur-Baker, 2010) as incivility. For example, McLelland (2008) observes racial and offensive comments to insult foreigners from a particular country in a thread from a Japanese BBS called 2chan. Similarly, people may also use racist language to prevent other people from expressing their opinion when they are discussing a technical issue (Anderson et al., 2014). These behaviours may not be expected in a face-to-face interaction, where it is called 'uncivil' (Papacharissi, 2002). For example, it may not be expected that an offensive expression be used during a public consultation of a bill, while it may be used at a sports match. In other words, people need to know in which contexts they can use an offensive expression. However, issues with online interaction in these studies above imply that the anonymous nature of the Internet plays an important role, as it might be difficult to know whether they could use such an expression in online interaction (cf. Nagy and Koles, 2014).

In a diverse society, it is inevitable that opinions are expressed during discussion which some people cannot accept or tolerate. As discussed in the Introduction, citizenship emphasises respect and equal positions among people. However, sensitive topics, such as ideology, a political event or party, may

challenge this egalitarian position. While Mouffe (2005a) advocated such debate, arguing that it is vital for democratic society, it would cause what Papacharissi calls incivility in an online context (Papacharissi, 2004). As Karlsson observed, in a discussion forum a discussion on policies can turn to bullying and exclusion of people who hold a different opinion (Karlsson, 2012). Although Karlsson did not mention details of people who committed online bullying, disagreement on a political view may trigger either democratic discussion or a furious exchange of words. Such possibilities would open up new questions about the potential of the Internet as a driver of democratic function.

#### 2.4.2 Challenges to Democratic Society: Fake News

Fake news has attracted interest from both the academic and non-academic realms. While its definition is not yet clear, it is considered false or incomplete, as it does not represent a whole fact but only displays a part in a decontextualised manner (Carlson, 2018). The difference from 'lie' or 'fake' is found in a warning from Carlson (*ibid*), implying that even well-educated people could be trapped by fake news.

The next section reviews how the Internet could function as a supporting mechanism of democratic discussion and conversation. It also pays attention to how citizenship can be practised in an online environment.

### 2.5 Conclusion to Literature Review

In conclusion, literature to date has overlooked the potential for non-school organisations (or CSOs) to provide learning opportunities for young people. While studies on citizenship education have heavily focused on issues of curriculum design and assessment in schools (see 2.2.1), those investigating on CSOs' activities looked at how they engage with young people (see 2.2.2). While citizenship addresses participation in society, there is a gap because studies separate schools and CSOs as different agents. It is in a sense understandable because schools are institutions to teach subjects in line with a pre-set curriculum; thus, the issue with assessment is problematic in citizenship subjects. CSOs, in contrast, are driving their own campaign to address their own priority issues; thus, their primary aim is not teaching or educating people.

However, CSOs could also offer learning opportunities through participation in their activities, from which young people would benefit, though learning processes might be different from the schools' curriculum (see 2.2.2). To fill the gap, I shall look at the potential of the Internet to function as a medium for CSOs.

The Internet would be the best place to promote democracy. It offers numerous platforms for interaction and discussion. In online discussion, however, literature to date suggests that disputes are seemingly triggered by different opinions. The online flaming is certainly worrying as it facilitates racism and haters through the discussion. On this point, it is still possible to reduce such an unfortunate consequence: a university-based online learning environment would be more successful in educating cosmopolitan citizens. Such online courses take advantage of the background of students, who go through a screening process prior to their study to scrutinise their learning skills, ability, and knowledge level. In addition, online courses can reach students all over the world and connect them. With their learning skills, they could experience an enhanced learning environment to widen their view. Since diversified environment in terms of demography is important preparation for being open to the views of others, it would be desirable to have a range of people in the learning environment.

The literature review above also implied there are gaps to be addressed. While studies on online learning focused on learning activity in a school context, no previous studies paid attention to non-school contexts. Furthermore, there is a scarce amount of research into forms of communication between CSOs and participants. On this point, the Internet can certainly promote learning outside an institutional context. The Internet has already become one of the infrastructures in society supporting our daily life. Furthermore, the Internet has a rich amount of information from which people could learn. Given that literature on the topic of learning to date has limited its scope to institutional settings, such a learning assessment needs different perspectives to assess learning activities. The assessment criteria may not be as rigorous and robust as in an educational institution; rather it may focus on interactivity between participants. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter 4 of this thesis.



In addition, the literature review suggested a need for a conceptual framework for democracy. As seen in subsections 2.2 and 2.3, people may not agree on the concept of democracy i.e. what democracy means and what activities and behaviour are acceptable under democratic discussion. To answer this question, Chapter 3 will review conceptual debate on democracy and political participation. Research Questions will therefore be restated at the end of the chapter.

## **Chapter 3      Literature Review for Conceptual Framework – Online Guidance for Citizenship Practice**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the basic concepts for this research. As a conceptual framework, I triangulate three perspectives to understand how a democratic society works using the Internet. These concepts are Democracy (and Citizenship), the CSOs use of the Internet, and political socialisation theory. Democracy and Citizenship are grouped into one concept since they are inseparable (see 3.2 for further discussion). The Internet is a tool for building a democratic society, although people need to use it appropriately to avoid its misuse. In this thesis, CSOs could act as mentors to guide such usage for people. The political socialisation theory illuminates the process of democratic participation through online activities (see Chapter 2 and below). In this thesis, I interpret the political socialisation theory as a learning process through political participation. In this section, I will discuss how the theory would provide the conceptual framework for the PhD project, with the notion of participation in political actions using the Internet.

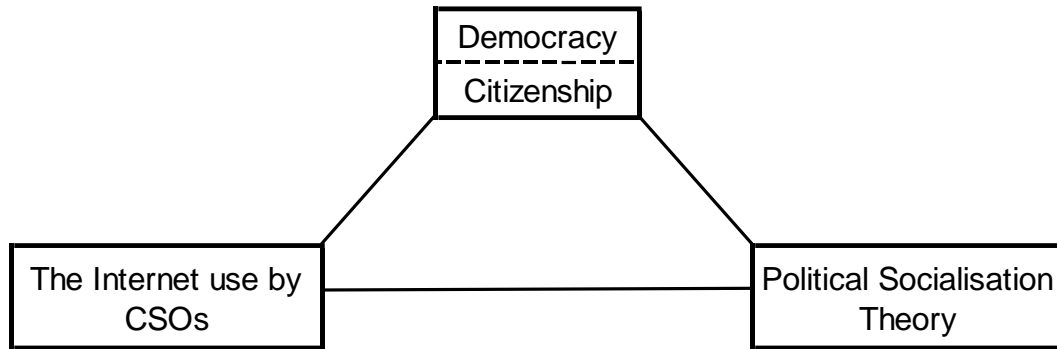
The conceptual framework is thus reconstructed with a combination of democracy, political participation, citizenship, the role of civil society organisations in a democratic society, and online learning in political participation. In particular, this section focusses on a learning aspect in political socialisation theory – that is, political socialisation as a learning experience of specific focus in political quality within its remit (Entwistle, 2012). Unlike other forms of learning experiences, a political socialisation process has a specific mandate to question social norms and political regimes that determine ideological assumptions in people's lives (ibid). As such, the process itself is political as it questions and demands people to criticise the hegemonic nature of the society (cf. Mouffe, 2005a). It thus demands people to consider their (future) role in society as mature, responsible citizens who will be valued for their contribution (Crick and Heater, 2012). Moreover, such learning experience is underpinned and strengthened by changes occurring in one's life cycle – for

example, leaving school, working, and having a school-aged child (Jennings and Niemi, 1968).

The above elements in political socialisation theory are based on the notion of the interdependency of democracy and political participation: while democracy allows political participation, political participation in turn enriches democracy (see section 3.2). While political socialisation has features which question the political legitimacy of authority, it is also endorsed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its guarantee for all people to live without fear (United Nations, 1948). Such a notion supports citizenship practice – people’s participation in their own community and life (section 3.3). Furthermore, this chapter conceptualises civil society organisations (CSOs) as the supporting group for democracy by providing participatory activities, including political participation, to citizens (see section 3.4). Moreover, unlike in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Jennings and Niemi, 1968), people today learn to maintain a democratic function in a society through participatory activities, in which they work for their own community, through the Internet (see subsection 3.5). Therefore, political participation is deemed a defence of democratic society and people’s ordinary life, which by nature necessitates an act of learning.

In addition, this chapter describes the function of CSOs as a supporting mechanism for democratic society (see subsection 3.4). In particular, it focuses on how CSOs use the Internet for their activities to encourage young people to participate in political actions. So far, several studies showed that the Internet functions as a supporting tool for political participation by providing opportunities through websites and social media: i.e. a social infrastructure. As the infrastructure, it would inevitably facilitate socialisation among people regardless of their background. In contrast, from the position of the CSOs, the Internet is a powerful tool to advertise and promote their activities by bringing a potential audience to their activities. In this chapter, I conceptualise a use of the Internet for political activities as digital citizenship, which has opened up a new way for traditionally disengaged people to start their involvement in politics.

The illustration below illustrates the conceptual framework for this thesis.



**Illustration 3-1: Conceptual Framework of Online Guidance for Citizenship Practice**

For better understanding, in this thesis, political participation and participation in political actions are interchangeable and thus both terms delineate the same notion. In addition, the following subsection illustrates the reasons for the inseparable nature of democracy and political participation.

### 3.2 Citizenship, Democracy, and Political Participation

In this subsection, I argue that democracy and political participation are inseparable concepts as democracy is a precondition for political participation. In fact, they closely interrelate to each other and overlap to some extent. Citizenship, in contrast, is conceptualised as a more inclusive term to describe any form of participation in political activities. As such, these three concepts are closely linked to each other, forming a conceptual framework which guides an understanding of CSOs to encourage young people to participate in political actions by using social media. For better understanding, this subsection is split into three parts in order to understand their conceptual relationship, starting with the concept for citizenship.

#### 3.2.1 Citizenship and Mind Development as Citizens

This subsection discusses how people can develop a mindset of citizenship in an online platform. Citizenship is a concept underlining the participatory nature of people in their society, as the notion of citizenship stresses the emotional attachment to a community (Osler, 2005; Osler and Starkey, 2005). Therefore, the practice of citizenship involves activities to improve a community and, ultimately, the world. In other words, it is an empowerment activity for people to commit to the betterment of society. On this

point, an interesting criticism suggests that citizenship practice could alter its aim to ease financial pressure on public spending (Mayo, 2010). Her criticism points at an acute neo-liberal idea emphasising an individual responsibility for one's own health and welfare (ibid). However, citizenship practice does not aim to demand responsibility for health or welfare, nor force citizens to provide public services. It does demand participation in a field where a government or even other individuals are unable to intervene (cf. Raghallaigh and Thornton, 2017; Tocqueville, 1840).

The core concept of citizenship is underpinned by criticism against political hegemony, which controls a whole society as an authority (Jennings and Niemi, 1968). The government would provide the necessary facilities and public services, while it may not be able to cover all the needs of citizens; thus, they need to work by themselves (see Tocqueville, 1840). Such voluntary work for the public good could suggest one's ability and skills to notice such a need, though people need to continue these practices for long time (Crick and Heater, 2012; Jennings and Niemi, 1968). In the 21st century, when the Internet is so popular, one might argue that it is possible to use the Internet for the development of a citizenship mindset among young people. On this point, while technology can help them to learn the needs of society, it does not deliver an answer to all the questions all the time (Sünker, 2003). As a responsible citizen, I argue that they need to go through life stages as a human and learn from their own experience, in addition to learning appropriate uses of technology.

Attitude and political interest will change over a life time (Jennings and Niemi, 1968). For example, high school students may not understand the meaning of income tax in full, partly because they do not work on a full-time basis, but they will understand it once they start working (ibid). Moreover, once they marry and have a school-age child, they may care more about subsidy and financial assistance from (local) government for their child's education (ibid). These experiences contribute to the development of mindset as responsible citizens who are able to consider others in their community and to care about them (Crick, 2003; Crick and Heater, 2012; Lockyer, 2003). Such experience can emerge through socialisation with people – interaction and discussion with people from different backgrounds in various contexts – while the nature and quality of socialisation will change as they enter different stages of life (German,

2014; Sünker, 2003). However, these experiences appear insufficient to develop the mindset as a citizen, which needs a basis which underpins and determines one's behaviour.

I argue the basis of behaviour is value. While experience, in addition to knowledge and skills, are important elements when living in a community, they are not alone sufficient. It is questionable how people view the world: that is, how and for what people live; otherwise, their conceptualisation of democracy would be different. Kaldor (2003) argued that how people situate values and norms into democracy matters. As values and norms are ideological concepts, there might be disagreement among people. On this point, Starkey (1992) argued that respect for one's fellows is essential when living in a community. His thesis is rooted in a cosmopolitan view, which advocates diversity and solidarity, stressing the idea of 'living together' in the world. To support his thesis, Osler (2005: 20) argued that the necessity of developing awareness of difference is urgent. It is an undeniable fact that the world is interconnected and interdependent (Osler, 2005; Ruppert and Isin, 2015), thus we should support those who have difficulty in achieving their goal. As such, being an active citizen requires the cognitive skills to identify difference, and the ability to appreciate diversity.

In reality, it is not enough for people merely to develop such awareness: they need to participate in their community (Westheimer, 2015; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Westheimer and Kahn emphasised that citizenship underlines an awareness of social structure and an action to respond to unfairness and inequality caused by a structural malfunction (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). In addition, Simo et al., (2016) supported the view that citizens are participatory agents in creating a community and world; however, this view is in fact debatable. Sandel (1996) argued that citizens are independent agents working for the common good – normally economic growth – in their community (ibid: 127). Therefore, participation in the community frees citizens from constraints, and ensures the achievement of the common good characterised by economic growth (ibid: 169). However, the notion of 'common good' may not be unanimously agreed by members of a community. As participation helps a development of awareness and helps people to demonstrate their skills in solving a problem (German, 2014; Sünker, 2003), they understand what could

be the 'common good' for the members. Moreover, they need to learn continuously from interaction to pick up the changes in demand.

The above argument indicates a possibility that citizenship practice is a process of life-long learning. This is why Entwistle attempted to distinguish between education and learning in the context of citizenship: while education underlines systematic and institutionalised learning, learning itself emphasises a flexible and self-learning style (Entwistle, 2012). Education has a function to teach students the 'right answers' for knowledge, and behavioural norms in a particular context (ibid), although people in real life have different expectations, requiring for example the skill to find a problem the government cannot solve in their community, and the skill to persuade a large group to cooperate in community activities etc (cf. Crick, 2003). As the nature of problems a community faces changes, people need to be aware of such changes. On this point, Dewey was aware of such necessity, arguing that interaction with people would develop and support democracy in a community (Dewey, 1916). His argument appears to adhere to the notion of political socialisation in which agents influence ones political awareness and consciousness (Quintelier, 2015).

Political awareness, or interest in politics, emerges from interaction with other people or institutions (e.g. schools, government), in a process which can last for one's entire life. It begins as early as young childhood: even primary school pupils can develop their political consciousness (Van Deth et al., 2011). The prominent study by van Deth et al., provided evidence indicating political interest, and its development, among primary school pupils, although young children may not have sufficient literacy skills (ibid). However, as they noted, it is a cause for concern that economic background also influences the degree to which political consciousness develops, even for pupils within the same school (ibid). If this is the case, while school teachers could help students to develop their political awareness (Sampermans and Claes, 2018), some of them might not develop to a sufficient level. While these studies have focused on a school context, schools are not only places where students/pupils live or stay. Some of them may join activities offered by non-school organisations, including NGOs, religious organisations, and youth sports/recreational organisations (Khalid and Wei, 2017).

Increased contact with non-school organisations means that young people have additional learning opportunities about politics. While experience of political discussion with friends and peers leads to higher potential political participation in later life among students, engagement in activities offered by non-school organisations also increased such potential (Quintelier, 2015). Such organisations are certainly able to play the role of agents to promote learning about politics, since they can seek collaborators who are willing to participate in activities to enhance young people's experience (Warleigh, 2001). In addition, non-school organisations could work better for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who supposedly maintain a low degree of political socialisation in schools (Hoskins et al., 2017). As such, participating in such activities enables young people to interact with other people from different schools, as well as, potentially, university students and young professionals from whom they can learn. The remaining issue is how these students could access such events and information: to address this issue, the Internet would help their effort.

The potential of the Internet in citizenship education is tremendous. It is considered as a tool for teaching and learning, as well as participating in political discussion (Selwyn, 2007). However, the Internet can function as an information resource from which people choose relevant information for their activities. I shall return to this topic in subsection 3.5.

### 3.2.2 Democracy as a Framework of Citizen Participation

In this thesis, I argue that democracy is a framework providing a set of rules as to how society can be governed. Tocqueville noted that in the 19th century US, people elected their representatives to run their country in a way that reflected their views and opinions (Tocqueville, 1840). In this sense, Schumpeter argued that a constitutional monarchy is not democratic, as a parliament has no power but a monarch has to choose a governing committee i.e. the cabinet (Schumpeter, 1994). Yet, in the debate of democracy, it seems less important to argue who chooses a governing body than *how* they choose it. In fact, democracy is about delivering the 'people's will' – how members of a society view and consider an issue (see Schumpeter, 1994).

Delivering the 'people's will' via government is a problem. As Schumpeter argued, there is no concrete 'people's will' since different groups of people have



different views on what constitutes 'good' (Schumpeter, 1994). Given that today's society has a wide range of people, it seems more sensible to consider a way to reflect their views in the government as much as possible. On this point, Schmitt contended that a decision supported by a majority should be respected (Schmitt, 1988). Schmitt argued that freedom is an important factor of democracy, in order to resist a dominant monarch and to return such power to the people (ibid). His assumption is that any decision made under freedom is deemed to be the result of people's self-determination, and thus is further deemed as their autonomy (ibid). Therefore, a decision supported by a majority should be regarded as legitimate and thus respected since it represents their autonomous decision on the issue (ibid). However, this is not the case all the time.

Mouffe fiercely counterargued that there is no assurance or guarantee that they would consistently make a decision which would always respect their freedom (Mouffe, 2005b). Mouffe further argued that in a democratic society, there is always a risk of producing a damaging decision against human rights (ibid). Democracy assumes that people will always be rational when they make a decision – which is not always true (ibid). They sometimes support a simple solution for a complex issue, unintentionally believing that it is a right solution (cf. Müller, 2017). This is a shadowy issue in a representative democracy: people are sometimes asked to make a decision on moral issues, which have no 'right or wrong' answers (ibid). Although Mouffe contended that a debate on a moral issue will not bring the necessary political tension which supports democracy (Mouffe, 2005a), in reality, issues on morality are subject to debate in democratic society. Yet, the decision on moral issues will be legitimate, as long as a 'majority of people' support it, and it complies with applicable rules and laws.

In addition, democracy itself does not have a procedure to prevent an emergence of debate on moral issues. This is because, as Mouffe further argued, democracy has two contesting elements: while democracy honours people's freedom of speech, it also presents their human rights as a non-negotiable and absolute element (Mouffe, 2005b). In a democratic society, every issue, including moral ones, are subject to debate (Mouffe, 2005a) from which a tension emerges among people to balance the power and safeguard

the people. This is how democracy protects freedom of speech: without fear they can seek a better solution in a fair way, to mitigate an unnecessary disadvantage to certain people, while they examine opposing views and opinions on a matter (Mouffe, 2005b, 2005c). Therefore, it certainly appears impossible to limit people's freedom of speech in order to prevent them reaching a harmful result for their human rights. Such a limitation will lead to a loss in balance of power, and damage to the common good for a society.

At the empirical level, it is agreed that democracy is characterised by participation, i.e. democracy as a framework of citizens' participation (Grasso, 2016; Mouffe, 2005a; Ober, 2000; Schmitt, 1988, 2007). Grasso notes there is an argument as to the degree of such participation (Grasso, 2016: 4). Grasso suggests there are two schools of participation: participation to confirm the decision made by elites, and participation to hold a government accountable to the people (ibid). The former type of participation, according to Grasso, aims to give approval from citizens to a decision made by government and rulers. Schumpeter (1994) advocated this view, arguing that direct democracy (i.e. where people decide policy and how to rule the country) is impossible in an egalitarian society. However, his argument is rooted in a socialist view, the societal model of which emphasises strong leadership by a few, with citizens following (ibid). Therefore, his argument seems to contradict itself, since he presupposes the existence of an upper tier and puts its citizens under their directives within an egalitarian society. Similarly, Schmitt opposes direct democracy for a purely practical reason: there is no place to accommodate all of the people in a country to gather and discuss a given matter (Schmitt, 1988).

The latter form is to encourage discussion among citizens, and enable a continuous challenge and debate for decision-making. This participatory form not only requires the citizens' participation, but also demands that they have a certain extent of knowledge and continuous learning (cf. Freire, 1974, 1998, 2017). Freire argued the importance of resisting the 'oppressor' by thinking independently and inquiring into what it means to be 'human' (Freire, 1974, 2017). Being human means, according to Freire, being free from an instruction from authority and therefore liberated from being blindly obedient to authority (ibid). In order to be free, Freire encouraged citizens to ask questions on issues, as well as learning new knowledge, regardless of whether they are students or

teachers (Freire, 1998). His idea aligns to Mill's argument, since he emphasised the manner of the democratic discussion as not to silence other people during discussion (Mill, 1859: 34). Mill warned that silencing others is same as robbing, since it deprives another of the opportunity to express his/her opinion in democratic discussion (ibid). Mill further discussed that people who form the majority in a society risk committing such a 'crime' (Mill, 1859: 35–36). Freire (1974) warned of the same consequences.

To advance the above discussions by two academic giants, Mouffe has a strong argument. She contends that democracy is an idea which allows diversity of opinion and continuous challenge to other opinions in a democratic society (Mouffe, 2005c). Her idea emphasises discussion – the core idea of democracy is discussion with guaranteed freedom of expression. Moreover, Mouffe strongly contends that it is essential to recognise the hegemonic rulers in a society – that is, all societies have a ruling hegemony, be it a dictator, or even a democratic government (Mouffe, 2005a). Since Mouffe believes that people are innocent and hence do not inquire into the existence of such hegemony, all societies have moved somewhat away from dynamic negotiation and discussion (ibid). However, Mouffe contended that it is important to keep the dynamism by recognising alternatives to such a dominant hegemony (Mouffe, 2013). Exposing itself to constant questioning requires a government to remain responsible in its decisions – otherwise, citizens would take over their position (cf. Machiavelli, 1532). As such, this critical questioning of authority maintains a society as democratic, and, consequently, stabilises it as a social system.

The above argument assumes that there should be freedom of speech, and any person should be protected from any threat based on their political position. In fact, Mill (1859) underlined the freedom as a core function of democracy. It is certainly important to guarantee freedom of expression and debate on a topic without any misassumption or misjudgement (ibid). Machiavelli argued on this point well: for a ruler, it is always possible that a rival will take any advantage of words, or a different position (1532). Although his view might be convincing and informative in some ways, in contemporary democratic society, citizens would usually advocate respecting their peers. On this point, Mill reminds us that opinions in any debate differ from one group to

another, and from one place to another (Mill, 1859). The argument also contrasts with Schumpeter, since it presumes strong leadership and citizens as followers (Schumpeter, 1994). Through his argument, Mill suggested that democracy, by nature, necessitates the existence of diversity and allows continuous dynamism within it. Therefore, a continuous debate from multiple perspectives and positions is most valued in democracy, which requires, in turn, conflict and reconciliation among members of a community.

In contrast to the above paragraph, Schmitt (2007) argues that politics requires a 'friend/enemy' (ibid: 29) relationship among people. This relationship presupposes that people can be divided into two categories (e.g. those who agree or disagree), thus producing discussion. However, his view oversimplifies the complex nature of political relationships. In fact, Mouffe (2005b) fiercely attacks his pluralist view, since it underestimates the importance of discussion and negotiation underpinned by diversity. Schmitt seemed not to consider the possibility that citizens with different positions would not be reconciled, hence such friend/enemy relationships would last. Therefore, the consequence of discussion is always to win or lose. In contrast, the argument Mouffe has made seems to weigh how to argue and discuss issues without fear of being labelled as the 'loser'. It further asserts the importance of protest and demonstration when the human rights are put at risk (Mouffe, 2008), which is not based on partisanship, but is based on what is called solidarity.

Despite the above argument, in the light of the current situation in Western democratic societies, an important question should be answered: what happens if the people themselves decide to put their human rights at risk? As argued above, it is always possible for people to make a decision to damage their own human rights. Mouffe argued that it is a democratic paradox (Mouffe, 2005b) without showing an effective empirical solution for it. People may be able to avoid the consequences of their own decision by annulling it; however, it is questionable as to how they assert the invalidity of a decision which was initially legitimate.

These questions trigger further argument as to whether the rights rendered are a mere 'formality' and are no longer 'actual', or whether they become powerful when they are being exercised. On this point, Osler and

Starkey (2005, 2010) argue that human rights are fundamental and universal i.e. they have been always powerful, and have never been weak. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims that human rights are the foundation of “inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” (ibid: Preamble). Moreover, it should be emphasised that human rights are universally recognised and, as in the Declaration, should be respected by governments. In theory, human rights have been powerful and live elsewhere in world, but in reality, the perception of human rights and the exercise thereof appear weak and decreasing. As argued in Chapter 1, lower voting rates in the UK (and in Japan) suggest that people might not associate voting with their human rights. The situation suggests that there might be a pervasive complaisant trend in society.

The complaisant attitude to their own rights has arguably allowed policies which may not be in the best interests of young people. For example, higher university tuition fees and rocketing housing prices are arguably the least favourable policies for them. The UK Conservative government brought in an austerity policy from 2010, against which there have been many demonstrations and protests. Despite such demonstrations of citizens’ anger, the government did not change its policy. This might be due in part to the result of the general election of 2015, which saw the Conservatives winning a majority in the House of Commons. However, the Conservatives suffered a reverse in the election of June 2017, perhaps because an increased number of young people voted. As such, getting such young people to polling stations might be vital in changing the direction of the government. Voting in elections is an established right and British people who are older than 18 years old are eligible to vote, and are not oppressed nor treated unfairly. They just do not exercise their own right.

The next section clarifies the conceptual function of political participation within democratic societies.

### 3.2.3 Political Participation: Its Nature and Scope

In this thesis, political participation is understood as a means to defend citizens’ human rights so that they can maintain the democratic function in their society (see 3.2.2). Although political participation takes many forms in practice, all of them are in fact the exercise of human rights, each of which is embedded

in both theory and everyday life. This subsection describes how democracy works as a defending mechanism for political participation among citizens, while highlighting the embedded nature of political participation in it.

As argued in section 3.1, political participation is certainly a characteristic of democracy, although academic studies have disagreed on its scope and forms of practice (van Deth, 2014). In fact, it could include many empirical forms of participation: for example, voting, going to demonstrations, protesting, and working for an election candidate are all considered forms of political participation (ibid). As such, studies on political participation to date have argued that the scope of forms can vary depending on how researchers conceptualise 'political participation'. For this reason, Leighley (1990) defines participation as voting, contacting government officers, campaigning and cooperative activities. Tolbert and McNeal (2003) regard only voting as political participation, arguing that the majority of political participation studies focus on voting (ibid). Once the Internet became a popular tool for politicians, Hoffman et al., (2013) suggested a number of political participatory acts such as donating money via the Internet and signing up for e-newsletters, which have become popular. As such, political participation includes numerous activities (Jackman, 1987), all of which concern actual politics. However, it lacks a finite conceptualisation and seems to continue expanding its scope as new technology becomes available.

The reason for such infinity in the concept of political participation is that politics can be conceptualised in many ways. For some, politics indicates an act of persuasion and convincing others on a topic. Best and Krueger (2005) argue that politics is to signal one's position within a group or society in order to manifest a political opinion. Similarly, Schmitt contends that politics is characterised in friend/enemy relationships (Schmitt, 2007). In his thesis, politics is a sphere where people are fighting over an issue by forming a group sharing the same or similar view (ibid). For others, politics is a decision-making process. On this point, Mouffe (2005a) argues that disagreement and adversary are necessary for democracy, since these enable the discussion necessary to produce dynamism among people in a democratic society. In this sense, political participation is to participate in a political process in order to produce an outcome as a result of negotiation based on one's interest and focus. While

politics as persuasion is a very specific and narrow concept, politics as a decision-making process is a more inclusive and wider concept. Since it requires any kind of discussion and interaction before deciding the outcome, it also includes a persuasion concept.

Despite these arguments, voting has remained the least controversial mode of the political participation (Beetham, 1999). Beetham further stressed that it is the only concept which has gained a broad consensus as a form of political participation among researchers (ibid). It is to express one's choice or support for a political agenda, and produces a clear decision. Furthermore, unlike other forms of political participation, its result will bring a real change and impact on a society and, in some cases, to other countries. As long as an election is administered properly i.e. it follows relevant pre-set rules, the result is legitimate and thus is definite (see Schmitt, 1988). In contrast, there could be questions over whether people genuinely had freedom in voting, and in the process of decision-making. However, it is unrealistic to assume that a government in developed democratic countries abuses its election system and thus its result become unreliable. If it were to happen, it would be a matter of political discussion among people themselves i.e. whether they sought an opportunity to explore an issue being debated. As such, it *is* an issue of exercise of human rights during the political discussion prior to voting.

From the above perspective, engaging in political discussion is arguably an important form of political participation and hence of practice of citizenship. In particular, literature to date has explored this field with the main focus on frequency of discussion, number of those involved, and "heterogeneity" (Eveland and Hively, 2009). Frequency of discussion indicates how many times people discuss political issues during a certain period of time (Mondak, 1995). Heterogeneity mainly indicates political orientation, such as liberal, conservative, or apathy, although there is disagreement on the conceptualisation of heterogeneity among studies (Eveland and Hively, 2009). On this point, Mcleod et al., (1999) and McClurg (2003) reached different outcomes, although their studies took place in the same country. Mcleod et al., did their research in Madison, Wisconsin, US, and their sample was collected by telephone interview covering neighbouring towns (1999). McClurg used the secondary data gathered in South Bend, Indiana, US, by Huckfeldt and

Sprague (cited in McClurg, 2003: 451), although McClurg did not mention its detail. As such, the background of people (and also, perhaps, the timing) would show a contrast and inconsistent result from other studies.

In contrast, studies investigating quality of political discussion mostly looked at the online environment; the results, however, are unpleasant. A number of studies found a frequent use of offensive expressions, specifically conceptualised as incivility (Papacharissi, 2004), during online political discussion. For example, several studies have identified a frequent use of racial expressions (e.g. Hughey and Daniels, 2013; McLelland, 2008) against certain races, the domination of a forum by a minority group (Karlsson, 2012), and online bullying (Erdur-Baker, 2010). Such unpleasant behaviour appears to happen regardless of the language in use. For example, McLelland (2008) observes racial and offensive comments insulting foreigners from a particular country in a thread from a Japanese Bulletin Board System (BBS) where people can post their comments anonymously. Similarly, people abused fellow users by posting racist comments to make them reluctant to post their opinions when discussing a technical issue of a computer (Anderson et al., 2014). While these behaviours may not be expected in face-to face interaction as it is called 'uncivil' (Papacharissi, 2002), it is certainly an anti-democratic act even in an online context (see subsection 3.2.2). Thus, studies need to look at a qualitative element of the discussion, particularly from a notion of citizenship.

Drawing from the above discussion, this project conceptualises political participation as participation in a decision-making process. In particular, voting is the very act to bring a real change to a society. Furthermore, the act of voting requires political participation before voting, most of which will be discussion about the election agenda. Moreover, even in online political participation, people are expected to discuss in a manner which respects fellow users and maintains a constructive atmosphere. Provided that the political participation itself is a practice of human rights, it is the least expected behaviour to appear in such a context: it would discourage fellow users to be involved in democratic processes. It is assumed that people vote based on argument and discussion prior to voting. In addition, given that voting rights are mostly recognised and acknowledged in Western democratic countries, not exercising these rights implies unconditional acceptance or indifference to a voting result.



In the following section, I will discuss how the concept of citizenship can be a theoretical foundation, not only for this research but also for wider societies.

### 3.3 Citizenship as Theoretical Foundation

Citizenship is a broad yet arguably important concept in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. From a cosmopolitan view, it primarily concerns status (i.e. membership), equality, and fair treatment within a community or society, regardless of belief, colour of skin, or religious background (Osler and Starkey, 2010: 45; Vandekerckhove and van Hooft, 2010). Osler and Starkey (2005: 87) differentiated status as a feeling of belonging – not as nationality or citizenship in the legal sense. It is not a legal argument but, they argue, citizenship stresses an emotional dimension (Osler and Starkey, 2010). Therefore, they further stress that the contemporary concept of citizenship stands on an egalitarian idea, metaphorically expressed as ‘family’ in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (ibid). In fact, it seems to place the concept of mutual respect among people (Starkey, 1992) in its central argument. Therefore, citizenship is arguably a guideline for everyone, as to how they can live with other people. As such, citizenship seems rooted in a philosophical idea which manifests equality and care to others. In particular, Osler and Starkey conceptualise citizenship as a cosmopolitan view – where people are aware of difference among themselves (Osler, 2005).

Cosmopolitanism emphasises ‘intellect and emotion’ (Osler and Starkey, 2010: 45) to encourage equality, the central feature of the idea. As it is metaphorically expressed as ‘family’, cosmopolitans view other concepts from an egalitarian perspective, for example, the responsibility to defend other’s rights when they are at risk (ibid). The view is founded on a notion of human rights: an affirmation of the unconditional equality given to human beings. Their view of citizenship is differentiated from another perspective, a republican view, which emphasises responsibility for a community. In the republican view, independence is understood as an essential for all citizens in order to unite under same common good (Sandel, 1996: 125–127). As such, republicans view actual participation in government and community activities as ‘good’ and appraised as a model. However, a cosmopolitan mindset is a prerequisite of

participation in a community activity; those without it would not show their solidarity with others. Therefore, cosmopolitanism is a basis to enable people to participate in community activities.

To understand citizenship further, a conceptual framework of democracy is needed. As argued earlier, one of the definitions is democracy as equality, in which no privileged rulers exist (Tocqueville, 1840). In his idea, a democratic society is one where citizens or members of a community have the same rights and title (i.e. an egalitarian society). Tocqueville believed this equality makes society peaceful, since power is evenly distributed and thus it minimises instability in society (ibid). In his argument, the general public are described as weak and unstable, which may not often be the case in democratic society. While Machiavelli argued a person who gained power would be eager, which causes instability in society (Machiavelli, 1532: 118), Freire (1974: 24) views those in power as dynamic. Freire argued that the importance is on commitment to spontaneous change and transformation through its practice (Freire, 1974: 29–32, 2012). As such, democracy is a mechanism to seek equality and balance between authority (in terms of having power) and the general public, and an opportunity to change through its practice.

The elements of equality and possession of equal rights play an important role in a democratic society. As reviewed earlier, the existence of rights enables people to participate in society. The definition of democracy in the present research shall take this factor into account.

This research defines democracy as the condition of a society where citizens are able to participate in a decision-making process. While there are many definitions of democracy, one of them is the principle of participation in a decision-making process (Beetham, 1999: 1). As Beetham seeks the principle of democracy in collective decision-making, Habermas (1989) argues that all people in a community will participate in its process (p.27). Habermas further contends that the ideal form of democracy is all members' participation in a community (Habermas, 1989). The problem with Habermas's understanding is the feasibility of such full participation in one place. On this point, Schmitt criticised such a form of democratic participation as unrealistic and unfeasible, since it has both physical constraints and disorder during the discussion

(Schmitt, 1988). The criticism from Schmitt sounds reasonable, since it is obviously impossible to gather all people in one place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, a principle of democracy still requires participation of the people during the process: the issue is at what stage they should appear.

If people participate in a discussion phase during the decision-making process, an understanding of democratic discussion is necessary. From this perspective, Mouffe (2005c) contends that democracy is an idea which allows diversity of opinion and continuous challenge to others, particularly to those holding power, in a democratic society. Her core idea of democracy comes from the notion of discussion with guaranteed freedom of expression. In other words, democracy is a device which displays dynamic negotiation (i.e. the political: *ibid*) of political identity (Mouffe, 2005a, 2005c, 2013). A key to understanding this dynamism lies in a distinction from others – identity. For example, claiming to be Japanese distinguishes one from others who identify themselves differently (cf. Rapley, 1998). Such distinction from others seems to play a certain role in democracy, as in the ‘friend/enemy’ relationship (Schmitt, 2007: 29). The notable point is that the terms, friend and enemy, do not necessarily mean an antagonistic relationship (Mouffe, 2005c: 4; Schmitt, 2007: 27), but rather a difference in political positions (i.e. political identity). Therefore, a democratic society needs to allow and tolerate the existence of counter-argument, protest, and challenge (Mouffe, 2005c: 4), all of which could inevitably happen in a diversified society.

Another phase of the decision-making process is the voting stage – the very focus of the present research. At this stage, members are asked to decide which option (usually one option, but they may choose two or more options in some cases) they support. Schmitt (1988: 28) pointed out a practical limit in the decision-making process: it is impossible for all eligible people to meet in one place to vote for a proposal. For this practical reason, a Parliament or a Diet is organised to represent people in a community, so that each representative is involved in making decisions (*ibid*) and voting by all members happens only on limited occasions, such as a referendum. As a general principle, people can vote as they wish (Schmitt, 1988). In this sense, Schmitt regards the core idea of democracy as a device to secure people’s freedom (Schmitt, 1988: 24); hence, a decision should reflect the secured freedom.

However, Schmitt's notion of democracy triggers a fundamental question: in a democratic society, is it acceptable for people to vote for an option which limits their own freedom? In other words, how can people manage different views and opinions, which they may find uncomfortable (cf. Mouffe, 2005b)? The question seems to require further consideration in the light of citizenship.

To answer the above question, revisiting how citizenship practice could work against unfair treatment provides a key. As argued earlier, scholars in the field of citizenship research have argued that discrimination based on their appearance, language, and colour of skin is not acceptable (Osler and Starkey, 2005: 11–14). It is a problem pervasive in society. Their argument is, as suggested earlier, rooted in a notion of human rights, in particular, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 (Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010). A notable point is that UDHR requests all governments and people to recognise human rights, and to respect and treat all people fairly (United Nations, 1948). Furthermore, human rights cannot be a justification for a person to behave as they wish on any occasion. As the Declaration specifies, human rights can be restricted under certain situations, such as reasonable and legally permitted conditions (ibid). To be able to make an appropriate judgement appropriate to the situation, experience is necessary to understand what the *democratic* practically means.

To understand how democracy is in operation in daily life, Banks suggested that all students need to experience democratic values and attitude at school (Banks, 2008). An advantage of experiencing such democratic values in a school setting is that this enables a student to learn how their society works and how to live with neighbours from various backgrounds (ibid). Starkey echoed Bank's argument, by stressing a potential for human rights-based education to empower students to show their solidarity (Starkey, 2017). In contrast, Biesta et al., (2009: 7) argue that schools might be inappropriate for such an educational approach. In particular, given that democracy is a total commitment to society, learning in schools might not cover all the aspects: it necessitates further learning in 'real' society (ibid). In reality, it is impossible to learn everything in a school; however, a school curriculum could aim to educate students in necessary concepts which they could apply outside the school, focussing on the development of a cosmopolitanism mindset in students.

As democracy itself suggests an egalitarian position among people in a community, (Tocqueville, 1840: 13–15), it also aims to distribute power to them (Machiavelli, 1532: 118) to ensure each member of the community has equal power and rights. However, in reality, it is a challenge for them to see that power is in fact distributed equally in schools. The challenge could appear in a form of intolerance to difference, whether in appearance (physical aspect) or their political or religious beliefs (internal aspect). Several academics addressed such intolerance; in this thesis, I shall refer to Mouffe's thesis that democracy is a statement, acceptance, and appraisal of diversity.

As argued earlier, Mouffe fiercely argued that the core idea of democracy is rooted in the acceptance of diversity (Mouffe, 2005c: 18–19, 2012: 630, 2013: 22). In a diversified society, she argues, a democratic discussion is deemed as a 'struggle' to envisage one's political position to maintain a democratic function in their society (Mouffe, 2005a). Yet, it is also necessary to consider how a productive discussion can lead to a satisfactory conclusion. On this point, Schmitt argued for the parliamentary system as a means of organisation, partly because there are too many people to gather and discuss in one place (Schmitt, 1988). Under the system, representatives from the general public would discuss the issues they are facing and produce a certain decision or solution. From this perspective, the core idea of democracy is arguably met as participation in a decision-making process (Beetham, 1999; Schmitt, 1988). Yet in a representative democracy, the general public do not participate in such a process directly; however, they do so indirectly through an election to select their representative. This method may, still, not fully reflect diversity among the general public.

