

Music, Ideology, and Emerging Political Elites: Musical Taste and Aesthetic Sensibilities among Young Politicians in Norway

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Whereas studies of the politics of music have overwhelmingly focused on how popular audiences, subcultures and social movements engage with music, only minimal attention has been given to how the relationship between music and politics manifests in political elites, and the degree to which these invest music with political significance. Based on a survey conducted among the members of the youth wings of five major political parties in Norway, this study demonstrates marked oppositions in musical taste and aesthetic sensibilities, which systematically follow the ideological left-right axis of Norwegian party politics. Starting from Bourdieu's cultural sociology, the article further discusses the findings in the light of socio-economic background factors. The findings indicate that music and political orientation is considerably more tightly integrated into the lifestyles of the young politicians of the left than young politicians of the right.

Keywords: Music, Taste, Politics, Political Parties, Elites, Aesthetical Sensibilities, Ideology, Lifestyle.

Let's do an anti-American dance
Make the embassy a Midsummer Eve bonfire
Grab the hand of your chosen one
Burn the flag and shake your booty!

Translated excerpt from Gatas Parlament's "Anti-amerikansk dans" – the most popular band among members of the revolutionary Marxist youth wing Red Youth (RU)

There was sunset
There was laughter, there was singing
There was summer vacation
There was the sea and there was magic

Translated excerpt from Postgirobygget's "Idyll" – the most popular band among members of the market liberalist youth wing The Progress Party's Youth (FPU)

Introduction

In the broadest sense, intersections between (popular) music and politics has been studied in terms of music's capacity to convey ideology (Frith 1998; Adorno 1973; Attali 1985; Street, 2012), and as a site for ideological struggle and resistance (Garofalo 1992; Frith 1983) – including the role of music in various subcultures (Hebdige 1979). Furthermore, music has been studied in terms of its role

in social, political, and not least nationalist, movements and struggles (Negus 1996; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Peddie 2005; Cvorovic 2012). More recently the role of music in political change and action has been explored in terms of its role within public sphere processes (Gripsrud 2009; Nærland 2014a, 2014b), and as a resource for (cultural) citizenship (Hermes 2005) and political engagement (Inthorn et al 2012). The disciplines of both popular music studies and cultural studies have in this respect yielded a relatively vast body of literature that in different ways focuses on how various intersections between music and politics play out within a number of broad social groups and subcultures, but leaving social and political elites out of the scope – including the politicians that operate at the center of the political system.

Although elite tastes and lifestyles were a central concern in classical sociological contributions, such as Torstein Veblen's (1976 (1899)) analysis of consumption in the 'leisure class' and Max Weber's (1978) work on charisma and legitimacy in high status groups, Jean-Pascal Daloz (2010) argues that there is a conspicuous absence of research on the symbolic and cultural characteristics of elites in current international research. In their study of cultural consumption and orientation among Norwegian parliamentarians and administrators, Hovden and Knapskog (2014a) note the same absence in the Norwegian context. Moreover, the cultural taste of elites has been a recursive concern within the Bourdieuan tradition of cultural sociology, but then mainly as a marker of cultural capital vis a vis other social strata, and with little attention to how political orientation and engagement are linked with (musical) taste and socioeconomic background factors within the elite group.

Thus, this study bases itself on the fundamental argument that there is a need for systematic research on such symbolic aspects of the elites – in this case emerging political elites – in order to understand the formation, contestations and characteristics of the elite group itself. Furthermore, knowledge about the tastes and sensibilities of politicians is also important as these may inform and reflect politicians' prioritizations and assessments of cultural expressions in society at large – not least in terms of how tastes and sensibilities may inform cultural policy (Hovden and Knapskog 2014b).

Based on data from a survey carried out on position-holding members of the youth wings of five major political parties (N=461) in Norway, this study offers an example of quantitative basic research in the sociology of aesthetics that serves to provide insight on (1) how musical taste and aesthetic sensibilities map ideological orientation among young politicians, (2) how and why such resonances between musical taste and ideology is at place, and (3) how music may function as a means of not only social differentiation, but also political differentiation.