As the phrase 'methodology of organisation' suggests, there are many possible ways as to how diverse people may organise their own group. Tocqueville (1840: 19–20) argues that it lies in tangible objects, such as ruins and texts i.e. the consequences of people's lives. In other words, the feeling of belonging remains as a result of participation in decision-making, or negotiation of their political identity. However, the above argument does not take into account possible prejudice or unfair treatment to block one's participation. In other words, democracy may internally contest a notion of affirmation in diversity.

To address the paradox of inclusion of different types of people under the umbrella of democracy, I consider democracy as a framework of participation. In the next section, I discuss how democracy can overcome the paradox with help from CSOs.

### 3.4 Civil Society Organisations as Support for Democratic Function

In this section, I shall discuss the role of CSOs in democratic society, their practical function, and an impact of their activities on society.

CSOs provide various participatory activities to people in a community. Their history goes back to the 19th century in the United States of America, where Tocqueville mentioned groups of people who worked building hospitals and churches in their community on a voluntary basis (Tocqueville, 1840). Through these activities, people brought their skills and knowledge to the community in order to defend their homes from tyranny (i.e. an oppressive government: *ibid*). While his conceptualisation seems to sympathise with the republican view of citizenship, which emphasises individual development (e.g. Sandel, 1996; Schudson, 1998), Tocqueville further argued it is the fundamental condition for a democratic society, underlined by solidarity (Tocqueville, 1840). He argued that people (citizens) were so weak that they should unite to avoid becoming a victim of an oppressive government at any time (i.e. solidarity: *ibid*). His notion is vital for today as it shares common elements with current CSOs.

Their aim and goal are rooted in a notion of solidarity. Tocqueville argued that the role of voluntary works in a community (hence civil society organisations) is to reinforce the skills and knowledge an individual has by bringing them to actual community works (Tocqueville, 1840). In his view, the role of government is merely to set laws and regulations, yet not to intervene in issues people have (*ibid*). Therefore, the government is not responsible for individual cases; rather, each person *is* responsible (*ibid*). His notion is shared by republicans, such as Schudson, who contend that the underlying notion of citizenship is to maximise an individual's capacity so that they can contribute to the country from an economic perspective (Schudson, 1998). However, Schudson appears to overemphasise the development of individual skills, rather

than the building of a community, and hence a notion of solidarity. Although skills development for individuals is nonetheless important for their lives, it is equally important to argue the conceptual notion of solidarity given the nature in which people live in a group.

The role of CSOs in a society is thus to engage with particular interests and issues people may have. In this sense, they are a separate entity from lobbying groups. CSOs support people's political participation so that their views can be reflected in a policy; in contrast, lobbying groups work for their own interest and benefit since they are the representative of professions (Rodekamp, 2014). Thus, CSOs work for members of a society more widely, not only for a particular group of people. For example, Dennis described fields CSOs worked in, such as saving children in poverty and triggering political debate on controversial issues (Dennis, 2019). Armstrong and Butcher studied a CSO working to build trust and tolerance in a local community recovering from the massacre of a war (Armstrong and Butcher, 2018). As such, their role is characterised in guiding and supporting a society in a way which develops particular attention among people. In other words, their activity is further grounded on a notion of solidarity.

Solidarity is an important concept for social life. Freire integrated solidarity into citizenship education and described its conceptual importance in democratic society. He argued that the improvement of the society requires awareness of citizens' lives and thus of the nature of society (Freire, 1974, 2017). To do so, Freire argued it is necessary to have a conversation with people, to enable them to understand how society works, why it works in that way, etc., (Freire, 2017), through which people will be more aware of a situation. In an oppressive society, people were expected only to obey the directions from the ruling party or the government: they had no rights to oppose or even to ask questions about the directions (ibid). This strategy aims to eliminate the opportunity of receiving education so that the people remain unaware of a situation and thus remain obedient to the authority. As such, people were not in a position to participate in a decision-making process, due to the lack of opportunity to improve their society.

To improve society, Freire sought to protect human rights among citizens so that they can live as 'humanised' people (Freire, 1974: 40–41, 2017: 18). In his view, being humanised meant being able to demand equal treatment from authority, not to be subordinated but rather able to assert their human rights. Freire believes that the importance of independence is rooted in a state where individuals are able to decide without any constraints and thus are free from the interference of others (Freire, 2017). As its core idea is rooted in freedom from fear of mistreatment and materialisation of people, it requires universal, cosmopolitan ethics to interact with others (Freire, 1998). Although Freire argues the universal ethics issue within the context of schooling, this may be applicable in various other contexts. In fact, Freire (ibid) contends such practices could exist within everyday experience. In other words, Freire believes that people can find and develop their ability of becoming humanised on a daily basis.

Such a view is supported by many researchers. Stammers contends that social movement highlights the importance of human rights – to protect a person from unreasonable and unfair treatment from the authorities (Stammers, 2009: 4). Johnson and Morris (2012) agree that citizens, particularly young people, need to protect themselves from injustice and unreasonable treatment by an authority. They further discuss how young people need to be confident to voice their views in public (ibid); therefore, as Vilchis et al., (2015) argue, education could play an important role in developing citizens. Although Johnson and Morris (2012) and Vilchis et al., (2015) emphasise the importance of developing active citizens, Stammers in fact warned that a social movement should not be an alternative authority (Stammers, 2009: 3). Often, people who become the majority in a society tend to behave as rulers or dictators.

In order to prevent a situation in which citizens may become an alternative authority, it is useful to refer the concept of 'respect' (Starkey, 1992) to a daily act within society. Osler and Starkey (2005, 2010) contend that attachment to the community ('feeling of belonging': Osler and Starkey, 2005: 11) is key to achieving a 'good' society. Standing on a cosmopolitan view, they argue that a daily act of respect would eventually protect human rights among members in a society. While Mouffe agreed that it recognises the existence of unfairness in reality, she criticised that it negates the nature of a political, consistent counter-



argument, envisaging a political balance among people through discussion (Mouffe, 2013). The stark difference between Osler and Starkey, and Mouffe is characterised in their different ways of seeking balance. Mouffe criticised that cosmopolitanism assumes equality and solidarity among people and thus overlooks diversity, while she contends that the political assumes the existence of diversity in the reality (Mouffe, 2005a, 2013).

The above argument signifies the importance of participation in a diverse community. As Benhabib (2012) argues, the core of citizenship is rooted in participation in the community; it is also a fundamental element of democracy. Grasso (2016) asserts that democracy, by nature, necessitates people's participation in a governmental process. The purpose of democracy is to make society work by allowing discussion but the people on issues it faces, through which they reach overall agreement on the future of the society. Similarly, Ober (2000) argues that democratic argument needs a wide range of participants with diversified backgrounds. Ober contends that participation in democratic argument develops behavioural and moral values among citizens, while respecting individual freedom where the law permits (*ibid*). Ober's argument highlights two sides: firstly, that democracy affirms individual freedoms and rights and, secondly, that law and rules can restrict these freedoms within reason. This is the very reason for people to participate in the decision-making process. In addition to the above philosophical argument, Osler and Starkey further argue that cosmopolitan approach could be practised through education (Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010).

In decision-making, people need to be informed as to what they are to decide. Swift argues that acceptance of responsibility for one's own acts (e.g. voting) is required in order to live in a community (Swift, 2014). Yet, Swift argues that people need to know the possible consequences of their actions e.g. in political participation, they should be informed (*ibid*). Swift's argument appears too straightforward to affirm the ideal state of 'being informed' – can people be fully informed as to their options when they need to choose? On this point, I argue that it is possible to develop citizens who are conscious about their behaviour and expect the consequences of it.

Giroux contends that everyday practice of behaviour in a community can certainly be taught even in a school setting (Giroux, 1997: 119–120). However, his argument focusses on the possibility that schools could also be a place to teach about inequality and struggles in society, because it would mirror the reality of relationships among students (ibid: 130). In order to fight against such inequality, Giroux suggested that schools should develop students' critical thinking skills and care of minorities in society (ibid). On this point, Freire contends that students are able to recognise the reality and are responsible for solving such issues by working with others (Freire, 2017: 52–53). Both Giroux and Freire highlight the awareness of reality which can inform students about the possible actions they should take. In this sense, the reality is not necessarily about the hegemony or an inequality caused by a dominant monarch – as Giroux argued, it can be everyday inequality, including bullying and discrimination.

Based on the above discussion, I argue that education is one of the available options for challenging the prevailing hegemony which may be deeply rooted in people's minds. Yet, there are others as well. Citizenship practice can be seen in everyday life: even offering help to a stranger on a street would be an example. Linking the above discussion to the Introduction chapter, I argue that the exercise of their political rights is a citizenship practice, and thus could lead to the protection of human rights.

In subsection 3.2.1, I argued the necessity to increase opportunities for young people to learn citizenship practice. I shall now turn to the issue of how the Internet could help young people to learn citizenship practice, including participating in political actions.

### 3.5 Digital Citizenship and Democracy: Impact of the Internet on Democratic Participation

In this subsection, I discuss how the Internet (online platforms) could contribute to citizenship practice. As discussed in subsection 3.2.2, the Internet, like citizenship, has a participatory nature, particularly in user-generated contents (UGC), a feature of the Internet by which users can create online content themselves (van Dijck, 2009). Furthermore, Kahne et al., argued that it

enables people to build their own online community in which they can work together to solve local problems and to establish community rules (Kahne et al., 2013). While some argue that UGC has transformed the user from consumer to creator (ibid), I focus on exactly how citizens can use online platforms to practise their citizenship.

Isin and Ruppert termed citizenship practice which takes place on the Internet as digital citizenship (Isin and Ruppert, 2015). Furthermore, they think digital citizens are not citizens who are simply using the Internet; rather, they are the subject of a dynamic political tension in the online environment (ibid). On this point, Ohler argued that digital citizens are citizens who know the norms and etiquette of behaviour in online interaction (Ohler, 2010). Ohler views that there are certain norms and rules in an online community which (il)legitimise people's behaviour there (ibid). This idea overlaps with Isin and Ruppert, namely that the eligibility to become a digital citizen is reliant on online community norms, which are to a large extent fluid.

The above notion of digital citizenship has an important implication when it comes to citizenship practice using the Internet. It means that the Internet could be used to create a new type of democracy in which more people could learn about democracy. On this point, Rheingold partly agreed that the Internet could provide a learning opportunity for young people by offering a space where they can engage in a democratic dialogue with fellow citizens (Rheingold, 2008). The key to building this digital community is how and who would manage it. Starkey and Savvides confirmed that online discussion in a postgraduate-level distance-learning course hosted by a university could work as a learning opportunity (Starkey and Savvides, 2009). They found that students, most of whom are mature students, could engage in debate, although they are all spread all over the world (ibid). Therefore, there is no doubt that the possibility exists to develop learning opportunities through the Internet (Starkey and Savvides, 2009; Zuckerman, 2013) and that these could be extended to include democracy. In other words, digital technology is a tool for people to enrich their everyday lives by nurturing their skills.

It is useful to note that social media does not always facilitate engagement in political activities. For example, Boulianne surveyed academic studies on

social media and political engagement to find little relation between them (Boulianne, 2015). However, her meta-analytical study did not look at details of each study she analysed. Theocharis and Quintelier found that Facebook does not facilitate political engagement among 15 to 16-year-olds (Theocharis and Quintelier, 2016). Although Theocharis and Quintelier did not give a reason, it may be rooted in young people's customs. If their purpose in using Facebook is to maintain friendships, they may not wish to use it for political purposes (see Thorson, 2014). Thorson suggested that expectations from others may influence online behaviour – if classmates are connected on Facebook, then they may not expect a user to post a political appeal (ibid). It further relates to the development of norms among people, since norms are derived from expectations (see Gee, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to understand their motivation in using social media.

While many studies on citizenship education are contextualised in an educational institution (e.g. schools and universities), it is also possible that organisations (e.g. CSOs) will use the Internet for their activity. As argued in 3.3, CSOs play the role of a supporting mechanism to maintain democracy within a society. Moreover, as argued in 3.2, voting has an important position within political participation activities. Thus, this PhD project will focus on how a campaign organisation encourages people to turn out to vote at a polling station in an election. This is only one type of participation but one often neglected by young people.

The next subsection explains how social media and the Internet, which are popular tools among young people, can be used to promote political participation.

### 3.5.1 The Role of Social Media and the Internet in Political Participation

Political participation is undoubtedly a citizenship practice. While it involves a number of activities (voting, demonstration, etc.), it involves taking part in discussion as to how people organise their own society. As discussed in the Introduction, practice of citizenship involves making a society better through

active participation. Therefore, political participation is one of the practices of citizenship.

From the beginning of the Internet around the mid-1990s, academics argued how it could contribute to the improvement of democracy (Buchstein, 1997; White, 1997). The assumption made in the advent of the new technology was that the Internet would add a new 'public sphere' – more people would join the discussion (cf. Habermas, 1989: 27). In fact, the Internet certainly does provide a place to discuss and express various opinions on many topics. For example, discussion boards such as Yahoo, Reddit, and 4chan are popular online forums among people around the globe. While they can accommodate many kinds of discussion topics (e.g. hobbies, education), discussion on political topics has been a popular means for citizens to involve themselves in political participation. As the popularity of online forums increases, a number of academic studies have been also conducted on the forums. For example, there has been prolific online discussion on such topics as the policies of the European Union (Karlsson, 2012), and the 2008 US presidential election (Liang, 2013), to name a few. As such, the expectations of those academic studies in the mid-1990s have certainly been met in the 21st century, in terms of involving more people in various discussions.

Despite the success in widening opportunity for political participation, it is another debate whether more people engage in political participation simply because of the Internet. Serek and Uemura (2015) contend that the media do not encourage people to engage in political participation, such as voting and discussion. In fact, the Internet is merely a medium of providing wider information than traditional media (Baekgaard et al., 2014). Still, it is apparent that merely having access to a source of information does not advance political participation at all (Brynin and Newton, 2003); for example, Ober argued that formal education might increase further political participation among people (Ober, 2000); other studies argued that other factors such as religious perspectives might encourage them to engage in political activities (see Elkind et al., 2016). This chapter argues that there is an additional factor which motivates people to actual political participation. The argument is supported by the claim that direct experience or awareness of social problems are key factors to further political participation among young people (Banaji and Buckingham,

2013: 158). For example, participants in the Women's March on 21 January 2017 appealed for women's rights in a protest against Donald Trump, US president, reflecting the discrimination existing against women.

Studies have explored the relationship between political participation by young people and the Internet. Seongyi and Woo-Young (2011) point out that young people (mostly university students) used the Internet to organise a demonstration against the government decision on a trade negotiation with US. They found that young protestors discussed agendas primarily in an online forum so that they could organise a face-to-face demonstration (ibid: 244). It is noteworthy that the process of organising protest is similar to the Arab Spring, in which people predominantly used the Internet to protest against the governments (cf. Khondker, 2011). As such, the Internet has certainly played a central role for not only mature but also young people to be involved in various political activities. Findings from Hao et al., (2014) suggest that young people use the Internet as a news resource and means of exchanging opinions on political issues. While Hao et al., do not specify the website where people discuss politics, Thorson (2014) argued that Facebook is a new place for young people to discuss political issues. However, it is not welcomed by everyone all the time, since Facebook users tend to have friends from their past life stages (e.g. primary school, university, and workplace), who might have different expectations on the use of Facebook (ibid). Moreover, they might well have different political views.

Using such SNS websites, however, has become a ground of new dynamism for political participation. Bennett (2012) argues that young people use SNS (particularly Facebook) as a platform for political discussion. Such a use of social media suggests that young people are not apathetic at all (Sloam, 2013a, 2014b), although they have the lowest rate of voting turnout in elections of all generations. While Sloam contends that young people demand a new type of political participation (ibid), it is questionable why these movements do not lead to voting turnout. Livingstone et al., suggest that young people do not discuss political issues on the Internet (Livingstone et al., 2007), hence it does not contribute to higher voting turnout. However, given the importance of voting as the most influential form of political participation (Sabucedo and Arce, 1991), there appears to be capacity to explore how to use the Internet for mobilising

young people to vote. Therefore, this study explores how the Internet or social media can encourage political participation among young people in a different way from what we normally expect.

Despite its promising nature, young people may have a negative experience of the Internet (see also subsection 2.4). The next subsection explores how young people can learn about social issues from online discussions.

### 3.5.2 Learning and Assessment of Citizenship Practice in the Online Environment

There has been academic interest in how people become familiarised with social issues and what mobilises them into citizenship practices. While there is no consensus on the cause and its degree, one of the strong arguments on this issue is that the Internet has played a vital role. In fact, the Internet certainly offers extensive information about events happening all over the world. As argued earlier, some people tend not to use the Internet for active engagement in society but for passively consuming information. Yet, information is crucial in transforming and improving society (Freire, 1974, 2017). The question is how they use information available on the Internet for their everyday life in society. In fact, the Internet has become well-known as 'Teacher Google' – a metaphor that Google (i.e. the Internet) knows everything. In other words, people see online information any way and arguably have an opportunity to learn it. The issue is how one can assess such a learning activity.

The literature to date has certainly been concerned with online learning – how people learn and how effective it is. However, they limit the context of online learning to higher education and its online learning environment, such as Massive Online Open Course (MOOC). Therefore, the studies have investigated online courses provided by higher education institutions, which are, to a large extent, similar to their on-campus courses. In contrast, it is hard to find any study looking at online learning offered by a non-school educational institution. My question here posits how people learn about citizenship in online environment and how to assess this learning. The Advisory Group of Citizenship suggested that learning on citizenship can be practised both in and

outside schools: it can be learnt through everyday life (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). The issue to be decided is what assessment criteria can be applied to such online learning.

As argued in subsection 2.2.1, it is difficult to assess such learning in an objective manner. Instead, young people could learn an issue as they participate in a CSO's activities, be it online or face-to-face (see subsection 3.4). Political socialisation theory suggests that people develop their political awareness as they grow up, since they experience new events (see subsection 3.2.1 for political socialisation theory). To add to this notion, I shall argue that as they use the Internet for their everyday life, they could learn something new from it. The Internet contains endless information which they might not know until they see it on screen (cf. Hipp et al., 2015). The example from Hipp et al., might be surprising and unacceptable to some people (ibid); however, such information actually exists – that is the key. To guide their online learning, CSOs could help by bringing them to their own online activity, for which CSOs need a certain strategy. As such, assessment would be in an informative manner, rather than a concrete, objective manner.

It might be challenging to establish assessment criteria for online learning by CSOs. Unlike the school environment, they do not have syllabus or course aims against which assessment takes place. In particular, the Internet offers a large amount of information, some of which might not be genuine and might be biased. In schools, teachers and authorities could exclude these biased and (perhaps) non-educational stances; however, because of nature of the Internet, information flowing there is uncontrolled and is, thus, a mixture of expert and non-expert, accurate and misleading. In other words, people need to have a standard or a set of skills to distinguish these differences by themselves.

The necessity of the above standard comes down to the fact that the Internet accommodates a wide range of people (what I call 'hyper-diversity') and affirms their existence online. A study by Guzzetti and Foley suggested that adults can learn from each other in online discussion, provided that they have a common interest with each other (Guzzetti and Foley, 2014). It appears straightforward to see whether they can learn or not – in the study, adults have a common interest (pets and animals) and posted relevant weblinks to the topic



being debated (ibid). Yet, their finding is not applicable to all websites and online interactions; the hyper-diversity may prevent a constructive discussion particularly when participants do not attempt to share common good. As Young and Muller (2017) argued, meaning differs depending on the social context in which it happens. In other words, even if an online post has a significant meaning for one particular group, it may not be so for another group. Thus, in a hyper-diversified environment, it is challenging to overcome potential conflict rooted in differences in background.

From the perspective of constructivist learning theory, identifying the purpose of discussion is important. Learning will be effective when learners understand its aim and activities, although these aims and activities are not always given by teachers (Gagnon and Collay, 2001). To understand aims and activities, learners need to understand the situation, e.g. who will be there, what topics they will discuss etc, all of which will be evidence of learning (ibid). Yet, critics of constructivist learning theorists argue that overt expectations of a spontaneous understanding of learning purpose among learners may be unfair, as constructivists overlooked the learners' cultural background (Bowers, 2005). The criticism suggested that cultural and moral perspectives guide one's understanding and interpretation, while constructivist theorists undervalue these cultural insights in their argument (ibid). While cultural impact during learning processes is certainly worth exploring, I shall argue that it is more important how young people develop their understanding in an online discussion environment. Unlike a school environment, they need to identify the expectations of other people in order to discuss political issues (cf. Kocadere and Ozgen, 2012 for the assessment of non-academic works). Still, given an online environment, it is worth considering how behavioural norms could be established.

To establish a standard, netiquette education, or etiquette on the use of the Internet would be a good framework to assess online learning. It aims to provide practical instruction for young people to use the Internet so that they can use online information in a productive and positive manner. The Internet Literacy Handbook, published by the Council of Europe, suggested that online information can be false and, to some extent, misleading (Hargrave et al., 2007). To identify such information, it encouraged looking at, for example, what

values underpin information, by looking at whether a site is free or payable, and so on (ibid). These activities are also termed as critical thinking: to see how information is presented, who owns it and what they are doing on the website (cf. Buckingham, 2003: 38). On this point, Ennis (2015) agreed to analyse the statement on the website by asking questions such as 'what is the aim of this website?'. It is quite risky to accept all available information as it is presented. Instead, users need to learn how to interpret and utilise the Internet for their own purpose. As presented above, the Internet provides rich source of information which might not be verifiable or immediately accessible in a face-to-face context or in school settings. In other words, information available online includes some fake and misleading information. On this point, the Council of Europe has been particularly concerned about potential malice and, in fact, warned that the Internet could be a place which undermines human dignity and respect to others (Hargrave et al., 2007). A number of studies have found that this is the case regardless of the country. For example, McLelland (2008) reports that stigmatising and insulting comments against neighbouring countries are commonly seen on Japanese online discussion boards. In addition, Hughey and Daniels (2013) imply that deleting racially offensive comments is almost impossible, because of an insufficient number of administrators and a lack of clear rules for moderation. As Soep (2015) critically warned, the advancement of technology does not mean a higher degree of education among people – it is people who need to use the well-developed digital tools.

In order to cope with such dilemmas, Buckingham (2003) suggested using the idea of media literacy. The term refers to a framework to practise critical thinking and enquiry so that people can assess online information at a contextual level (ibid: 38). In fact, the Internet certainly enables people to access knowledge (whether it is genuine or fake) which is nonetheless inaccessible in a face-to-face context. People would have accessed such knowledge via schools, social networks (family, friends), or their own experience. In contrast, the Internet provides information without having such direct experience. As Barnett suggested (1997: 13), it is important to utilise critical enquiry skills in using the Internet; otherwise this information may be false or misleading. While the Internet might provide such useful information, people need to treat it with extra care. It may always be the case that such

information is too old, biased, and unreliable, given that there is no central monitoring or mediating organisation. It is the individual's responsibility whether they accept or reject such information.

Further to the above argument, Isin and Ruppert (2015: 2) argue that the unreliable nature of the Internet alters the way of learning in digital citizenship. The existence of unreliable information requires both social movement organisations and their participants to question the appropriateness and justifiability of their purposes. Kahne et al., argued that developing these online critical thinking skills are important in order to facilitate online political engagement (Kahne et al., 2012). It would help young people to develop skills to assess the trustworthiness of information, which is vital for participation in political activities (ibid). For example, it is possible to organise a 'fake' plan for a march against an incident, which is in fact based on a hoax on the Internet. This is not expected of social movements, since they behave as if they were challenging an abusive authority. Although Isin and Ruppert were concerned with the abusive use of the Internet by a government (Isin and Ruppert, 2015), I argue that, in addition to such classic concerns, social movement organisers could also behave as an abusive authority.

As such, participants on digital social movement need to use digital literacy skills, as argued by Buckingham, to assess critically information from the organisers. Similarly, the organisers need to justify their position and prove the reliability of information they distribute and share with its participants. In other words, the evidence of learning could be seen in the extent to which participants ask questions of each other, including the social movement organisers.

### 3.6 Conclusion to the Chapter

To sum up, I shall use the conceptual framework triangulated by democracy, Internet use by CSOs, and political socialisation. Democracy is a concept allowing citizens to participate in political actions with a guarantee of human rights, including expression of political opinions and freedom of speech (see subsections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). The concept forms a basis of the theoretical notion of citizenship to protect human rights – all people are expected to

participate and are guaranteed to be able to do so, in their own society (subsection 3.3). The inseparable nature of democracy and citizenship is theoretically profound; yet, young people would be more encouraged to practice the theory with help from certain groups of people. The point is how these people could assist young people's participation and how young people could benefit from such an experience.

CSOs are the groups supporting democratic functions in various fields of society. CSOs use the Internet and social media in order to promote political participation particularly among young people who have little resistance to using online platforms (subsections 3.4 and 3.5.1). In addition, young people will benefit from online political participation by socialising with fellow young people and, possibly, professionals who are using the Internet for their occupations (subsections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). As such, young people can participate in society through CSOs' online activities, during which they are also able to learn about society. In other words, if CSOs have built an appropriate online environment, they could successfully encourage young people to participate in political actions, and could offer learning opportunities which schools may not do (see subsections 3.4, 3.5.2 and 3.5.3). On this point, from a learning perspective in political socialisation theory, the least concerning problem is *what* young people would learn – instead, we are most concerned with *how* they develop an idea and practise it.

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to illustrate an approach to answer the main research question (MRQ) and the two sub research questions (SRQs) presented in Chapter 1. The MRQ, 'How does a civil society organisation promote voting and political learning with using social media?' emphasises a particular focus on digital strategies for a political activity and for learning about it. Furthermore, the two SRQs, 'What social media strategies does BtB use?' and 'What evidence is there that young people learn about democracy by engaging with BtB on Twitter?' specify areas I should investigate. In short, the above research questions demand the case study design of a CSO, since they direct me to investigate its role in promoting political activities and to explore how young people learn about democracy and/or political actions.

The chapter has the following structure. To begin with, this chapter first introduces ontological and epistemological suppositions of this study. The aim of these suppositions is to show how the present research contributes to wider academic debate in the field of citizenship. Following the discussion, this chapter illustrates justifications for a case study design and a selection of a CSO (section 4.3.2), text analysis (section 4.3.3) data analysis (section 4.3.4), and ethical consideration for the project (section 4.5). The present chapter also discusses key elements to establish the trustworthiness of the qualitative research so that it can maintain a higher degree of rigour in data analysis (see section 4.3).

This research employed four research methods: text analysis of tweets; interviews; document analysis; and network analysis (see section 4.3 for details). The table below summarises each research method and its data collection period.

Research Method	Data Collection Period
Text Analysis	19 August 2017
Interviews	Bob: 19 July 2018 Dan: 11 September 2018 Ed: 24 September 2018 Charlotte: 23 October 2018
Document Analysis	September - November 2018
Network Analysis	

**Table 4-1: Summary of Research Methods**

At the end of the thesis, I only included the interview script of Bob as an example: this is due to the large volume of scripts and I confirm the scripts with other interviewees are kept securely.

This research followed the ethical guidance from UCL and GDPR regulations for interviews and obtained the necessary approval from UCL. I provided an information sheet about the research and asked participants to sign on a consent form. I assured them that any identifiable information, including names and private information, would be removed and anonymised (see also Table 4-2). All 4 interviewees signed the form. For the text analysis of tweets, ethical approval was not necessary since they were publicly available data.

## 4.2 Ontological and Epistemological Aspects in the Project

Discussions about the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the academic studies will inform the type of research and how it would contribute to a wider academic field. Blaikie stressed that, in social science research, it is imperative to question assumptions about the nature of social reality and to consider how it can be achieved (Blaikie, 2007). The former questioning is labelled as ontological enquiry and the latter is labelled epistemological enquiry (ibid). In this study, this subsection defines the ontological inquires of this research as *my own view of social reality* (i.e. democracy and political participation) and the epistemological inquiries as what knowledge I will generate.

Ontology is to seek the nature of existence, structure of reality, and elements of the reality (Crotty, 1998). Thus, an ontological enquiry is often to answer ‘what’ type questions – that is, “what is the nature of reality” (Blaikie, 2007: 13). Yet Blaikie and Priest contend that several factors, such as family,

community and life experiences, would influence their views and thus interpretation of these existences will vary among people (Blaikie and Priest, 2017). On this point, I argue, from a constructivist perspective, these experiences influence one's interpretation of reality. The meaning of reality is constructed through interaction with people and institutions (Crotty, 1998; Robson and McCartan, 2016); in addition, the interpretation of this meaning is very much influenced by memory, tradition, and the cultural factors people have experienced (Luhmann, 1995). Luhmann's argument implies that any meaning of reality may be biased to some extent, as long as it is within reason. As such, the ontological inquiries in my PhD thesis are rooted in my own experience (i.e. how I look at the world) of political participation.

#### 4.2.1 Ontological Condition for the Thesis

When I was in high school in Japan, I had the opportunity to discuss politics, particularly on a topic about the national flag and anthem. At that time, in the late 1990s, there was a huge debate as the Japanese government attempted to officially recognise the national flag and anthem in law (国旗及び国歌に関する法律 “Kokki oyobi Kokka ni kansuru houritsu”: the 1999 Act of National Flag and Anthem). I still remember that I could not understand the argument of some people who furiously contended that the law would be a reminder of World War II. In addition, there was a civil movement aiming to lower the voting age to 18 years old from 20 years old. As a high school student, I disagreed with this movement, since many classmates were apathetic. I noticed my discussion group for political issues always consisted of the same five or six students, while we had around 100 students in total at that time.

While I was a regular member of the politics debate group in my high school, I also noted that however we as a group tried to convince other students of the importance of politics, not all of them were interested in it. In my high school, many students viewed politics as something difficult, while others thought it was hugely important for our lives and country. Furthermore a few members in the group tried to push their own political views and belittled those who disagreed with them. However, in a democratic debate and discussion, there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer. Moreover, such treatment is disrespectful to

other discussion members' background and experience (cf. Blaikie and Priest, 2017). Therefore, this PhD project is based on constructivist perspectives which allow multiple possibilities in understanding of politics and suggest it is the learners' right to decide whether they actually participate in political actions.

The late 1990s also saw the rapid expansion of the Internet in Japan. As it first became available to the general public in the mid-1990s, many people started to use computers around the early 2000s. As the number of online users increased, online etiquette emerged as an educational issue, since there were no conventional behavioural norms in online interaction (for example, the form of emails to academics: Bloch, 2002). The most concerning factor was the deteriorating quality of online discussion, where people posted harsh remarks, biased views or insulting comments, i.e. what Papacharissi described as online incivility (Papacharissi, 2004). While it was said that the Internet would improve the quality of democracy, enabling participation in its advent (White, 1997), the situation I witnessed was far away from these hopes. In fact, as a student, I saw a lot of online debate which ended up out of control, with uncivilised comments and undemocratic exchanges, if not hate speech.

In university, I studied how the Internet could improve society through changing our way of life. One of the topics I studied was online political participation to increase turnout among people, to find out that we need to identify a key to succeed. This is the reason I am looking at what kind of digital strategies a CSO uses, particularly in use of Twitter, and what evidence there is suggesting learning for political actions. As seen in Chapter 2, numerous studies have reported that online discussions tend to end up with an uncivilised, undemocratic exchange of opinions, rather than reaching for a constructive and democratic outcome. However, my question is if an organisation working on citizenship practice uses the Internet, how does it guide an online discussion maintaining respectful treatment to participants? To respond to ontological enquiries, it seemed appropriate to choose a case among CSOs in the UK which would be suitable to answer research questions. However, a choice should be one which is capable of answering epistemological enquiry (Crotty, 1998).



#### 4.2.2 Epistemological Enquiry

Epistemology is, in contrast to the ontology, to understand the ‘theory of knowledge’ (Crotty, 1998: 3): it is thus to seek a way of retrieving knowledge of reality (Blaikie, 2007). An epistemological enquiry is thus to seek ‘how’ type questions – that is, ‘how can social reality be known’ (ibid: 13): in other words, how an answer of *my* ontological enquiry can add another piece of knowledge to the entire body of knowledge. As such, epistemological enquiries of my PhD thesis are: is it possible for a CSO to guide young people towards political activity with a respectful manner? To interpret the reality, I contextualised this research into settings outside schools, as most of my experience in online interaction was from non-school settings. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, many studies in political education and online learning have been done in educational institution settings (e.g. schools, universities). Since the research focus of this project is on digital tools, their strategies, and learning effects for young people, it would be appropriate to explore how non-educational organisations could use digital tools in a way that respects young peoples’ views on a topic.

In addition, this research seeks evidence of learning – what trace is there to suggest that young people learn about political action outside a school context. As Dewey suggested, people need to learn to maintain their lives and the community where they live (Dewey, 1916). Dewey argued that people keep learning to be able to cope with changes in a democratic society, as it is fundamentally based on interaction with other members of society (ibid). While learning is, in theory, always possible through school (Dewey, 1926), his earlier argument suggested that people can learn from experience outside school. As reviewed in Chapter 2, literature in online learning has attempted to measure the learning effect by interview and outcome of online mini- tests. However, outside the school context, there is no formal framework to measure to what extent young people learn, be it a degree of understanding about political action or a number of actual participations. The epistemological contribution this research presents is thus to measure learning outcome without a formal marking framework. In particular, I shall clarify how learning outside the school

context happens. Such a contextualisation will allow a variety of views among people to the activities a civil society organisation pursues.

The next section provides a justification of the case study, including a case selection, data analysis, and discussion on the trustworthiness of this research.

## 4.3 Justification of Case Study

This subsection argues the advantages and disadvantages of the case study design and discusses how this present research ensures the rigorousness of the academic research. The following section (4.3.1) argues general strengths and weaknesses of the case study design. In particular, it presents four components to preserve the trustworthiness of the qualitative research and thus to ensure the epistemological worth of this research.

### 4.3.1 Advantages and Challenges of the Case Study

The main advantage of the case study is to allow a researcher to focus on a significant and unique case which may otherwise be overlooked by other cases in the field of studies (Yin, 2018). Such focus on a single case allows a researcher to conduct an in-depth investigation to seek a learning point which would benefit others but remain unnoticed if not explored (ibid). Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that a merit of the case study design is in identifying a stand-out example of a common phenomenon. By nature, case study design treats a single individual or organisation as a unit of analysis; therefore, its main scope of studies is limited (Yin, 2014). As such, Yin (2014) further argues that having a good justification of case selection is important to avoid confusion with other similar cases in the field. This is particularly significant when a researcher has a research question focused on the background or motivation of a subject or organisation within the scope of research (ibid). Therefore, a strength of the case study research design is to identify a subject which a researcher has a strong motivation, or other rational reason, to study.

In contrast, one of the challenges in case study design would be its generalisability. Robson and McCartan (2016) illustrate that, by nature, case study design does not provide any generalisability which is theoretically applicable to similar cases. In particular, if a researcher follows a constructivist

view, they may not agree on the interpretation of a case being chosen as a subject (cf. Blaikie and Priest, 2017). As such, the argument by Robson and McCartan suggests the necessity of a rigorous process behind case selection. On this point, Flyvbjerg argued this is not the point of a case study – the aim is to identify a context-dependent case which is common in real society (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Furthermore, Flyvbjerg highlighted the functional role of research designs: while some research designs aim to generate a theory, the case study design aims to generate hypothesis (ibid). Therefore, generalisability of data analysis and results are less important for a case study; rather, how it can maintain its validity and credibility are more important, because of the nature of case study design.

A discussion on the validity and credibility of the case study design relates to the trustworthiness of research. This issue will be addressed in subsection 4.3.5.

The main challenge in the present research was, in particular, contact with Twitter users. The aim of contacting them was to learn how they felt about the interaction with BtB and to see if they took any action after the interaction. I did not offer any prize or reward for their participation. Since there were many twitter users who followed BtB's account, I decided to contact the users whose tweets I cited in this thesis: a total number of 16.

The reasons for the difficulty were a technical issue and, arguably, sudden contact by an unfamiliar researcher. The first issue I encountered was the fact that two of them seemed to delete their account. The second issue was an inability to send a message to the users, due to the technical reason that a Twitter user is unable to send a message to other users who do not follow him/her. In order to send a message for this research, the remaining 14 users needed to follow me. From my experience, I knew some twitter users followed me back once I followed them. Therefore, I followed them and waited to see if they reciprocated.

The strategy I took saw partial success. After three days, only two of them followed me back. I sent a message to them and one person replied, asking me to send a questionnaire by email and returned their answer. This person was

the only correspondence I could use in this thesis. Still, there were 12 users who could potentially contribute to this research.

The final step I took was to send a tweet to them. Since the composition of a tweet is limited to 240 characters, I could only write a short invitation, with no detail of this research. This step proved unsuccessful – none of them replied.

The difficulty in contacting twitter users could restrict the scope of the research project. Of course, it might have been different if I had offered a reward or incentive; however, what I learned was that establishing contact with twitter users was difficult.

#### 4.3.2 Justification of Case Selection

Bite the Ballot (BtB) is a CSO based in London, UK, campaigning on political activity exclusively for young people aged 18-24 outside a school context; as such, it is detached from the national educational curriculum and has never been part of it (see Chapter 5 for more detail about BtB). As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, BtB addresses the issue of lower turnout among young people in elections, a common problem across Western democratic countries. In the US, Holbein et al., (2016) admitted that young Americans aged 18 to 24 years old are less likely to vote compared with other generations. Similarly, Japan, where the minimum voting age was 20 years old until 2015, has seen the lowest turnout since 1969 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2018). The first general election in which 18-year-olds could vote was held in 2017; turnout among teenagers was about 40%, which accounted for the second lowest turnout by age-group (ibid). Similarly to other democratic countries, the UK had seen lowest turnout from 18 to 24-year-olds among all generations from 1970 to 2015 (Dempsey, 2017). However, turnout among these young people jumped to 51.8% in 2010 and increased to 64.7% in the 2017 general election, which accounted for the second-lowest among all generations (ibid).

There have been several attempts to increase turnout among young people both in and out of the educational context. In the UK, many universities, student unions, and other organisations have campaigned to encourage young people to vote. For example, the student union at the University of Manchester

has a webpage on the 2017 general election (<https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/generalelection>) to provide key information, such as on registration and students who live away from their registered address. While the activity student unions take has some learning elements (e.g. information about registration), it is still within an educational setting.

It is worth noting that the current young generation in the UK have been brought up with social media and the Internet in general. Many of them are adept at using different forms of social media to follow news, updates from friends, and so on. As such, it is understandable for BtB to use social media as its main communication tool with young people. While it runs a face-to-face event, the DeCafe project (see Chapter 5 for detail), it uses social media substantially in its activity: discussion on trending political issues, development of an online learning tool kit, and collaboration with another mobile application developer. While other CSOs in the field focus rather on face-to-face events, using social media as mere PR, BtB is good at using online channels to communicate with its audience. For example, one of the CSOs has offered political education in a classroom context; their use of social media is to advertise new writing on their website by a student who took the classroom lectures. Their use of social media is therefore rather minimal. In addition, I was unable to attend one of DeCafe sessions: although BtB posted the session photographs on Twitter, they seemed not publicise an announcement in advance for the session. I hoped to attend to watch how participants explore political issues there, though it was not the case.

It is an epistemological question as to how one can assess the digital strategies BtB uses. To address the issue of lower turnout among young people, BtB has used several communication channels including Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube. While the Internet as a whole is anecdotally believed to promote democracy and civil participation among people (Livingstone and O'Neill, 2014; White, 1997), it remains unknown to what extent CSOs could spread the appeal of political activities among young people through social media. To highlight its potential impact, one of the possible approaches for the assessment was an interview with young people who subscribe to BtB's communication channels. However, this method did not see a successful result.

Although I contacted users who interacted with BtB on Twitter, only one person replied to my message. In addition, the person did not elaborate on their answers to my questions, which were not sufficient to assess the use of social media and political activities. Therefore, asking about their learning experience in this context seemed unsuccessful.

I omitted Facebook and Youtube from data collection and analysis for the following reasons. Facebook blocked data collection without log-in (this triggers ethical issues; see section 4.5) and BtB was not active on Youtube channels at the point of data collection. In addition, Instagram is designed for sharing photographs and images, rather than verbal/text interaction. Users can post comments and discuss; but Instagram's main focus is to share photographs and images and any comments follow these. Therefore, I did not choose Instagram for this research.

While there are other organisations working in youth political activity, I did not choose them for the following reasons. Politics Project, the UK based CSO, works on youth political engagement using the Internet; however, their activities mainly involve face-to-face interaction. Moreover, their website is used to offer young people a place to publish their articles on politics, rather than for online political discussions. There is another organisation in Japan, Youth Create, which works to increase turnout among young Japanese voters. However, their social media use is to advertise their face-to-face events, rather than for online discussion or even socialisation with others. This relates to the Japanese cultural background, which avoids political discussions in public, and is somewhat insular. For those reasons, I did not include these organisations for this research.

Drawing from the argument above, this project focusses rather on what activities BtB pursues and how good they are at reaching young people. The logic behind this is that if BtB has appealed to young people successfully, they can mobilise young people into political action to some extent. While the main focus is on BtB tweets, a triangulation of data analysis will strengthen its analysis and justify its result – a series of interviews with key informants, both former/current employees at BtB, and a person outside the organisation who has expert knowledge in the field of citizenship education. By using their tweets,

interviews with current and former employers and an expert in the field, and documents as data, I expected to have sufficient information to answer the RQs.

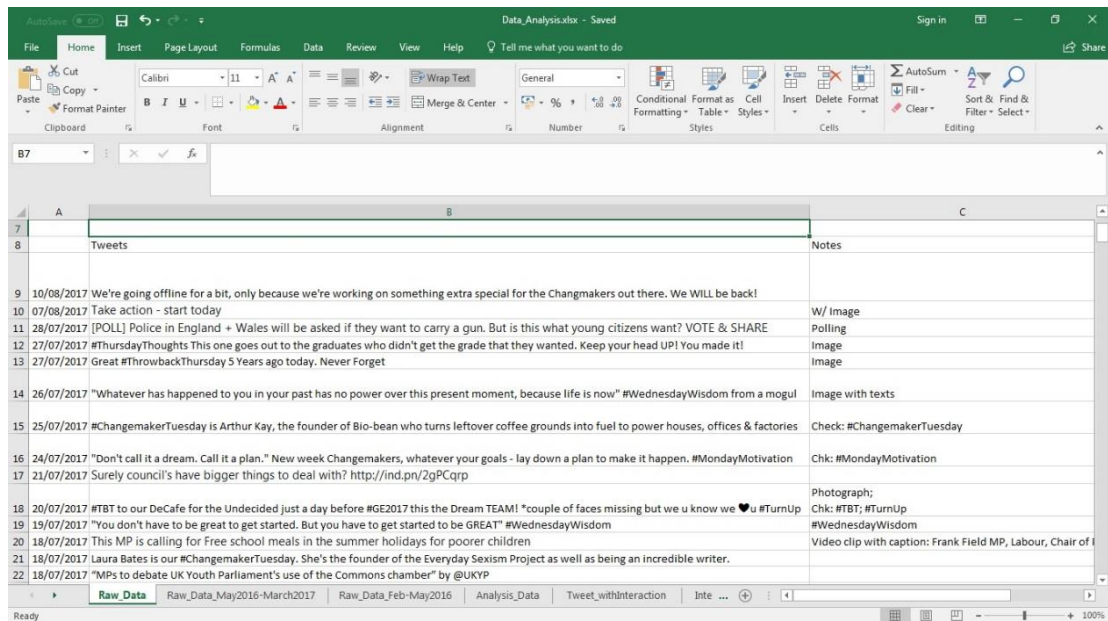
### 4.3.3 Text Analysis of BtB Tweets

A text analysis of BtB tweets is the main analysis of the present research. As mentioned in Introduction chapter, BtB has used several social media channels to reach potential audiences – mostly young people. This project collected tweets by downloading the entire twitter webpage manually and using a copy-and-paste method to collect the BtB tweets (see further detail: Miyazaki, 2016). There were two reasons for this method. Firstly, since I only collected publicly open tweets, I did not log into Twitter (see also section 4.5 for ethical considerations). Secondly, because of the above reason, I did not use applications (so-called Twitter APIs). These applications require a log-in to Twitter due to technical restrictions; therefore, they may collect tweets which are not publicly open. A use of APIs might possibly breach the terms of service of Twitter and, as such, may have ethical considerations. As an academic researcher, I was not expected to use a tool which may possibly violate or breach a written condition. Although use of the applications is useful in collecting a large amount of tweets (e.g. 100,000 tweets) and analysing them, this research only deals with and analyses open tweets and its size is not large. Using this approach, I collected 1865 tweets in total.

As part of Twitter security settings, any users can limit the audience who are outside of their friends list but who can reply/retweet (Twitter, 2018). There are no strict rules or guidance to specify recommended security settings each user should use; therefore, it is entirely up to users to set their security strength. In other words, it is the users' responsibility to determine the security level. Similar to other organisational accounts, such as the Independent, an online newspaper in the UK, BtB has set up their account as 'public': any Twitter users can follow, reply, and retweet BtB messages.

In this project, tweets from BtB and other accounts replying to BtB were collected. The collected tweets were sent between 20 February 2016 and 10 August 2017. The period includes the day when the EU Referendum was announced (20 February 2016), the polling day (23 June 2016), the

announcement and actual polling of the 2017 general election, and the aftermath of these votes. Copied tweets were put into an Excel Sheet to record and for analysis purpose, as shown in Image 4-1 below.



**Image 4-1: Excel Sheet after Copying All Tweets**

This sheet consists of three columns: date (of tweets), texts of tweets, and Notes. 'Date' indicates when tweets were published, 'Tweets' column contains the text data, as well as icons, and 'Notes' show supplementary information. Although I do not analyse icons and other images in this project, at this stage, these items are kept.

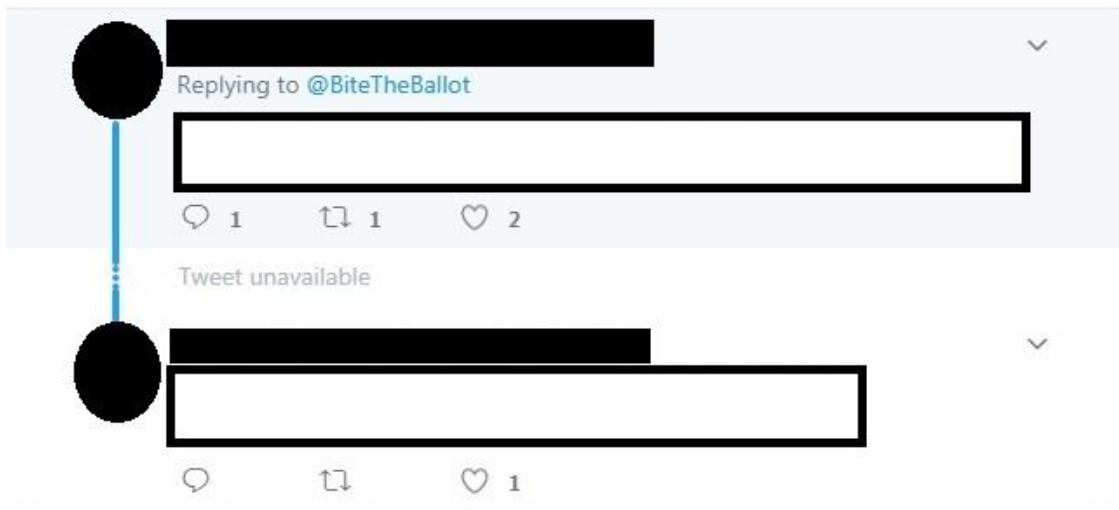
After selecting tweets to analyse (see Chapter 6 for the selection criteria), I made the analysis sheets consisting of the analytical framework (see subsection 4.4).



	F	G	H	I	J
1	Purpose (aim of tweets)	Knowledge (how to use knowledge to justify Purpose)	Reference (origin of knowledge)	Acceptance/Rejection	Note
170	Henry VIII did sth on democracy current curriculum in Civics				
171	politics for everyone	minority does have power			https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/what-communities-realise-their-political-power-is-BtB-teaming-up-with-Virgin?
172	Doubt of legitimacy	Virgin is a big (capitalistic) cooperation	Ideology?		Link (website of virgin cooperation) discuss can be part of community - that is, they d engagement
173	first impression does not represent whole spectrum				
174					
175	working together		Teamwork (BtB's ethos)		
176					
177	young people cannot save	Yps are financially struggling	the government announcement		
178	answer to question in (#862)	personal value is key	Personal belief		
179	sometimes we have only one option				
180					

**Image 4-2: Analysis Sheet on Excel**

At the time of data collection, some tweets disappeared for a number of reasons. If this was the case, I omitted the interaction from the analysis. First, since some users delete or hide their tweets after posting, interaction among users may not be obvious. As shown in image 3 below, such tweets were replaced with a text 'tweet unavailable' in the weak grey colour and hence there is no way to know what kind of tweet was there.



**Image 4-3: Example of 'tweet unavailable'**

In addition, there are number of closed tweets i.e. tweets which are not open to the public. As mentioned earlier, users can set their own privacy

settings to limit the scope of tweet publicity. Closed tweets appear when privacy settings limit the audience and require a log-in to read. They are shown by a blue line extending from a circle and stopping at the border line (in the weak grey colour), not reaching to the next user. This means that someone in fact replied to a user, but s/he makes tweets closed. Since I did not log on to Twitter to collect data, the interaction looks one-way, similar to disappeared tweets. Image 4 indicates an example of such a case.



Image 4-4: Example of closed tweets

If these are the case, I did not analyse the tweets and interaction. Simply, it is not possible to analyse tweets, and thus the result of the data analysis might not be reliable.

Each BtB tweet was continuously numbered in the chronological way (i.e. the newest tweet is tweet #1). If BtB replied to their own tweet, these tweets were numbered continuously. See the below examples for the numbering system.

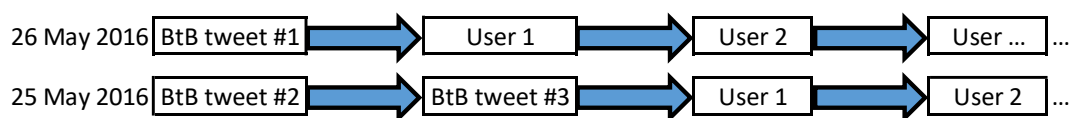


Image 4-5: Numbering system for tweets

#### 4.3.4 Justification for Data Analysis

##### Document Analysis

The aim of the document analysis is to assist the social network analysis, to add supplementary information about BtB, and to provide evidence for the argument in this thesis. As Prior argues, the definition of 'document' in

academic studies includes a wider variety of materials – from websites to diary – all of which form a research field in their own right (Prior, 2003). Still, Burch and Heinrich suggest that use of documents would reveal any contradictions and inconsistencies in an argument, caused by the misinterpretation of data (Burch and Heinrich, 2016), if only the selection criteria is reasonable.

In the present research, documents were selected on the following criteria. Firstly, they are published and publicly accessible; secondly, they are authored by BtB or a person working in BtB; thirdly, they were available during the period of collection of tweets (20 February 2016 to 10 August 2017) plus three months after this period. The first and second criteria are to keep the selection criteria from being biased so that the analysis could provide supplementary yet authentic information about BtB. In particular, use of publicly published information will maintain reliability of data; thus, it will contribute to the trustworthiness of the research (see 4.3.1.1). The third criterion is to avoid any discrepancy between collected sources and to avoid yielding contradictory information (Robson and McCartan, 2016), while it allows a time gap between submission and publication. Robson and McCartan argue that if there is an extensive length of time between date of publication and data collection, an author may have different ideas from the publication (ibid). However, it is reasonably expected that it takes some time from writing to actual publication; as such, the present research allows the time gap between writing and publication to be three months.

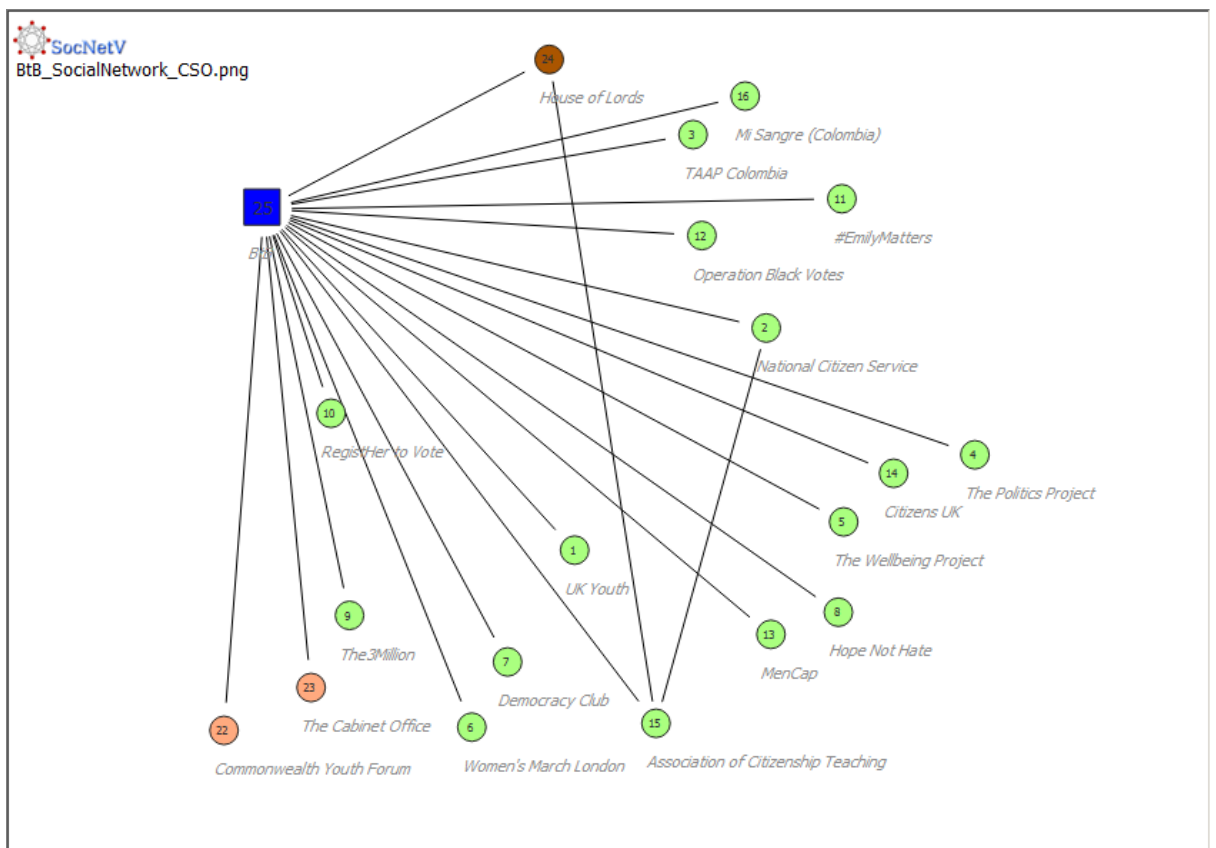
Based on the above criteria, the documents in the present research include the website of BtB, any texts written under the name of BtB or its employees' (where these are credited), and their presentation videos relevant to this thesis. All documents were publicly available at the point of data collection. In light of the aim of the analysis, the documentation analysis is factual, i.e. based on provision of facts only (e.g. what is being written, said). For example, if BtB put a partner organisation name in their website or publication, I did not argue about the reasons for their selection.

### Social Network Analysis

The aim of conducting a social network analysis (SNA) is to provide insight about activities BtB pursues. In order to identify these, I first looked at the BtB

website to see with which organisations they worked (I shall call them ‘co-workers’). Furthermore, I also looked at the websites of these co-workers so that I could see with whom they worked other than the case study CSO. The assumption behind this was that the network would suggest an organisation which has a lot of connections within the field (i.e. citizenship education) and may be able to provide an authoritative account.

To visualise their network, I describe their connection with organisations and business firms in the form of an ego-network. An ego-network, according to Crossley et al., (2015), focuses on a protagonist (i.e. ego) and its ties with others (i.e. alters) and how they connect with each other (i.e. connections). Since researchers can define what constitutes connection (Crossley et al., 2015), I simply define that a connection is any interaction which involves BtB’s activity in any way. Therefore, connections include retweets, shares, comments on Twitter, and involvement and participation in events hosted by BtB or other groups BtB mentioned they have worked with before on their website or in other publications. Put in the context of this thesis, ego is BtB and other organisations are alters.



**Map 4-1: BtB and Other Civil Society Organisations**

Based on the above diagram, I contacted a senior member of staff in the Association of Citizenship Teaching (ACT). ACT is an association of citizenship teachers and provides training courses and holds conferences for them (Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2018a). While they mainly work with citizenship teachers in school, their mission includes how to encourage young people to participate in society (ibid). It has also partnered with a university and governmental organisations (Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2018b), which suggests that it should be in a position to gather information from both a practical level (e.g. teachers) and a management level (e.g. government). For example, teachers in schools may update them on their teaching experience, while information from a university may give new findings from academic research. As such, I assumed that ACT has an informed view in this field and could provide a critical perspective on the use of social media for citizenship teaching and learning.

#### Face-to-Face Interview

The aim of the interview was to increase the rigour of interpretation of the tweets analysis and argument in the thesis. Since the aim of interviews in academic studies is to gain insight into reality in societies (Wengraf, 2001), the present research included people who either currently or previously worked in BtB. and an external person to BtB who was able to provide an informative view about use of social media for citizenship practice.

I contacted four people in total. Two of them were ex-employees of BtB and worked in different organisations at the point of interview. The reason for contact was based on an expectation that they could provide an insight into BtB and could evaluate BtB's activity with reference to their working experience as a former worker. Since they had left BtB already, I expected their statements would be reliable (see Nünning, 2015). In addition, I contacted a current senior member of staff at BtB. He has worked there for an extensive period and knows about BtB's activities. The selection criteria for the fourth person is based on the result of the SNA (see 4.3.2.1). As shown in the diagram in section 4.3.2.1, there is another organisation which works with citizenship teachers in UK schools and has a link with BtB. As such, I expected a senior member of staff there would give an informative view about the role which social media could

play in the society, although they have never worked with BtB before. Interviewing one knowledgeable but external to BtB would establish objectivity of data analysis and minimise researcher's bias.

The series of interviews took place from July 2018 to October 2018 in London, UK. The former employees worked with BtB before the summer of 2017 and were in charge of managing the social media channel and youth mobilisation respectively. However, their working periods were not exactly the same: they were slightly overlapped. The current employee is one of the senior members of staff and has served for extensive period at BtB. Another interviewee is working in a citizenship education field with a proven track record, and is one of the senior members of the Association of Citizenship Teaching, UK. Therefore, it was expected that they could provide an informed view about the use of social media in mobilising young people into political action, about its role and impact among them.

To identify the external interviewee, I conducted an SNA to draw connections between individuals and organisations and to measure the influences between them (Crossley et al., 2015). As such, an SNA can identify who occupies a central position within the network (ibid). Through the analysis, it showed BtB is also a member of the citizenship education community – other members in the community know about BtB to some extent. In this way, this analysis indicated a potential interviewee who could provide an insightful view about use of social media (and the Internet in general) by CSOs and the role of digital tools in learning for political actions. Therefore, using this analysis, I could identify the central organisation and a person working for the organisation as a senior member of staff.

Upon preparing several questions in advance, I designed any questions in such a way that an interviewee would not need to mention their privacy or political opinion. This is to protect interviewees from unnecessary disturbance and unintentional disclosure of their privacy. I employed a semi-structured interview to allow me to ask some random or follow-up questions during an interview where necessary.

#### 4.3.5 Establishing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

Trustworthiness of research is to ensure rigour of academic research. In the case of a qualitative method, it means the research should ensure its rigour through preservation of credibility, validity, and dependability of data (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). Credibility indicates all the data set used in the project should be relevant to the research questions and any irrelevant data should be excluded (ibid). This is particularly important when a researcher follows the constructivist perspective since it will enable further discussion based on the data. Similarly, validity ensures the data itself is correct and true (Robson and McCartan, 2016). To facilitate a rigorous debate, data should be genuine and true (i.e. neither forged nor tampered with in any way) otherwise the conclusion will be different. A practical approach to achieve validity is to keep all records of data e.g. keep an audio recording and transcription to enable a validity check of data using the records (ibid).

Dependability, in contrast, questions who would give an authoritative account of the subject being studied (Nünning, 2015). While dependability is generally understood to refer to whether a measurement procedure always returns the same answer (Kirk and Miller, 1986), in social science, it is often the case that different people have different views; as such, there is, arguably, no 'right answer'. Furthermore, it can be the case that one person expresses different views at different times. It is a natural human response – the response to the same question when a person is sitting in their preferred place may differ from when they are in a place they visit for the first time. As such, this may happen during the interview process, as an interview is a type of conversation taking place at one particular time and place (Wengraf, 2001). While the argument by Kirk and Miller (1986) appears rooted in a positivist view, people may respond differently for unknown reasons.

In addition to the above argument, it was necessary to triangulate the accounts given by interviewees in order to increase the reliability and rigorousness of this research. Given that they were either current or ex-members of BtB and the fourth interviewee had worked closely with BtB, there was a risk of interviewees describing BtB's activities in an excessively optimistic way. To overcome this potential bias, I was careful to triangulate the data by

crosschecking with other sources. In the case of interviews, I made audio recordings and transcribed them and then conducted detailed analysis using other sources, such as documents I collected. Using transcriptions, I could crosscheck statements from each interviewee to compare the accounts. If I could not verify the objectivity of a statement, I left it as a mere record and did not make a judgement. For instance, I was unable to verify the claim of 8 million clicks to register to vote on BtB's Twitter account during the general election campaign, due to the inaccessibility of such internal records.

To increase the rigorousness of the present research, I did a triangulation of data analysis using multiple data sources to ensure rigour of research: use of the SNA, interviews, publicly available documents, and tweet analysis.

The next section discusses how each data analysis has been done and provides a justification of the analysis.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

As shown in section 4.2, this research is contextualised in non-school activities. Since the primary focus is on the Twitter strategy of a CSO, the present research analysed text data from tweets to explore how it attempts to persuade young people to participate in political actions, particularly voting. To provide the context, I have developed a pre-existing discourse analytical framework to fit to the online text data so that the analysis can answer sufficiently to the main research question. Since there are no curriculum or assessment criteria for learning in this context, I used a modified discourse analysis framework which I invented in my previous study (Miyazaki, 2016). The idea was inspired by a Discourse Analysis framework originally suggested by Gee (2010, 2014), which I have developed to enable exploration of how BtB attempts to mobilise young people to go to vote via Twitter.

Discourse Analysis (DA) is an analytical approach to explore how interactions produce a meaning and how this is perceived (Gee, 2010). Gee mentions that DA enables researchers to identify characteristics of interaction, and how they change in different contexts (ibid). As such, DA in Gee's view follows, by nature, a constructivist stream i.e. meaning is being negotiated and constructed by backgrounds and experiences (Crotty, 1998). This is particularly



appropriate to the context of this present research, since it will give further insight about mechanisms behind the tweets.

The tweets to be analysed for this project are from Bite the Ballot (BtB) and their followers. In order to fit the analytical perspectives, this project made further modifications to Miyazaki's framework as follows:

- Purpose (the aim of tweets)
- Knowledge (use of knowledge to justify Purpose).
- Reference (the origin of the Knowledge); and,
- Acceptance/Rejection (to see how people agree or disagree with other's opinion).

As Freire (1974, 2017) discusses, the approach CSOs take is to offer critical perspectives on information to citizens, but not to establish themselves as an authority. In other words, they encourage people to ask questions (i.e. criticality), while sharing a position as a learner (ibid). In particular, Freire stresses the importance of sharing about and learning from their own lives and society, which leads to a continuous improvement of one's life (Freire, 1998). Therefore, based on Freire's argument, BtB might be expected to share knowledge or practice with Twitter users about what they have experienced before. Moreover, participants might be expected to ask questions of BtB about their tweets, which might reflect a feature of the Internet (see Chapter 3). Therefore, 'Purpose' indicates the aim or purpose of the tweet, focussing on the claims it makes.

'Knowledge' informs how they use knowledge to justify their purpose. In my previous study, I reported that, in online discussion, people use everyday knowledge to justify their voting (Miyazaki, 2016). Such use is particularly deemed to be rhetoric (Andrews, 2014) – persuasion of others. Andrews argues that rhetoric is to persuade and convince others during interactions, from political discussion to everyday small talk (ibid). What I found was that justification in online discussion was in the form of anecdote, which is merely subjective rather than objective, verifiable evidence, yet is deemed acceptable in an online discussion forum (Miyazaki, 2016). Hipp et al., reported a similar use of anecdote to explain reasoning, although acceptability of such use

appeared context-dependent e.g. the topic being debated, strategy and the purpose of use (Hipp et al., 2015).

This is the reason why the 'Reference' perspective is used. This is to question the epistemological aspect of 'Knowledge' in use. It is possible that not all justification is based on everyday knowledge, but might include some professional views. However, as I argued, it may not be the case in an online environment (Miyazaki, 2016). It is not always the case that the general public refer to academic articles or government statistics. This is due to the fact that not everyone has access to academic articles, but also due to the nature of diversity. Use of Twitter is not limited or controlled by users' educational history or occupations – in fact, there is no restriction on it. Anyone who can pay for Internet connection can use Twitter i.e. their own will and consent is the key to use of Twitter. Therefore, it is possible that they may use any kind of evidence during the discussion. As such, given that this project will analyse tweets, it is possible that some of 'evidence' might come from other websites.

Drawing from the above discussion, as part of the analytical process, it was necessary to visit the website from a URL on the tweets to make a commentary about their contents where applicable. The purpose of this process is to ensure consistency between tweets and a linked website, and how BtB and their followers respond to and refer the website. To achieve this, I gave a descriptive account of the content of the website but did not analyse the content of the website. The description is factual, i.e. what the website is, who owns it, the type of website (e.g. blogs, online articles, questionnaire, etc), and what is written. It will not, however, attempt to analyse its political stance since that lies outside the scope of this research. The focus of this PhD project is to analyse the tweets between BtB and its followers. Therefore, I argue that the description of the website will strengthen the results of the tweet analysis of BtB and its followers.

This project does not take any judgmental position as a result of data analysis. For example, this project will not give a judgment on any collected comments such as good, wrong or inaccurate, but will rather point to the objective facts in it. This is to respect not only contributors' political positions but also their effort to engage in political discussion. In addition, this project will not

make any judgment on which party people would vote or support. The primary purpose of the project is to explore how CSOs use social media to mobilise young people to political action, not which political party, option or candidate they wish to support.

For text analysis, I filtered and grouped the collected tweets based on the filtering standard, before analysing them. See the detail in Chapter 6.

## 4.5 Ethical Considerations

This section considers ethics in the present research, with a particular emphasis on social media studies. The subsection 4.5.1 discusses specifically ethical issues in online studies. In general, the ethical consideration is to ensure “respect, rights, and equality” (Alderson and Morrow, 2011: 38) for contributors of academic research. Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that there is a requirement to obtain their permission and agreement prior to data collection for the research. While this is the particular case in interview (see Marzano, 2012), it is not straightforward, because of anonymity and technical conditions of the Internet. The anonymity makes tracing users’ identity difficult: their place of residence and affiliation to local organisations (e.g. schools, companies), age, and even nationalities are well hidden. Hence, a specific argument on ethical considerations needs to be made for online studies.

In addition, subsection 4.5.2 discusses potential risks of interviews and considers how to avoid or, at best, minimise the impact of these risks for both researchers and interviewees.

### 4.5.1 Online Ethics – General Discussion

Anonymity is a significant feature of the Internet, but can be an obstacle for academic research. In fact, users can display their identity however they want: as Whitty (2008) reports in a study on dating websites, people tend to make up features in their online profiles so that they can attract a dating partner. This is due to the aim of the website – to meet a potential partner. Therefore, they need to invent a version of themselves, which may not reflect the truth. For example, it is often the case that these people put false occupations on their

profile, which are not those they are actually pursuing. Apart from dating websites, such false claims in users' identity could happen on other websites and SNSs. In other words, people can say anything about their identity which is not true. There is no way to check their gender and age, which are vital for ethical considerations currently in effect, unless a researcher meets them face-to-face. Yet, meeting in person may not be practical for most studies – it is simply not feasible to meet more than 100 people just to check their identity.

Twitter is no exception from such features. Twitter users can put any information they want on their profile page. In addition, they do not need to display their gender, age, and affiliation – they are optional items – and therefore they can choose whether they hide their private information. However, due to technical reasons, a tweet could include identifiable information about its user (Zimmer and Proferes, 2014: 258). For example, some users unconsciously disclose their gender, age, place of residence etc. While it is primarily the responsibility of users, researchers need to be aware that they might encounter personal information during the data collection process. Furthermore, although it is the responsibility of users to set a level of publicity of their tweets at their own discretion, some of them unconsciously leave their tweets open to public, with no limitations on access. As such, it is not realistic to assume all Twitter users are fully aware of their privacy and security settings, nor that they use the same security settings, nor the same level of openness. Similar features do exist in other SNS, such as Facebook and MySpace.

The above argument highlights an underlying feature of the Internet, that there is no solid standard. Because it is a special external environment that differs from face-to-face interaction, the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) published guidance on ethical considerations for Internet research in 2012. It is situational guidance for researchers to consider ethics, and covers most technical aspects of online services. To enable flexible decisions by researchers, it recommends looking at the Terms of Services (ToS) of each online service to assess how the service provider articulates the conditions of transfer/dissemination of user content (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). In the case of Twitter, the ToS state that all users agree unconditionally that Twitter may disseminate tweets (including photos and images) to third parties, if the

tweets are publicly open. Even so, it is not convincing that all Twitter users are fully aware of such conditions – they may not read them when they sign up.

Although it is mandatory to accept the ToS in order to use Twitter and other SNS, Williams et al., (2017) point out that it is often the case that SNS users do not read the ToS. They argue that, accepting the ToS does not guarantee users' full understanding of consent, even if the ToS state that users' contributions may automatically be passed to third parties (ibid: 1156). Therefore, they contend that researchers need at least to contact users before data collection take place (ibid: 1159). However, I argue that this is not universally necessary. As indicated, accepting the ToS means they are fully aware of the conditions set out in the ToS: that is what the agreement demonstrates. Moreover, it is ultimately their responsibility and, within the scope of the ToS, they have no right to object to this once they have agreed. As Bruns et al., (2012) contend, making publicly-open tweets indicates consent for these to be collected and published. However, there should be other factors to consider when researchers collect tweets.

The most controversial issue in online studies is user consent and how it is handled. There is huge disagreement on the necessity of gaining consent from Internet users for several reasons. One of the reasons could be diversity in website design, as the AoIR guidelines state. For example, an infamous online bulletin board, 4chan.org, does not show contact address or user name, but instead indicates 'anonymous'. In contrast, Yahoo! requires its users to register their contact addresses. It is obvious that researchers need different approaches to discussion of research ethics in different websites.

Online studies certainly demand situational decisions of researchers. However, Williams et al., (2017) accuse other online researchers of failure to mention ethical issues they encounter, or any process they followed with institutions in their articles (but see Bruns et al., 2012; Page, 2017). Clarifying the ethical challenges which they faced would be useful for other researchers. In fact, Bruns et al., (2012) argue that researchers should consider the complex nature of a website – Facebook has multiple layers of privacy settings, while Twitter is more straightforward. Page (2017) questioned whether seeking a user's consent for publication may sometimes be difficult when the content is of

a sensitive nature. Page remained open as to whether researchers should seek permission to use a blogger's narrative on his own medical treatment. The Internet is so diverse that there is no straightforward and simple solution available. Given that there is no single standard for ethical considerations and online interaction studies deal with such diverse and complex contexts, I argue that they should mention how they afford protection for contributors.

This issue is rooted in the fact that discussion on research ethics is behind the speed of development of the Internet. For example, Jowett (2015: 289) refers to a claim made in around 2000 which seemed based on the assumption that researchers can contact users. Similarly, Whiteman accused some online studies published in the mid-1990s of being unethical for a number of reasons (2012). However, it is important for us to note what ethical standards were in force at that time, and to see how the authors of the studies handled the ethical issues. The Internet became widely available around 1995, and therefore, ethical standards for online studies were arguably underdeveloped around that time. Moreover, the speed at which the Internet has developed has exceeded our expectation. For example, from 2004 to 2008, we saw the service launches of Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and Youtube (2008). It is a rocketing speed of development that famous online services were released within four years. Therefore, discussion on online ethics should always note the timeline, as the development of the Internet is so fast that research methods struggle to catch up.

The above robust discussions highlight significant features of the Internet: diversity and rapid development. Provided that there is no single standard to fit all circumstances, Elgesem (2015) suggested making a concrete assessment to judge whether a researcher needs to obtain a user's consent for studies on Twitter. In his argument, Elgesem showed a tripod framework to assess the following perspectives: publicity, nature of discussion, and intention of tweets. Publicity indicates whether tweets are open to the public; nature of discussion means the topic under discussion; and intention of tweets indicates users' intention of tweets (ibid). In his study, political discussion on Twitter was a general interest, tweets were open to the public, and intention of tweets was considered to seek attention (ibid). As such, using the tripod framework could be helpful in judging whether I need to obtain consent.

From the above argument and with the tripod framework suggested by Elgesem (2015), I conclude that permission from Twitter users is not necessary. Tweets are publicly open; the nature of discussion concerns voting in an election (i.e. one of the human rights); and the intention of tweets is to show opinions about the voting. Since the right to vote is one of the established human rights, there seems little or no risk in expressing an opinion on it. Furthermore, contacting Twitter users is not feasible or practical. The researchers may need to contact more than hundreds of users to obtain consent, some of whom may not respond to the enquiry. In fact, Williams et al., admitted that most Internet users tend to consent to participate in studies and are least cautious to academic researchers (ibid). Yet, as Williams argues (ibid), consideration of protection of users' privacy and potential harm to them is still needed. For example, it is important to anonymise user names, to avoid mentioning sensitive information (e.g. those who identify as in a sexual minority), and so on.

In considering potential harm, Alderson and Morrow suggest a number of areas of sensitive information, such as political opinion, nationality, racial or ethnic origins, religious beliefs (Alderson and Morrow, 2011). On Twitter, such information appears in users' profile pages in which they can provide details such as gender, occupation, and even identity (e.g. 'European citizen'). While this project will collect publicly-open tweets but not the profile pages, it is necessary to consider how to protect individuals. Moreover, although the nature of discussion is about voting (i.e. an established human right), handling these tweets needs extra care.

Therefore, I will remove a person's user name and substitute with a number, and delete any contact address, including postal and email addresses, phone numbers, and other information which could otherwise identify a person. In addition, given that potential teenaged participants might include these, the project will remove all profile photographs regardless of image (e.g. faces, animals or cars) from the thesis. The above procedure will apply from the data collection stage to the dissemination stage (thesis or other form of publication), regardless of whether the personal information in the data is genuine or fake. However, it should be emphasised that the text data analysed in the project is searchable on the Internet, as it is already publicly available and, therefore, the

procedure above might not afford enough protection. Still, the protection procedure is necessary, since online data containing such information could disappear in future. In addition, as the tweets collected in this research may contain texts showing political preference, it is important to keep analysis non-judgmental. The purpose of this project is to explore how democratising campaign organisers use the Internet to achieve their purpose effectively, but not to put them in a certain judgmental category.

#### 4.5.2 Ethical Consideration for Interviewees

In line with discussion by Alderson and Morrow (2011) and the debate on online ethics mentioned earlier, the present research considers how protection of interviewees' rights can be achieved. Since researchers know who an interviewee is, a different approach to protect privacy and rights is required from online data collection. This subsection will review how sensitive comments, such as private and political opinions can be protected; in addition, it considers how a researcher should cope when an interviewee unexpectedly discloses sensitive information during the interview.

Personal information is considered the most sensitive information about people. Although a list of types of such information is not exhaustive, the following list from the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (Information Commissioner's Office, 2018) is useful guidance about information which may potentially be categorised as personal:

race	ethnic origin	politics	religion	trade union membership
genetics	biometrics (where used for ID purposes)	health	sex life	sexual orientation

**Table 4-2: The List of Information deemed to be covered by a privacy policy**

The underlining idea is the fact that each mature individual can choose either to be public or not in their own capacity (i.e. autonomy). For example, in the UK, people are free to choose whether to become a member of a trade union or not. However, it is also an individual's decision whether to announce their membership of a trade union, but others do not have such rights. Marzano contends such personal autonomy is common in western countries and thus it should be respected. As such, Marzano further argues that to respect their



autonomy a researcher should obtain consent from interviewees prior to the interview since it will ask them about personal information, if not everything (Marzano, 2012). Marzano also suggested the possibility that an interviewee mentions these points during the interview of their own volition (ibid).

An aim of the interview is, as argued earlier, to gain a better understanding of a real society and to reflect it in academic studies (Wengraf, 2001). As such, a researcher would prepare the questionnaire prior to the interview (in the case of semi-structured interview) to gain better understanding. Despite such preparation, interviewees may answer in an unexpected way (Marzano, 2012). Provided that a researcher did not aim to gain private information with malicious intent, it is not a researcher's responsibility to collect such personal information. Even in such is the case, Kaiser contends that a researcher should strive to protect their privacy (Kaiser, 2012). Kaiser's argument may appear strict, yet I argue that a researcher should be prepared for unexpected information from interviewees, as they are the people with the answers to the question. Since a researcher has little or no knowledge in the field compared to the interviewees, it is not surprising that they may talk about something 'unexpected' to a researcher.

Drawing from the above argument, the present research took the following protective measures. Firstly, in addition to the information listed above, any remarks mentioning other people's names or otherwise suggesting their social network is either masked or substituted with another name. Even if it is public, it is not my intention to reveal who an interviewee's friends are. Secondly, any remarks falling within the categories of Table 4-1 were either removed, masked or substituted with another expression. The elements in the table could reveal the identity of the interviewee, which may affect their activities. Given that all interviewees in the present research work in the citizenship field, which also covers politics in its nature, I argue it is the researcher's responsibility to avoid any potential risk to them. Therefore, in the present research, all names, workplaces, and other information potentially identifying a person were removed from all transcripts.

The next chapter introduces the case of Bite the Ballot and shows its relevance to the research aims.



## Chapter 5      BtB as a Centre of Youth Mobilisation

This chapter provides detailed information about the case study, Bite the Ballot (BtB) and highlights its role as a campaigning organisation that promotes democracy. As such, this chapter includes documentary analysis, including some Tweets from the BtB account, other information obtained from the interviews with key informants, either currently working or who previously worked with BtB, and the social network analysis. In this chapter, the names of the key informants are represented by pseudonyms: Ed and Bob respectively.

The information will be supported by evidences taken from results of a series of analyses. The aim of interviews was to clarify BtB's activity as an organisation, but not about any individual person or key informant within BtB. While documentary analysis provides some insight into BtB, it does not explain the reasoning behind actions. Some documents, such as their website, give reports about their campaigns and claims, but do not provide sufficient reasoning for the aim of the campaign (e.g. Bite the Ballot, 2018b). Therefore, I asked questions of interviewees about past campaign activities of BtB, so that I could clearly understand the intention of the activities. In addition, this chapter also refers to the oral evidence which a co-founder of BtB, Michael Sani, provided to a select committee of the House of Lords regarding citizenship issues among young people in the UK. The oral evidence is, by its nature, regarded as a highly credible publicly available source from which to understand BtB's activities. These sources were compiled to understand BtB's nature and its campaign.

Overall, BtB's practice has reflected the cosmopolitan view which appears through their activities. While cosmopolitanism underlines solidarity and co-living (Osler and Starkey, 2005), BtB has worked with partners in wider fields, including business and legislative bodies, and those working outside the UK. Their coordinated activities are unified under the same goal – to encourage young people to vote – so that they can achieve it as a team. To maximise its impact, BtB appears to operate two contrasting philosophies (see subsections 5.2 and 5.3). One of them is their philosophy of teamwork which underpins communication strategies when they interact with young people on Twitter. The other is a philosophy stressing 'accountability', under which BtB demands

politicians and governments to be held accountable, though this is differentiated from 'criticism' or 'accusation'.

## 5.1 Background Information about Bite the Ballot

BtB was established by Michael Sani, co-founder and CEO in 2010. As the aim and objectives of BtB state, it is deemed a social entrepreneur i.e. it addresses social problems through business activities. Therefore, it is registered as a company and has been engaging in commercial activities e.g. selling products or providing services: in fact, they sell an online product called Verto and offer consultancy services to other CSOs (Bite the Ballot, 2018a, 2018d). In addition, they appear to engage in consulting services by exporting their mobilising methodology to other charities outside the UK (Bite the Ballot, 2018b). Their online communication channels include their own website (including email), Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram, although their official Youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/BitetheBallot>) has been inactive for more than a year (as of December 2017).