More generally, we naturally make assumptions about how taste for certain kinds of music connects to certain kinds of ideological orientations – be it jazz and left wing ideology or country and moral conservatism. Such connections, however, has very rarely been empirically substantiated. Although this study is

confined to young people of particular socio-demographic characteristics, the findings from this survey may also provide an empirically based starting point for the further exploration of how musical taste connect to political orientations among audiences more generally, and the social and political implications of such connections.

Political youth wings make up a particularly fruitful case for several reasons. Firstly, the membership of youth wings are at an age (most between 16 and 25 years old, see appendix, table 4) when musical interest, relative to other age groups, takes up a privileged space. Thus youth wings constitute an arena where the intersections between musical taste and politics can be seen at play and studied. Secondly, the location of the various youth wings across the ideological-political specter of Norwegian mainstream politics readily allows for the investigation of how specific taste-formations and aesthetic sensibilities may correlate to political-ideological position. Thirdly, youth wings perform a key function in the recruitment and schooling of young people into party- and parliamentary politics (Katz and Mair 1995) – hence their members represent emerging political elites and future actors in the political public sphere. Fourthly, youth wings represent a political force in their own right in issuing well publicized and often radical reprimands of both their mother parties and of parliamentary politics in general.

Musical taste and political-ideological orientation

The cultural sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) offers a conceptual framework through which we can make sense of the relationships between musical taste, aesthetic sensibilities and political orientation in particular social groups, and moreover, the importance of socio-economic background factors in configuring these relationships. Within this tradition musical taste enjoys a privileged status as marker of social background, and is seen as a subtle yet effective means of social distinction. The important social function Bourdieu ascribes to musical taste and its role in the reproduction of social class is due to two main characteristics of music: its non-representational character, which in turn makes it a potent symbolic site for the inscription of social hierarchies, and the subtlety and opaqueness of musical distinction, of which the level of mastery is dependent on socioeconomic conditions (Bourdieu 1984: 77).

Within this framework (musical) taste is seen as part of habitus – the set of (aesthetic) sensibilities and dispositions acquired through socialization – that is initially shaped by socioeconomic factors. Moreover, musical taste and the aesthetic dispositions it entails are expressed and manifested through lifestyles, which according to Bourdieu must be understood as the different “systems of properties in which the different systems of dispositions express themselves.” (Ibid: 260). As such, habitus functions as the mediator between socioeconomic background and lifestyle (Ibid: 170). Aesthetic sensibilities involves the susceptibility to and orientation towards general aesthetic qualities, be it disruptive aesthetics, aesthetic complexity or abstraction. Thus, it is a concept that captures less

specific orientations than that of taste. Yet, as shown in this study, aesthetic sensibilities can be seen to inform the taste for specific artists, songs and genres. Crucially, ideological and political orientation is from this view point regarded, alongside musical taste, as lifestyle-expressions of the dispositions and sensibilities acquired at the more fundamental level of habitus (See for instance Van Eijk and Bargeman 2004).

However, this conceptualization has been challenged and supplemented by scholars working from within and from outside the Bourdieuan framework. The concept of musical omnivore is a recent and important addition, and some would say challenge, to this framework (Peterson and Kern 1996; Savage and Gayo 2011). Recent studies have also emphasized demographic factors such as age, ethnicity and gender (Savage 2006) as determining factors of musical taste, while other studies has re-actualized the importance of educational background (van Eijk and Bargeman 2004; Gripsrud et al 2011) in the formation of cultural taste.

Employing the concept of *taste cultures*, Georg H. Lewis (1992) offers a somewhat different conceptualization that builds upon the framework established by Bourdieu, but with a more particular focus on how political-ideological orientation specifically relates to the formation of musical taste. The concept of *taste cultures* was originally introduced by Gans (1973) and further developed by Peterson and DiMaggio (1975) as a concept alternative but roughly parallel to *class culture*. Andy Bennet (2008) argues that Lewis' conceptualization is an important, yet strangely neglected framework in which to elucidate connections between (musical) taste and political orientations within social groups.