BtB claims to be a politically neutral organisation in its financial statement, since it is a charity, which is legally required to be non-partisan and non-political (Charity Commission for England and Wales, 2013). Yet their activities involve political education and campaigning; thus, they have worked with UK political parties regardless of their position on the political spectrum. In the Youtube channel "Bite News" (<https://www.youtube.com/user/biteneews>), there are several clips of interviews with leaders of political parties posted in 2014. These interviewees included Ed Miliband from the Labour Party, Nick Clegg from the Liberal Democratic Party, and Nigel Farage from the UK Independence Party (UKIP). These interviews support the claim of BtB to be a non-partisan organisation, developing young people's ability to make judgments and decisions on politics. In fact, it proves BtB's non-partisanship stance but also offers an opportunity to the audience to learn different perspectives on a political issue. This is also evident from the interview with Bob, stressing the role of BtB is to provide support for young people to make a decision, but not to push a particular political view.

The above section described BtB's stance as a democratising campaign organisation and how it worked with various partners in its activity. In particular, its political stance of non-partisanship appears to support its mission as a democratising campaign organisation by enabling a collaboration with many stakeholders including political parties and business companies. The next section will look at how BtB interacts with young people – its main target audience – by using the Internet.

### 5.1.1 Working together: Collaboration with Partners

BtB has developed a network of organisations to mobilise young people effectively. That is one of the features of BtB activities: many organisations have connected on Twitter (for example, TES Resources, The Politics Project, etc) and have contributed their views. In addition, BtB worked with UK Youth, National Union of Students in the UK, Demos, regist-Her, and Full Fact within its campaign to boost its effect (see the interview transcription with Bob). Its methods of collaboration, however, differ by nature. Jelly London is an artist management and production company based in London and New York (Jelly London, 2018). They offered a series of illustrations and artistic products for a BtB activity (Bite the Ballot, 2018b). In contrast, Ashoka Changemakers is an alliance of social entrepreneurs of which Michael Sani is a fellow (Ashoka, 2017b). Ashoka Changemakers aims to offer global support to social entrepreneurs – those who commit to the improvement of society through business – by developing a network and community for them (Ashoka, 2017a). The wide network seems to have two functional aspects for BtB's activity.

Firstly, BtB is surrounded by supporting groups which can work as their information exchange platform. Ashoka, which has a network of social entrepreneurs across the world, has its own projects with an investment bank in Switzerland (Ashoka, 2016). The fact that Ashoka has its own global network suggests that BtB could learn from what has been attempted by others in different parts of the world. In addition, BtB has a connection with Citizens UK, which is an organisation working with several groups, including schools, universities, religious organisations, and others across the UK (Citizens UK, 2019). Their network is geographically limited to within the UK, i.e. domestic. Yet, belonging to both global and domestic network means BtB can balance its

activities. Therefore, BtB is arguably able to obtain and exchange information with its UK counterparts and those in other parts of world. In other words, they can use such information to improve their events in the UK, as well as to find opportunities to expand their activity to other parts of the world.

In January 2018, BtB went to Columbia to deliver a workshop on political engagement (Bite the Ballot, 2018b). BtB was invited by two organisations: Mi Sangre and TAAP Foundation (ibid) both of which work for a democratising movement in South America. The connection here is that the founder of TAAP Foundation is also an Ashoka Fellow, with Michael Sani (Fundación TAAP, 2019). Although BtB has not announced a new collaboration with the two organisations since then, sharing a position as a fellow could lead to international collaborations.

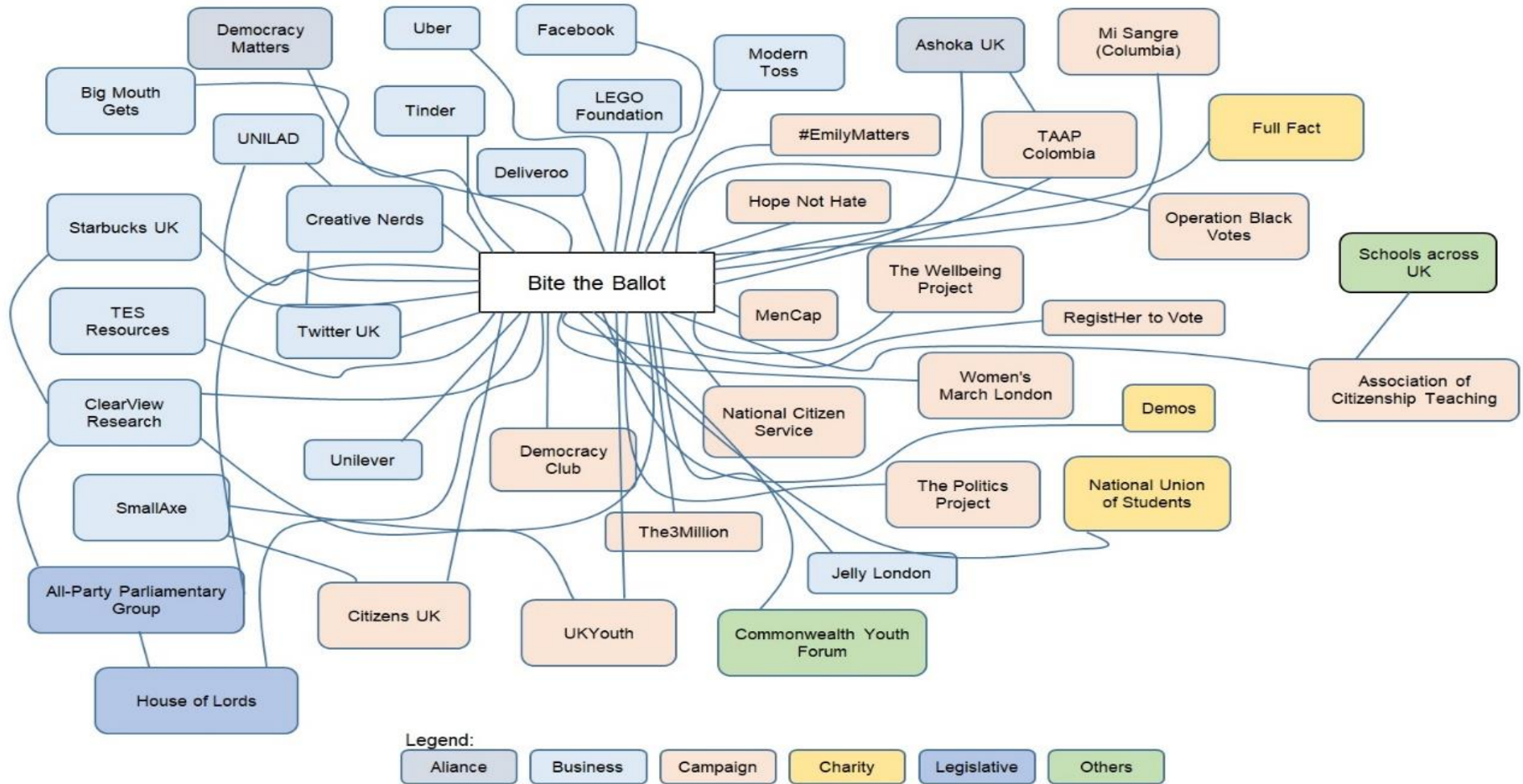
Secondly, some groups can help with the logistics of BtB's activities. BtB has consulted Small Axe about their campaign strategy (see the interview script with Bob), and they offer a transformative campaign solution (Small Axe, 2019). In addition, they also have contact with Creative Nerds (see the interview script with Bob), a digital company offering digital social movement solutions underlined by insight into youth culture (Creative Nerds, 2019). As mentioned earlier, the art product company, Jelly London, offered artwork which would draw young participants' attention to BtB's events. These groups support BtB's activities from establishing campaign strategies to their implementation: BtB is not a stand-alone organisation.

The collaborative nature of BtB activities can be found in a report to the All-Parliamentary Party Group on Democratic participation, which is based on extensive research of statistics, academic studies, and a thorough assessment of BtB campaigns to increase turnout among young people (Bite the Ballot et al., 2016). It credits contributions from academics, experts, MPs, campaigners, civil servants and so on, which extended across several sectors (ibid). The report highlights an issue with the voter registration system on which the 2014 reform might have an adverse effect, particularly with young people (ibid). Unlike the previous registration system, under which one person in a household could register others, each individual became responsible for registering themselves (Snelling, 2015). Because of this change, young people often

mistakenly believed they were already registered (ibid). BtB addressed this issue by reaching out to potential voters who were not on the voters' register with help from several business companies, such as Twitter, Tinder, Facebook, which are supposedly well-known among young people (Bite the Ballot et al., 2016).

In addition to those companies above, it is noteworthy that BtB has a connection with several business companies. Unilever, an Anglo-Dutch company, worked for a BtB campaign, although its motivation is unclear (see the interview transcript with Bob). Unilever's business is nothing to do with democratising campaigns or citizenship; however, commitment by business companies could, arguably, open up a new paradigm for citizenship practice. In other words, business companies could participate in society, yet in a different way from individuals.

Although not all the names of these organisations appear on BtB's website as collaborators, working with a democratising organisation suggests that their activities are underpinned by solidarity or collaboration. Furthermore, BtB's idea of 'teamwork' extends beyond the sphere of democratising campaigns – it in fact includes business firms. As a result, the network BtB has is wide and diversified in its members, demonstrating the cosmopolitan aspect of its activities while pursuing a particular agenda to increase the rate of political engagement among young people. The diagram below describe BtB's network comprised of organisations and business firms.



Map 5-1: BtB and Other Organisations



The above diagram shows the relationships between BtB and other organisations. It appears, I argue, that BtB functions as a bridge between campaign organisations and business firms. As Bob mentioned in his interview, business firms wishing to be involved in the democratising movement need to know someone who can guide them to the movement (see the interview transcript with Bob). The above graph, in fact, shows that business firms and democratising campaign organisations have few or no direct ties: they are connected only via BtB or social network companies e.g. Facebook and Twitter. Social Network Site (SNS) companies are, however, social digital infrastructure providers which support the life and activities of people on the Internet. Therefore, they do not actively connect partners: SNS is merely a tool supporting everyday life among people. As Bob mentioned in the interview, BtB has actively worked with business firms, who need guidance for the democratising campaign. In a sense, BtB committed to develop a network of partners involved in the democratising campaign, playing its central role.

Despite the above, a democratising campaign organisation working with business firms (e.g. Facebook, LEGO, Starbucks, and Experian) may be uncommon and unusual. In other words, BtB has collaborated with various partners in a wide range of fields who may have different expectations for a democratising campaign and, particularly, its outcome. One cooperation resulted in the development of a mobile application with Tinder, a dating application provider, to enable its users to test their knowledge about the European Union before the EU referendum in June 2016 (see the interview script with Bob). Although it is naturally expected that such business firms demand some kind of 'return' i.e. nothing will be offered for free, Bob assumed that these business firms wanted to work with them but did not ask for anything (ibid). He also emphasised that whether BtB can increase a number of young voters cannot be measured numerically. The explanation from Bob shows that even business firms are willing to support the promotion of democracy through their activities. Although Bob did not know the precise reason for them to join the campaign, such willingness from business firms opens up a new paradigm for education sectors. They are, if not all, as concerned at the current political situation in the UK as academics are.

As such, unlike other social movements, it is worth noting that a number of well-known business companies have also been involved in BtB's activity: for example, Starbucks participated in their Decafe (Democracy café) in which they discuss social issues and politics over a cup of coffee or tea (Bite the Ballot, 2018c). The aim of Decafe is to offer a place for everyone to voice their interest in a café, and the idea originates from the 19th century practice of meeting in cafés where people engaged in discussion about the social issues and politics of the time (ibid). Moreover, they were considering working with Experian to analyse the demography of those who do not register on the electoral roll (Bite the Ballot, 2017). Experian is a credit rating company providing data analysis tools primarily to banks. BtB, therefore, works with business firms which are willing to support BtB campaigns and offer their knowledge and skills, a unique way of organising mobilisation, through cooperating with youth organisations and business firms to support their democratising campaign.

However, the reasons for business companies to get involved in the movement are not clear. On this point, Bob speculated in the interview that these business firms simply wanted to be involved in the democratising campaign; however, they needed help to enter these types of campaign because of lack of experience (see the Interview transcript with Bob). While Bob struggled to remember their intentions in participating, it is clear that these companies need someone who knows how to enter the democratising campaign world i.e. business firms are novice in this sense. As shown in the above graph, BtB has connected these companies with other democratising organisations: it further suggests that their role is encouraging partners in different fields to be involved in the democratising field. BtB might be a good guide for those from different fields to become familiar with the citizenship education field.

In return, those in the citizenship field may view working with business as irregular. In fact, Small Axe, a not-for-profit organisation supporting a progressive social movement, refuses to contract with corporations, whose business is incompatible with their philosophy (Small Axe, 2019). They even publicise the names of companies and foundations with which they refuse to work on their website (ibid). In contrast, BtB has worked with several businesses to date, and, according to the oral evidence to the House of Lords of

the UK Parliament (House of Lords, 2017), BtB considered further partnership with other business firms. Often, participation in society by business companies is carried out through their own corporate social responsibility (CSR) schemes; if so, what would be the theoretical justification for them to engage in citizenship practice?

The concept of 'citizenship' is reserved for a living individual person (Crane et al., 2008). For this reason, the notion of corporate citizenship has sparked a conceptual dissonance and somewhat uncomfortable misalignment (ibid). This is, to some extent true, because the aim of business companies is to make profit (Frederick, 2018), not to pursue philanthropic activity or volunteer work. For this reason, many academics perceive using the words 'citizenship' or 'citizens' in annual business reports is merely a gesture to portray themselves as a 'nice neighbour' (Crane et al., 2008). Yet it is undeniable that business activities can be harmful to society, for example, mistreatment of employees, job losses, toxic environments, and so on (Frederick, 2018). Moreover, a business firms could be accountable in its operation to an oppressive government, such as the operation of Shell, the oil company, in South Africa under the apartheid policy (Van Cranenburgh et al., 2013). Therefore, business firms can practise citizenship from a different perspective to human beings.

CSR as a response to social demand was common in 1960s and 1970s. During those decades, business was held accountable for social injustice in the workplace, including unfair treatment of employees, and had to revise the rules (Frederick, 2018). Given that people at that time were aware of inequality – gender, refugees – and several social movements emerged as response, it is understandable that business needed to align with demands from the people. In the 21st century, unlike the 1960s, we have the Internet as a communication tool, and it appears easy for business to respond to social demand. The question is – why do business firms approach BtB?

The reason for business firms joining the force of social change is not clear. As Bob mentioned:

“I think in general sometimes businesses can be new or not accustomed to or not have established corporate social responsibility mechanisms for engaging employees in democracy.”

(from the interview with Bob)

While Bob speculated that the reason lay in CSR, working with these companies signals two opposite impressions. Bob gave some examples:

“There was a collaboration with the dating app Tinder where young people were going through every several swipe that they take him to the register to vote page. There was a collaboration with Uber where again people were encouraged to register to vote or scan [inaudible] and engaging with the communications there. There was a promotional post through the business conglomerate's business in the community. Business and the community members include McDonalds and other large organisations to promote to their employees that they should register to vote and participate.”

(from the interview with Bob)

One of the impressions is that these business firms are trying to improve their corporate images to a public audience. Encouraging their employees and other young customers to register to vote is in itself not strange, unless a company takes a partisanship approach. However, as Crane pointed out, CSR has been regarded as a good gesture by which business firms impress local residents (Crane et al., 2008). Given the possibility of the harmful impact emitted from business activities, CSR can be a mechanism for a company to move away from a negative reputation. BtB may overlook this point, as business firms could utilise BtB as a device to polish up their image with the general public. The collaboration with business firms could lead to improving the firms' reputation, without bringing BtB's desired outcome.

Business firms worked with BtB in many ways, though it appears that they offered their improved products to their own customers as well as a promotion within each company. For example, Tinder is a dating application and thus has no connection with voter registration. By design, it can display an advertisement from other companies after several swipes. Therefore, I shall argue BtB's attempt to insert an advertisement leading to the voter registration page is a good idea to increase the number of voters, if it leads to an actual increase. Similarly, Uber is a taxi arrangement application, which is also popular among young people for its cost-effective tariffs. Interestingly, some companies started in-house campaigns encouraging their employees to register to vote. While the data to assess the partnership is not available to the public or a researcher, BtB claims that it could have mobilised about 1.1 million young people to register to

vote, which contributed to the crash of the online registration portal (Bite the Ballot, 2018b).

Secondly, working with business firms could financially help BtB and other CSOs' management. As Bob mentioned:

“interestingly we might be seeing a tiered approach where they assist civil society organisations who [businesses] are aware of necessity and have the funds to be able to do that sort of activity.”

(interview with Bob)

Interestingly, business firms did not set any target or success criteria of the activities:

“I don't think there were any such conditions because one it's a very ridiculously difficult measure to actually calculate it”

(interview with Bob)

His statement suggests that, to some extent, business firms were aware of the difficulty of setting numerical targets for BtB's activities. It is then interesting that business firms invest funds from which they cannot expect any return, expect for better reputation. While the history of CSR shows its roots in responding to a 'demand from society' (Frederick, 2018), what is the rationale for business to be involved in such activities?

To address this issue, I shall argue that business firms are also citizens – yet a different type of citizens. Since the nature of business is to make profit, they need to maintain a profitable environment for their business, while their participation in society may have different aspects from individuals. As such, their means of political participation are limited and fewer are available to individuals. They do not have the right to vote; they cannot join a demonstration as a company. Instead, they can donate part of their profit to charities, as Bob mentioned, on condition that the relevant laws permit. In addition, they can (and do) join pressure/lobbying groups to voice their opinion (Crane et al., 2008: 35–36). Lobbying groups are interest groups with a specific agenda for business firms (ibid); thus, joining such groups is, arguably, a form of participation in society specifically for business firms. However, joining a lobbying group is not the only way for them to participate in citizenship practice.

As long as the primary aim of businesses is to make profit, CSR activities can be reduced or stopped in an economic downturn. In other words, business partners may stop their collaboration with BtB once the economic situation

deteriorates. In recession, it is more often the case that business firms reduce or scale down a team for CSR activities in order to reallocate budget to crucial business activity (Ellis and Bastin, 2011; Klára, 2009). Such restructuring includes changing a partner who is cost-efficient in order to keep their CSR activities (Klára, 2009). This could be the critical case for BtB: as Bob struggled to remember the reason why business firms teamed up with BtB (see the Interview script with Bob), business firms may equally be unclear of the meaning of the collaboration. Often, CSR can send a message to their consumers, giving a good impression: by doing so, they could use CSR to survive in recession (Green and Pelozo, 2015). If they find it cannot help survival in an economic storm, business firms could withdraw from the collaboration.

As long as business firms collaborate with BtB as part of their CSR, a critical moment will be inevitable in an economic downturn. It could impact negatively on the BtB financial position as well (see Chapter 9 for further reflection on this issue). This potential backdrop to partnership with business will be discussed in Chapter 9.

The notable record BtB has achieved is that it successfully brought these corporate citizens to citizenship practices. In addition to joining a lobbying group, and donating funds, BtB showed how business could use their own product to mobilise young people. That is, they improved their original product by adding some feature to reflect BtB's ethos in it, and offered this to their customers. Moreover, they approached their own employees and encouraged them to register to vote. By doing so, BtB could, in effect, reach potential participants who did not have opportunity to learn about BtB and their campaign on Twitter but could do so through a different channel. While Twitter and other social media channels are no doubt powerful and influential, they do not guarantee successful mobilisation (see Chapters 8 and 9 for the limitation of the social media strategy). Working with business firms could reach more young people, by opening routes to potential participants who are otherwise missed from BtB's radar.

## 5.1.2 Sophisticated Communication Approach

BtB has utilised a sophisticated communication approach. As Bob mentioned, they used a marketing approach used by business for customer relationship and marketing purposes.

“For example to, say, these 15 people are teachers, they'll get the education email; these 20 people are students they'll get the US in student movement email; And I think it would be the benefit of such an approach is that you would get more relevant messages to individual parts of your population without necessarily replicating the effort which again in the small grassroots organization is very effective.”

(Interview with Bob)

The method Bob mentioned is in fact part of a marketing strategy called customised marketing. In business, this method requires the analysis of an individual's purchase record and his/her behaviour to make an effective suggestion for that person. For example, if an individual buys a fried chicken often, shops would send a direct advertisement to the person containing an appropriate suggestion judging from his/her purchase behaviour (e.g. a new product of fried chicken). BtB uses this method to reach potential participants and collaborators effectively as they are a 'small grassroots organisation'. Although Bob did not elaborate, his remarks highlight the difficulty CSOs (and other small grassroots organisations) may face in reaching out to potential participants. As far as I am aware, studies on management issues within these organisations and other NGO/NPOs within the education field are scarce. However, it is of great interest to know how these non-profit organisations manage financial and participant relationships.

It is also notable that BtB has received a lot of assistance and external help. For example, Bob mentioned a media communication strategy company, Small Axe, which suggested a means for effective communication with an audience. The marketing method is not something available to everyone: it requires, in some cases, experience and technique to use. Bob was responsible for this:

“what SmallAxe did was essentially create a web-based platform that can be accessed from a phone or a computer or a tablet. And they then built an infrastructure around it that allowed members of the team to feed in quizzes from politicians manifestos and then as a result of feedback in the most relevant useful information young people got to see how the current political environment correlates with their own interests. You could start to see young people as a resource some of the data that came out of their sites to

become very engaged or more engaged as a result of actually realising public policy issues were more relevant to their lives”

(Interview with Bob)

Web-based interaction would be particularly useful for young people. The platform was accessible from mobiles and tablets, to increase accessibility, and young people could understand how their environment relates to actual policies, and vice versa. The significance here is that using technology is a weakness for CSOs:

“They [N.B. Small Axe] are essentially consultancy here all about harnessing the most modern innovations for use by grassroots movements and historically I think this has been an area of weakness for civil society.”

(Interview with Bob)

His statement suggests civil society has an issue with the use of technology; in fact, choosing an appropriate online platform is not easy. In general, it depends on the purpose of online forum, aim, data processing which users posted, and users’ background (Janssen and Kies, 2005; Wright and Street, 2007). Even if a CSO plans to invite young people to political discussion on their online platform, they need to consider how to manage the discussion, as it can easily become uncontrollable (Karlsson, 2012; Wojcieszak and Mutz, 2009; Wright and Street, 2007). I will mention discuss this issue further in subsection 5.2.

## 5.2 Communication Stance – Criticism or Accountability

BtB is a CSO with a particular agenda to encourage young people to participate in political activity. As argued in chapter 3, voting requires consideration before the act takes place. People need to be able to explain the reasons for their vote, although not be subject to criticism.

It is important to highlight the effort to demand accountability of users without criticism. According to Bob, BtB has provided an introductory phase for those who have not voted before. This may well explain the reason for little criticism in light of political socialisation theory. The theory explains that people change their behaviour corresponding to the socialiser’s behaviour (Dekker, 1991). While there are several strands to consider in the effect of socialisation, one of the perspectives stresses the psychological consequence of behaviour (ibid). As Bob admitted, if BtB, which acted as an introductory guide, were



critical, it is easily understandable that a novice would be afraid of engaging in political practices. In contrast, BtB's guiding plan appears to be well-considered so that newcomers feel no resistance or fear in entering this new field. As such, BtB also offers a safe place where a novice can make mistakes or fail in the discussion. The existence of the safe place arguably facilitates further participation in discussion and actual voting. This may, however, represent a paradoxical situation in that people are entitled to exercise their human rights, free from fear, yet they fear doing so.

In an environment rich in rights, people are already the 'authority', if they are not the oppressor. Having human rights means their decisions are protected and respected unless they breach the law. In contrast, social movement theory expects people to struggle against oppression (or authority) to be 'human'. Such theoretical discussion presumes that people are vulnerable and dehumanised, while the oppressor should be responsible for their treatment of people. In contemporary Western democratic society however, people are now entitled to have human rights and for their government to acknowledge these. As Michael Sani suggested in his oral evidence (House of Lords, 2017: 2–3), it is imperative for people, including young people, to understand the importance of playing a role in society and to be responsible for that impact. However, studies in this field so far suggest that young people express difficulty in understanding politics or distrust politics (e.g. Gilbert, 2004; Livingstone et al., 2007). Scandals among politicians are enough to diminish the level of trust from citizens and, even worse, if politicians are not accountable, people may stop following them.

In such an environment, I argue that people are responsible for their participation in society and accountable for what they do. While there might be a scandal among politicians, it is not sufficient to justify walking away from participating in society. Since the people are already an authority, as I argued above, they are ultimately responsible for their decisions and the outcome thereof. In short, people are, to some extent, already an authority which is accountable and responsible for their social roles and their commitment to society. The argument would be, therefore, how they can participate responsibly in society, and what is the concept of 'responsibility' in this context?

### 5.3 BtB as Friend of Young People – Topics in Tweets

Educating and nurturing responsible citizens is not an easy task. As the Advisory Group on Citizenship stated, the school curriculum requires consideration of moral aspects (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Focus on moral education is, by nature, fundamentally controversial as it is inevitable that discussion includes subjective notions on being good (Hinde, 2002). Hinde argued there is no agreeable concept on 'being good' since it is ideological i.e. there is no single standard to judge what good behaviour is (ibid). This suggests, in return, that if certain behaviour is deemed good or less problematic, it would be morally acceptable within its context. The question is then to seek how one can start guiding people to behave in an acceptable way within a particular context.

In this subsection, I argue that BtB represent themselves to young people as their friend on Twitter. BtB's political agenda is to encourage young people to vote (i.e. context); however, their tweets cover other topics. By tweeting on these topics, I argue, they present themselves as the young people's friend so that they can initiate guiding young people to behave responsibly. Examples below highlight those elements of BtB's identity as friend of young people.

"The most important question! If the UK leaves the EU can we still be in #Eurovision? [URL]"

(Tweet #636 on 14 May 2016)

Eurovision is the pan-European song competition (i.e. entertainment), in which groups of singers representing their home countries compete to win first place. The competition itself does not belong to European Union (EU) or any political party; in fact, there are some countries outside the EU such as Australia, Israel, and Ukraine who participate. Therefore, the extent of its 'importance' regarding the EU referendum is not political, but rather aiming at keeping in touch with their audience as described below:

“because [sic] the UK has come really close in recent years?!  
#voteforyourneighbour #Eurovision”

(User NN to tweet #636)

“Yep, 5th in 2009! #Eurovision”

(BtB response)

“Jade Ewen - 'Its My Time”

(User NN response to BtB)

The above interaction appears to demonstrate BtB’s ability to cover a wide range of topics from such a ‘soft’ topic (entertainment programme) to a topic on voting issues, their own agenda. For example:

“How can we stop #Glastonbury goers from missing out on their EU referendum vote? [URL to news article about dates of Glastonbury festival]”

(Tweet #644 on 12 May 2016)

Glastonbury here means a music festival held every year in Pilton, Somerset, England. In 2016, it was held from 22 to 26 June – the first day of the festival was also the voting day for the EU referendum. The tweet aimed to ask users how festival participants could vote in the referendum, while still participating in the festival. The user responded:

“.@BiteTheBallot @electoralreform Get a postal vote.”

(user @MA to reply #644)

“Indeed!”

(BtB response to @MA)

“I have one & I am going no [sic] where.”

(@MA response)

Interestingly, the user @MA admitted s/he is not going to the festival, although s/he has a ballot paper for the postal vote. As per regulations, a postal vote is an option for those who cannot vote on the polling day, instead posting their vote to a relevant electoral committee. BtB strongly agreed with the option, since it is another way for those who cannot vote on the day.

This interaction between @MA and BtB suggests the role of BtB as an educational organisation as specified in their agenda. The BtB response “Indeed!” to @MA shows that the answer is correct, and is the alternative way to vote, in an affirmative manner. Given that voting options are specified in law, there is no divergent or alternative way which regulations permit. In other words, there is always a right and wrong answer on this issue. Although it is not clear how other users learnt from their interaction, since no one joined them, BtB’s

response shows the necessity of exploring other voting options when people cannot go to polling stations in person on the polling day.

Although these positive responses on the topic about elections align with BtB's agenda, it is insufficient if users do not consider BtB as their friend. On that point, BtB successfully develop their identity as one of the British youth through using Twitter.

"Great #ThrowbackThursday 5 Years ago today. Never Forget"  
(Tweet #5 on 27 July 2017)

This tweet has attached an image of the London Olympic Games in 2012 which opened on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2012. Given that it was a remarkable and memorable event for most of British people, including youth, mentioning it on Twitter would represent their identity as British youth, who enjoyed watching the games. The phrase 'Never Forget' underlines such the strong emotional and fond memories of it. Similarly,

"Remembering the lives of those we lost 12 years ago today. From a tragic incident we've only grown stronger as a city. #LestWeForget"  
(tweet #22 on 7 July 2017)

This tweet refers to the terror attack on 7 July 2005. In the incident, terrorists carried out suicide bomb attacks in tube trains on the Piccadilly and Circle Lines and on a bus driving near Tavistock Square in central London. It was certainly a shocking attack, as it happened on the public transport system. Therefore, the tweet shows remembrance for such a tragedy in London, which is signified by a hashtag ('#LestWeForget'). In particular, the hashtag phrase had an effective emotional appeal by its use with the sentence 'Remembering the lives of those we lost 12 years ago today'.

These BtB tweets reveal that BtB is not just educational but attempts to present itself in the everyday idiom of young people. They further demonstrate its communication strategy as friends of young people, since most young people do not wish to be instructed as schools usually do. When it comes to elections, young people who are interested in politics will be in their late teenage years: they are mature enough to make decisions without being instructed, though they may need some help and guidance. In other words, BtB's tweets above represent their strategy in a way which assists young people's voting, by offering an opportunity for them to consider issues in

society. Chapters 6 and 7 will focus on these points i.e. how BtB guides young people to explore political issues by themselves.

## 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, BtB has established a unique position as a democratising organisation in its attitude and ideas for active engagement in society. It is willing to work with any organisation or individual who shares its ideals and will work to achieve it. Its mission is to encourage young people to vote and anyone, including business firms, can be involved in its activity. In addition, BtB believes that people, including young people, should be responsible for their own active commitment to a society.

To achieve this, it offers an introductory phase of political participation – voting – and refrains from criticising views expressed in Twitter interaction. By doing so, it guides novices to vote and, theoretically, attempts to change mindset among young people. Such a novice-friendly attitude represents the idea of having a safe place where they can discuss any topics without taboo, to boost participation, which would subsequently lead to a higher voting rate among young people. Its use of Twitter in particular reflects the technical aspect of Twitter – 140 characters limit – when it spreads its message, and BtB acknowledges therefore the difficulty of insightful discussion. In addition, it is the key protagonist in connecting business firms and other democratising campaign organisations to boost their activities. This demonstrates its notion of a democratising campaign, in which everyone can participate. Moreover, such interaction might highlight diversity within society and subsequently develop tolerance to it.

The wider network across business firms and the legislative body may well influence BtB's communication strategy. Both business firms and the legislative body have naturally different expectations to the democratising campaign; therefore, they need to communicate with an audience whose ideas may fundamentally differ from each other's. This is also applicable to young people. They may be in same generation, but may have different life experience to date. To encourage and advocate diversity in a serious sense, it is imperative to

consider these possibilities and communicate effectively. BtB's wide network suggests a good level of communication skills with the wider audience.

In short, BtB's core idea of 'accountability' is the background philosophy of its campaign. The philosophy further extends to its communication and partnering strategies which enrich its activities. Yet, such a philosophy applies to every person who participates in society – not only politicians and political parties, but also young people i.e. all members of society.

## **Chapter 6      Data Analysis, Result, and Discussion – Part I**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports and discusses the result of the data analysis. As mentioned in chapter 4, I collected more than 1800 tweets in total. In order to choose tweets for data analysis, I categorised them into four types based on the interactive pattern described in subsection 6.1.1 below. As a result, the actual total number of tweets analysed was 132 after filtering through the pattern. In addition, I used some tweets in order to support my argument (see subsection 6.1.2). The data analysis was conducted by applying the analytical framework I showed in subsection 4.4 of Chapter 4. In this subsection and the following chapter, I demonstrate how I applied the framework to each tweet by placing an analytical perspective in brackets (e.g. [Purpose], [Knowledge]). Drawing from the result of analysis, I argue that BtB has played an important role in encouraging young people to be responsible for their voting behaviour. Furthermore, BtB's collaboration with business companies suggests a sense of (cooperate) citizens in a society.

This chapter is structured as follows: the next section describes the types of interaction, the selection criteria for analysis, and the justification of tweet selection. Section 6.2 provides main findings from the analysis, followed by discussion in section 6.3.

#### **6.1.1 Types of Interaction**

Interaction happens when an exchange of words or signs takes place between two or more people. In this thesis, I shall call interaction on Twitter a twitter chain. A twitter chain starts with an initial tweet to which there is a response. In this project, interaction starts with BtB tweets or retweets. After collecting their tweets, I identified four types of interaction among BtB and users.

Type 1: One-off interaction

A user responds to a BtB tweets without further interaction. In this type, the user replies to BtB, while no one, including BtB, replies or responds further.



**Illustration 6-1: Type 1 interaction**

Other users except user 1 can view the original BtB tweet and respond to user 1; however, since no one added a comment, it remains unclear what others thought or felt about the response.

**Type 2: Continuous interaction**

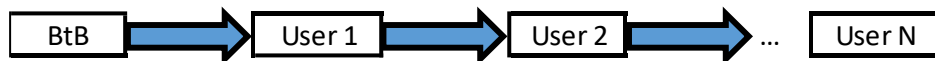
In this type of interaction, BtB interacts with one particular user. There might be several interactions between the user and BtB; however, the number of users involved in this type is always one.



**Illustration 6-2: Type 2 interaction**

**Type 3: Discussion without BtB**

In this type of interaction, two or more users engage in discussion about a topic BtB tweeted. However, BtB do not intervene in the discussion at all except for the original tweet. Thus, the discussion was developed solely by users.



**Illustration 6-3: Type 3 interaction**

**Type 3-1: Discussion with BtB intervention**

This is a variance of the Type 3 interaction. In this variance, BtB and two or more users engage in a discussion. In this type, BtB could join the conversation at any point and any time during the discussion.

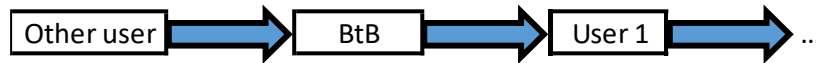


**Illustration 6-4: Type 3-1 interaction**

**Type 4: Other users**

In some cases, discussions started from other users' tweets. BtB either replied or retweeted other users' tweets, and subsequently a discussion follows.





**Illustration 6-5: Type 4 interaction**

Since the type 4 interaction is started by other users (i.e. not BtB), this type of interaction is omitted from the analysis (see subsection 6.1.2 below).

### 6.1.2 Selection Criteria and its Justification

Based on research questions (see Chapter 4), I chose types 2 and 3-1 for data analysis as main data. These types of interaction originated from BtB tweets and users subsequently became involved in discussion with BtB. Thus, they could have a chance to learn from the BtB response, which allows me to investigate any evidence of learning. I decided to use the types 1 and 3 as supporting evidence, for these reasons: they do not fit the research questions; type 1 does not give sufficient evidence of learning – only a single response from a user is available; in type 3 interaction, BtB is not involved in discussion, which reduces the chance for users to learn from it. Both types 1 and 3, however, provided an implication of BtB’s social media strategy indirectly, and can support the analysis of types 2 and 3-1. I excluded the type 4 tweets since they do not begin with a BtB tweet and thus fall outside the scope of this study.

In this chapter, I present data analysis and results of type 2 tweets.

## 6.2 Features of BtB tweets

While BtB is an educational, youth-led organisation, its use of Twitter gives an impression of a personal rather than paternalistic tone of communication. It is certainly a democratising organisation and has an agenda to encourage young people to vote. Yet, the topics covered in BtB tweets are diverse – from elections to everyday life – and educational. People do not live solely by their political agenda or professional work: life is a mixture of both public and private spheres. In addition to the description in Chapter 5, the following subsection describes the main features in BtB tweets illustrating themselves as people living in UK society, just the same as other young people.

### 6.2.1 BtB as an Educational Organisation

To make young people vote, they need to study the issues. As argued in chapter 3, voting is an individual act of political participation and thus an exercise of human rights. Because of this, no one can intervene in the voter's decision for whom they vote. Therefore, upon voting, they may look for information about candidates, which may require an ability to evaluate the degree of credibility and logic of a candidate's claim. The tweet below shows how users could assess the logic of information available on the Internet.

"HOW AGES VOTED (YouGov poll) 18-24: 75% Remain 25-49: 56%  
Remain 50-64: 44% Remain 65+: 39% Remain #EURefResults #TurnUp"

(Tweet #317 on 24 June 2016)

"is there a breakdown of attendance by those age range?"

(response from @R7)

"Well that's only a YouGov Poll, so until [sic] we have detailed breakdown, not as yet!"

(Reply from BtB)

In response to a BtB tweet (#317), a user @R7 raised questions about the voting patterns of those aged 18-24 [Purpose]. The questions raised by @R7 are in fact important, since the YouGov poll did not provide the metric (i.e. the population size surveyed) nor does this post include a weblink or other sources. Without showing the entire population size, the figures in the BtB tweets could lead to different interpretations. Moreover, it is important to check the sources from which the figures come ("is there a breakdown of attendance by those age range?"). These are necessary skills for media literacy so that one can analyse online information critically (Buckingham, 2003). The user's question is, from the perspective of media literacy, deemed to be an attempt to seek detailed information, while BtB's reply [Purpose] suggests encouraging the user to wait until the official statistics are released (see subsection 6.3.2 for further discussion). Referring to an official document or statistics is also important to avoid distribution of inaccurate information (cf. Hargrave et al., 2007).

Another discussion had a similar trend among users who tried to understand the basis of numbers:

“75% of young people across the UK voted to remain. #EURefResults #TurnUp”

(Tweet #316 on 24 June 2016)

“Do we know what the turnout was for 18-24 yr olds? What was that 75% as a total of the eligible voters?”

(Reply from @SG)

“I have been trying to find out too. Seems difficult, but is important. Do you have the answer now?”

(Reply from @LW to @SG)

“No, sadly I don't. Also fed up defending the rights of older people to vote!”

(Reply from @SG to @LW)

“It seems turnout for 18-24 group was 36%. +65 83%. Many young ones obviously couldn't be bothered to vote.”

(Reply from @LW to @SG)

This tweet #316 is the BtB's own reply to tweet # 317. The analysis was separated because different users involved in the interaction.

This particular tweet has two learning points. First, it is notable that BtB talks about a number of young people who voted for remain, while users talk about turnout among either young people or voters in total. As such, there is a difference in interests between BtB and users, although users' interests are not satisfied at this moment. The reply from @LW suggested difficulty in learning turnout figures by age (“I have been trying to find out too. Seems difficult, ...”) [Purpose], which is unsurprising: firstly, the UK does not publish official figures of turnout by age (see Dempsey, 2017); secondly, at the time of this interaction, all the numbers were provisional [Knowledge]. Because of these conditions, the last tweet from @LW (“It seems turnout for 18-24 group was 36%. +65 83%. Many young ones obviously couldn't be bothered to vote) was not convincing. @LW and other users (even BtB) were unable to provide solid data on turnout at that time. Therefore, their effort to learn the basis of calculation was unfortunately unsuccessful, though it is nonetheless an important attitude from the perspective of media literacy.

The above interaction shows an effort by users to understand the basis of a claim, although it did (or could) not succeed. People need to wait some time to see statistics since the numbers need to be calculated; in fact, BtB intervened in another interaction with a different user in tweet #317, saying that they need to wait until an official report to be published. Yet, BtB may need to keep telling users that the official figures are not available immediately, as many users may

be unaware of the nature of administration in the election system (see 6.3.1 for further discussion on this). Nonetheless, users' curiosity about the basis of numbers is a good sign, showing their awareness of media literacy and tricks of statistical presentation. Moreover, some users tend to rely on anecdote when they tweet (see section 7.2.1 for further discussion).

Secondly, BtB did not mention evidence (or source) of the number (75% of young people for remain). This is critical, as it is not evidenced, the legitimacy of the claim can be questioned. In the UK, there are no official turnout figures, or voting trends based on age; instead, organisations and universities conduct surveys on this, which often show different figures. For example, IPSOS-Mori concluded that 75% of 18 to 24-year-olds voted for remain (Skinner and Gottfried, 2016); YouGov insisted 71% of young people voted for remain (Moore, 2016). Full Fact defends a claim of 73% of 18 to 24-year-olds for remain, while it acknowledges some limitations on survey methods and different survey results among other surveyors (Full Fact, 2018). As such, considering the nature of voting in the UK, it is almost impossible to assert that a certain proportion of young people voted for remain/leave. Rather, as there is a methodological limit on non-voters (Skinner and Gottfried, 2016), any numeric claims on voting turnout/trends based on age should be perceived as guidance only.

The second point may relate to the first point on audience curiosity about the basis of numbers. As some of them sought the basis of numbers, in a sense, BtB has succeeded in guiding them to think independently about the claim; however, in my view, they needed to act in a way to deepen a discussion on the numbers.

In addition to the statistics, it is also important to check administrative regulations when they go to vote:

“Psssst! The @GOVUK site is working, here's your chance to #TurnUp a little late! [URL to registration site]”

(Tweet #418 on 7 June 2016)

“is that actually true though? many saying the deadline stands by law...”

(response to #418 from @JF)

“we also hear the same! However [sic] if that's the case, their last tweet was rather misleading! We'll find out soon!”

(Reply from BtB)

This BtB tweet is to encourage them to check the official announcement for an irregular situation. On the last day of registration for voting in the EU referendum, the government website for voting registration crashed and became unavailable. After some hours, it resumed service, while the government announced an extension of registration deadline. However, there was confusion among people, since it was not clear whether they could register to vote immediately after passing the original deadline. Although voting registration is legally regulated (“is that actually true though? [Purpose] many saying [Reference] the deadline stands by law [Knowledge] ...”), the situation was so exceptional that it was beyond the control of the law and required an ad-hoc decision. The user @JF asked if it is the case, knowing the registration deadline is a legal matter, and asked for evidence [Purpose]. Provided that registration is mandatory for any eligible people to vote in the UK, and such administration is controlled by the law, @JF acted to check the facts. The BtB response was to promise to look into this matter further, since they were not entirely sure at the time of tweet. As such, both sides acted in a professional manner to check the fact, and attempted to clarify the administrative issues in a chaotic situation.

Although BtB acted in a professional manner, the tweet contained a noticeable feature regarding BtB's identity as one of the young people. The phrase “Psssst!” is normally followed by the phrase “don't tell others but ...” [Knowledge] which hints that a listener is privileged. This is also very common among young people when talking about something secret and not to be known widely among other members. This strategy appears in other tweets:

“Are you a VIP in this EU Referendum? Make sure your vote counts, by registering: [URL to registration site] #TurnUp”

(Tweet #480 on 3 June 2016)

“Guest list closing today - last day for registration. Do it NOW by clicking here [URL to registration site] #GE2017 #TurnUp #rizeupuk”

(Tweet #146 on 21 May 2017)

The tweet #146 has a unique feature in that elements of Knowledge and Reference work conjunctionally. BtB told the audience that 21 May 2017 was the last day for voter registration for the general election on 8 June 2017 [Purpose]. In the tweet, BtB metaphorically showed registration as “Guest list” [Knowledge] [Reference] – similar to an invitation to a secretive event – and (young) voters as VIPs [Knowledge] [Reference]. Such a metaphor would certainly appeal to young people, considering “VIP” (as it stands for ‘very important person’) and “Guest list” infer the privilege of voting [Knowledge] [Reference]. Using these metaphors in a playful way, therefore, emphasises BtB is part of youth culture, and invites them to vote as their friends.

This can be found in a Twitter poll about quality of politicians:

“[POLL] Do you think people are TOO harsh on politicians? They definitely don't have the easiest job but are we too critical? (with 78 votes)”

(Tweet #15 on 17 July 2017)

While the tweet is to ask audience a question as to what extent people judge politicians harshly [Purpose], replies from followers, following type 1 interaction, shows how BtB reacts in a playful way:

“Discriminate. If they're honest and genuine they're owed civility and respect, but If slimy and venal they deserve 1000 Paxmans to the face.”

(Reply to tweet #15 from @LK)

“”1000 Paxmans [with a laughing emoticon]””

(Reply to @LK from BtB)

BtB agreed with @LK that people can be harsh to politicians (as in the original tweets) only when politicians are slimy and venal [Acceptance]. Paxman is a British interviewer, Jeremy Paxman, who is famous for his aggressive style of interview with dishonest politicians [Knowledge]. A quantified BtB's agreement “1000 Paxmans” is, therefore, a metaphor signifying the degree of harshness people can show, yet describing it playfully.

BtB is a CSO and thus is serious about mobilising young people to vote. However, these tweets show that it is not just ‘serious’; it is comprised of people

who are approachable and sympathetic to others. Showing such friendliness in Twitter may signal comfort and less pressure to young people when they attempt to make contact.

### 6.2.2 Living Together – Civic Judgement

While complying with the law and regulations is no doubt important and essential to live in a society, BtB encourages people to learn about collaboration with others. On this point, BtB believes that it can work with anyone who shares the aim:

“Is politics, PALE, MALE & STALE? Allow us to help YOU realise your political power: [Link to an article on website of Virgin] #Verto”

(Tweet #832 on 17 March 2016)

In response, the user @AU asked:

“@BiteTheBallot With the Virgin logo all over this, sadly I can't take this seriously!”

(reply to #832 from @AU)

“@AU We can all take first impressions, such as someone not having a profile picture being spam, but it's not always the full story!”

(BtB reply to @AU)

“@BiteTheBallot @AU hahaha, meow!”

(Reply from @AU)

“@[another user] @AU It's all about working together!”

(second BtB reply to @AU)

During this interaction, @AU has demonstrated a critical attitude [Purpose] about the legitimacy of working with a business company, Virgin [Knowledge], although @AU's second reply (‘hahaha, meow’) implies a lower degree of seriousness about his criticism [Rejection]. Interestingly, the Rejection delineates @AU's earlier reply to BtB. The link in tweet #832 leads to the blog of Virgin Unite, a foundation within Virgin, a UK mass media company, which shows how it supports BtB's work. This blog article is, however, a guest blog written by Michael Sani, the co-founder of BtB, with a disclaimer that the content of guest blog might not represent Virgin's view. Writing for the foundation of a business company may be a usual practice; it may raise a question on tension between business, with its aim to make profit by employing people, and community engagement. Therefore, the claim of @AU highlights the tension between business sense and democratic community living. On this point, BtB

counterargues that the importance is on working together, defending its position by urging not to judge on first impressions of a person or company [Purpose]. The Reference of BtB's counter-argument here is its own position, teamwork (see Chapter 5 for further detail). This tension further leads to a notion of cooperative citizenship.

As Crane et al., (2008) argues, the concept of 'citizenship' had been reserved for an individual, i.e. a living person. For this reason, the notion of corporate citizenship has sparked a conceptual dissonance and a somewhat uncomfortable misalignment. Crane et al., point out that many academics perceive using the words 'citizenship' or 'citizens' in annual business reports is merely a gesture to portray themselves as 'nice neighbours' (ibid). Their response is to some extent understandable, because the primary aim of business companies is to make profit, but not to pursue philanthropic activity or volunteer work. Furthermore, a republican view of citizenship conceptualises citizenship as working to live, and thus the government and other companies need to offer a workplace to citizens (Sandel, 1996: 169). In their view, people need to work so that they can maintain their livelihood and family, which is also considered a contribution to their country (ibid). Therefore, there is a hierarchical structure between individuals and companies: people work for them. As such, citizenship as a concept delineates people's activity in participating in society but excludes a company's activity.

The practice, if not the gesture, of corporate citizenship could include some forms of political participation. However, their means of political participation are limited and fewer than individuals can take. They do not have the right to vote: they cannot join a demonstration as a company. Instead, they can donate part of their profits to political parties and other charities where the law permits. In addition, they can (and do) join pressure/lobbying groups to express their opinion (Crane et al., 2008: 35–36). Since the nature of business is to make profit, they need to maintain a profitable environment for their business. For example, the National Rifle Association in the US donates funds to the US Republican Party, so that gun controls remain less restrictive. By doing so, their member companies can continue selling guns and retain sales revenue. By joining such groups, companies can express their views to the public and put pressure on government, so that they can continue their



business. In other words, business companies are also citizens, but are specialised and interested in making profit for their stakeholders.

Living together assumes learning about different perspectives. In addition to the above example, users may suggest different views about a politician:

“[a user] shared his views on the #EuRef during #InOutLive. Do you think the campaign has focused on 1 topic?”

(Tweets #366 on 19 June 2016; short movie was unavailable)

“may I point out ukip [sic] was formed to get us out of the EU for sovereignty. Early 90s no mention of immigration!”

(Reply from @CC to BtB)

“Lord of the Lies. #UKIP #EUref #Leave #Remain #Brexit #ProjectFear #ProjectHate”

(Reply from @SU to @CC)

“I thinkyou [sic] must be confusing him with david [sic] cameron [sic]”

(Reply from @FV to @SU)

The user @CC commented about UKIP, a political party in the UK, pointing out that the party did not mention immigration issues in the early 1990s, but their aim was to take the UK out of the EU [Knowledge]. In response, @SU agreed with @CC [Acceptance] and accused UKIP as “Lord of the Lies” [Purpose], an expression resembling ‘loads of lies’, suggesting that the party has shifted its target to immigrants, rather than EU, by listing hashtags including #ProjectHate (project hate) and #ProjectFear (project fear) [Reference]. However, @FV intervened to suggest it was David Cameron, a former prime minister of the UK, who maliciously accused immigrants in order to recover UK sovereignty [Knowledge]. The intervention however lacks Reference: what is the evidence for the claim that David Cameron wrongly accused immigrants of losing UK sovereignty? As argued in Chapter 4, I do not comment on whether their view is right; instead, I shall focus on the learning aspects from this interaction.

A responsible citizen may wish to check if a politician lies or not about an issue on which they have genuine concerns. In particular, immigration issues could be controversial, as the above tweet interaction suggests, since they can bring both positive (e.g. international experience) and negative (e.g. overstay) consequences. However, it is not an easy task: they need to see the evidence, for example, statistics, and official records which are available on the government website ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)). To navigate the website, they need to

acquire the skills to find the source of evidence, to interpret the data reasonably, and the ability to understand the context in which a politician behaves in a certain manner. The interpretation of data is one of the required skills to judge if the claim is appropriate or not (see the above subsection 6.2.1). It is possible to learn these critical thinking skills, although it would not be the case all the time. I will return to issues relating to such critical thinking skills in subsection 7.2.1.

### 6.2.3 BtB's Mission as Its Own Partisanship

Non-partisanship means not taking any particular side. BtB is, politically, considered non-partisan by not adopting the political manifesto of any political party. As shown in Chapter 5, BtB regards itself as non-partisan – in fact, its website states it is a 'party-neutral' organisation. Moreover, it has worked with various individuals, celebrities, and politicians from the wider political spectrum to achieve its purpose. Non-partisan does not mean, however, that BtB is undisciplined or rootless in its position: it has its own stance and mission. In other words, its political stance is 'encouraging young people to vote' and its formal statement *per se* shows this. Therefore, BtB may not intervene in options available to the general public in the referendum.

"30% of all 18-24 year olds are not registered to vote at the moment... Will you #TurnUp? [Link to news article]"

(Tweet #616 on 19 May 2016)

"I don't see the Leave campaign trying to encourage the young to vote, I wonder why"

(Reply to #616 from @WC)

"We're encouraging anyone to vote!"

(Response from BtB)

"I see that and I have also seen that the campaign to stay are supporting the [sic: here is double blank space] and encouraging the [sic] to register but not Leave."

(Reply from @WC)

The above interaction represents a rhetoric of the agenda employed by BtB. The user @WC asks why the leave campaign group is not encouraging people to vote, while remain campaign is doing so [Purpose]. The question is certainly important; in fact, BtB's first response 'We're encouraging anyone to vote!' shows their own agenda clearly [Reference] [Purpose]. Here, it is worth noting that the Purpose of the tweet refers to their own agenda as Reference, which left @WC wondering why the leave campaign did not encourage people

to vote as a result of the above interaction. This use of Reference as Purpose seems rather rhetorical (cf. Andrews, 2014); hence, the absence of a BtB response to @WC question appears a political manifest of BtB. For them, the important action is to encourage people to vote, but not to give information about a particular group, which may hinder the referendum result. As in the earlier rely ('We're encouraging anyone to vote!'), BtB's mission is to encourage young people to vote. Therefore, the absence of response highlights their mission in a diplomatic way so that they do not make (unnecessary) counterarguments against the Leave camp.

A somewhat problematic expression can be seen in the tweet below. BtB seems arguably not to care about the detail of how they mobilise young people to vote. Although their mission is to encourage them to vote, as a CSO with educational elements, the methods need careful consideration:

"Here's why Keira Knightly thinks you should #TurnUp next week. [image] Make your vote count and control your future! [with an unavailable short film]"

(Tweet #379 on 16 June 2016)

"5 seconds? Does everything related to the EU referendum HAVE to be nonsensical spun 'fact'? #TurnUp"

(Reply from @JH)

"If it gets people to #TurnUp, who cares!"

(Reply from BtB to @JH)

"there are alsorts [sic] of ways to get people to vote. Some better than others. Is it wrong to have an opinion?"

(Reply from @JH to BtB)

In this interaction, the user @JH raised a question about the factuality of the contents of the video clip. The emphasis seems on 'facts' about the EU or EU referendum ("Does everything related to the EU referendum HAVE to be nonsensical spun 'fact'?") [Purpose]. During the referendum campaign, there were some claims about the EU which were deemed false or misleading; therefore, it is unsurprising for people to focus on factuality about any claim at the time of tweet. However, the response from BtB ('If it gets people to #TurnUp, who cares!') suggests that BtB may not care about contents or any other available options [Rejection] in order to achieve the aim [Purpose]. The subsequent counter-argument from @JH seems to reflect the situation in the referendum campaign; in particular, the final sentence may represent an antagonistic sentiment to the situation [Knowledge] [Rejection] ('there are

alsorts [sic] of ways to get people to vote. Some better than others. Is it wrong to have an opinion?').

The discussion above concerns organisational issues, rather than political campaigning, underlining a difference of enthusiasm for a goal. If an organisation puts their utmost emphasis on achieving their goal, but pays less attention to the process, the organisation would take any pathway or means to achieve the goal. If it is more important to achieve the goal than choosing the right methods, its quality in question does not matter at all (in the above case, to mobilise young people to vote outweighs a consideration for factuality). In a sense, this attitude might be necessary for any person or organisation with a few years of experience in the field. However, it might also lead it to take questionable, if not illegal, ways, which might cause some people concern.

## 6.3 Discussion

As argued in Chapter 3, citizens themselves are already an authority. However, it has remained unclear how they can be authoritative i.e. how they practise their responsibility to society. In this section, I argue that being in a position to participate in political actions *per se* is their authority to make their society better. With this authority, they are responsible for inviting others (including young people) to a discussion place and encouraging them to talk without fear. To remove such fear, an individual could avoid judgments based on superficial impressions but could commit to actual collaboration with others. BtB has suggested these hints to their followers during the discussion, thus it makes them a key player in helping young people to learn the concept of responsibility as a citizen.

### 6.3.1 Learning and Practising Responsibility as Citizens

Overall, through the discussion, BtB has tweeted based on evidence (but see 6.2.1 and 6.3.2 for irregular tweets) and, whenever possible, included a link to it. This makes their tweet 'authoritative', as the key informant stated (see chapter 5), but also encourages followers to read and to post a comment on it.

The practice of critical thinking in a group enables effective learning about politics and political events around young people. As seen in the previous subsection, BtB has given examples of teaming up with others, and debating

without triggering an unnecessary dispute. Such practice suggests a moral aspect of the discussion: a person may express their own political opinion in a harmless way (see Chapter 2, particularly subsection 2.4). As previous studies reported (e.g. Anderson et al., 2014; Coe et al., 2014; Rowe, 2015), disputes in online discussion tend to happen when a person denies or attacks a particular opinion. One of the practical solutions against such 'uncivil' behaviour was to introduce a moderator scheme, to reduce or prevent the dispute. However, moderation for online discussion does not work all the time (e.g. Harris et al., 2014; Hughey and Daniels, 2013; Karlsson, 2012). Contrary to these studies, BtB's work suggests not only that mature behaviour would reduce uncivil online behaviour but also that it assists a constructive discussion. On this point, BtB retains this philosophy through the discussion.

BtB's approach, however, is not to represent itself as a paternalistic 'authority'; rather, it includes a strategy to show itself as a part of the youth community. As seen in subsection 6.2.2, they employed empathetic talk to keep the audience attracted to their tweet, employing metaphors to describe voting as 'luxury' and a 'privileged' act. These actions are in contrast to the findings from studies in subsection 2.4: they appear to undermine its stance to treat followers as mature. BtB provides guidance for young people so that they can be independent. This view was also supported by Ed, being able to demonstrate critical thinking skills:

"Is there an agenda behind it, how to critically think, how to challenge, misleading news or fake news."

(Interview with Ed)

In addition, the followers are still in their late teenage years and thus retain a sense of being 'teenagers'. They may still hope to have 'fun' and may be addicted to fancy expressions (e.g. comparing being a registered voter to being on a VIP list). BtB has separated these strategies: while it maintains friendliness, it makes followers think critically. Therefore, BtB provides the necessary information, based on which they trigger discussion, while treating the followers as mature people.

The issue with the BtB social media strategy here is its skill in coping with fast-paced change. Tweets #317 and #418 were similar to breaking news: while tweet #317 reported a percentage of young voters in favour of remain, tweet

#418 updated the extension of the deadline for voter registration. As in the case with voting trends in the EU Referendum, it takes some time for turnout and voting rates to be publicised. Any figures available on polling day are thus provisional and unofficial. Similarly, the decision to extend the registration period was so sudden that an evidential source was not immediately available. While BtB's livestream style tweeting itself is interesting and attractive, it may need to give some consideration to the learning process offered to young people. As long as those numbers and additional formal information were unavailable, any discussion would not be constructive or evidence-based, but merely speculative. Perhaps BtB could ask some questions to guide young people to reflect on election processes or on how they could move forward after the referendum.

The critical assessment of tweets is also a subject to consider. Tweets #317, #418, and #832 showed how they can be critical of information available on the Internet. Contrary to the argument in Chapter 3, these tweets show that people should be critical about information which might not come from an authoritative source. In the 21st century, people in Western democratic countries can freely access the Internet without interference from the government, as long as their usage is legal. In other words, they are responsible for judging whether online information can be trusted or not. The interaction on tweet #418 clearly indicates how people can demonstrate critical assessment of information available on the Internet. Yet criticism based on anecdotal evidence can be judgmental. BtB has generally handled these instances well, yet it seems to demonstrate the limitation of online learning. People have to rely on anecdotal evidence to some extent and this is inevitable. Anecdote may be useful but it only applies to certain individual cases. In addition, an anecdotal story may contribute to the spread of fake news (see following section).

### 6.3.2 Regulation and Evidence

Misleading information and so-called 'fake news' is commonly seen on the Internet. Although there is no consensus on the concept of fake news (Bakir and Mcstay, 2018b) and thus there is ambiguity about its definition (Schapals, 2018), fake news is arguably considered to be misleading information based on

unreliable or fabricated evidence, which is circulated and amplified in the online sphere (Bakir and Mcstay, 2018b; Nelson, 2018; Schapals, 2018). When it comes to fact-checking regulations about an election, the most sensible way is to visit the official website; however, this may not always be the case. Silva and Walker found that university first-year students relied on biased judgment and personal experience when they assessed the credibility of online articles (Silva and Young, 2018). Although these are not reliable criteria for assessing the genuineness of online information, they are in fact the easy ones to use. From this perspective, BtB has acted in a way to keep followers from inaccurate information which may be available online, as seen in tweet #644.

However, BtB seems sometimes to have difficulty in showing evidence. As shown in 6.2.1, BtB did not show evidence or the source of its claim. This can be very problematic, as it may damage the organisation. If the source of numbers (e.g. turnout, voting behaviour, etc) was not credited, users will not believe the claim and likely conclude it is speculation. A similar case happened when BtB updated the extension of the registration period, though they added the need to wait for an update from the government. This might be a learning point for any organisation or individual building a social media strategy.

In addition, from the perspective of online etiquette education, the above practice has significant meaning. While the curriculum of online etiquette education includes the assessment of online information (Buckingham, 2003; Hargrave et al., 2007), some assessment requires an additional technique. In particular, Hargrave et al., defined it as a skill to identify misleading, inaccurate information (Hargrave et al., 2007). The practice of BtB on Twitter seems to reflect the suggestion from Hargrave et al., as they guide and signpost original information. Their actions have not only reflected their ideals ('be authentic', see chapter 5) but also made an effort at least to prevent the circulation of information on the Internet, which might subsequently become misleading information. In addition, this effort is arguably the action of a responsible citizen. It is well-known that misleading information could allow an emergence of hoax, made-up, untrue news, which would confuse people and, in the worst case, jeopardise lives and properties.

Another issue with the BtB social media strategy is, as seen in 6.2.3, it may need to consider carefully the methods by which it achieves its aim. Undermining consideration of the appropriate method may send the wrong signal to its audience and may reduce credibility in its activities. As a CSO with an educational aim, it may want to retain credibility and authority in its activities and goals. Though it may diverge with youthful elements (see subsection 5.3), on social media, BtB needs to keep in a professional mode. It may be difficult to train the general public to use the Internet in a professional manner all the time, though BtB, or other CSOs can keep their professionalism. While, in overall, BtB's practice is arguably deemed interesting and encouraging for young people, it may wish to review some its posts and establish a code of practice (or similar) for its social media strategy.

## 6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the educational role played by BtB extends to the moral aspect of a mature person. Although BtB is a CSO, its activity extends to the field of learning, including regulatory aspects of the elections and the referendum, and giving advice on voter registrations. Moreover, BtB shared useful information, with reference to the original source and discussed the issues with users so that they could make their own decisions on voting. Given that voting is an act of decision-making, it is important to include many people in discussion opportunities.

Voting is, however, the act of people with authority. It is one of the human rights authorising people to intervene in a harmful situation so that it can be stopped. In other words, the people are already an authority with power. BtB has also acted in the role of educational mentor, teaching how they can use their power through voting. They need to consider as much information as possible before they vote, so that they can decide for which option or candidate they vote. Furthermore, since they are mature enough, they are expected to be able to explain their reasons for voting as they did. Although there is no right or wrong answer in voting, they should be able to explain why they voted for an option. The opportunities BtB has offered would be useful in helping them to summarise their ideas and thoughts, through interaction with BtB and other



participants. As such, the discussion opportunity on Twitter has certainly been a cultivating place for people to learn an aspect of individual 'authority'.

Such an opportunity would certainly be useful for young people. Although they are still young and may not have much experience in life, they are nevertheless an authority. The concept of authority can be translated to a responsible citizen in a context of co-living, or living in a diversified society (see Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010) with an emphasis of respect (Starkey, 1992). As such, they may be asked to explain their behaviour, for either a good or bad cause, and will be expected to be able to do so particularly in cases of dispute or misunderstanding. This is a basic expectation for a mature person, yet no one, including schools, gives solid training for this. It is rather a life skill to live together with others from different backgrounds, to achieve a harmonised society.

It still remains unknown how many people could learn the meaning of authority and realise the fact that they are already an authority. This is due to the fact that a limited number of people interacted with BtB and other users. In addition, not all British adults followed the BtB Twitter account. Some people do not know of BtB, and others do not even have their own Twitter account. Therefore, it is impossible to assess BtB's impact on the entire UK and thus it is inconclusive to claim whether they had an impact on the results of elections and the EU referendum. However, their activity as a democratising campaign organisation has several points to highlight and provide a rich source for citizenship education. Without a doubt, BtB has worked beyond the remit of a youth-led democratising campaign organisation – its work extends to nurturing a behavioural manner for a mature people.

## **Chapter 7      Data Analysis – Interaction with Multiple Users: Part II**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the data analysis and discusses the results of type 3-1 interactions (see Chapter 6 for type 2) and exceptional interactions. In particular, this chapter will focus on any evidence of learning from a user perspective to answer the second SRQ (see Chapter 4). Thus, the focus of this chapter is on the interaction among users (including BtB) with particular attention to the response among them. Furthermore, I will closely look at what evidence users used during the debate, and the process by which they developed the discussion. This evidence is discussed in subsection 7.3 as an indicator of democratic functionality, suggesting the degree of quality in democratic practices.

Overall, the users engaged in this type of interaction tend to rely on their own experience when they develop the discussion, while BtB provided credible and authentic information relevant to the discussion. In addition, the analysis suggested that users might not always pay attention to the initial tweet from BtB, particularly to the websites it linked. As a result, participants posted comments irrelevant to the discussion topic and thus it went off-topic. In contrast, the analysis also revealed that coherent discussions produced an appropriate opportunity for learning. These suggestions are termed as meaningful participation, a barometer of democratic practices to measure the quality of functionality of democracy.

Following the above implications from data analysis, I argue that, in an online environment, a reason for the difficulty in engaging in constructive discussion is because participants may not fully understand and share the aim of discussion among themselves. A lack of shared understanding also reduces the opportunity for them to engage in the discussion meaningfully, which subsequently disrupts the discussion and turns it off-topic. In contrast, if participants fully understand the discussion topic, they can discuss it meaningfully and learn by elaborating on evidence and opinions from fellow participants, including BtB. Therefore, I argue, in addition to the conclusion of

the previous chapter, BtB is in a position to nurture these participants to engage fully in the discussion. I conclude such meaningful participation is a responsibility of citizens involved in a civil society in the era of human rights.

## 7.2 Trend in the Discussion

This subsection reports the learning evidence among users and their over-reliance on anecdote. The analysis suggests that users tend often to refer to anecdote (their own story from daily experiences), but not to an authentic and credible source. Furthermore, they sometimes pay little attention to the links included in the initial tweets from BtB, which subsequently led to an off-topic discussion. The trend highlights the clear contrast to BtB's strategy (see Chapter 6) and yet partly aligns to the finding from my previous work (Miyazaki, 2016) and Hipp et al., (2015), although little attention to the purpose might bring an adverse effect in democracy (see Chapter 8 for further discussion).

### 7.2.1 Use of Anecdote as Supporting Evidence

As argued in 6.3, people tend to use anecdote as evidence for their claims, which could risk distribution of fake news. In contrast to the previous chapter, this chapter further explores the Twitter discussion based on a user's own experience, and thus insufficiently supported by solid evidence. The aim of this chapter is to understand how BtB handles anecdotally-evidenced discussions and claims from users. In the previous chapter, BtB referred to what it deemed credible sources, such as statistics, an official announcement or online news articles, all of which are verifiable and objective, when they engaged in the discussion or tweeted. However, as reported by Miyazaki (2016) and Hipp et al., (2015) respectively, whose studies were on Reddit but different discussion topics, users engaged in online discussion tend to refer to their own experience, rather than official material.

“The PM Theresa May has squashed the idea of lowering the voting age at UK elections if the Conservatives win power on 8 June. Thoughts?”

(Tweet #178 on 15 May 2017)

“it wasn’t until I was old enough to vote that I started to engage with politics, if the age was lower, I’d have begun sooner”

(Reply from @DX)

“Great point @DX!”

(Reply from BtB to @DX)

“The same here!”

(Reply from @RB)

Anecdote can play an important role in online discussion to negotiate a political stance among people, particularly when people are expected to talk from their own experience. The very aim of Tweet #178 is to ask whether the voting age should be lowered (currently set at 18 years old) and its justification (“Thoughts?” [Purpose]). The user @DX discussed its positive effect [Purpose], arguing it would nurture political consciousness among young people from a much earlier age [Knowledge] based on his/her own experience (“I was old enough to vote that I started to engage with politics”) [Reference]. This is not necessarily a view shared by all British people to support the argument: Some people might engage with politics from an earlier age because of a political movement at the time (e.g. anti-apartheid movement), while others might remain apathetic even though they are old enough. Despite this, subsequent replies from BtB and @RB agreed with @DX’s argument [Acceptance], suggesting the argument by @DX is convincing as @RB also started to engage with politics when he/she became eligible to vote. The agreement shows that the experience of @DX (becoming eligible to vote) could be shared and be a good reason for lowering the age so that people become interested and will engage with politics, along with other political movements.

BtB’s response is certainly encouraging. In light of their mission, it encourages and ‘make[s] noise’ (see Ed’s interview) to mobilise young people. However, its encouraging tone may not reach people who do not follow its account. I shall return to this topic in Chapter 9.

However, use of anecdotal evidence may trigger tension in a discussion:

“RT NOW: If you have registered to vote but your polling cards hasn't arrived, YOU CAN STILL VOTE. #iVoted #TurnUp”

(Tweet #321 on 23 June 2016)

“@FO So someone else could turn up claiming to be you?”

(Reply from @JK)

“As far as I can see even if you turn up with a polling card you don't have to prove you are that person.”

(Reply from @FO)

“They can, and may, ask for ID.”

(Reply from BtB)

“Never been asked but have lived in the neighbourhood for 30 years & am known to people at polling station”

(Reply from FO)

The intention of BtB's initial tweet is to inform people that they can vote without a polling card with them on the day of the polling day [Purpose]. The tension emerges when @JK suggests, while responding to @FO, whether it is possible for a person to misrepresent their identity as another person [Purpose]. The claim from @FO is based on his/her experience (“as far as I can see” [Reference]): it is not necessary to prove by him/herself. While BtB intervened that it is possible for administrators to ask a person to show their ID [Knowledge], @FO further justifies that has not been the case [Reference], at least, for him/her. Note that the Reference of @FO is anecdotal and incompatible with administrative rules. Here both BtB and @FO negotiate their mandate using their knowledge and reference (in this case, anecdotal evidence). A close look suggests that the argument and claim @FO has made is purely based on his/her experience and claim (“never been asked”, “am known to people at polling station” [Reference]).

A tension emerges in the use of such different discursive devices, between hard evidence (as used by BtB) and unclear evidence. While the experience of @FO might be applicable to all constituencies in the UK, BtB referred to a legal condition that authorises a member of staff to ask anyone to produce their ID. In other words, @FO's claim might be unconvincing unless someone disagrees with @FO stating that a member of council staff has asked for his/her ID in a polling station. While the above interaction did not reach 'incivil' behaviour (see Papacharissi, 2004 for further discussion on this topic), the conflict on emerged tension over evidence could be a cause of such incivil

interaction in online discussion. As long as BtB uses openly-accessible social media, an emergence of tension is inevitable.

Similar to the above, it is not always the case that users learn something from others. In discussion, sometimes a user rejects others' opinions and causes a discussion to go off-topic. In the discussion below, a user response in the discussion 'why older voters are likely to vote' shifted the topic to 'why young people are unlikely to register to vote' (and thus their turnout is low).

"Why do you think older generations are more willing to #TurnUp to vote? Vote in our poll..."

(Tweet #507 on 1 June 2016)

"more accustomed to the completely antiquated process of registering / voting. Where's my mobile app?"

(Reply from @J7)

"you can just do it online it takes like 5 minutes"

(Reply from @RJ)

"AND the website works on your mobile!"

(Reply from BtB)

"it's a pain if you're renting + moving a lot (like most young peeps), need to send off forms for postal vote etc"

(Reply from @J7)

"interesting article here on why young people less likely to vote [link to an article on Economist]"

(further reply from @J7)

This could be a case in which BtB's effort did not pay off. Responding to the imposed question, @J7 suggests online voting and registration would boost turnout among young people [Purpose]. Yet his/her argument is merely speculation supported by his/her imagination ("accustomed to the completely antiquated process" [Knowledge]) but not by an online article or other publicly available evidence. In addition, it is noticeable this speculation is not supported by any anecdotal evidence. The user @RJ and BtB explain [Purpose] that online registration is already available (but not a mobile application), adding that it will not take long to complete [Knowledge]. Their responses to @J7 are understandable since online registration is in fact available on the government website. Despite their explanation, @J7 maintains his/her own argument, claiming it is a demanding process if a person moves frequently, and subsequently introducing a link to an article [Purpose]. At this point, the Purpose of @J7 had shifted to another issue on the voters' registration system. After

@J7's report of an article on Economist, there was no further discussion of the registration system.

The issue is that @J7 did not listen to BtB and another user whose intention was to explain the reality (online registration). Similar cases have happened in online interaction. As seen in Chapter 2.4, some people on online discussion boards discredit a particular country and continue posting insulting remarks despite intervention from other people. The above Twitter interaction does not contain racial or abusive remarks, though a common feature is ignorant or dismissive comments. In democratic discussion, it is expected that people listen to others in order to reach a meaningful conclusion (see subsection 7.3 for further discussion on this). It might be a challenge for any organisation using social media to handle people who continually ignore posts from others.

In addition, the above Twitter interaction suggested the difficulty of keeping coherence in discussion among users. The article @J7 introduced was about low turnouts among young people from The Economist, a journal specialising in social issues (D.K., 2014). It is not clear what argument the article made, since it required registration and payment to read in full at the time of access. However, judging from the first two paragraphs, the author seems to disagree with a claim about youth apathy, arguing high participation rates on volunteering, better education, and lower alcohol and drug abuse (ibid). Even if the argument in the article takes the above line, the user@J7 did not support his/her claim sufficiently. The initial question from BtB was about the reason for a higher tendency among older generations to vote, not about reasons for low turnout. Furthermore, using this type of website may prevent others from joining the discussion. Using Twitter does not mean one can automatically access online content on websites with a paywall: in fact, I could not read the full article through the University library. It may reduce the possibility for others to learn and, consequently, reduce the chance for them to join a democratic conversation.

Despite the above, BtB appears not to intervene in the use of anecdote as an evidence for the discussion, or in the use of a website whose accessibility might be questionable. The reason is not clear but the following interaction

could suggest a potential role of anecdote in online discussion, such as on Twitter:

“Tell us why you're going to #TurnUp to vote and you could #WIN @StarbucksUK vouchers! T&C: [Link to Facebook page on a competition]”

(Tweet #361 on 20 June 2016)

“. @BiteTheBallot I'm going to #TurnUp because I don't want young people to have the minority voice in a referendum which effects us the most.”

(Reply from @PM to BtB)

“I've heard so many people around 18 talking about voting today. it's [sic] great.”

(Reply from @JD to BtB)

BtB encouraged followers to take part in a campaign telling their reason for voting via a link to its Facebook page which has its own Terms of Conditions with the Tweet [Purpose]; however, the above replies represent motivations to vote in the EU Referendum in the form of personal beliefs or thoughts. The reply from @JD emphasises such perspectives (“I've heard so many people around 18 talking about voting today [Knowledge]. it's [sic] great.”), with an evaluative comment to what @JD might hear that young people's discussion about voting “it's [sic] great”. The phrase suggests @JD's recognition of the fact that talking about politics signals an interest in politics; as such, it further indicates that more young people are aware of the importance of the referendum. Note that the basis of the evaluative comment is @JD's anecdotal [Knowledge]. While the reply from @JD shows his/her interest in politics, the motivation to participate in voting is based on his/her anecdotal experience.

The reply from @PM emphasises personal belief as a motivation to vote in the referendum. The reasoning for @PM to go to vote (“I don't want young people to have the minority voice in a referendum which effects [sic] us the most” [Purpose]) is not necessarily agreed by everyone, as reasons to vote can vary widely. This is rather a personal, yet important, reason: it signifies the importance of voting as an exercise of human rights. The phrase (“I don't want ... in a referendum”) suggests the fear that a minority would control young people's lives [Knowledge]. Again this Knowledge does not accompany any Reference to strengthen its Purpose: it is not clear who the minority are, how they undermine young people etc. However, the belief here is certainly a good reason to vote i.e. it is a practice by a responsible citizen. The absence of Reference has represented @PM's Purpose in such an abstract manner: it is



not clear to what extent this personal belief (or determination) could defend young people.

As shown in Chapter 1, young people are not apathetic, but they are reluctant to go to vote. The above Twitter interactions show the absence of Reference in the argument but overuse of anecdotal [Knowledge] or ideological argument. Although it is a general trend in online discussion to use anecdote as supporting evidence, it is worth noting that an anecdote is not objective evidence and thus is not convincing. Overt reliance on anecdote causes difficulty in keeping a coherent discussion and thus it does not continue further. Furthermore, use of ideological argument may represent a political mandate to force readers to take action in order to cope with a given situation (see Fairclough, 2010; Wilson, 2003). Therefore, it is worth investigating how people can use anecdote to make a constructive discussion.

### 7.2.2 Insufficient Understanding of Initial BtB Tweets

One possible way to increase youth turnout would be an improvement of the political education curriculum. While discussion about the curriculum itself is out of the scope of this thesis, the education curriculum could include methods of registration, voting, and voting systems. BtB and users discussed the issue on Twitter, which suggested several focusses in this topic. The discussion below is about a tension between curriculum design and the intention of the government.

“School should prepare us to #TakePower: why we're making #ThePledge (and why you should too) [URL to a Google Docs]”

(Tweet #694 on 3 May 2016)

“@BiteTheBallot @CB Hmm, " a political education". What can poss [sic] go wrong? I'd rather kids learned stats so they cld [sic] spot lies”

(Reply from @NH)

“@NH @BiteTheBallot So include that in political education. Present void is a gift for right-wing media, predatory corporations”

(Reply from @CB)

“@CB @NH We can all create this curriculum together, too. If the option is there.”

(Reply from BtB)

“@BiteTheBallot @CB but is that really the way curricula work? Govts control curricula.”

(Reply from @NH)

The hashtag (#ThePledge) indicates a campaign to change the educational curriculum to include political education. As seen in the image below, it argues that students should be able to act as citizens when they leave school (Image 7-1). As such, the URL led a petition form on Google Docs asking people to show their support for the campaign.



Image 7-1: Advertisement of the pledge campaign

In contrast to the campaign, the user @NH discussed possible curriculum content, arguing that inclusion of statistics into the curriculum would improve students' skills in identifying misrepresentation in a political statement [Purpose]. As shown in the previous chapter, numbers and figures in statistics can deliver a different meaning if their metrics are not clearly shown (for detail, see Chapter 6). In fact, BtB agreed to take part in creating a curriculum of

political education (“We can all create this curriculum together” [Purpose]), signalling its recognition of this possibility [Knowledge]. The reply highlights BtB’s teamwork spirit (“We can all create ... together”) which works as Reference to their Purpose. However, the next tweet from @NH underpins his/her scepticism about such a collaboration with the government (“Govts control curricula”. [Knowledge]). It might be the case that @NH may refer the National Curriculum which the government oversees and designs (possible [Reference]). If this is the case, it is certainly the fact that the government sets the educational curriculum, although it does not necessarily mean to exclude young people from a consultation process for so doing.

In citizenship education, the ‘Crick Report’, authored by Sir Bernard Crick, several academics, and school headteachers had recommended including citizenship as a statutory requirement in all of the UK schools (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). This example suggests, at least, a possibility for people to join a curriculum improvement process. The crucial process is to find a route through which young people could have an opportunity to participate in this process.

In this Twitter chain, the discussion appeared to highlight one aspect of the pledge campaign. As shown in Image 7-1, political education is one of the demands – others are the voter registration and youth inclusion and empowerment. It is therefore notable that discussion is not about the campaign as a whole, but rather about one specific issue on political education for young people, leaving aside voter registration. At the beginning of the interaction, they discussed the possibility of including statistics in the political education curriculum, and the reason for this. While such an argument would contribute to improving the curriculum content, during the course of interaction, it became clear that they are in fact not talking about the campaign *per se* but a school subject they hoped to include. Moreover, while it might be useful to include statistics in a political education curriculum, it is applicable to the entire UK (and possibly, other countries too). In a sense, users do not keep to the discussion topic because they appear not to pay attention to it carefully. This happens often during discussion with BtB.

“Our poll on the #EUReferendum has ended! The results are in and we're interested to hear your thoughts! RT & Share!”

(Tweet # 896 on 1 March 2016)

“@BiteTheBallot @[another user] strange that this poll is way off the mark of every other poll out there, why?”

(reply from @WS)

“@WS @[another user] Maybe more young people voted, maybe it's just a Twitter reaction, or something else!”

(reply from BtB)

“@BiteTheBallot @[another user] with the result I'd have thought it would have been more targeted to the old as they're more in favour of out”

(reply from @WS)

The poll BtB mentioned was one about the EU referendum they conducted on Twitter from 22 February to 29 February 2016. The Twitter poll is a feature of Twitter which allows users to vote about any topic; however, users are required to log in to do so.