Arguing that socioeconomic background remains the key structuring factor in the formation of musical taste, Lewis suggests that the process whereby individuals acquire and form groups around musical taste can also be fruitfully understood in terms of three distinct but intersecting dimensions. The first dimension is *demographics*, comprising factors such as age, gender and locality. The second dimension is *aesthetics* – the aesthetic sensibilities acquired through socialization. The third is *politics* – a dimension he defines as the relationship among musicians, music, fans, and the power structure of the larger society. Drawing on the terminology of Raymond Williams (1977) he further argues that the political dimension may yield different taste cultures that can be: (1) supportive of the power culture (hegemonic); (2) alternative (and co-existing) with the power culture; (3) oppositional to the power culture.

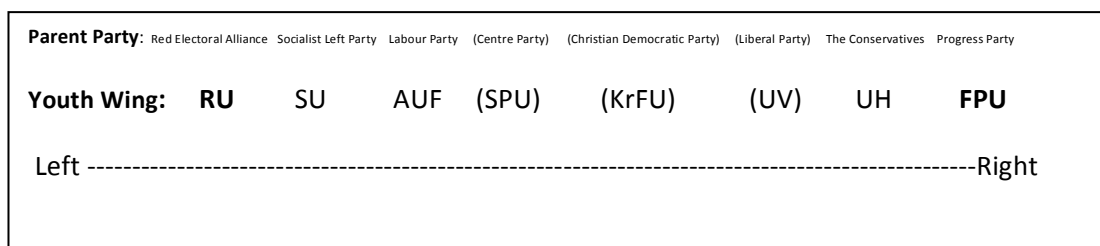
This study first descriptively compares two ideologically divergent youth wings in regards to musical taste and attitudes towards music. Taste for and attitudes towards explicitly political music are here emphasized. This allows for an elucidation of how and to which extent respondents of divergent ideological orientations invest music with political significance, and moreover how aesthetic sensibilities are distributed across the whole ideological spectrum of Norwegian politics. Combining taste data with socio-demographic data indicative of inherited economic and cultural capital, this study further discusses how the musical orien-

tations integrate into the wider lifestyle-complex of the young politicians. By employing Lewis’ conceptual framework of taste cultures, this study thereafter highlights resonances between musical taste and ideological orientation among the respondents. Lastly, drawing upon Bourdieu’s concept of cultural distinction, this article argues that musical taste may serve as a symbolic means of political as well as social differentiation at the political field.

The Norwegian political landscape: the parties and their youth wings

In order to clarify how musical taste maps on to political and ideological orientation among the members of the various youth wings, I will in the following outline the key characteristics of Norwegian party politics in regards to constitutional arrangement and political cleavages. Like the other Scandinavian countries, and unlike for instance the UK and the US, the parliamentary system in Norway is organized according to the principle of proportional representation, thereby encouraging a proliferation of political parties. According to the now classic model established by Rokkan (1967), and more recent studies (Heidar 2007), the most important cleavages in Norway have centered on class, religion and the power/identity struggle between center and periphery. The left-right axis has been, and still remains, the primary organizing dimension of Norwegian party politics and electoral behavior (Knutsen 1986; Ray and Narud 2000), aligning the parties by their stance on key political issues such as tax-level, the level of privatization of public services and the welfare state. However, Norwegian politics, and Scandinavian politics in general, have been characterized by a high level of consensus, corporatism and support of the welfare state – or what has come to be known as ‘The Nordic Model’ or the Scandinavian version of social democracy.

Ideologically the parties can be seen to position themselves as following:



This study primarily focuses on the two ideologically most divergent youth wings of the Norwegian political landscape, namely Red Youth (*Rød Ungdom*, from now on abbreviated *RU*) furthest to the left, and The Progress Party’s Youth (*Fremkrittspartiets Ungdom*, from here of abbreviated *FPU*). Ideologically *RU* identifies itself as a socialist, revolutionary political organization consisting of “students, pupils and young workers, whose goal is a democratic socialist revolution, leading to a society without classes – communism”¹. Although not unambiguously, their ideological counterpart *FPU* identify themselves ideologically as a libertarian and market liberalist organization that bases its politics on “..the in-

dividual's right to life, freedom and property", and whose primary goal is to "work towards the radical reduction of taxes, fees and governmental interference."²