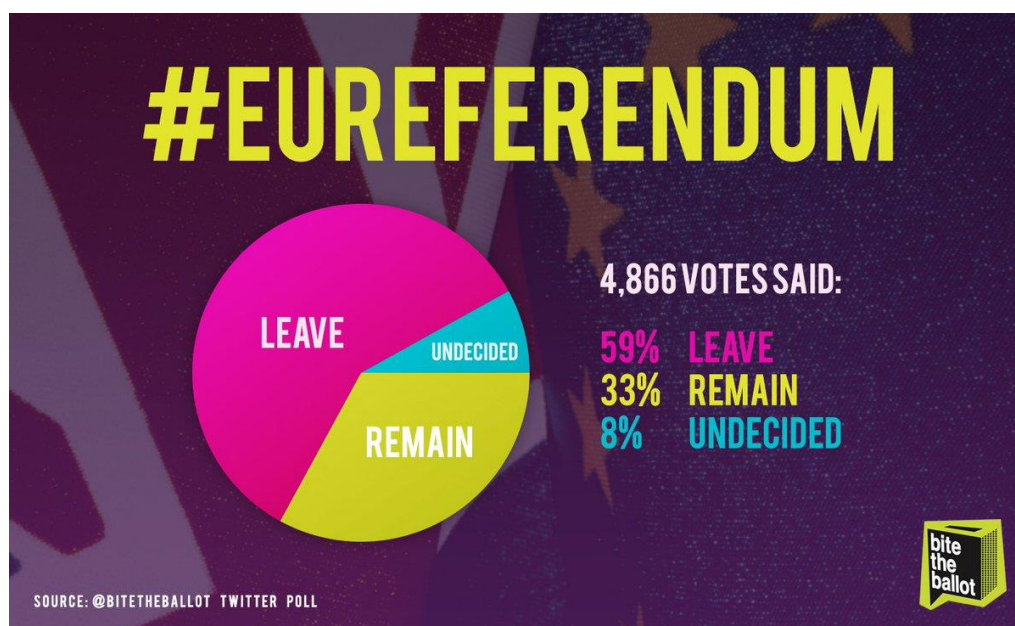


Image 7-2: The result of Twitter poll published on 1 March 2016 with Tweet 896

Therefore, the result did not represent the entire population of the UK: it rather reflected a partial population as BtB admits (“maybe it’s just a Twitter reaction” [Knowledge]). However, the first reply from @WS suggests that he/she might not be aware of the fact that this is merely Twitter poll by asking a question (“strange that this poll is way off the mark of every other poll out there” [Purpose]). Furthermore, @WS explains that the result (‘leave’) signals that the poll was just for older people [Purpose], suggesting they are likely to vote to leave the EU [Knowledge]. While @WS’s statement suggests different trends

between younger and older people on EU referendum, @WS seems to misunderstand that this poll was the same as other polls. It is quite possible that old people on Twitter voted for leave on the poll, though it still did not represent their view accurately. Moreover, on a Twitter poll, it is impossible to target a certain political preference or trend – it is open to all Twitter users who follow the account. Given that BtB is a non-partisan organisation, at the time of the Twitter poll, the statement from @WS suggests he/she might insufficiently understand the nature of the poll.

The reply from @WS further suggests the importance of literacy in statistics. As argued in the political education tweets, statistics can mislead people. In particular, given that a Twitter poll is not scientific at all, its result is not reliable; as such, it is not comparable to other polls. Although BtB admitted that it is just a Twitter poll, BtB might need to explain why it may not be reliable. Individuals can use Twitter without charge; they need only internet access and a device. Twitter user demography is not published or available and thus it is not known who voted in the poll. Therefore, users' socio-economic status is arguably mixed – from teenagers to seniors, from economically disadvantaged to wealthy, school leavers to university professors. Since a Twitter poll does not show who voted for which options, it does not allow further analysis of voting behaviour. These conditions do not provide a meaningful insight into the issue (remaining in or leaving the EU); it is rather an entertainment feature.

It is worth mentioning that not all users engage seriously in issues BtB has raised.

“Is the LGBT community safe on London's transport? It's a key issue for the Mayoral election: [broken link]”

(Tweet #696 on 1 May 2016)

“@BiteTheBallot Maybe the guys just a racist? Hard to tell if someones [sic] gay just by looking at them.”

(Reply from @VB to BtB)

“@VB What can be done to make people feel safer?”

(Reply from BtB to @VB)

“@BiteTheBallot Government funded self defence [sic] classes should be mandatory for all and it should be legal for all gays to carry shanks.”

(Reply from @VB to BtB)

As the link in tweet #696 was broken, it is not clear what the website was about; however, the interaction here suggested how BtB handled a frivolous response.

The aim of the original tweet is to ask users to consider how transport in London can be a safe place for members of the LGBT community [Purpose]. BtB asked further what measures could be taken for members of the community to feel safe [Purpose]. However, the response from @VB does not answer the question from BtB. Allowing all LGBTQ people to have shanks (i.e. weapon) can signal they are LGBTQ, which is contradictory to @VB's earlier response (“Hard to tell if someones [sic] gay just by looking at them”). Moreover, it is difficult to see a source [Reference] for the suggestion to permit them to possess shanks legally and financing mandatory self-defence class [Knowledge]. The interaction here ended with no further tweets from BtB or other followers, perhaps because of the contradictory reply. Yet, such contradiction might disturb the constructive nature of discussion on controversial issues, and thus might keep others from participating in the discussion.

The interaction above appears to relate to the concept of meaningful participation, which will be discussed further in subsection 7.3 below.

It is worth noting that after @VB's suggestion, the discussion stopped without developing into an uncivil exchange of comments, as reported in several studies in online interaction (see Chapter 2). Possession of shanks is illegal in the UK and it would be unsurprising if suggesting the legalisation of weapons caused a backlash from other users in the discussion. As suggested in the above paragraph, it could be the case that the discussion itself kept its coherence and its discussion topic, apart from this suggestion. Therefore, the

discussion could go on, for example, a review of the suggestion from the perspective of an 'inclusive environment' on public transportation or in public spaces. Citizenship education is about how to live together or co-living (see Chapters 2 and 3); therefore, it is a good opportunity to consider public behaviour and its consequences (see Chapter 8 on this topic) on Twitter interaction. In particular, online discussion on public codes of practice could be innovative, given the discussion environment.

At its advent, it was often argued that the Internet would promote democracy and connect people more closely with its technology (White, 1997). It was true in some senses: online discussion forums such as Yahoo and Reddit are places where people post their comments on any given topic. These forums no doubt provide opportunities for people around the world to exchange views and opinions on a topic, if they can understand the language in use. In short, they have functioned as a global 'community'. As a result, the expectation of the Internet from the mid-1990s appears to have been achieved in one sense. However, in another sense, it has not brought people closer in terms of mutual understanding. As I argued in Chapter 2.4, some people use the Internet with malicious intention, not necessarily for their own financial sake but to practise their political mandate.

In online learning, people may not be malicious; however, the interaction in type 3-1 tweets suggests that the learning trend among users differs from BtB's Twitter strategy. In the previous chapter, I argued that BtB provided sources deemed as 'authoritative' and 'credible' during discussions on Twitter, which encouraged people to be able to contribute responsibly to their own community. In contrast, users tended to rely on anecdote and experience from their daily life, which are not considered 'authoritative' or 'credible' sources. In particular, users are less critical about anecdotes: they do not challenge their legitimacy or robustness as evidence. While it is not clear as to why people are uncritical, Miyazaki (2016) suggested the possibility of not having alternative evidence to which they could refer in making a counter-argument. It is possible that those participants are not in a position to access any evidence, or they may need to buy subscriptions to access. However, in this thesis and in this data set, I argue that the aim of discussion is to learn to participate in a political action.

Reading through and responding to opinions about social issues from the viewpoint of other participants' would raise unfamiliar views which they may otherwise not encounter in their daily life. Online political discussion would, in this sense, facilitate political socialisation among people, as it develops political sense and perception among them (Dekker, 1991; German, 2014). Dekker contends that socialising with people and agents (e.g. education, media) develops an individual's view about political systems (Dekker, 1991). German focusses on the importance of agents – education, family and media/Internet (German, 2014). German argues that family is the primary agent of political socialisation an individual meets in their early life and, as such, the agent's political views and perceptions influence him/her over a lifetime (ibid). Yet German appears to overemphasise the family's influence over one's entire life; their political view could change as they grow up. As Warleigh found, NGOs can act as a political socialiser in a society (Warleigh, 2001), which suggests people may develop their political views as they widen their social circle. Therefore, online political discussion is an opportunity for them to learn about political issues.

Yet, it is necessary for them to acknowledge the discussion topics being debated. As seen, users appeared to pay little attention to the links contained in the initial BtB tweets, which resulted in a loss of coherence in the discussion, which meandered off-topic. As Dewey (1916) argued, the aim of learning is to allow a person continuously to grow to maintain life. However, such learning needs to be coherent and organised, aligned to the focus. Otherwise, it causes a disruption in the discussion which prevents others from elaborating their discussion in an insightful manner. As such, a disruption in the discussion suggests users are not engaged in the discussion in a serious manner or, at best, they do not understand the purpose of the discussion.

### 7.2.3 Exceptional Interaction

The following interactions exhibit BtB's ethos, although these interactions fall into a subsection of BtB's main agenda. As is often the case, an organisation works on subsidiary tasks, such as logistics, around its main agenda. Through working on the main task, BtB attempted to distribute flyers for its campaign to reach wider audiences in the UK. As such, they tweeted:



“London! We've got some wicked #TurnUp poster/sticker packs available if you're able to come by. Get in touch with us to arrange pick-up”

(Tweet #112 on 6 June 2017)

People who wish to receive the packs replied:

“Those look amazing! Where are you, if you still have some available to pick up?”

(@KW)

“Hi [user's name] - for sure! Drop us a line on 020 3643 4502 to arrange.”

(reply from BtB)

“[In reply to another user] Sure, DM us leaving your phone number and we'll call back ASAP”

(BtB replied to a user, whose tweets was hidden)

“These are AWESOME [two emoticons] Whereabouts in London are you based for collection?”

(@LB)

“78 Duke Street, W1K 6JQ - nearest tube Bond Street - head on over!”

(reply from BtB to @LB)

The above interaction suggests BtB's political stance supporting their campaign [Purpose]: options and choices (see Chapter 8). While BtB asks followers to visit their office to collect the packs (“if you're able to come by”) [Knowledge], they also offer an arrangement over phone [Reference]. Note the Knowledge here is a basis to make people to show their intention if they are not able to visit BtB's office in person. In fact, a similar interaction occurred on 5 June 2017, the day before the above interaction when they received new stickers and posters for their campaign:

“Yesss it's Election Week and we've got #TurnUp stickers & posters fresh off the printer. DM us to grab yours TODAY. #GE2017”

(Tweet #119 on 5 June 2017)

“im [sic] not london [sic] based (happy to cover postage!) but would love some of these for me and my university pals to spread the word!”

(reply from @HL)

“That's great [user's name] - do you want to dm us some contact details and someone will be in touch to arrange getting them over to you.”

(reply from BtB to @HL)

The user @HL admits that they are not in London where the BtB office is located. As such, @HL offers to pay postage (“happy to cover postage!”) [Reference] as @HL is not based in London [Purpose] for sending the packs to their home, which is not mentioned. In response, BtB asks @HL to send a direct message (which is used for Twitter users to communicate each other) to arrange this [Purpose]. The interaction with @HL, as well as @KW and @LB

shows BtB asking them to choose an option with which they are happy. In other words, they need to decide themselves from available options. In Chapter 8 of this thesis, I discuss this point further.

The exceptional interaction in this subsection supplies additional information on BtB's ethos: that is, guiding young people to make a decision. It indicates that, even on the Internet, it could build a meaningful interaction and discuss political issues in a professional way. Drawing from findings in Chapters 6 and 7, the next subsection looks at the issue of serious engagement in a discussion, which is termed as 'meaningful participation'.

### 7.3 Conceptual Argument: Meaningful Participation

This subsection attempts a conceptual understanding of BtB's activities on Twitter (see Chapters 5, 6, and 7.2 for BtB's Twitter use). To formulate a conceptual argument, I shall begin by discussing the degree of participation in a democratic society, in light of democracy, diversity, and the Internet.

As argued in Chapter 3, democracy needs diversity of opinion in discussion. Yet, diversity is not diversity until its existence and value are unconditionally respected in its community: in other words, diverse participation should be recognised and valued. Engagement and encouragement for young people to vote and to participate in society are no doubt precious and valuable in the mission to sustain and improve democracy. In democratic discussion, it is important to keep coherence and relevance in a debating topic. To maintain a coherent discussion, I shall argue that meaningful participation is key to sustaining participatory democracy and a democratic society.

Jerome and Algarra (2005: 497) argue that participating in a discussion will in itself keep democracy healthy, since people are working together to achieve a common goal. While setting a common goal *per se* is seen in the argument of deliberative democracy, it does not guarantee reaching a final decision through debate (see Chapter 3 for further reference). In order to reach the goal (i.e. a final decision), they people work in a team to examine ideas, information, theories etc. by submitting their opinions from their own positions (Johnson and Johnson, 1993). These steps are arguably necessary to maintain a healthy democracy, allowing the existence of counter-opinions and

counterviews in the debating topics (Mouffe, 2005a, cf. 2005c). As such, a good grasp of these topics keeps discussion coherent and productive so that participants can reach a conclusion (Samuelsson and Bøyum, 2015: 85). The discussion *per se* does not contribute to the maintenance of democratic function; it needs a well-defined purpose and a precise procedure (Johnson et al., 1996; Johnson and Johnson, 1993).

The common goal leads, according to Johnson and Johnson (1993), to a high quality conclusion after the discussion. During the discussion process, participants would be exposed to several perspectives, and the discussion subsequently becomes a critical examination. To make this process effective, all participants should understand different perspectives to examine their validity (Zorwick and Wade, 2016: 442). This process is, as yet, hardly seen in online discussion, since it is difficult to establish a common goal or consensus. Shum and Lee mention that each online discussion forum has its own behavioural norms, although such norms are unwritten and thus the degree of participants' understanding unclear (Shum and Lee, 2013). In online discussion, no one defines the concept of 'participation' and forces it on participants, while in classrooms, teachers could decide the learning objective, define a concept of participation, and an evaluation standard. As such, the nature of online discussion might not sufficiently meet the definition of meaningful discussion. McLelland further argues that anonymity fosters an unconstructive nature of discussion and consequently allows the existence of racism and hatred comments (McLelland, 2008).

In order to use the Internet, people need to pay a connection fee and to possess a device to access it. These requirements do not test a person's moral code of conduct or level of knowledge for online discussion, though these elements are in fact necessary to participate in discussion (Zorwick and Wade, 2016: 435–436). This is a stark difference from a higher educational institutional context where there is a selection process through which the academic and learning competencies of students are assessed against pre-set criteria. As such, academically, they are expected to have a certain degree of knowledge, an ability to grasp the discussion topic as well as the facility to participate in an academic discussion. Such expectations develop a learning environment where students can enhance their learning activities through socialising with fellow

students (cf. Gilbert, 2004). While Gilbert argues that an 'expectation' from others might form a societal expectation for youth political participation (ibid), it needs to be emphasised that expectation could play the role of agent, as the guideline for citizenship education (see Chapter 3).

In contrast, online interaction has a shadowy aspect which has attracted certain academic interest (see subsection 2.4 for further detail). While the Internet has a long-standing tradition of diversity of users, the result of such a wide range of backgrounds has led to disruption: so-called 'flaming', or 'incivility' (see Papacharissi, 2004 for the concept of incivility). Such online misbehaviour has often caused unnecessary conflict among users, leading to a series of racially abusive remarks and discriminatory comments (see Hughey and Daniels, 2013; McLelland, 2008 for examples). In the context of meaningful participation, 'flaming' and 'incivility' would be labelled as ignorant participation in online interaction. Despite the discussion in Chapter 3, it is doubtful whether seeing such anti-social actions and behaviour would offer any learning opportunity for young people on the Internet (cf. Livingstone et al., 2013; Livingstone and Bulger, 2014). In addition, such incivility makes little or no contribution to the interaction; thus, it renders the interaction unproductive and discouraging, if not harmful.

The ignorant participation is a mere participation and does not contribute to the discussion (see the example in subsection 7.2.2). A person may express irrelevant opinions, and other people in the discussion will not be able to learn from such random contributions. Furthermore, the quality of discussion may deteriorate by expelling those who make relevant statements in the discussion. As Karlsson reported, such bullying causes the atmosphere in a discussion place to deteriorate, and participants became reluctant to post or stop participating (Karlsson, 2012). It is unproductive to engage in a discussion from which they can learn nothing and they might feel that involvement in such unproductive discussion is a waste of time (cf. Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010; Starkey, 1992). In contrast, if people keep expressing relevant opinions aligned to the discussion topic, the quality of discussion will remain high, meaningful, and productive. Furthermore, it will enable participants to learn something from fellow participants, and thus it is meaningful for them to remain engaged. Provision of a learning opportunity retains participants in the discussion, which

also maintains the quality of discussion. I shall conceptualise these acts as meaningful participation.

An act of meaningful participation is conceptually defined as any act which contributes to the constructive discussion, measured against the degree of relevance to the topic (see subsection 7.2.2). As long as the act is during the discussion, it does not matter whether the comments are based on anecdote or published articles. For example, it is well-known that members of the general public use anecdote, i.e. their own experience from daily life, during political discussion. I argue that, in the online environment, it is the best way for them to learn from each other. In particular, online discussion on Twitter and other SNSs have no pre-agreed rules or norms for interaction. This fact signals that there is no curriculum (as in schools) setting a certain standard of discussion manner. Instead, users will learn from anecdote, and other relevant websites, as long as it falls into the act of investment in an intelligent asset. Therefore, they do not have a reason to demand rigours of the evidence to support their argument. If they think the evidence is relevant to the discussion (i.e. investment in common), they do not need further examination or discussion on it.

It is thus conceptualised that the investment in common is in fact a sign of an active member of the community. An active member is expected to engage in the community spontaneously: they will be aware of issues around community members and/or an issue facing the community as a whole. Through the engagement process, they will have the opportunity to learn about and share these issues with other members there. If people can learn from each other during the meaningful discussion, such participation could be conceptualised as 'informed participation'. Since they understand and are able to contribute to the discussion meaningfully, they give information to others, keeping other participants informed. In short, having a common interest or concern with others is key to the successful investment in common which will strengthen a tie among community members i.e. solidarity.

This is in fact a practice of care to others in a community, informed participation shows their identification as part of a community (Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010). The feeling is underlined by solidarity so that such

participation could contribute to the development of a community and could facilitate further involvement in community activities by its members. In contrast, ignorant participation merely gives random information from which other members of the community are unable to learn or to reach meaningful agreement (cf. Jerome, 2012: 171–175). In other words, this is the act of belonging to a community by maintaining quality of a community enthusiastically. In this regard, the background of the participants does not matter at all, however diversified it is. While using anecdote during discussion might work to exclude certain people, it is, paradoxically, the most accessible way for them to understand the discussion. In fact, it is worth noting that in the data, no one, including BtB, rejected or insulted the anecdotes used. While this may be explained partly because it is impossible to prove their invalidity, I argue that such criticism does not produce any meaningful discussion.

Because of the above reasons, I can explain why people are less critical about the use of anecdote as evidence in the online environment. Low levels of criticism against use of anecdotes are due to the wider variety of backgrounds of people who engaged in the Twitter discussion. In fact, the followers of the BtB account vary in terms of their occupations and political beliefs (and, possibly, ages). On Twitter, people just follow any account they are interested in, and there is no requirement other than that. Similarly, the degree and nature of ‘interest’ would widely vary among users. This aligns to what I argued in Chapter 3: users have learnt about other users through interaction on Twitter. On Twitter interaction, people use their own anecdote and other websites as part of their replies to BtB (see Chapters 6 and 7). Such usages are, I shall argue, online specific norms (see Miyazaki 2016). On the Internet, people can refer to several websites as part of a post in order to fulfil particular agendas or mandates (ibid). Socialising in such a way would force them to learn a way of interaction and communication for discussing political issues i.e. this means works as an agent of political socialisation.

In contrast, in a university setting for example, a prospective student must go through a selection process which scrutinises his/her academic competency and learning skills before admitted to the institution. As a result, the students in the institution share a similar degree of academic interest and competencies, knowledge in the field and learning skills; in other words, it is academically

homogeneous. Moreover, institutional discourse on higher education forces them to focus on learning academic subjects as a student (see Gee 2010). Such a discourse is strengthened by expectations from academic staff of students so that students can behave and communicate as university students (cf. Bloch, 2002). The difference between institutional settings and Twitter is not only a pre-existing selection procedure, but also an expectation and its degree. While I shall return to this point in section 8.1.1, it is worth considering the nature of Twitter (and other online platforms) as diversified environments functioning as agents for political socialisation among young people.

Where there is diversity among people, it also suggests a lack of common experience and shared language. Therefore, they have no option but to accept the anecdotal evidence referred to by fellow users. Since anecdote is a subjective experience, no one can prove or measure its usefulness and relevance to the discussion. Unlike a rigorous discussion by experts, where relevance and strong evidence are required, there is no way for the general public to find and use such evidence to support their arguments. Given this situation and the wider demography, it is not a good idea to debate on the capacity of anecdote as evidence during discussion. In other words, arguing such issues is not constructive or productive in such environment. Furthermore, it highlights how discourse in online settings emerges. In online discussion, there are no pre-agreed rules or norms. It is the users of the Internet who create and are continuously producing norms while they interact. The discussion in this subsection suggests that such norms adhere strongly to the debate topic and its contribution measured by the relevance of comments to the topic.

Meaningful participation is measured by the relevance of the contribution made through the act of investment in an intelligent asset within the discussion. Its assessment adheres to the discussion topic but not to the rigour of evidence. Now that the Internet is deeply rooted in society, and people have human rights, it is a responsibility of people to pursue meaningful participation during online discussion. The role of BtB as a mentor is, therefore, conceptually defined as a guide for young people to become a mature, responsible citizens who are able to engage in meaningful participation in society.

## 7.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the data analysis in this chapter suggests a barometer to measure the degree of democratic practice. It reveals that there is a clear difference in regard to use of evidence between users and BtB. While the users often referred to anecdote when they engaged in discussion with other users and BtB, BtB showed information from an authentic and verifiable source. Furthermore, BtB was tolerant to their use of anecdote and did not criticise or deny its validity within this data set, as long as it was relevant to the discussion. The focus on the discussion topic and avoidance of criticism of use of anecdotal evidence appear to be indicators of democratic practice.

I argued such approaches signify an active participation in a community. While online discussion often leads to unconstructive and unhealthy argument, BtB has focused on debating topics to produce meaningful participation and constructive discussion. To facilitate constructive discussion, they took an approach which accommodates various perspectives from users and allows their use of anecdotal evidence. Its openness to anecdote could be due to the fact that it is still possible to learn from their anecdotes, since each person in this society has a different and unique experience in their daily life. Particularly on Twitter, they are interested in, at least, the activity BtB pursues, though their backgrounds such as educational attainment and occupation are presumably wide. Therefore, BtB has played the role of mentor to promote further mobilisation of young people to democratic processes, while not criticising or accusing them for having little or no knowledge about it. While I discuss BtB's role further in the next chapter, this approach also facilitates meaningful participation, through which democracy would function as it is.

I argued that the key factor of meaningful participation is conceptualised as the investment in common i.e. the act of adherence to the topic and commitment to democratic practices. The meaningful participation requires the act of investment in an intelligent asset, which contributes to the constructive discussion, measured against relevance to the discussion topic. Although some users may have referred to the evidence inappropriately, as seen in 7.2.2, it does not cause a significant problem for discussion. In contrast, if participants did not understand the discussion topic correctly, the discussion went off-topic



and did not produce any meaningful conclusion. I argued that this is an absence of consensus on the aim of discussion from which no one could learn. I also emphasised that this is critical in a learning context – if no one can learn anything, they will leave the discussion forum. Provided that, in the data set, the discussion topic is clearly presented by BtB, it could be the subject of future research as to why people do not understand or read the link carefully and thus post irrelevant comments.

As such, meaningful participation can be a barometer of functionality of democratic practices. Since democracy needs participation by members of society, its quality is determined by the nature and quality of participation. Hence, active members have an obligation to contribute responsibly to developing the community. The analysis in this chapter suggested, through the text data from Twitter among BtB account followers, that understanding of the discussion topic and adherence to it would suggest such a degree of contribution. In this sense, BtB as a democratic mentor has an important role in nurturing young people to participate in democratic practices as responsible citizens in a society. The next chapter discusses the above further, to integrate concepts of the investment in common, meaningful participation, active participation, and responsibility as an active member in a community.

## **Chapter 8 Discussion: Practising Meaningful Participation Outside a School Context**

In this chapter, I present a discussion as to how a degree of meaningful participation would practically be achieved using social media. To achieve this, I develop the discussions in Chapters 6 and 7 and integrate them to address the potential role of BtB in a wider context, using evidence from interviews.

The findings of this thesis refuted results from previous online studies. As mentioned in Chapter 2, literature to date has focused on citizenship education and practices in the school context. Furthermore, online interaction studies have found abusive behaviour in online discussions (see subsection 2.6). These studies disagreed on a definitive solution to online misbehaviour but only Savvides and Starkey (2009) reported a successful approach in a citizenship education course in a higher education context. This thesis enhances their findings by showing a social media strategy employed outside a school or educational institutional context.

As argued in Chapter 3, democracy requires, by nature, participation in a decision-making process by members of its society. In addition, Dewey (1916) and Giroux (1997) respectively emphasised that learning how to interact with others is the basis of democracy; therefore, discussion is arguably vital for democracy. Their arguments emphasise that any decision on an issue should be based on a discussion on the topic by stakeholders. The data analysis in the previous two chapters partly supports their argument that this works when people commit in a meaningful way (see chapters 6 and 7 for further discussion). In addition, a mentoring approach would facilitate participation in a discussion and guide them to explore the social issues they are aware of (see subsection 8.2). To deepen previous discussions, I shall present three strands of discussion in this chapter: first, the degree of participation and democracy; second, the necessity of a mentor for citizens to participate in democratic processes; finally, an argument for building a society where young people can fully participate in a decision-making process.

## 8.1 Relationship between Meaningful Participation and Democracy

Participation is the main driver of democracy. As argued in Chapter 3, democracy necessitates, by its nature and by definition, participation by members of society. This is to seek establishment of political agreement in order to manage conflict among its citizens (Mouffe, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). Such conflict is envisaged as the establishment of an alternative political order from a group of the oppressed. by fierce debate and affirmation of diversified views (Mouffe, 2013). In order to achieve democracy, a serious commitment by citizens is required: the degree of meaningful participation could suggest the degree of the function of democracy.

An assessment for a democratic functionality is based on a qualitative approach in order to grasp the nature of democracy in full (see Chapter 3). In addition, as article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises and enshrines, everyone is entitled to speak and express their view (United Nations, 1948). While free speech supports democratic functionality in a society, it is undoubtably recognised as a human right. However, unlike voting, which can be measured against a dichotomy, it is difficult to assess qualitatively to what extent a discussion is democratic. Drawing from the previous chapters, a theoretical framework I develop indicates the maturity of democracy based on a degree of commitment to discussion and open-mindedness among people.

Since democracy by nature necessitates the commitment of a people to political action, the quality of democracy is tactically determined by the degree of meaningful participation (Ohme, 2018). The underlying notion is that meaningful participation is to commit the interest of society (but not individuals) as Dewey and Giroux argued that living with others is the very essence of society (Dewey, 1916; Giroux, 1997). This resonates well with the argument by Osler and Starkey, who emphasised a principle of mutual care for members of a community (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Since the interest of the society would not be clear at a glance, members of the society may interact with each other to find their common interest. Therefore, interaction is a necessary element in assessing the degree of commitment and the quality of conversation to discover their interest.

There may be difficulty in finding, firstly, the right people who genuinely wish to commit democratic processes and secondly, how one can guide them to be involved in such a practice. On the first point, Bob mentioned that BtB has applied a marketing technique in email communication:

“[we used] an email programme [which] monitors and tracks whether people like it, whether people are going to attend events, whether there is a differential level of engagement and we purchased this solution. ... For example, say, these 15 people are teachers, they'll get the education email; these 20 people are students they'll get the US in student movement email ...”

(From the interview with Bob)

Through using this marketing technique, they could effectively identify potential participants in their activities, and potential donors, i.e. identifying the right person for each purpose. It is intuitively understandable to target the right people because people will act if they are interested in; conversely, they will take no action if they are not concerned.

The above approach reflects BtB's core idea as well. As Ed mentioned:

“one of [BtB's] the core ethos is to remain issue-based: issue driven you know we would talk about issues rather than talking about government and politics because they're two words that put young people off, whereas people will come together around an issue.”

(From the interview with Ed)

The statement from Ed endorses BtB's marketing strategy: if people want to talk about an issue, they would come to do so. However, people do not always share the same interests. The marketing technique is effective in approaching these people, while differentiating them based on their interests. For example, teachers in UK schools may care about the new national school curriculum in force from the following year. In contrast, young people may be concerned about their future careers after their university studies. These two examples illustrate how different audiences may have different concerns, which are not necessarily compatible, and which inevitably require different approaches.

Records show the marketing techniques used by other political campaigns and politicians. Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump employed a social media strategy in order to send their message to specifically targeted audiences in the 2016 US presidential election (Enli, 2017). For them, use of social media is an election strategy to identify people in a specific segment who are very likely to

vote for them (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016; Enli, 2017). The strength of social media which by nature differs from traditional media, such as TV and newspapers, is the ability to customise a political message and choice of recipients (ibid). While a TV advertisement is able to convey a single message once to audiences, social media has an advantage for campaigners who can customise contents of the political message for audiences from different backgrounds. As such, technological advancement in data science has enabled a complex strategy for both political campaigning organisations and CSOs (Chadwick and Stromer-Galley, 2016). Therefore, the complex strategy, I argue, has reformulated the nature of “the political” (Mouffe, 2005a) by reaching disengaged young people who were mistakenly considered apathetic.

What BtB is doing is showing a new form of politics to young people. Theoretically, the concept presumes the existence of injustice embedded in a society, which people struggle to overcome through democratic debate with fierce competition of opinions (Mouffe, 2005a). Such a debate does affirm diversity of political opinion and antagonism against injustice to seek a solution among people (Mouffe, 2005c). In particular, presenting multiple views and opinions on a single issue is interpreted as an inducement to tension on being good (ibid), which is necessary to envisage a comprehensive solution to the issue (Mouffe, 2005b). In Twitter discussion, BtB has shown several perspectives to users, the contents of which were customised so that the user could respond in a meaningful way (see Chapter 6). It might be challenging to some users, but learning about multiple perspectives on an issue is theoretically meaningful, and will contribute to building a democratic society.

While BtB aims to bring young people to vote, their work leads to building a democratic society, which necessitates rules on decision-making. This is how politics works, as its mandate is to establish a certain order and organisation to manage conflict emerging among people (Mouffe, 2013). On this point, BtB appeared not to intervene often, but rather appeared to keep an eye on how users solved issues by themselves. I argue this is a form of political struggle, yet in a friendly manner. BtB has affirmed through its acceptance of perspectives from young people, that a political struggle has never ended; once politics is established, other people will start to challenge it (see Mouffe, 2005a). While BtB has questioned users as to how they can justify their view or, simply,

their reasoning (see Chapter 7), it is a good opportunity for users to practise the legitimacy of their political expression. Provided that voting is a form of political participation, users are, metaphorically, participating in establishing a new political regime through democratic practice.

Yet, a struggle to establish an alternative political regime may not be attractive to young people as shown above. To overcome this, BtB has reinvigorated its programme with some face-to-face events, one of which is called DeCafe, where people can discuss topics in small groups. This is to facilitate socialisation among people, while they explore their potential to participate in politics, as well as to develop their civic skills underpinned by debate skill, critical thinking skills, and the courage to challenge the views of others:

“to understand the power of debate, to understand and to critically think and to challenge someone’s views to feel resilience, to show empathy. These are things that if you’re socially excluded the likelihood is that you won’t have all of that in abundance. ... [Asked if it was the cause of DeCafe initiative] Yeah.”

(From the interview with Ed)

Ed’s claim suggests a backdrop of the framework provided in the Crick Report. The report has acknowledged the importance of political literacy in the curriculum, although its emphasis is rather on the development of responsible citizens and their participation in society and community (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998). Crick himself appeared to advocate the notion of responsibility or responsible citizens (Crick, 2004). Because of this, Ed’s understanding of how critical thinking skills could lead to empathy here might sound irregular. Yet, Ed’s view appears to confirm that critical thinking skills could further advance mutual understanding which will eventually lead to solidarity and unification.

Ed’s statement further suggests an element of meaningful participation. While measurement of meaningful participation can be based on the degree of commitment to the task, it could also be based on the degree of socialisation to recognise various views which are vital for democratic society (see Mouffe, 2005b). Unlike populist discourse, which attempts to avoid discussion (Müller, 2017), it will act as a safeguard and assessment indicator for democracy. Where a higher degree of meaningful participation is maintained, as envisaged,

it would certainly allow the existence of a community with various views circulating which reduces the risk of the emergence of populism to dominate the political sphere. While such diversity may not be perfect protection against populism, meaningful participation exposes members of society to complex situations and multiple perspectives to maintain democracy in that society (Mouffe, 2005a, 2013). As Mouffe argued, it is impractical to adopt all of these perspectives; however, it is possible to recognise and reflect each of them into practice (Mouffe, 2013: 3).

The reason for recognising such diversity is the need to build a community where people feel a sense of belonging. BtB has used social media benevolently to enrich political participation by guiding young people to consider several perspectives, while running face-to-face social events. These attempts are underlined by a notion of community so that they can facilitate meaningful participation among young people; it is vital to build a community or environment where it feels natural to make one's voice heard. On this point, Dan and Ed agreed:

"it's cultural or it feels natural for them to do a big part of what was going on BtB is about how can you make registering to vote, going to vote the actual rule natural to you."

(From the interview with Dan)

"You need to create a community around the issues that they care about you need to provide opportunities for people to come together to explore. ... [in] an environment where they can be heard and feel a sense of empowerment."

(From the interview with Ed)

Their argument aligns with political socialisation theory. German argues that being part of a network with other peers will keep society democratic; in other words, democracy may not work in a society where people are isolated from each other (German, 2014). Aligned with this theory, Dan and Ed suggest that if people feel it natural to engage in politics and feel it safe to explore their views with peers, they will participate in society further. Moreover, such a society would promote youth political participation as it does not demand duty or obligation to country, rather it relies on spontaneous motivation among young people (see Collin, 2015; Dahlgren, 2007). Therefore, to achieve such a situation, as Dan and Ed argue, it is necessary to create a situation where

young people feel it is natural to participate and to be heard, to achieve meaningful participation.

Having a place to interact would facilitate meaningful participation. It is now a question as to how one can elevate this one degree. I argue that it would be an open atmosphere where people can freely join and leave. BtB used marketing techniques in email communication to find the right people to participate in a democratic discussion. However, it would only be useful to identify the right people; using Twitter could contribute to developing such a community.

Unlike email, a Twitter user has a limited autonomy to control who can follow their accounts. Twitter security settings may allow a user to specify a blacklist – a list of users who are not allowed to follow their account – but, by default, they are not able to give permission to follow. In other words, a Twitter user can follow anyone unless they are listed in a blacklist.

“you know sometimes the people there engage with us are not necessarily the people that we're trying to target. You can't stop people from following you.”

(from the interview with Ed)

Because of the Twitter system, there are some people whom BtB does not necessarily target to reach and to mobilise. They are however unable to specify the audience and thus may not be able to reach a particular audience to learn about voting and political actions for young people: even if their aim and activities are to mobilise young people, using Twitter may not achieve it successfully. Furthermore, followers may not learn as BtB projected. As Ed admitted:

“What do I expect from people that would response to us? No.”

(the interview with Ed)

Yet, Ed continued:

“the main thing is when people respond to try and acknowledge that they've responded and challenge them if we need to”

(the Interview with Ed)

This statement represents BtB's effort in building a democratic society. It affirms young people's concern and voice and if necessary, BtB would challenge. As shown in Chapters 6 and 7, BtB has encouraged them to look at



different sources and perspectives so that they can develop their arguments. These efforts are important, though assessment of them is still subjective.

One of the reasons for the lack of objective assessment criteria is the impossibility of seeing the 'real cause' of political actions:

"let's think about a young person sitting at home who is not registered to vote. It's June 6, 2016 and they see through the window a banner across the street saying registered to vote. And then they go downstairs and their grandma is there and she says, "by the way have you registered to vote? It's very important as a civic duty". They may go to school and a teacher opens form piled by say "actually everyone should register to vote". And then I come in two hours late. I give them interactive democracy workshops. I ask them to raise their hand if they're not registered as they are and ask them to register to vote in the session. They do. Is that me? Their grandmother, the teacher, the banner across the street? ... why there aren't many expectations in the sort of space is because it is incredibly difficult to monitor causation and also monitor the results and consequences of it."

(From the interview with Bob)

There are many possible causes behind the reason for a young person registering, which remain unclear. In addition to what Bob said, they may be interested in politics but simply took no action:. As such,

"I think you need to learn in this space not to have too many expectations. We don't understand exactly what's going on with that person who's responding. Are they angry. Are they frustrated. Do they think we work for the government. Do they believe in conspiracy theories or are they already politically engaged and just engaging everything."

(interview with Ed)

From constructivist perspectives, what Ed and Bob say is understandable: it is impossible to know how and what people really think. Therefore, the possible approach of assessment could inevitably be a subjective and more or less reflective target.

"you know in this game this is many cases about perception ... the online engagement is just about making noise. You need to make noise for the demographics of underrepresented and if you can do that in the right way with the combination of good quality content social influencers (and) good calls for action"

(From the interview with Ed)

The statement from Ed appears to reflect the online environment, that has the issue of anonymity. Several studies have found that in an online environment people's behaviour changes, suggesting anonymity as a cause of such change (Van der Nagel and Frith, 2015). Ed appears to acknowledge this dimension in the online environment: No one knows if that person is in fact interested in politics, is in their teenage years or early twenties, or whether they

are willing to participate in political activity. Alternatively, BtB used an online platform as if it was a community where people talk, discuss, and debate topics concerning them, without any fear of being oppressed or silenced.

It is now clear that BtB has used social media (Twitter) to provide a place for young people to debate their interests. On Twitter, they accept anyone who wishes to follow their account and have little or no expectation of response from Twitter users. The social media strategy contrasts with their use of marketing techniques in email communication to reach the right people who are likely to engage with their activities. Therefore, their role on Twitter is similar that of a mentor who guides young people to participate in political activity, while normally avoiding excessive intervention with the users.

In contrast, with poor levels of meaningful participation, there would be a high risk of the emergence of undemocratic practices, such as populism. Poor meaningful participation implies some degree of apathy among people. They may not care about what happens in their community and may not be willing to solve a problem. As Stammers asserted, participation in social movement, whatever its forms are, is to challenge the authorities and maintain human rights (Stammers, 2009). In addition, Mouffe warned that a lack of recognition of such 'challenges' would eventually negate any form of expression to resist opposition from an authority (Mouffe, 2013). Although Mouffe's argument is contextualised in relation to the neo-liberal view, which affirms a materialisation and marketisation of individuals, it is a strong argument for the necessity of commitment to participation. As such, an absence of commitment and respect for others would therefore lead to denial and ignorance of others i.e. a simple solution to solve more complex issues.

Denial of the existence of an issue is damaging to democratic practice. The above example exactly illustrates how a poor degree of meaningful participation would provide a chance for populists to emerge and to dictate the political sphere. Populism, according to Muller, is a morally imaginary idea about others and thus signifies an absence of acknowledgement of the real situation (Müller, 2017). Muller thus argued populist discourse signifies their *own* view but not *others'* view. This is the opposite of a democratising movement which underpins the concepts of solidarity and caring for others. As

Starkey vividly describes how the university student movement fought against the apartheid policy in South Africa (Starkey, 2015), the democratising movement has a strong potential to promote solidarity and friendship. In other words, it acts for others in a community in a way that maintains the human rights of others. Populism has, on the contrary, an egoistic nature in press an individual, or small group's view on a group of society, and representing it as the whole society's view. As such populism will appear on the stage in situations with no, or little, meaningful participation.

## 8.2 The Role of BtB as a Mentor

In order to encourage meaningful participation, BtB acts as a mentor but not a teacher. As seen in the previous chapter, BtB refers to authoritative and credible sources when it tweets, while avoiding a paternalistic approach. A key to understanding such divergence from paternalism is their attitude of 'audience in mind'.

"we were trying to overcome some of the difficulties of language by speaking ... [O]ur target audience voice... A young person who might have traditionally sceptical views of politicians and more to academics ... might have a few gaps in their teenage education ..."

(From an interview with Bob)

Bob argued that academics' and politicians' words may not resonate well because of a gap between young people and them: a gap between a teenager who is having difficulty, and academics and politicians who might not have had the same issues when they were in their teenage years. His argument showed that some young people may not trust politicians because they may think politicians are unable to understand them. Furthermore, Ed asserted young people do not need an academic degree in politics to engage in political actions:

"you don't have to do a politics degree or be an MP or a councillor to be political."

(From the interview with Ed)

Therefore, BtB's approach to young people is to position themselves closer to young people so that they can help young people to voice their concerns. BtB does not think young people should necessarily study or pursue a political degree in a university; however, they believe in the importance of a community where they feel empowered, no matter how knowledgeable or not

they are. In doing so, BtB has built a community where young people feel it is natural to discuss the issues they care about.

Their manner highlights the difference from the one in which politicians and academics discuss an issue. BtB's approach appears, I argue, to emphasise listening rather than talking.

"People were curious and we need to provide especially younger people the opportunity to be heard not talked down to. Not talkenistic [sic]"

(From the interview with Ed)

"the face-to-face would be the British thing because the rewards would come from the people who went to that and were more engaged and more inspired to take part"

(From the interview with Dan)

While Dan described a face-to-face interaction as 'British', he underlines the importance of feeling inspired to participate in political activity. BtB believes, in such an environment, people are an authority whose voices are matter. Conversely, BtB's role in such an environment is seemingly limited to act as their mentor to develop their 'authority', as one who knows how to develop the manner and skills to debate an issue among young people.

A way of developing such authority can be regarded as mentorship. Chao et al., suggested two types of mentorship: one is formal and the second is informal mentorship (Chao et al., 1992). Informal mentorship features no organisational management, no formal programme or institutional recognition (ibid). In informal mentorship, Chao et al., showed that mentor and mentee could develop a successful relationship by sharing the same goals and passions both personally and professionally (ibid: 631). Such relationships would enable the mentee to feel able to ask any question they have in everyday life and work. As such, BtB's form of mentoring is in fact classified as an informal mentorship to facilitate self-learning. On this point, Wenger argued that effective learning requires understanding of the meaning of actions in any given community (Wenger, 1998). BtB has built a community where young people learn from each other – developing a manner of debate and discussion. BtB is thus guiding young people to understand the meaning of voting through discussion on tweets.

The form of guidance BtB gives is to nurture young people to be able to contribute responsibly to their community through voting. While BtB is, arguably, in a position of 'authority' (see chapter 6), able to obtain and use authoritative information, they also behave in a way of a mature person to guide followers to a topic being discussed. When it is looked at closely, BtB intervened when a user appeared to misunderstand the facts, or to express a biased opinion, by explaining or providing supplementary information (see chapter 8). Furthermore, even when they intervened, they provided accurate information and gave the user a chance to learn. However, it is questionable whether BtB coped successfully with people who did not engage in meaningful discussion and kept posting irrelevant comments (see chapter 7). While this is not a welcome attitude, in the context of learning, it is far more problematic. To encourage young people to vote, I argue that the provision of a learning place with clear aims is essential, so that they can learn something of meaningful participation.

BtB is in a position to provide such a place. Its activities both offline and online are proof of the possibilities which can enhance their mission and nurture young people to become responsible citizens. The definition of responsible citizens is, drawing from the discussion in 7.3.1, citizens who know and understand the purpose and aim of discussion to contribute to a democratic decision-making process. Since this requires practice, in addition to information literacy, of participation, BtB can provide a 'practice room' for young people to prepare to become citizens. As some young people, if not all, are already conscious of social issues, yet may never have discussed them in a mature way, they may wish to practise before they go on to 'real' society.

"unless is really strong, meaningful civic education across all schools, starting from really young we are really we're up against it because many young people haven't developed the skills and values needed to be active citizens."

(From the interview with Ed)

As Ed mentioned earlier, becoming an active citizen requires development of critical thinking skills, which, according to Ed, schools do not offer to their students. Assuming BtB supplements this role, what BtB is doing is providing a place where young people can try and test their skills and values, and are allowed to make mistake.

As argued in Chapter 3, in the 21st century people in Western democratic countries have human rights and the means to protect their rights. In this sense, using the 'practice room' is also a practice of exercising their human rights. Moreover, such a practice would strengthen the feeling of belonging to the community, since meaningful participation requires a desire to be part of a community or group. Ed has been critical that schools do not provide enough opportunities for students to develop such skills. His criticism does not mean there are no young people who are interested in social issues. Then, how do schools use social media as a teaching and/or learning tool?

On this point, Charlotte noted how social media is being used by students and teachers:

"[they use social media] not in class but out of class so maybe for a homework activity for example ... it's sort of become more of a habit for some people, not for everybody obviously, but for a lot of people it's become part of everyday life. It's not so out of the ordinary. So, I think in a way we now see less teaching that uses social media than craps we did before because it's not a new thing anymore. It's just part of life."

(From the interview with Charlotte)

Earlier in the interview, Charlotte mentioned teachers exploring the possibility of how they could use Twitter for teaching citizenship. However, it has changed and, as cited, it is now part of ordinary life, some people are in favour, but others are not. Furthermore, she has not heard any feedback or comment from teachers after they used social media in their teaching:

"[to the question whether she has heard any feedback] No. ... I think when social media was still quite new and teachers were sort of exploring what could it [sic] be used for in a classroom context, ... So, they were exploring what could and couldn't be done."

(from the interview with Charlotte)

Her view from the teachers' perspective contrasts with Ed's statement:

"you need to bring politics to the people ... What social media has done as it's opened up the opportunity to commit anyone, provided owning social media, obviously .... we know big part of our demographic are on social media"

(from the interview with Ed)

Ed knows that many young people in the UK have a social media account, although he acknowledges that there would be a small number of people who do not. While Charlotte's and Ed's statements pointed out the limitations of using social media for citizenship education, their stances are in stark contrast. Charlotte believes, despite acknowledging that it has become an everyday life

tool, that social media may not be well used in schools. Teachers are exploring how they could use social media for students in classrooms, while BtB focusses on people with social media accounts. This might come from a difference in nature between schools and BtB: while the former are responsible for educating all students in their school, BtB is not (and cannot be). It does open up a new question about tension between BtB and schools: can they mutually cover the gap currently between them and, if so, to what extent?

Moreover, it is notable that BtB's work needs to continue over a longer period in order to develop a citizenship mindset among young people (see Chapter 2). While many studies to date investigate how online political activities can have a one-off impact offline (e.g. Quintelier, 2015; Xenos et al., 2014), it is hard to find a study investigating the long-term impact of continuous use of social media/the Internet on offline participation over a decade. A similar attempt was made by Emmer et al., (2012) to compare how Germans became accustomed to offline and online political participations over eight years, from 2002 to 2010. However, their findings may need to consider the emergence of new online services during the research period: Facebook (2004), Youtube (2006), and Twitter (2008). Therefore, it may be necessary to consider how these platforms affected people's 'experiences in other dimensions' (Emmer et al., 2012: 248). From the perspective of political socialisation theory, BtB could play a role in other dimensions.

In the following subsections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2, I will discuss how the role of CSOs could contribute to citizenship education both theoretically and practically. Because of nature of schools, students learn academic subjects which may not align with their interests. As long as they are students, they need to work on homework, preparation and revision of subjects they learn since, all of them are required in order to progress or pass examinations. In contrast, BtB has helped young people to learn by themselves and develop the skills needed for becoming a responsible citizen by themselves. Their approach is to listen to what young people say about what they are interested in, not to instruct them as to what they should think on the topic. Therefore, the learning process through interaction with BtB is rather self-learning, and the role of BtB is to support young people's learning by providing suggestions and hints. From the above

perspective, I shall view BtB as a mentor in political participation for young people.

### 8.2.1 Theoretical Contribution – Educating Civic Republicans

Responsible citizens are citizens who contribute to their own community with great care for others. They even existed in the 19th century when Tocqueville visited the US, where people in a community worked building and maintaining their own facilities (Tocqueville, 1840). The central idea of these contributions is that a government would not help in this respect, since it should be 'neutral' (Pangle, 1998; Sandel, 1996). These forms of civic participation in a community have been, however, unpopular in the UK because of a long-standing tradition in its educational ethos (Crick, 2003; Lockyer, 2003). Crick argues that the ethos – care of community members is the duty of the privileged – was deeply rooted in the British education system and mindset among people (ibid). However, these privileged do not pursue such a duty through their occupation; furthermore, 'commoners' were not prepared by the education system to participate in a community (ibid). Now that the privileged do not necessarily work in a particular occupation to fulfil their 'civic duty', the 'commoners' need to be ready to contribute to their own community.

Theoretically speaking, civic duty, once held and pursued only by the privileged, is understood as an 'essential moral life for individual free actions which is also compatible with others' (Crick, 2004: 9). The concept has stood on two assumptions: that people are living in a community, and that the community has a rules or a consensus on behaviour by its members (Crick, 2004). Although he did not specify how people learn the rules of communities, his view appears rooted in a communitarianism view so that it legitimates the moral duty held by members in the community. In fact, as long as people are living in a community, someone is needed to care for each other – the privileged held such a duty in the past; however, it is now held by every member of the community (Crick, 2003; Lockyer, 2003). Furthermore, if the duty is reinterpreted as solidarity, it is also understood as a defence mechanism for human rights (see Osler and Starkey, 2005, 2010). The backdrop of the theoretical framework is that an insufficient number of reports of practice took place outside schools.



Civic duty, or responsibility to a community, includes normative perspectives. As Crick suggested, a notion of care to community members demands moral aspects in community life (Crick, 2004). It appears rooted in, for example, a notion of solidarity and cosmopolitanist perspectives. Solidarity is, as argued in Chapter 4, based on a notion of a community i.e. living together. As such, its emphasis is on benefits for a whole, rather than benefits and advantages for individuals. The contrast would highlight tension when in particular there is a conflict between the benefits of an individual and a whole community. In the context of elections, an individual does not need to vote if they find there is no suitable candidate to support. It is, from an individualist perspective, their own choice and no one is eligible to complain. Therefore, one would need to explain the reason for voting why it is good. As such, the situation demands a normative explanation (why going to vote is good), which would never see a consensus (see Hinde, 2002).

There is a dilemma between theoretical assumptions and practice. As reviewed in chapter 2, there are a number of studies on citizenship education in schools teaching students how to participate in society. Furthermore, Crick mentions that teaching civic duty can take place outside school (Crick, 2004). It has, yet, remained unanswered as to who teaches, guides, and mentors students or young people so that they can participate in a society in a responsible way even after leaving school.

In a school context, the Advisory Group on Citizenship in the UK Parliament has issued a report illustrating its teaching framework for citizenship education. To support citizens' participation in a community, it suggested in its report (the so-called 'Crick Report') three strands of citizenship education: 'social and moral responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy' (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998: 11). The Crick Report recommended that the UK government include citizenship education in the national curriculum to develop citizens who are capable of dealing with social issues. However, having the subject in schools might, as Crick admitted, increase the burden on teachers to prepare for teaching the subject (Crick, 2004). In fact, it would require teachers, for example, to preview a topic, make careful preparation for debate, and prepare learning materials, if necessary. I shall look at the burden issue for teachers in subsection 8.2.2.2.

In contrast, the present research showed through tweet analysis and interviews that non-school organisations can provide citizenship education through a form of mentoring. The next subsection discusses how these empirical findings contribute to the theoretical perspectives.

### 8.2.2 Transforming a Way of Citizenship Education: Its Pros and Cons

Use of the Internet has transformed forms of education. In the 2010s, education can even take place online. FutureLearn and Coursera are representative online learning platforms free of charge (except to claim a course certification). Twitter is, unlike these two platforms, designed for general use and thus does not aim to provide any learning course by nature. Bite the Ballot used Twitter as a learning platform to build an online issue-based community where young people are able to explore political issues by themselves. Online education can certainly be beneficial in terms of financial accessibility and time constraints, although it has several issues to be addressed.

BtB's Twitter approach to young people is a form of mentoring. The approach highlights a different way of teaching: it allows young people to explore issues by themselves and ask questions on their understanding. Through this interaction and subsequently their own learning, they develop debating and information examination skills. Jerome and Algarra argue that skills to compare and examine topics being debated, in order to explore a position on a topic, are necessary for a democratic society (Jerome and Algarra, 2005). Here, the emphasis is on the skills – not the position itself. The skills give an opportunity for young people to learn together to achieve a common goal (ibid), since the topic might be unfamiliar to them. On this point, Zorwick and Wade agree that people can deepen their understanding of an issue through the examination and comparison of information they learnt respectively (Zorwick and Wade, 2016). As such, there is no restriction on the methods used to achieve a shared goal – what does matter is that they learn to compare information and make judgments on information obtained.

Unlike a moral civic duty, independent and autonomous citizens are expected to pursue their duty as citizens, with the expectation that their main

duty would be to address an issue in their community and work to solve it. Examples given by Tocqueville could be indicators of issues their community hopes to solve (Tocqueville, 1840). In 18th-century US, they might need to build more churches and hospitals (ibid); in the 21st-century UK, people may engage in social issues such as housing prices, university tuition fees, employment, Brexit, etc. Issues in both the 19th-century US and 21st-century UK are derived from demands in historical background and context; however, they all share one common factor: the need for teamwork to resolve them. Building a church needed more plumbers in a team; improving employability for young people may necessitate advice from managers and interview coaches. As such, there are innumerable issues in a society all the time, irrespective of country and time, all of which need teamwork and working together to resolve.

Working in a team would provide a young person with a different perspective of an issue. In discussing housing issues, it would seem good to demand a decrease in housing prices: this would help students and young people to find an affordable home (even if it is a temporary one). In contrast, however, it would lead to less income, which would impact on a landlord's business and decrease their indispensable income. Furthermore, decreased housing prices would make them less attractiveness for investors in general and thus would trigger a lower amount of investment in property. As Ed answered in the interview, studying an issue would drive young people to learn different, conflicting perspectives. In practice, they would compromise at some point; yet, they still need to have an insight about the other views to compromise. In the example of housing prices, they may wish to look at the business model a landlord has (it may differ from an individual to a cooperation). The fact that a landlord offers a room to rent would give some insight into it.

Using social media for citizenship education claims to be a promising area. However, it is not a perfect way to change education drastically. Ed seems to be aware of this:

“What social media has done is it's opened up the opportunity to commit anyone, provided owning social media, obviously. And we know big part of our demographic are on social media.”

(Interview with Ed)

While Ed acknowledged that a “big part of our demographic” has a social media account, I shall address the necessity of further exploration into the nature of ‘digital natives’, and a potential risk of over-reliance on social media.

Young people, BtB’s main target, are regarded as ‘digital natives’ (Pernsky, 2001: 1) who were born into and have grown up with the Internet. Pernsky describes them as speaking the Internet and technology as their ‘first language’ (ibid), while processing information in a different way from older generations (ibid). Their wide range of information processing skills were, in a sense, cerebrated, while in reality the nature in which they use the Internet might not be so promising (Selwyn, 2009). It is reported that young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds use school computers less than the ones in their home, while their use is limited to entertainment purposes, rather than learning and studying (Harris et al., 2017; Selwyn, 2009). In particular, the nature of their computer use might impact on their lives in the longer term, e.g. whether they can use it for their occupation, university studies or advance degrees (Robinson et al., 2015). In addition, these young people might use school computers in a similar way to their home computers; that is something we need to learn about the manner and rules they follow in using computers (see Selwyn, 2009).

With regard to citizenship education, the above issues could all impact on their participation in political activities. While the Internet has strong potential to change the nature of the world by redistributing power from a privileged minority to ordinary citizens, such a process necessitates active use of the Internet by ordinary citizens (Norris, 2001). Using school computers as a substitute for home computers does not sound a compelling case of online democratic revolution, rather it demonstrates insufficient understanding and overtly unrealistic hopes of the Internet. The fear was already described in early 2000 (ibid), yet somehow it was underestimated; it became clear in the late 2010s that a meaningful use of the Internet by young people is the essential key to mobilise them into political action (Elliott and Earl, 2018). Since they are disengaged and less interested in political action, they do not use the Internet to

seek information about it (ibid). To bring their attention to politics, Elliott and Earl suggested two strands: one is proper online skills: the other is the existence of a mediator or agent to approach them (ibid).

Interestingly, access to the Internet *per se* does not impact on the probability of online political participation (Elliott and Earl, 2018). Unlike the early 2000s, when the discussion on the digital divide concerned whether people had a physical computer and access to the Internet (see Norris, 2001), now 'Internet access is ubiquitous enough now that the differences in Internet access are not reflected in who uses the Internet for online advocacy' (Elliott and Earl, 2018: 714). In addition to the above, therefore, discussion needs to focus on the nature of Internet use by both (young) people and CSOs. As argued earlier, BtB's approach on Twitter is characterised as that of a friendly mentor, rather than a teacher or instructor. Such a nature could help them act as agents on Twitter so that they can mobilise more young people into political action. As such, it was possible:

"[a]t one point 8.5 million applications to register the vote in nine days. So many people could through to go to the government poll they crashed the government pool and therefore David Cameron had to extend the drive by further two dates."

(Interview script with Ed)

Note that the figure of 8.5 million came from BtB's Twitter analysis which is not publicised. Their Twitter account is the official one equipped with several marketing features including statistics (number of clicks on a link, etc). It is unusual to crash the government portal without any malicious intention to do so. What BtB did was, as shown in Chapters 6 and 7, to encourage people to register to vote. There was no evidence to confirm they intentionally mobilised that large number of people but merely encouraged them. The fact that people crashed the government portal rather indicated that the nature of their Internet use was successful in mobilising young people to vote (in this case, into the registration process).

Despite above argument and an earlier comment from Ed, I noted that some young people are unable to access to the Internet and thus have no chance to participate in political activity. As mentioned earlier, there was a central issue of digital divide in the early 2000s (Norris, 2001). While the Internet emerged in the late 1980s and became publicly available in the early

1990s, it was only available to those who were financially privileged and lived in a country with a well-developed infrastructure (ibid). In the late 2010s, Internet access has become ubiquitous (Elliott and Earl, 2018); however, it is noted that some people are unable to access the Internet or a computer (Calderón Gómez, 2019). A proportion of such people in the entire country may not be significant; nor could they determine the result of an election or a referendum. Yet, as indicated in Chapter 3, the situation should be changed as it violates human rights.

To improve the situation, educational institutions and local governments can play a significant role. This may not be, in contrast, what CSOs could do as their main role. As Charlotte noted:

“you've got 30 students in a fixed space sometimes you have IT in your classroom; sometimes you don't have access to it.”

(Interview with Charlotte)

It is important to have access to computers and the Internet from schools. Being able to use them would influence students' life (both academic and professional) which would determine their well-being (Calderón Gómez, 2019; Robinson et al., 2015). However, this is not something a CSO can work on – it is down to funding issues with schools and local governments. To install computers, they simply need funding from central government or charities which could donate huge amounts to a fund. Building such 'hardware' for education is a responsibility for governments or management bodies of schools. Yet CSOs can participate in discussions on the nature of curriculum (i.e. software) to develop responsible citizens:

“there is space for things that sit outside of, let's say, formal politics, political parties, and government structures that aren't public services but are these groups of organisations who help shape ideas change things make things happen for citizens and for democracy.”

(Interview with Charlotte)

When Charlotte referred to formal politics, political parties, and government structures, she suggested an existence of space where CSOs could work. I shall contend the organisations can work in designing and programming a curriculum for responsible citizens as non-school organisations, maintaining their non-partisanship.

What BtB has been doing with Twitter is teaching a way of learning about and studying social issues. In particular, they encourage people to search other perspectives and to develop their own ideas critically. They focus on mastering the skills of democratic commitment – evidence-based, use of multiple sources of information, and development of a natural feeling of being part of a community.

Yet, use of social media does not solve all problems. As Ed mentioned, many young people have a social media account, but those on social media are not always interested in political issues. As I argued earlier, Twitter is designed for general purposes; so is Facebook. Therefore, users have their own purposes, which are not necessarily political (see Thorson, 2014). Thorson mentioned that her friends on Facebook include her classmates from school, universities, and colleagues (ibid): similarly, my friends on Facebook include colleagues, classmates from schools in Japan, employees in huge business companies, and musicians. The only common link among my friends is that they have me as a friend, not shared political leanings or interest in the treatment of musicians. As such, the difficulty for BtB in particular is how it can approach those social media users whose aims are non-political. Talking about politics on social media platforms may disturb some people who wish to remain isolated from political debate but to see the updates from their friends. These intentions are invisible in social media – by design, Twitter and Facebook are for general purposes, not for specific ones.

Another issue social media has brought is the erosion of boundaries between private and public lives. The advantage of non-school organisations for citizenship education would be the possibility to focus on the provision of teaching. In schools, preparation and taking classes brings a huge workload to teachers (Crick, 2003). Crick argued that citizenship education would demand a new type of teaching which may force teachers to engage in preparation for debating and preview of topics (ibid). However, as Charlotte mentioned, now social media might break the distinction between private and professional spheres among teachers:

“I think is this issue about personal life and work life and finding the balance sometimes so for example people tend to use or originally people used Facebook to share what's going on in their family with their friends and not so much in a work context. ... teachers are so busy and quite pressured at

school. It's another way of them being kind of... under pressure almost it's the pressure that young people feel is the same."

(the interview with Charlotte)

There has been great academic interest in how social media has complicated the balance between public and private lives. Youngs pointed out that blogs can show both private and professional lives of an individual in one place (Youngs, 2013). As such, a private view expressed in a personal blog could be viewed negatively by a future employer when an author applies to a job (ibid). Abril et al., argued that social media itself is a boundary-crossing tool – while it is a valuable tool for marketing and communication, it does not discriminate between private and public spheres (Abril et al., 2012). In their study, problems emerging in social media are mainly due to unprofessional conduct: for example, a high school teacher was dismissed because of her insulting remarks against local residents in the school area (ibid: 68-69). The issue Abril et al raised is purely of unprofessional misconduct yet the remark itself appears to be a private view. In contrast, Charlotte's statement suggests that social media compels teachers to work even in their own home. In other words, social media has transformed home as a private sphere to home as a public sphere.

The concerns raised above might be same for employees in BtB. Although BtB uses social media effectively, it is also true that they will receive messages and emails after finishing work. As Youngs argued, social media does not discriminate between the public and private sphere at any time (Youngs, 2013). It appears ironic that the Internet can assist the democratic function in a society while it also increases the workload among teachers in educating future citizens. Yet, it appears rooted in a self-control issue: individuals should make a decision on how to use social media and when they use it.

### 8.3 Conclusion

All in all, building a democratic society needs continuous effort and work by citizens. Democracy is, in essence, a concept affirming diverse discussion and views in a society, and political participation involves a decision-making process to express their views. To support a democratic function in a society, citizens are expected to inform their views through discussions on issues in



their society with their peers. However, they need someone who can guide such democratic learning so that the entire democratic process is meaningful. To date, schools in the UK have offered citizenship curriculum to develop good citizens; however, CSOs can also offer alternative learning processes for young people to develop the mindset of responsible citizens. In this sense, schools, including higher education institutions, are not sole agents to facilitate political learning – CSOs, business firms, and even professionals working outside the schools are all capable to participate in this project.

The role BtB has played is to build an environment to support fellow citizens' learning. BtB has encouraged their participation in a decision-making process outside the school context. The environment, which I dubbed 'playground' in the thesis includes many people from diverse backgrounds, while it functions as an introductory phase for young people. Through socialisation processes there, they learn how to participate in actual democratic processes, with particular emphasis on critical thinking and debating skills. This is the transformation process through which young people become responsible citizens who can bring real changes in society. While schools in the UK offer citizenship as part of their curriculum, CSOs, like BtB, can offer a flexible programme for citizenship practices, since CSOs can use the Internet and social media platforms on their own decision. Moreover, they could enrich and widen the curriculum by reaching more people from other domains in society such as business and other volunteer sectors. This collaborative nature is at the heart of the practice of citizenship and thus represents the notion of living together.

## Chapter 9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this PhD thesis illuminates the detailed approach BtB employs to nurture responsible citizens by using social media in a non-school context. The aim of this PhD thesis is to assess the social media strategy used by BtB, a non-school CSO, with a particular focus on learning among young people for political activity. This thesis identified practical elements in its social media strategy; acceptance of young people's opinion and guiding them to register to vote online, while they build an issue-based community where they are invited to explore and to discuss their interest with peers. The highlighted approach is digital mentoring for political activity, which respects young people's efforts to explore political issues and their decisions on voting. The approach also refuted previous online studies by showing that use of the Internet in a publicly accessible context (i.e. outside school) can build a constructive, positive environment.

As argued in Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8 respectively, theoretically, participating in discussion and decision-making processes are the exercise of human rights; therefore, guiding and mentoring participation are arguably supporting functions of democracy in society. Young people in particular are interested in political issues, yet it is beneficial for them explore further with guidance from a group which is knowledgeable in the field (see Chapter 5). Through the self-study style of the learning, young people learn how to participate in a political activity, namely, in this thesis, voting. Abstention from voting is regarded as unconditional agreement to the election/referendum result (see Chapter 3), that is they would not be allowed to express their view on the result. In fact, if a person did not exercise their human rights when they are entitled to, they are at risk of allowing others to control their life (see below). Therefore, findings from this thesis suggest that learning with a mentor (see Chapter 8) would be beneficial for young people.

In addition, as argued in Chapter 8, it is also necessary for people to participate in the process in a relevant way so that their participation can contribute to maintaining a democratic society. Since the aim of participation is to make a society democratic, people are expected to commit their democratic practice in a meaningful way. The present research conceptualised such a

contribution as meaningful participation, which necessitates a sincere commitment to the democratic practice. The commitment therefore requires tangible and reasonable activities to justify their participation, e.g. posting a relevant comment on the topic under debate. To meet expectation, people may need to learn about the topic further by themselves: this justifies the use of a mentor. While the concept legitimises young people exploring the possibilities of exercising their human rights, it also requires the existence of mentors or guides who can encourage them to gain insight. The role of the mentor is therefore necessary so that young people can be responsible citizens who are capable of committing to political activities in the meaningful way.

The concept also illustrates the nature of responsible citizens in a democratic society. I noted that BtB is surrounded by other organisations – from CSOs to business firms – to carry out their activities. A learning point here is that no one can achieve by themselves. If someone is knowledgeable in technology and if they are willing to cooperate, it is welcoming to invite them to join their campaigns (Chapter 5). Moreover, even if an organisation has little or no prior experience in political participation, they can help the campaign by doing what they can. As seen in Chapter 5, business firms can even approach their own employees so that they can register to vote, as well as offering their product for a campaign to reach a wider audience whom BtB might miss. Furthermore, donating to campaigns or CSOs is not surprising – it is also a form of political participation. Such a system of cooperation provides BtB with various opportunities to enhance its field of activity.

The motivation for this research originated from my own experience in high school and undergraduate studies. As a member of the first generation of Internet users, I have always believed that the Internet is a tool which can make the world better. The literature review in Chapter 2 showed how academics have explored use of the Internet for citizenship education and people's participation in democratic processes devised by online platforms. The review also showed that abusive behaviour in online discussion forums is common, while one study showed a successful example of online use for citizenship practice in an educational institution context. Chapter 3 discussed a conceptual framework to emphasise the relationship between democracy and political participation, and in particular, how the Internet could help political participation

among young people. Chapter 4 illustrated how to answer my research questions and highlighted an analytical framework for online text data. Since the present research is a case study, Chapter 5 introduced the case and reasons for the selection. Chapter 6 and 7 show the result of data analysis of tweets to show how a non-school organisation uses Twitter to reach and interact with its followers. Chapter 8 discussed how social media usage outside the school context could address the development of responsible citizens and its implication for both young people and schools.

In this concluding chapter, I reflect how the Internet can play a role in building a democratic society and to promoting political participation among young people.

## 9.1 Answers to Research Questions: Effort to Build a Democratic Society

This thesis has three research questions. The main research question (MRQ) of the present research was 'How does a civil society organisation promote voting and political learning using social media?'. Sub Research questions were: 'What social media strategies does BtB use?' and 'What evidence is there that young people learn about democracy by engaging with BtB on Twitter?'. As shown in Chapter 1, these research questions aim to assess the social media strategy for mobilising young people to political action. To answer the questions, the present research used a concept of democracy as participation in a decision-making process, including voting, discussion, and so on. I will first show answers to SRQs1 and 2, then move on to the answer to MRQ.

To answer SRQ1 and SRQ2, I demonstrated the way in which BtB has built a safe playground where young people are allowed to explore political issues which interest them. As shown in Chapter 5, BtB represents itself in a friendly manner to be approachable to young people on Twitter. The data analysis demonstrated that BtB maintains a welcoming attitude to others, to encourage, and support them to speak up about their concerns, on issues important to them, on Twitter (Chapters 6 and 7). BtB responds in a sincere way to questions from followers, which, I argued in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively,

develops and maintains an encouraging environment. In contrast to other online studies (see section 2.2.3 for further detail), its effort significantly provides a safe place for young people to explore political issues, where they can also practise their human rights – speaking up is in fact a universally recognised human right, and maintaining such an environment leads to protection of its practice. Furthermore, in the safe place, young people had rich opportunities to learn about the social issues their society faces – such as tuition fees or housing prices. Through a relaxed yet serious discussion, they encountered different points of view to interpret the issues, and how to commit to a discussion.

This may contrast to the teaching approach taken in schools. As argued in Chapter 8, by nature, schools need to meet numerous expectations. For example, preparation for in-class debate might increase the amount of preparation before a class begins; schools may not be equipped with the necessary IT systems (hence not all students are able to use it); using social media may put teachers in a situation where they need to work at home (see Chapter 8). In contrast, BtB has filled the gap schools are struggling to cover; as a non-school organisation, they have more autonomy in their activities. They can choose the audience to whom they wish to send information; they may not have much expectation that people who follow their Twitter account will engage in political activity (see chapter 8). This removes any barrier when they engage in mobilisation activities.

In contrast, young people have also learnt how they can be responsible citizens through participating in a discussion. It is conceptualised as meaningful participation through which they can learn about and build a democratic society through interaction with peers (see subsection 7.3). On top of this, it is a sign of healthy democracy and, ultimately, the degree of functionality of democracy in a society can be measured by looking at the coherence of discussion in its debates (see Chapter 8). Engagement at such a serious level develops healthy discourse in a society where people can eventually nurture a feeling of belonging i.e. integration. The role of this feeling in a society is so significant that it determines the degree of democracy, of participation and the discourse to drive the entire society. This feeling, however, does not question the amount of knowledge they memorise or epistemological understanding of knowledge.

Instead, it does problematise the way in which people explain to, and persuade their peers, and its degree of constructiveness and relevance. As seen in Chapter 8, young people will decide by themselves what they learn to participate in society; CSOs could help their autonomous learning by providing mentor-style guidance.

Furthermore, BtB's activity showed how, as a non-school organisation, they could guide young people to become responsible citizens. Its approach on Twitter discussions is positive and encouraging, which underpins the actions of a model role of citizen (Chapters 6 and 7). As shown in Chapter 8, there are many issues in a society, each of which has multiple dimensions and perspectives; in other words, BtB has acted as an agent of political socialisation and played the role of model citizen for young people using social media. While the Internet can certainly provide opportunities for them to acknowledge different views, BtB has guided them in such a way as to encourage democratic conversation. Such encouragement would, arguably, enhance opportunities for people to recognise the diverse nature of society – that is, the very core part of democracy (see Chapter 3). Theoretically, BtB has increased opportunities for young people to learn the manners and behaviour of responsible citizens, while young people can access such opportunities via social media free of charge. This is good practice by a non-school organisation in using the Internet and social media.

Moreover, it is a normal activity for them to use social media to encourage young people to participate in democratic processes (Chapter 8). Their online work strengthens the function of the Internet as a democratic tool, while they use social media not only as a communication tool but also as a tool in daily life. As the Internet has become a social infrastructure, it is no exaggeration to contend that people should be able to use the Internet wisely by now. In other words, social media is not out of the ordinary for BtB – it is also part of their daily life.

In contrast to other studies reviewed in Chapter 2, BtB's approach on Twitter is characterised as friendlier and more genuine. It first accepts its followers' opinion, and then invites them to discuss the issue raised in an inclusive way (Chapter 7). As its accessible manner suggests, it keeps the door

open to everyone by using plain language (i.e. avoiding technical terms and academic writing style). In other words, its behaviour is consistent with its language and attitudes: i.e. principled. In contrast, it did not always communicate about an election itself. It tweeted about the election in the approach to a registration period or polling day while, for most of the data collection period, it tweeted about social issues in the UK. As such, its actions help young people's preparation for voting so that young people are able to vote for the candidate whom they believe to be trustworthy. Its way of operating demonstrates the model of independent citizens and their responsibility to educate young people to be able to make their society better as independent citizens.

BtB's approach is different from schools' perspectives. This might result from the difference in their nature. Schools are expected to provide the same lessons to students and thus teachers need to explore ways of teaching. When it comes to social media education in schools, they need to understand how it works, how they can teach it, and how they provide a learning opportunity for students. This approach, however, would work for unchanging subjects, but social media is not static. The Internet has been developing since its emergence at a fast pace, and so is social media. For example, when Twitter entered service in 2008, it had a restriction on a length of sentence (140 characters). In 2019, it is now 240 characters and it can work with other social media services such as Facebook and Instagram. In such high-paced development, teachers' exploration might not be able to keep up with the development speed: both students and teachers need to learn as they use.

The answer to the MRQ is that BtB has created a vibrant environment where young people feel integrated in political activity by learning from peers, and people from other organisations and business firms on Twitter. The key to this answer is the collaborative nature of BtB's campaign (Chapter 5), in addition to its role as environment developer for a young novice of political actions. While this thesis focused on BtB's Twitter account, BtB has used online tools and techniques extensively offered by other organisations. By making its campaign collaborative in nature, BtB has produced a festival-like mood in which young people are able to enjoy participation:

“But in the online engagement is just about making noise. You need to make noise for the demographics of underrepresented and if you can do that in the right way with the combination of good quality content social influencers (and) good calls for action”

(Interview with Ed)

Making noise and producing a festival mood is not easy in an online environment; however, collaboration with other organisations has enabled it to succeed (Chapter 5). If young people find it interesting, and they feel it ‘natural’ to participate, they will do so, and a campaign is successful. While BtB does not have any solid, numerical criteria of ‘success’ for their own campaigns, I conclude that making young people feel natural and enjoy participation can be success criteria.

From the above perspectives, BtB is assessed as knowledgeable on social media use. It used social media effectively by using weblinks and illustrations to highlight information to which young people could refer. As long as there are many views on a single social issue, no one can cover all of them. Instead, BtB has encouraged young people to learn perspectives they might not be aware of before and has allowed them to make ‘mistakes’ during the discussion to learn new perspectives. BtB may not expect this; however, it is the only way to learn in a real society.

## 9.2 Implications for Representative Democracy

The act of learning about democracy from political discussion on Twitter highlights the moral aspect of representative democracy among citizens. As shown in Chapter 1, representative democracy exists to enable, practically, the participation of ordinary citizens in a decision-making process through their representatives. In other words, their will appears through the behaviour of the representatives in parliament. As such, the voting result will indicate a strong sense of people’s will – as long as its administration is legitimate, it is regarded as their will which should be, at same time, respected. For this is the reason why they need to be responsible citizens: they are accountable for their own choices. Even if they, on an individual basis, disagree with election results, they are still obliged to follow the will of the majority of people and are responsible for the outcome. The only possibility of reversing the outcome is when the administration of an election or referendum does not follow the pre-set rules or



law, or there is malicious behaviour which jeopardises the election result. As such, because the result carries such strong implications, the degree of engagement in democratic processes may determine the fate of the society.

The other forms of participation, such as demonstrations, are only effective in that they make people aware of issues so that they can be mobilised into democratic processes. As shown in discussion on Twitter, people can persuade others through constructive discussion; however, it does not legitimise or indicate the 'people's will' as a whole. In other words, demonstrations and marches are not a substitute for an election and hence they do not alter its result. The ultimate emphasis is still on the outcome of the election as a decision, but not on the degree of participation in a demonstration. However, its degree can indicate how democratic a society is and how persuasive the decision through an election is.

Meaningful participation is a concept to assess how democracy operates, by looking at the degree of engagement in a discussion among people. In particular, one of the indicators is the degree of interest in a topic, which is a driver to motivate people to engage in the discussion. A genuine interest would help or, at best, develop one's appetite to explore the issues society faces. Having the interest – or enthusiasm – promotes and justifies one's behaviour and, in some cases, it may develop further interest. In contrast, little or no interest in a topic and its discussion would diminish the degree of meaningful participation and thus the degree of democratic function. A lack of enthusiasm is synonymous with apathy and ignorance, both of which reduce the degree of engagement of people in a society. They reduce the degree of feeling of belonging and caring for others. This is, I argue, the beginning of the end of democracy and democratic practices, since no one is interested in others. In other words, it is the erosion of the community.

As such, a low degree of interest would lead to serious consequences in the real world. BtB has, in this regard, appeared to guide young people to be involved in meaningful participation using social media. They have built a safe community on Twitter where young people are allowed to explore social issues and to commit to discussion as a preparation for voting. The discussion on Twitter worked as a safe place for young people to practise their human rights –

freedom of speech – as a result of which they can develop their confidence as a citizen. The absence of humiliating or insulting responses to a user’s comment models the role of the responsible citizen; instead, BtB asked questions and encouraged users to explore their political views appropriately. Its approach is certainly positive in encouraging the exercise of human rights. On the polling day, however, BtB merely counted down until its end, and did not instruct young people for whom they should vote. It showed, again, its trust in young people: they could decide as they wish. This is similar to an exam: teachers can help students to prepare for a test, though they cannot do anything other than that.

Despite the above, BtB did not frequently mention implications of election results. As it has a proven track record in the youth political engagement field, it certainly understands the reason to vote and thus might have done so in the past (i.e. outside the data collection period for this thesis). However, it is interesting that BtB, as an organisation raising awareness of voting issues, does not explain the possible consequences of abstaining from voting or the implications of the voting results in an election on Twitter. Voting is, as mentioned, different from other forms of democratising movement and political participation since its result is regarded as a firm expression of the ‘will of people’. As matter of fact, BtB cannot tell young people how they should vote, or the possible consequences of abstention. Instead, BtB could highlight the importance of political participation in reference to the ‘will’. On this point, I reflect that it would be instructive to show young people an example of abstention. Brexit could be a case in point.

The election result is the outcome based on the individual decisions. As argued previously, a democratic society has an assumption that responsible citizens are expected to make a decision independently. In this regard, BtB can help them to make such a decision but it cannot tell them which decision they should make. When individuals are allowed to express their political opinions without any fear, they are responsible for their decisions in a democratic society. For this is the reason that democratic societies allow political participation among people, none of them can interfere with the autonomy of citizens (see Habermas, 1989). Yet, in general, the result of a parliamentary election does not affect the diplomatic relationship with other countries; thus, it might be difficult to see how each vote has an impact. However, the referendum

result is, by nature, different: it does have an impact and deemed as a people's will on a topic.

Meaningful participation would also guide young people on how they should participate in political action. For example, before they go to vote, young people may need to imagine what would happen as a consequence of voting. In the EU Referendum, British people were asked to vote for one of two options – remain in or leave the EU. Each option would have a significantly different consequence; BtB's work could actually guide voters to explore the issues. BtB has provided resources and made young people think critically on topics (Chapters 6 and 7); hence, they could imagine how the result would impact on foreigners from EU and non-EU countries.

The work BtB pursues has produced opportunities for young people to learn not only about democracy but also how they can be responsible citizens. With help from BtB and other groups, young people are able to learn and deepen their understanding of an issue in question critically as they interact with BtB and other people on Twitter and other face-to-face occasions. In addition, prior to an election, young people and other followers could learn how to discuss a topic in a respectful and responsible manner. Through the discussion, they would learn multiple dimensions of an issue and thus they would learn that it is complex – subsequently, they might even know there is no possibility for total consensus on it. Nevertheless, they need to make a decision on an issue, the result of which can still send a strong but irreversible message both domestically and internationally. Therefore, discussing issues before an election happens, exploring them to learn, is much more important than discussing the election result itself.