Crucially, the left-right axis of Norwegian party politics is organized along a *continuum* of ideological values; the further to the right the party is located on the axis, the more accentuated marked-liberalist ideology becomes, and conversely; the further to the left, the more accentuated socialist ideology becomes. Consequently, the analysis will also attend to the question of how musical taste and ideological orientation maps align along the whole political spectrum.³

Method/data

Participants and procedure. Both in order to avoid non-active respondents and to reach respondents with a high level of commitment to the political and ideological agendas of their respective youth wings, the questionnaire was distributed as a web-survey to all position-holding members of the youth wings of the eight major political parties in Norway. E-mail lists provided by the youth wings' secretariats, containing the e-mail addresses to members holding formal positions within their parties, ensured access to the full population. The position-holding members in the five youth wings compared in this article together make up a sample of 461 respondents. The overall response-rate was 64 percent.

Music preferences. Genre is widely recognized as a variable indicating general orientation in musical taste (Frith 1996), and has fruitfully been employed in surveys of musical taste in both the field of sociology and social psychology, particularly in big scale surveys of musical taste in relation to social class. However, genre has its limitations as a variable as it only maps general and broad orientations in taste, thus potentially leaving out the finer but, in the context of this article, significant nuances contained within the genres. Music preferences were therefore surveyed at three different levels: preference for a selection of genres, preference for a selection of artists and preference for artists by self-reporting.

The selection of genres, 41 in total (see Appendix, List of genres), was based on recent research from both Norwegian and international contexts (Gripsrud et al. 2010; Savage 2006), and designed to reflect the potentially diverse music preferences of the respondents. In order to allow for a more detailed mapping of musical preference that captures distinctions also within genres, the respondents were asked to grade their preference for a selection of 39 artists in total (see Appendix, List of artists).

The selection of artists was partly based on recent research (Ibid.) and modified and updated to accommodate for shifts in musical trends. The selection was coded in regards to cultural legitimacy, and also contained a number of artists coded as "political". Starting from Street's (2012: 44) distinction between "explicitly political music" from "ideological music" the coding of political artists and genres were based on the following definition: *Genres and artists that either intentional-*

ly, by contextual factors or by artists' biographical narrative assert culturally stable and socially recognized associational relationships with particular political ideologies, causes or organizations. Neither selection nor coding of genres and artists are, however, a simple methodological question of classification. The politics of genres and artists is also a question of what sort of qualities and meanings audiences and critics *ascribe* to different kinds of music (Nærland 2015). Hence, the selecting and coding of political artists necessarily involve taking part in such dynamics of meaning- and quality ascription, and can thus always be problematized.

In order to attain a more nuanced picture of *what kind* of punk, hip hop, metal etc, the respondents have a taste for, the respondents were in addition asked to report their three most and least favorite artists. In order to explore the ways in which the members of the different youth wings themselves may perceive links between music and politics, the survey contained a set of attitude-questions. These were questions surveying the respondents' attitudes towards music as both a form of political expression and as a resource for political engagement. The survey also included open questions asking the respondents to describe the nature of their interest in music, and if, when and how they perceive music to become politically significant. In order to obtain data indicating social background a set of questions surveying parents' level and type of education and income was also included.

Findings

Politico-musical dividing lines. Preferences for genres, artists and favorite artists by self-reporting (Table 1) clearly demonstrate that political music makes up a significant part of the musical taste of the members of RU, whereas political music has only minimal occurrence among members of FPU. Already in their preference for genres (Table 1, A) this tendency can be seen: members of RU indicate high preference for genres that are known to allow for and encourage political expressions and interpretations such as indie rock, (hardcore) punk, protest songs and hip hop, whereas members of FPU to a higher degree indicate preference for genres considered less politically explicit and less culturally legitimate⁴ such as dance music, mainstream rock and heavy metal.

The preference for artists (Table 1, C) among the members of the two youth wings solidifies the tendency suggested at the level of genre. Six out of the ten most popular artists among the members of RU are artists that are commonly associated with political ideologies, causes or organizations (*Gatas Parlament*⁵, *Bob Dylan*, *Bob Marley*, *Bruce Springsteen*, *Vømmøl*⁶ and *Rage Against the Machine*), indicating a general endorsement of political music. In comparison only one out of the ten most popular artists in FPU (Bruce Springsteen) can be characterized as political. Coldplay and U2 also enjoy much popularity in FPU, but these are bands that, arguably, are associated with humanitarian causes rather than explicitly political ones.

Table 1. Expressions of musical taste in youth wings (percentages and rankings).

Ideological orientation		Left ----- Right				
Youth wings		RU	SU	AUF	UH	FPU
A Top 5 most popular genres*	1	Indie rock (61%)	60s and 70s pop/rock (51%)	60s and 70s pop/rock (48%)	60s and 70s pop/rock (45%)	60s and 70s pop/rock (46%)
	2	Punk+hardcore punk (61%)	Punk+hardcore punk (43%)	Protest songs (32%)	Mainstream pop (44%)	Dance (32%)
	3	Protest songs (43%)	Indie rock (41%)	Rock from Trøndelag (32%)	Mainstream rock (34%)	Mainstream rock (31%)
	4	Main-stream rock (38%)	Electronica (37%)	Mainstream rock (31%)	Indie rock (34%)	Hip hop (31%)
	5	Hip hop (31%)	Protest songs (33%)	Indie rock (31%)	Hip hop (28%)	Heavy metal (30%)
B Top 5 most unpopular genres*	1	Dance (65%)	Dance band (56%)	Black metal (48%)	Heavy metal (53%)	Black metal (42%)
	2	Dance band (48%)	Eurovision (48%)	Noise/industrial (38%)	Black metal (53%)	Joik (38%)
	3	Eurovision (40%)	Black metal (48%)	Gospel/worship (38%)	Hardcore punk (44%)	Danseband (36%)
	4	Electronica (35%)	Gospel/worship (46%)	Electronica (33%)	Noise/industrial (41%)	Gospel/worship (33%)
	5	R'n'B (30%)	Dance (37%)	Heavy metal (31%)	Joik (27%)	Noise/industrial (32%)
C Top 10 most popular artists #	1	Gatas Parlament (92%)	Bob Marley (78%)	Bruce Springsteen (77%)	Postgiroybygget (83%)	Postgiroybygget (85%)
	2	Kaizers Orchestra (71%)	Gatas Parlament (77%)	Postgiroybygget (76%)	Coldplay (77%)	Coldplay (61%)
	3	Bob Dylan (70%)	Kaizers Orchestra (74%)	Kaizers Orchestra (70%)	U2 (71%)	U2 (60%)
	4	Bob Marley (69%)	Coldplay (68%)	Coldplay (69%)	Bruce Springsteen (66%)	Bruce Springsteen (58%)
	5	Jokke & Valentinerne (69%)	Jokke (67%)	Bob Marley (64%)	Kaizers Orchestra (65%)	Metallica (55%)
	6	Røyksopp (67%)	Røyksopp (66%)	Bob Dylan (61%)	Røyksopp (63%)	Kaizers Orchestra (53%)
	7	Bruce Springsteen (57%)	Bob Dylan (63%)	U2 (58%)	Bob Dylan (59%)	Lady Gaga (50%)
	8	Vømmel (58%)	Postgiroybygget (59%)	Røyksopp (55%)	David Guetta (51%)	Røyksopp (47%)
	9	Rage Against the Machine (53%)	U2 (55%)	Odd Norstoga (52%)	Karpe Diem (50%)	Turboneger (47%)
	10	Karpe Diem (51%)	Bruce Springsteen (49%)	Lady Gaga (51%)	Jokke & Valentinerne (46%)	David Guetta (44%)
D Top 10 most unpopular artists #	1	Ole Ivars (75%)	Ole Ivars (92%)	Ole Ivars (76%)	Ole Ivars (54%)	Gatas Parlament (62%)
	2	Jay Z (46%)	Vassendgutane (51%)	Dimmu Borgir (56%)	Gatas Parlament (51%)	Ole Ivars (58%)
	3	Kurt Nielsen (41%)	My Chemical Romance (45%)	Vassendgutane (45%)	Dimmu Borgir (47%)	Odd Norstoga (43%)
	4	Dimmu Borgir (41%)	Dimmu Borgir (37%)	My Chemical Romance (45%)	Metallica (41%)	Dimmu Borgir (39%)
	5	U2 (38%)	Kurt Nilsen (35%)	Lady Gaga (32%)	Vassendgutane (37%)	Jay Z (30%)
	6	My Chemical Romance (38%)	Odd Norstoga (32%)	Turboneger (32%)	My Chemical Romance (34%)	My Chemical Romance (30%)
	7	Vassendgutane (36%)	Jay Z (31%)	Jay Z (31%)	Lady Gaga (26%)	Lady Gaga (28%)
	8	David Guetta (32%)	Metallica (30%)	Metallica (31%)	Kaizers Orchestra (25%)	Kaizers Orchestra (24%)
	9	Lady Gaga (31%)	Lady Gaga (26%)	Gatas Parlament (26%)	Kurt Nilsen (20%)	Rage Against the Machine (23%)
	10	Postgiroybygget (31%)	Karpe Diem (27%)	Mari B Persen (23%)	Sigvard Dagsland (20%)	Mari B Persen (23%)