### 9.3 Limitation of the Studies: Challenges for BtB Social Media Strategies and for Social Media Studies in General

The main challenge for the BtB social media strategy is that the Internet as a social infrastructure, is not the perfect tool to mobilise young people. The Internet offers a variety of options by which CSOs can reach a wider audience, not only by posting a comment in text, but also referring to external links/website, attaching a film clip, photographs, and illustrations, all of which

enrich the visual effect. As shown in Chapter 7, illustrating the result of Twitter poll is a visually effective way for its users to understand the figures and the ratios at a glance. While Twitter has enabled these visual materials to be posted, different social media channels may provide different features e.g. live stream.

Despite the above, using social media for political activity may not mobilise all young people. Some young people may wish to see updates from their friends living in another part of the world; hence, they may not wish to use social media for political learning or they may even dismiss any posts seemingly relating to politics (see 8.2.2). Even if BtB highlights the importance of voting on social media, if young people dismiss it, they may not go to polling stations on an election day. If this is the case, young people may still participate in an alternative form of political activity (see Chapter 1). However, BtB may need to consider alternative ways to approach young people outside social media platforms (see 9.4 for a possible disturbance of using social media) to mobilise them to vote.

Another issue is about diversified features with social media platforms which create difficulties in social media studies. In this project, I encountered several missing links and disappeared/deleted tweets during the data collection and analysis phases. For example, it is often the case that a link on a tweet has disappeared or has become invalid, because the linked website was either removed or deleted. If the tweet referred to the website as evidence or a signpost of a tweet, it would be difficult to assess the relevance of the contents to the tweet. Similarly, it was impossible to analyse a deleted or removed tweet. In this case, it was not possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis and, in fact, I had to omit a chain containing missing tweets from this thesis. Furthermore, I could not download short film clips which BtB and other users had posted; this triggers an issue with the data collection method – some webpages do not allow a user to download files.

Such issues of missing material affect any online studies employing qualitative methods. As qualitative methods aim to understand the nature of social phenomena, it is important to preserve the contents of data and, in some cases, to see links to other websites (see Silverman, 2011, 2013). This is in

stark difference from quantitative methods which seek changes or to explain the nature of data in a numerical way. However, it is often the case that websites, film clips and images would disappear or would be deleted at some point in time for reasons unknown (Whiteman, 2012). Such disappearances cause a problem in tracing links and interaction flow, as they disrupt the understanding of the entire interaction and grasp of meaning. While the number of omitted interactions in this thesis was small, it does not mean such missing link problems would be unproblematic in future. In addition to ethical considerations (see below), the issue of qualitative data analysis for online data should be considered in future.

In addition, there is a specific issue with data collection for studies using qualitative methodology – ethical consideration. Some tweet collecting applications require a log-in to Twitter in order to harvest a Twitter chain. However, this may allow the applications to collect tweets which are not publicly available. These users do not wish to disclose their tweets to the public and thus log-in may breach the trust between researchers and members of public. In this project, I used the classic copy-and-paste technique to collect the text data of tweets without log-in, so that I can ensure all collected tweets were public at the time of data collection. While this technique is certainly effective to comply with the ethical requirements, it is also more time-consuming to complete data collection. This issue also relates to legal regulations. After the data collection and analysis of tweets were completed, new legislation, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took into effect from May 2018. While GDPR did not give any impact on this project, researchers may need to contact all users who make a contribution on social media platforms.

It was also an issue that some social media websites do not allow data collection without log-in. Among the social media channels BtB uses, Facebook, for example, demands a viewer to log in to see an entire post made there, otherwise a pop-up square appears to hide a contents page. Similarly, log-in is mandatory to access Instagram. As argued in Chapter 4, this highlights an aspect of the nature of social media – it is a closed sphere exclusively for registered members. In contrast, Twitter and Youtube are accessible to non-registered users. It may be due to their nature: in addition to a personal chat, Twitter can provide an opportunity for an organisation to advertise an event,

which stresses the open access to reach a wider audience. Youtube commits to freedom of expression and the sharing of ideas with everyone by showing its contents around the world. Although the preference for open access enables discussion by literary, diversified people, it also brings a difficulty in obtaining consent from users involved in the discussion. Therefore, data collection should be done without log-in to ensure that it collects publicly open comments only.

Furthermore, the nature of diversity may be an obstacle to maintaining coherence and quality of a discussion in an open discussion forum on the Internet. As shown in Chapter 6, some people did not commit to the discussion or respond relevantly. This is in fact a rare case in a university context. Since it is impossible to determine their identity, educational, or occupational background, I contend this is a feature of online discussion and the nature of real diversity. As long as people can understand and write a comment in a language being used, and the online forum is open to public, there is (and should be) no checkpoint to assess whether they are qualified to participate. Although people need to pay to access the Internet, once they pay, they can access these forums. The issue is not about financial difficulty in accessing the Internet; it is about how to participate in a discussion in an online forum. In this thesis, I addressed the issue of to what extent people could commit to the discussion meaningfully and could make a productive argument on a topic.

In addition to the above, I found that data analysis can be problematic in avoiding judgmental commentary. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I took a position to avoid making judgmental comments on the intention of users' tweets. Even with this position, I found that it is possible to make a comment which could be deemed to be judgmental. This was largely due to the nature of comments: I encountered some tweets which appeared not to commit to the discussion in a serious manner. Yet, as long as it could be useful for this thesis, I had no reason to exclude these tweets, for such a decision could be deemed to be judgemental. It was certainly a challenging task to maintain a non-partisan commentary in order to provide a rational assessment of BtB's social media strategy. Social media studies could face similar situations in future since the Internet and social media are very diversified and, of an uncontrollable nature.

Drawing from above discussion, I argue that it is worth exploring the nature of diversity among people, in light of the nature of online discussion. As some researchers in the early 2000s hoped, the Internet has strong potential for the promotion of democracy and engagement into the community by promoting diversity of opinion. Yet, the nature of online diversity seems beyond their expectation: we need deep insight into diversity. In order to explore this, it may be necessary to find a new framework which reflects the anonymous nature of the Internet. On the Internet, it is often the case that the user's identity is not clear and thus they remain masked. As such, it is more valuable to focus on what is being said and how relationships emerge as interaction develops, without looking at identity or educational and occupational backgrounds. There is an urgent need for this work: the Internet has already become an infrastructure rooted in almost all aspects of our life in society.

## 9.4 Future Research Agendas

I shall address further areas to investigate thoroughly in the digital citizenship field. Three points appear particularly relevant to the current political situation in the UK.

First, educating (potential) political campaigners seems important so that they can judge whether their use of social media is ethically acceptable. On 1 March 2019, the *Financial Times* reported that some political campaign organisations used a bot on Tinder, a dating application, to address the deportation of immigrants carried out by an airline (Gross, 2019). The bot is a software programme working automatically to spread message or tweets without any instruction from a person. However, their use of the bot is highly problematic in two ways. First, they breached the terms of service from Tinder and other social media platforms; second, it ignores the users' intention, and as such, it might not impress travellers at an the airport, for example, as they might have another agenda, such as holiday or leisure purposes (ibid). While talking about immigration issues to tourists at an airport would be a consideration, it is worth investigating how bots impacted on sentiment and discourse among British travellers on that occasion. In addition, the issue of bots could be generalised in a way to focus on the issue of lack of respect to social media users.

Using Tinder for a political appeal certainly appears to intimidate users' intention. The issue with using a bot is that a real photograph of a person is taken over to mislead a person into political discussion. Tinder users swipe a photograph if they wish to chat to fulfil their intention in accessing the site. Using a bot on Tinder is ethically problematic as it deceives users by not inviting them to chat and thus gives a negative impression of political campaigners. While the use of a bot on social media platforms is often prohibited, it appears necessary to educate those political campaigners in complying with these rules and in the potential impacts of breaching them.

Second, researchers may need to consider when they are unable to reach online users. As I experienced, attempts by a researcher to make contact for questionnaire or a face-to-face interview with online users may not be successful, even though they are necessary (see Chapter 4). Moreover, even if a researcher can successfully contact an informant, he/she may not answer in full, thus the answer is insufficient for analytical purposes or academic discussion (Chapter 4). If this is the case, researchers need to consider an alternative approach (i.e. without meeting users in offline environment) to continue a study, while maintaining its rigour at a certain academic standard. In my view, this can be covered by providing a statement that explains the situation and the limitations of the study this implies, although it may indicate less rigour in situ. While it is not a researcher's fault, it is a dilemma for academics: we need interviewees, but they will not respond, even if they do not actually refuse.

Studying the social media strategy employed by organisations is a new research domain for investigation to identify successful elements. In this thesis, I identified these elements by looking at a CSO in London, UK. In contrast, provided that social media and the Internet have developed at a fast pace, social media strategies might change at a faster pace than we imagine, so that organisations could attract more people with an appropriate method. As such, I believe academic studies need to address their potential and risk, to promote people's participation in political activities from theoretical perspectives. Yet the domain also has many issues in practicality and feasibility of research conduct, all of which render theoretical discussion unsatisfactory. Solutions for such potential hindrances should be addressed in future studies.



Third, it would be a very interesting to attempt to investigate the impact of fake news on the silent majority. The silent majority is a group of people who (emotionally) feel economically failed and thus dissatisfied with their current life (see Lowndes, 2016). Stigmatisation has seemingly played a crucial role in strengthening the contribution of such social and political exclusion (see Pilkington, 2016). As they feel isolated, fake news (see section 6.3.2 for definition) may be able to mobilise these people, if it succeeds in winning over their sentiment. This thesis found that CSOs could mentor young people; as such, it is worth to investigate how CSOs could reach the silent majority and could assist them to feel emotionally attached to society through using social media.

## 9.5 The Final Words

On the morning of 30 May 2019, I received an email informing me that BtB would close over the coming months. The sender suspected financial issues, though these were not formally announced or publicised. While its closure will have significance for CSOs, BtB's work and strategies offer positive lessons for them.

The importance of BtB can be divided into three points. First, they worked from outside the institutional context. As seen in Chapter 2, most academic studies have looked at how educational institutions offer citizenship education to students, but not at the network they develop and how they use the network for education. BtB takes advantage of being a non-partisan independent organisation to develop a wider network expanding to include both businesses and schools. The network enabled BtB to run several events with companies (see Chapter 5). Secondly, their approach is mentoring for the mobilisation of young people, rather than setting a direction. BtB's work indicates that the approach, often employed by business firms, can be used to encourage young people to take political action. Thirdly, BtB show good use of social media channels. Academic studies on online interaction often found misbehaviour in online discussion boards which might disturb constructive discussions (see Chapter 2). This thesis showed how BtB used a social media platform in good faith and in a constructive manner, to build a community where young people discuss issues they care about.

While BtB may discontinue their activities for financial issues, other CSOs and individuals can use the findings of this thesis to make youth mobilisation towards voting more active and effective. They can use the concept of meaningful participation as a guideline to establish a social media strategy or even a face-to-face strategy in order to build constructive discussion among young participants. They may find it particularly useful to use evidence or sources from other online sources, preferably accessible websites, to legitimise their claims, when they use social media. From organisational strategic perspectives, they can maintain their non-partisan stance and can develop their own network of both schools and business companies with whom they can launch collaborative events for political actions. These findings are also useful for similar organisations internationally. For example, a Japanese organisation could apply a mentoring approach in a face-to-face event to invite young participants to develop their ideas and thoughts on political issues. Although international organisations may need to alter/modify the approach in contextually appropriate ways, organisations can still learn something from BtB's legacy for their own activities and strategies.

All in all, CSOs could reuse BtB's work in their own activity. BtB has had such success in establishing these strategies and in developing a collaborative network for citizenship practices. Other organisations may not need to copy and duplicate BtB's work; however, they can use BtB's strategic legacy for youth mobilisation in future, no matter where they are based.

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## Appendix

### Interview Script for Bob

T: [00:00:02] The first question is, when you were in BtB what you needed to do to motivate young people to go to vote.

B: [00:00:13] I think there were a range of activities that we pursued the primary method was an interactive democracy workshop called the Basics whereby usually one of the young person's peers or young: so, beneath the age of 25 member of the campaigns team would go into a youth centre or a school a place where there was a volume of young people and in unison with a YouTube video that displayed a number of instructions such as debate on this topic; consider this issue; register to vote. The facilitator would provide a session that was engaging and interactive for the young people so that was the first aspect.

The second aspect was an online voter advice application called Verto that produced a gamified experience in which young people would answer a number of questions about their preferences in decision-making around a number of political considerations. Should we allow people who gain lung cancer from smoking to have free health care for example. And at the end of the use of the Verto application they would be shown a pie chart that enables them to understand how closely or not their views align to the main parties in the May 2016 London local elections. The end point of that being a start to register to vote and the link being provided.

And then the third form that was slightly more varied was a series of activities around theme weeks of democracy. The first of these in 2016 was the National Voter Registration Drive with which was a national campaign to get young people to run activities in their local communities. That would encourage others to register to vote ahead of the May local elections and the second of these was hashtag Turnup. That was a big collaborative exercise between Bite the Ballot and a number of other organizations in which employers, faith organisations, parents and other crosscutting sections of the population were encouraged to persuade particularly young people that they were in contact with to take part in what would be the most important democratic decision-making process in Britain's history. The June 2016 EU referendum. So three methods.

T: [00:03:35] Three methods. Could you explain a bit more about the first aspect and I feel that your first aspect is more instructive way. So how did you how did you get that facilitators and how did they communicate with young people.

B: [00:04:02] There's a number of functional and substantive questions there in terms of how we developed it and chose the facilitators. I think there were two levels of facilitator: one was the paid staff of Bite the Ballot and selected volunteers through the program we developed called the Bite the ballot Ten. They got 10 young people from different circumstances some university students some engaged in youth groups of around 18 to 19 who could do direct peer to peer engagement to facilitate these sessions. We also had a recruitment exercise before this wave of activity in December 2015 where we were explicitly recruiting young people to look like the diverse and marginalized communities of London. We had a very diverse staff team. That's the first aspect of developing and selecting the facilitators.



And then for the second aspects of wider facilitators so these are youth workers people that elected offices of Student Unions of universities. We've worked with national organisations that we knew would be and did have a demonstrable track record of engaging with young people. We went to the NUS Conference which is the biggest student union conference in Europe to select a number of students sabbatical officers who had great relationships with their students and students societies and universities to conduct the work. We've worked with the UK Youth and London youth organisations who are the representative organisations of youth workers who have a pool of talented youth workers who engage in the day to day basis which are students and young people who are often facing quite severe degrees of disadvantage problems and we would run train and trainers sessions for these people. So for the youth workers who were selected and the students union officers who were selected I or the members of the team would run the basics the interactive democracy workshop that we're talking about here showing them how to run it so that when they had their groups of young people they would be able to run it in that community areas in groups.

T: [00:06:50] Talking about a second aspect it's an online application, Verto, who developed this application? Were there any person who were very good at IT or application developer in BtB? Or. Did you ask somebody else to develop the application?

B: [00:07:16] So it was the second?

T: [00:07:18] Yes.

B: [00:07:21] Grassroots tech organization with the Small Axe produced Verto and I think some assistance from Demos as well and small acts are quite successful in using technological solutions for social purposes. They are essentially consultancy here all about harnessing the most modern innovations for use by grassroots movements and historically I think this has been an area of weakness for civil society. So what SmallAxe did was essentially create a web-based platform that can be accessed from a phone or a computer or a tablet. And they then built an infrastructure around it that allowed members of the team to feed in quizzes from politicians manifestos and then as a result of feedback in the most relevant useful information young people got to see how the current political environment correlates with their own interests. You could start to see young people as a resource some of the data that came out of their sites to become very engaged or more engaged as a result of actually realising public policy issues were more relevant to their lives. And since then we've seen an increase in civil society and tech organisations working together to develop e-solutions to the democratic deficit problems.

T: [00:08:56] Could you spell that company's name?

Bob: [00:09:06] Small Axe: S-M-A-L-L-A-X-E-E sorry AXE just one e. Yeah, and they are based in Tower Hamlets on Greatorex street.

T: [00:09:24] So now we shall move to this third aspect themed weeks of democracy. How long was it. Is it several weeks, or one month?

B: [00:09:45] This is a borrowed concept from the United States the United States have their National Voter Registration Day a national voter registration

drive and [a senior member of BtB] Essentially brought these concepts to the UK. In 2014 this NVR day in the vote it covers was just that day but in 2016 it was made a week to enhance engagement over a longer period of time and hashtag Turnup was also a week with suggestions either side that people should continue to engage. Hashtag turnup was initially planned to end on the deadline day for voter registration for the EU referendum. However, as a result of the Government Digital Service portal for voter registration crashing the Government extended the deadline for registration by two days. In a sense be tied up messages continue for another two days so we can encourage the last few young people to register to vote and I think be successful turn up and the wider social movement was part of was that in those days there were more applications than ever before received a comparative period for voter registration.

T: [00:11:30] Who involved that the weeks of democracy in 2016? Could you give me some names or organisation?

B: [00:11:39] UK Youth was one of the big collaborators who were involved and they were helpful in getting youth workers to spread the message about our students and young people should be involved. The National Union of Students will again very useful and they hard to register to vote movement conformable the number of was but they have their own regular campaign ... should Remember this. I'll come back to me later.

T: [00:12:16] Sure.

Bob: [00:12:16] They were useful. Well we engaged some businesses in some of the more functional aspects helping with state run events and whatnot and we had some success with Unilever the company that runs Ben and Jerry's who provided the street funds for T-shirt and gift to volunteers across the campaign. And then there were some other aberrations that we struck for smaller groups. There were a couple of feminist voting campaigns called the Regist Her to Vote and #Emilymatters who voter registration outfits for women. Operation Black Votes again encouraging minority participation in democracy. Mencap make up of long talked about how those with disabilities are excluded from the voting process for a range of reasons. We're very keen to include them in our campaign. Citizens UK the national grassroots organizing movement also partners for turnup, not necessarily NVRD and we engage with these Centrepoint Parliament who are a group of young people in accommodation who are looked after children or they are homeless and whilst they were in Centrepoint accommodation. This group of young people help others with engagement and mental health issues and other problems and they're very passionate about democracy so we engage them as women in our track. The train at work for people who are excluded from the political participation process.

T: [00:14:13] You mentioned a name of business company Unilever.

B: [00:14:22] Yeah. Unilever.

T: [00:14:23] Do you know why they participated in these weeks?

B: [00:14:28] Again I'm really struggling to recall all of the issues and motivations of what Unilever at the time were. I think they they really wanted to engage in the encouragement of participation around the EU referendum but they didn't have the track record of engagement in the area. They were keen for

an organisation that did have the expertise to help them do that. Unilever is perhaps not the best example they were just funding but there were other collaborations that were also quite useful that I think we should talk about as well. [Name of one of the directors] The director of strategy at Bite the Ballot managed to resolve a number of very high level effective partnerships. There was a collaboration with the dating app Tinder where where young people were going through every several swipe that they take him to the register to vote page.

There was a collaboration with Uber where again people were encouraged to register to vote or scan [inaudible] and engaging with the communications there. There was a promotional post through the business conglomerate's business in the community. Business and the community members include McDonalds and other large organisations to promote to their employees that they should register to vote and participate. And, those are those really important collaborationists still in my mind. I think in general sometimes businesses can be new or not accustomed to or not have established corporate social responsibility mechanisms for engaging employees in democracy. So interestingly we might be seeing do a tiered approach where they assist civil society organizations who are aware of necessarily have the funds to be able to do that sort of activity.

T: [00:16:43] We shall now move to about a communication strategy about the BtB. At BtB, what was the balance between face to face events and use of social media?

Bob: [00:17:01] I guess there was a lot of both. My milestones and targets in setting the grassroots on the ground face to face. Yeah I guess you could call them key performance indicators whether that would be a hundred events nationally. In both campaigns and we managed to do that. Over the seven days there were an average of I guess sum must be 13 events per day, further for the week both directly facilitated Bite the Ballot employees and by our partners in the community while at the same time we will be pushing some content on these social media channels particularly Twitter that was going quite a lot of what Twitter described as engagement clicks and views. What I was very keen to do is to have the grassroots activity working in tandem with the online presence. We had for example during our faith weekend communications that were saying it's within the tradition of this religious group to vote should do it. At the same time as having actual events in mosques churches and synagogues where people would be encouraging members to vote on the terms of one day's were on the student day. You had voter registration drives up on campuses and at the same time communications going on about how only 44 percent of 18 to 24 year olds the majority of the students voted in the last election. Students make your voice heard et cetra.

There was a really prominent there was a really prominent social media campaign. It was stressed and bolstered by again actual community events where young people were sitting around a table discussing the issues that matter to them. And over the course of an hour going from a position where they hadn't had much engagement or were quite disaffected with the politics thinking. But even if an individual citizen might not be able to achieve much change collectively if young people were more engaged politicians might start to take more of an interest in their concerns.

T: [00:20:14] As online communication, I think the BtB used email, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. What strategy did they have for these each method, What kind of strategy did you use for email. Did you use email for communicating with young people.

B: [00:20:39] Yes, I was in charge of all e-mail communication. We we had a very ambitious. I wouldn't call it a strategy I call it plan. Going back to Smallaxe, Ed and I sat down with their tech director to think about how we could put together an email system that would track the engagement of people with our campaign to a point where they were ready to lead sessions ready to donate. There is there is a company in the States called Blue State Digital who have what we call a customer relations management system which is essentially an email programme monitors and tracks whether people like it, whether people are going to attend events, whether there is a differential level of engagement and we purchased this solution. And I was responsible for implementing it within our work. We used Blue State Digital as the means for people to sign up to be involved in the campaign as a means to track donations as a means to understand how we could deliver specific messages to different parts of the population and I also trained the staff and use it as well. What we were doing was trying to be very specific with the messages. For example, say, these 15 people are teachers, they'll get the education e-mail; these 20 people are students they'll get the US in student movement email; And I think it would be the benefit of such an approach is that you would get more relevant messages to individual parts of your population without necessarily replicating the effort which again in the small grassroots organization is very effective.

We had a situation where overall we would decide what the relevant messages were for each themed week each themed day of the week. And then I would segment the messages to the system that was used. People were getting the messages that would be compelling to them. So that was the e-mail strategy. I think it is quite effective. I was never in a situation where we didn't have a full room. Already overflowing by the time events started particularly the events that we were in a Starbucks out Democracy Cafe events and the Twitter strategy and email strategy very much, or planned should I say, very much work simultaneously. You'd have Twitter content about a particular issue and then we would be encouraging in the e-mail or the sharing of that message or that media so that people knew when they should be talking about education policy and when they should be talking about religion when they should be talking about workplace issues. I think it was quite a case of the message that really resonated.

T: [00:24:22] Could you tell me what the were the reason to buy customer relations products. I guess there's so many products there?

B: [00:24:31] They're the other uses and campaigns to which have been used. Obama 2012 had used that digital thing. I think Bernie Sanders again really engaging the youth campaign in the states also used its use by Greenpeace. Generate some donations in a field that is actually very difficult to get donations for environmental activism. I think we had an ambitious attempt to be using the tools of the best campaign. I think there are other more cost-effective solutions. Let's just say.

T: [00:25:31] So then could you tell me what strategy did BtB useed for Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, and Facebook?

B: [00:25:46] Okay so I'm less well versed in those aspects. There was also a snapchat. For Twitter. There was a creative company of great experience of working with young people called Creative Nerds who had project management oversight for that aspect of the social media. We had a relationship where I would tell them what was going on in the grassroots operation the face to face engage and then they would use that to tie in with messages on social media.

If I said X member of staff is going to be delivering a workshop to a mosque they would then send relevant messages around now these are the big issues for the Muslim community. You should think about voting and then we'll try to tie in. If, for example, a young person sitting in the back of our workshop and we say registered the vote and have already registered they might go into the Twitter account to see if Bite the Ballot are really interested in this issue. It's quite political. Maybe I should be more engaged with it. Who was trying to tie the Twitter into the actual work on the ground they're willing to let the very clever things as well. They had we got some support from some organizations with online work.

They were used by the tongue rush to acquire new tools in social media such as the though there was a variation of that Twitter system where it's something interesting was happening – happening local to you you would see a lightning bolt and then you just click the Lightning Ball and Bite the Ballot managed to get one of those lightning bolts for young people in and in so that they would see an event that we were running at Twitter HQ about democracy. I think it was called moments. They they used these moments to show what was going on.

They also used what we call dark post which are a type of direct targeted marketing to those who have a range of different characteristics. It wants to sort dark post you might be able to use these teachers and then you target all the teachers that are in your demographic an area. There was use that as well. There will more conventional means of paid advertising as well. Those were the industry tricks of the trade they used were. And then we also used the traditional Thunderclap and effort. We had all of these different civil society organizations, individuals with a large reach as well such as Labour deputy leader Tom Watson. And they would subscribe to our social media Thunderclap and then I think we had either cottagers of thousands or millions of unique users seeing registers a vote thunderclap which I think happened on. I think it happened on the fifth of June 2016 or something. So there were a lot of there. There were a lot of paid for activities that we were using to enhance our social media spread across Twitter. There were some paid advertising aspects on Facebook. We had less of an advance plan for Snapchat where we would simply look to record and video whatever parts of our sessions we were able to which is actually quite difficult because you often doing things that are quite expressive and you're moving around when engaging in a session is not always possible to, to simultaneous record. Snapchat Twitter Facebook and I engagement with Instagram.

T: [00:30:19] In BtB's view, what was the strength of Twiter?

B: [00:30:27] I think what we were promoting and what we were asking people to do was a very introductory and minutes first step into democracy and what Twitter is very good at doing is amplifying shallow messages. This was a time in which Twitter was limited to 240 characters and there was a clear in my view compatibility between what is actually a relatively shallow message go vote and

the tool itself so people who are going on Twitter in my view are usually doing one of two things; they're looking to gain access to things that they will look elsewhere. So those are the journalist and lawyer types who are clicking on the journalist and lawyer types of contributions so they can actually see for papers of things etc; and people who are looking for short sharp snappy news comments hot takes and very often you find that younger people are engaged in that sort of more shallow activity if you will.

For me the message of Twitter is relaying and amplifying messages of that sort is really resonant with people who may not potentially have much time because of study or life complications the precarious young stage of their lives. And I think there's a level of social reaffirmation for these things because the reach we secure social approval for particular ideas people get this sense of mean from having their views confirmed or the opposite. I feel as though they will engage because situations and things that they think are excellent or good are said to be negative or in the mind. And then there's a desire because that means being challenged that they will in a sense take part in a democratic online conversation because their initial perception that Twitter is quite good at suggesting has been challenged by another. So a testing ground for democratic ideas if you will.

T: [00:33:35] So you mentioned that basically your aim is to give some introductory phase for young people.

B: [00:33:48] Absolutely.

T: [00:33:48] So what was your self-evaluation of BtB's communication strategy? How did you evaluate their Twitter strategy in particular?

B: [00:33:59] I think it was really good at making the headline points about underrepresentation of 18 to 25 year olds in democracy. Because 140 characters is there is no there's no ability to be ambivalent there's no ability to be ambiguous. What you say is very clear direct concise and I think the tweets that are coming out would directly engage with the injustice of going to be enough to face this high tuition fee. People are getting pension increases. Young people the Educational Maintenance drops out people get increases in winter fuel allowance. See you can represent the zero sum games in democracy really went its way and I think just judging by some of the tweets that appeared huge numbers you know hundreds and thousands. They were very great engaging bigger senses of injustice in a very short space of time.

I think the other thing that I've not really talked about in this interview is the ability of social media superstars if you will to enhance the quality or is it just the quantity and the spread of the campaign messages. So there were quite a few YouTube celebrities and people of influence who would lend supports Bite the Ballot social media messages retweeting and tweeting to start with. (and) David Janáček is one of them. Schmoll Edwards of SPTV fame and we were able to show pictures of celebrities engaging with the campaign. So quite a few on the left. Bob Geldof for example who I was and on the right. Kate Hopkins was involved in that provided the sort of social media head of steam that is useful for a campaign getting more attention. And I think I think that the the thing about things like Facebook and to a much higher degree Twitter is that they use these very experiments or it's ever developing it's ever changing. And for me running the National Voter Registration Drive in early 2016 it's kind of campaign later on

honestly it did seem that Twitter itself has got quite a few changes. One of the things that I think the social media strategy is very flexible and adaptive to was using the new tools as they or I was to get really good traction. I talked a lot about the Twitter moments feature but also the ability to pose for photos like they changed during that time frame and started doing that and getting even more attention because people skim through text and focus on photos of the human brain is there is a thing we understand to be focused on photos. So I think some implicit observations about human psychology operate in the background of the campaign and who is really good at using novel and innovative social media trends and tools, if you're.

T: [00:38:05] And did you have any success criteria for Twitter strategy? What were, and if so, what were they?

B: [00:38:12] I didn't have oversight of that aspect so I don't know what the key performance indicators or anything like that would be. But I would assume that one of the criteria would be the general engagement of our partners. One of the things I would do in my e-mails to other organizations we're sending a social media pack toolkit that would contain the images that they would tweet. We would know that success activity if we saw our partner organizations tweeting out are concerned because they've received and we've not released it to the public at large.

T: [00:38:59] Also you think BtB has some face-to-face event. How did you evaluate their face-to-face event.

B: [00:39:13] We would often ask you to start a procession of people registered to vote. And then also ask them at the end of it. The percentage of people who were not registered to vote at the start who were registered to vote to the end. There's one gauge of success; I think anticipated vs. actual attendance. There's another theory of success. One of the things I've been I've become quite aware of since wading into citizenship education research is these sorts of output variables don't necessarily speak to the more difficult to measure changes in the competencies of people over the process of engagement. And I think it would be for us to look at the benefits to the young people in isolation at just the events. I'd prefer to look at it as a holistic question for those who engaged in the first themed week national voter registration drive that continued on how good they look as Democrats. That was at the end of it.

One of the things that [Name of the director] and I do was looking at how well young people do three things. The first was how were they how they worked to build relationships; how they as the second point how they developed over the course of; and, how they acted politically and we didn't quite get to include all in that work but about a hundred people across different youth organizations over the course of the three activities the National Registration Drive turned up and something else the decaf series had run events of some sort. I think the question is not necessarily what is the effect of interventionists what is the effect of the young person's empowerment through the intervention. I'd say about a hundred young people came through a relatively difficult three pronged set of obligations to become quite meaning a fully empowered democratic citizens by by June or July or so.

T: [00:42:09] So the success criteria for face-to-face event was to do, let's say, young people to vote.

B: [00:42:21] Yes. Yes absolutely.

T: [00:42:23] I would like ask some questions about when you tweet. How did you choose that topic when you tweet; was there criteria?

B: [00:42:38] I guess decisions were made by committee and because in the composition of the decision-making committee there were a number of implicit criteria to reflect as well. Actually this is an explicit criterion. The number one overarching criteria for any communication that came out from Bite the Ballot was the it had to be accessible it had to have a level of communication. The vast majority of people would be able to understand and it must use any language that would go for anyone at the moment trouble I to tackle that. accessibility was an explicit criterion for any communication whatsoever. There were also some implicit criteria around the relevance of subject matter.

It had to be something that young people would actually be passionate about. And I think there were a few you know psychological scheme type things operating in terms of things that were visual and really could be things that could be rendered pictorial being important for the process as well. So those are the impressive sort of considerations and in terms of explicit stuff we will do a horizon scanning exercise over the whole of the period to see what the big political events would be. The deadline for voter registration the referendum is so the the local elections sporting events things that are going to be big things in music it's taking a really wide perception of what is culturally relevant to young people over time and say let's render some political content about that situation policy or issue so that that's how we decided what these specific moments would reference then in terms of what would feature within an image for example there were a few implicit criteria around not displaying anything that various things wouldn't be comfortable with and reputational protection of the organization and things like that. I guess there was there was an impressive piece about Brandon Boyce so there would be a need to be accessible and inclusive in the language it was used.

So for example where you were as much as possible we actually wanted to avoid using the metaphor of the voice the Student Voice The Young People's Voice etc. because we worked with some organizations where there were deaf mute individuals and those terms might, might inadvertently cause some level of discomfort. There were there were some discussions around how we would provide both a text version of a picture or text and the picture itself because quite often if one is blind they might be using audio dictation software and would be able to see an image. And in terms of advice that we were receiving there was quite a lot of collaboration with Espey TV the grime music channel. So things that would be useful and relevant to that audience often made their way into the way that we thought about things and create us. That's all I can really think of.

T: [00:47:10] What do you mean by accessible? What accessible means.

B: [00:47:16] I think there is a consistent approach across political commentary to be quite for both quite lengthy in expressions using over complicated times. For us that was a background barrier preventing people from seeing politics as a process that was for them. In that situation of deficit we were trying to overcome some of the difficulties of language by speaking in more than youth friendly voice, a voice of the youth one that would be deeply resonant in this in



its terms, in its intonation and in its language. Our target audience voice. That word sound like a peer rather than a figure of authority. A young person who might have traditionally sceptical views of politicians and more to academics a few something that would not be difficult for somebody who might have a few gaps in their teenage education to be able to relate to quite a few troubled young people that have such problems. So yeah the implicit approach is padded accessibility as almost the pedagogical consideration was present plau the tweets. I think there were a few jokes about how we should have any words longer than the first syllables. Yeah. Making it is easy to understand those could be possible for a young person irrespective of their level of education.

T: [00:49:24] About a topic in tweets, what was there a reason to tweet about the social issues, such as housing price and tuition fee.

B: [00:49:41] For us around that policy consideration of relevance there had to be a substance to the tweet would surely have an impact on a large number of young people. For us there are a number of very obvious recent public policy decisions that can be rendered as impacting negatively on young people as a whole.

Homeownership especially in London has seen the number of difficult decision-making processes such as housing aid for up to 30 fores I think and single occupancy being either reduced or cut. The fact that the vast majority of under 18 year old university applicants have a bachelors degree applicants in England being 18 be placed in an 18 year old has just come from a college not receiving education maintenance allowance payments that they would have received had they been my age again negatively impact upon the teenager time and first time voter. For us if these issues that have just been a consequence of a political system that if I were to look at it in Foucauldian or the power dynamic sentences serves the interests of an established elite. If we can really pick out our young people to see that there is a power imbalance here using explicit individual public policies as the stair to doing that it can lead to a resonance for political content that previously was merely theoretical conceptual but here becomes concrete because it's about opportunities that the young person wants to take up that they can because political considerations are falling against them.

T: [00:52:14] Talking about the power and relationship between political consequence and social issues. The election results and referendum results is one of that emergence of power from people's side. Why was it that you did not comment on the actual referendum result. Were there any reason not to argue about that result?

B: [00:52:42] Is this from the sense that young people voted.

T: [00:52:46] Yes.

B: [00:52:47] Disproportionally against the older people voting for remaining in the party.

T: [00:52:52] Not only about that but also election results as a whole.

B: [00:52:57] Okay so we, at Bite the Ballot, living non-partisan neutral objective etc.. Whether or not a particular government in power dispenses the interests of young people and students first is not within the scope of the organisation's approach. However, I also want to reflect on a few legislative reasons that such

a thing would be difficult as well. In 2014 the Transparency of Lobbying and third party campaigns act was passed which impose obligations of registration upon organizations that would be invalid commerce company during a election period. If an organization is being political advocacy work it can be caught by this provision. If an organization is saying actually people should vote for this party or this party because we think this policy is wrong. They may have obligations to register how much money to spend on communications or staff salaries related to that topic.

It's a very difficult period in which to be a political organization campaigning in the political space generally. In terms of another consideration I think it might be quite off putting to the substantial minorities that disagree with the vast majority of young people. So not to comment on it too much the the argument runs 75 percent or so young people voted against the UK leaving the European Union. So 75 percent through some [inaudible] and pollsters said to vote to remain. A load of youth organisations are [sic] saying young people do not want to leave the European Union; however, there are 25 per cent of 18 to 25 year olds who did vote to leave the European Union by saying all young people did not want to take this public policy decision: these 25 per cent are being completely excluded. I guess in trying to be inclusive and accessible it's about not declaring a particular substance to democratic engagement but just saying that democratic engagement in general whether it's ready to leave or remain or left or right or yes or no or in or out is a good thing. So I think as a philosophy not having a stance left or right allows us to engage and Bite the Ballot engaged with a wider the scope of the potential voting population than otherwise.

T: [00:56:25] So basically that, as a BtB's stance, it is young people need to discuss by themselves.

B: [00:56:35] Absolutely.

T: [00:56:35] BtB doesn't push particular opinion.

B: [00:56:37] No.

T: [00:56:47] In terms of general use of Twitter, how did you decide whether you join the discussion with followers or not?

B: [00:56:50] Join the discussion with individuals.

T: [00:56:55] Yeah.

B: [00:56:55] I think the Bite the Ballot would be in that period would always engage with individuals were talking about democracy matters. I mean if there had been a direct approach by the ballot from a young person they engage I think I think the usual sort of considerations about is this is this a chat bot is it an individual. Is probably the more important distinction rather than who they would or wouldn't talk to. And I think all young people who've approached it would be talk to people who are interested in the work as well. And recently Bite the Ballot started a chat or sorts where people can ask questions and members of staff will reply and whatnot. It's very it's very open for discussion that there is Twitter and very keen to facilitate conversations as well between people who have differing views about individual things that are tweeted.

T: [00:58:00] Now I would like to ask some questions about funding; funding to BtB. Could you tell me who was finding BtB's activities?

B: [00:58:14] That is mostly grants and foundations. There was one project by the Trust for London which was the London based aspect of the campaign grassroots were with people from marginalized communities in powers of London boroughs so they were I think Brent, Harrow, Islington and Hackney. And I think [inaudible] and Finchley. There would be a community engagement officer a member of staff and activist who go into these areas and work to build the engagement of the community working alongside the local authority that seem to be relatively successful. So that was one of the funded projects just for them. I think the Farber and Foundation will be one of the funders also based on campaign strategy work. Charlie and I were running a Cabinet office funded projects to use digital communications to get people to engage in democracy; we traded a few donations should be the rest.

T: [00:59:57] What was your funder's expectation to BtB's activities?

B: [01:00:04] So the trust for London was to increase democratic participation in London. So no no easy feat and provided support with monitoring and evaluation training for me and I think increasing Democratic participation in London, they were expecting us to shift the needle a little bit on voter registration to encourage people to actually go to the polls on voting day and something which is slightly more nebulous to actually make people change their behaviors so that people feel more confident about participation. So you know I think with the methods under the style those are ways of doing through the voter advice application Verto that's one way of showing people actually politics is for me the interactive democracy Sessions again very useful. So that's one example of founders expectations and I think for the campaign strategy stuff which is that we would we would be able to identify the changed and wanted to see in the world and then identify the steps that were needed to take to get there in a way that's a bit more 21st century strategy like I guess in general anybody. I mean what Bite the Ballot wants to see some kind of democratic participation increased.

T: [01:01:48] Did they did they put some conditions to your activities like, so if the Bite the Ballot didn't achieve an increase of voter registration, they don't fund for a following year. What kind of condition.

B: [01:02:11] I don't think there were any such conditions because one it's a very ridiculously difficult measure to actually calculate it. And for a number of reasons the first being that the register which is used for local elections is different than the national. No one is counting nationally and locally people elect registration offices the Cabinet Office elects or commission on doing the robust evidential scientific evidence gathering that would lead us to actually know the figures. And third is actually really really difficult to assert causation. Who is responsible? So let's think about a young person sitting at home who is not registered to vote. It's June 6, 2016 and they see through the window a banner across the street saying registered to vote. And then they go downstairs and their grandma is there and she says, "by the way have you registered to vote? It's very important as a civic duty". They may go to school and a teacher opens form piled by say "actually everyone should register to vote". And then I come in two hours late. I give them interactive democracy workshops. I ask them to raise their hand if they're not registered as they are and ask them to register to

vote in the session. They do. Is that me? Their grandmother, the teacher, the banner across the street? You know I think the reason why there aren't many expectations in the sort of space is because it is incredibly difficult to monitor causation and also monitor the results and consequences of it. And funders aren't really used to funding voter registration activities yet. It's actually a very small number of organizations conducting this activity in the UK. And I don't quite think that they have the sort of understanding of that. With all due respect check that that's required to be able to quantify what they want.

T: [01:04:31] As a final question how much did funders gave you?

B: [01:04:41] I can't remember internally what things looked like but you can certainly view the income and expenditure on the charity commission charity register. Sure I'll send you the link to that.