E Top 10 most recurrent favourite self-reported preferences	1	Gatas Parlament	Kaizers Orchestra	Kaizers Orchestra	Lady Gaga	Pink Floyd
	2	Kaizers Orchestra	Beatles	Åge Aleksander- sen	Muse	Queen
	3	Loop Troop	Tom Waits	Michael Jackson	Garth Brooks	Kaizers Orchestra
	4	Karpe Diem	Michael Jackson	Pink Floyd	Coldplay	Skrillex
	5	Nirvana	Coldplay	Big bang	John Mayer	Metallica
	6	My Chemical Romance	Arctic Monkeys	Beatles	Veronica Maggio	Postgiroygget
	7	Dropkick	Led Zeppelin	Bruce Springsteen	Kaizers Orchestra	AC/DC
	8	Pavement	Gatas Parlament	Eminem	Kings of Leon	Muse
	9	Talib Kweli	System of a Down	The Killers	David Guetta	Coldplay
	10	Patti Smith	Radka Toneff	Coldplay	Beatles	Robbie Williams

* 41 genres in total. # 39 artists in total.

This orientation towards political music among the members of RU, and absence of such among the members of FPU, is confirmed and nuanced by the reporting of their three most favorite artists. In RU the artists mentioned generally fit into five genre-categories: hip hop comprises the highest number of artists, followed by indie-rock, punk, classic rock and to a lesser extent metal. Crucially, both hip hop artists (for instance *Gatas Parlament*, *Loop Troop*) and punk artists (for instance *Drop Kick Murphys*, *Patti Smith*) are profiled as “alternative” and are generally characterized by a disruptive and explicitly political aesthetic. In comparison, the favorite artists reported by the members of FPU generally enter into the genre-categories of classic rock, mainstream pop/rock/hip hop, heavy metal and dance music, where few of the reported artists have a political profile.

Diverging politics / Diverging attitudes. The respondents’ answers to the attitude-questions clearly demonstrate that whereas members of RU make substantial connections between their engagement with music and their political engagement, the members of FPU do so only minimally or even actively reject such connections. Consistent with their extensive taste for political music, 63% of the members of RU answers affirmatively to the statement “It is important for me that music contains social critique” (Table 2, C), whereas only 15% of the members of FPU answers affirmatively to the same statement. Similarly, the two youth wings also generally hold polarized views on the importance of the political opinions of musical performers (Table 2, B). Whereas 59 % of the members of RU either disagree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement “An artist’s or band’s political opinions are not important as to whether I like them or not”, 70 % of the members of FPU agree “strongly” or “somewhat” with the same statement. Indicating that members of RU invest music with political significance, or even agency, 63 % of them answer affirmatively to the question “Would you say that music has had any

influence on your political engagement or on your opinion about a political issue?”. In comparison 85 % of the members of FPU answered negatively to the same question. Lastly, suggesting that the members of RU constitute a taste community, as well as political community, 55 % of the members answer affirmatively to the question “Have your musical taste changed as an effect of joining the youth wing? In comparison 88 % of the FPU-respondents indicate a negative answer to this question, suggesting that matters of musical taste is of a significantly lesser importance to them as a group. The respondents were also asked to specify what kind of music they had started listening to after joining the youth wing. Consistent with the taste-preferences of the members of RU, all answers here emphasized either hip hop, punk or protest songs.

Table 2. Attitudes towards music as political expression (in percentage)

Ideological orientation	Left----- Right				
	RU	SU	AUF	UH	FPU
a) “Would you say that music has had any influence on your political engagement or on your opinion about a political issue?”					
No, that has never happened	37	67	64	82	85
Yes, that has happened	54	31	34	18	12
Yes, that has happened many times	9	2	2	0	3
b) “An artist’s or band’s political opinions are not important as to whether I like them or not”					
Strongly agree	7	15	15	27	34
Agree somewhat	18	10	19	45	36
Neither disagree nor disagree	16	16	17	12	8
Disagree somewhat	40	42	33	3	20
Strongly disagree	19	16	15	3	2
c) “It is important for me that music contains social critique”.					
Indicated affirmative answer	63	55	47	6	15
d) “Have your musical taste changed as an effect of joining the youth wing?”					
Yes, to a very high degree	5	5	2	0	0
Yes, to some degree	50	30	34	12	3
No, it has not had any significance	38	62	58	88	88
Don't know	7	3	6	0	9

A political-ideological structure of musical taste. In summary the musical tastes and attitudes of the members of RU and of FPU tend to gravitate towards opposite sides of the following dichotomies (Table 3), which are here employed to illuminate key differentiating tendencies among the two youth wings. Importantly, these dichotomies do not only highlight differences in taste and attitudes between RU and FPU, they also highlight what seems to be a structural dimension of the orien-

tation towards political music that runs through the whole ideological left-right political specter, as represented by the five youth wings in this analysis.

In terms of preference for genre (Table 1, A) the occurrence of genres considered to allow for and encourage political expressions and interpretations drop as one moves from the left and towards the right of the spectrum. This tendency becomes more accentuated in the members' preference for artists (Table 1, C). Whereas the preference for political artists is almost as high in SU as in RU, the preference is lower in AUF and drops further in UH, where Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan are the only artists coded as political. Another clear tendency is that the further right on the left-right axis the party positions itself the more mainstream and chart-based musical taste gets. This is both evident in the members' preference for artists and in their mentioning of their favorite artists (Table 1, E). Similarly the taste for music entailing a disruptive or noisy aesthetic, most evident among the members of RU, decreases the further to the right the party positions itself. However, this is not a tendency that follow the left-right axis consistently; the taste for music entailing an aesthetic of pleasure and non-disruption is most evident amongst the members of UH, not FPU furthest to the right.

Table 3. A political ideological structure of musical taste

Ideological orientation	Left	Right
Attributes of musical taste		
Level of political explicitness	Explicitly political	A-political
Adherence to music industry	"Alternative"	"Commercial"
Aesthetic mode	Disruptive	Pleasant
Attitudes towards music as politically relevant		
Music as politically significant	Endorsement	Rejection
Explicitly expressed politics	Endorsement	Rejection
Artists political-biographical narrative	Endorsement	Rejection
Youth wings as taste communities	Recognized	Rejected

Further evidence of this structural dimension is found in the attitudes held by the members of the five parties. The degree to which music is held to be politically significant is consistently decreasing from the left to the right (Table 2, A). There is also a consistent decrease from the left to the right in the extent to which members value music that expresses social critique (Table 2, B). A similar decrease is evident in the degree to which they place importance on performers' (political) biographical narrative (Table 2, C). Lastly, the recognition of the youth wing as a taste-community also decreases the further to the right the party is positioned.

Musical aesthetics in lifestyle, taste cultures and distinction

Social background, music and the configuration of lifestyle. Studies of young people's recruitment into political organizations in Norway emphasize that partic-

ipation is itself to a considerable degree conditioned by a relatively privileged socio economic background (Wollebæk et al. 2000: 108). Ødegård (2010) found that politically right leaning engagement among young people connects to mercantile-technical middle class strata and left leaning engagement to social-humanist middle class strata. In line with these findings the sample of youth wing members can at large be characterized as typically middle class, but with diverging types of background-resources.

In terms of parents' level of education (appendix, table 5) both FPU and AUF (Labour youth) score lower than those of the other youth wings, leaving SU (The socialist youth) as the youth wing with the highest score, and UH (the Young Conservatives) second. In terms of parental income the differences are not huge, although RU stands out as the youth wing whose parents have the lowest income and UH as the youth wing with the greatest proportion of fathers earning a high income (600.000 NOK or more). In terms of parents type of education, the parents of the respondents on the left gravitate towards humanities/social science educations and the respondents on the right towards mercantile/technological educations.

A commonality, which must partly be understood as an effect of the overall socioeconomic homogeneity of the sample, is that the musical taste found in all the youth wings is almost exclusively confined to popular music. There is only minimal preference for or mention of classical music, jazz or traditional music. When taste for traditionally legitimate music appears it is mainly among the members of SU – whose parents both enjoy the highest level of education and score highest on humanities education in the sample. Other commonalities in taste that testify to this homogeneity are the all-around shared preference for rock bands such as *Kaizers Orchestra* and the shared distaste for low status-genres such as dance bands and boy bands. The common distaste for the two latter genres must, however, also be considered an exclusionary effect of age in addition to class.

The taste-disparities among the youth wings *within* the field of popular music must at least in part be understood in relation to parents' level and type of education. The preference for legitimate popular music such as indie rock, protest songs and also canonized artists such as *Tom Waits* and *Elvis Costello* is highest in the youth wings on the left, SU in particular, where humanities and social science types of education are more common. Genres enjoying little legitimacy, such as dance music, mainstream pop and heavy metal are more popular among the members of the youth wings on the right, FPU in particular, whose parents to a larger degree have mercantile/technological types of education.

This is a finding consistent with tendencies found in recent studies of cultural taste and social background among Norwegian university students (Gripsrud et al 2011: 20) which shows that there are systematic relationships between students' inherited cultural and economic capital and their political orientation, thus supporting the argument that musical taste and political-ideological orientation, and

the relationship between these two, as found in the youth wings must be conceived as interrelated lifestyle-expressions rooted in habitus. The diverging aesthetic sensibilities typical of the left and the right may also be explained in terms of parents' educational background. The endorsement of explicit political expressiveness and aesthetic disruption found on the left can be seen to concur with the prevalent, and largely modernist, aesthetic values in Norwegian arts and humanities-education. In comparison, the endorsement of an aesthetic more directed towards ease and pleasure, most markedly articulated in UH, may be connected to mercantile/technological educational backgrounds where aesthetical objects to a greater extent are likely to be valued in terms of their functionality as entertainment.

However, in terms of the aesthetic sensibilities typical of the different youth wings there are particular intersections and ruptures that problematize the notion of a straight continuum between disruption and noise on the left and ease and décor on the right. A comparison between the young conservatives, UH, and, FPU who is both located furthest to the right on the ideological axis, shows that whereas members of the former have a common distaste for heavy metal and also frequently report to dislike "noisy" music in general, members of the latter share a significant taste for heavy metal and to some degree also aggressive electronic music. As such the taste for the latter genres in FPU can be seen to entail an aesthetic sensibility that to some degree overlaps with that entailed by the taste for punk in RU, on the complete opposite end of the ideological axis. This suggests a circular rather than linear logic, which gets more accentuated if one takes into account the musical practices in political organizations positioned in the margins *outside* mainstream politics. Eyerman's (2002) comparative study of musical practices within anarchist groups and extreme right wing groups in Sweden shows that central to the political engagement of both of these ideologically divergent groups is the centeredness on generically similar aggressive hard-core punk. What might be the case here is that the further away from the ideologically hegemonic – and socioeconomically speaking privileged – centre of the political landscape one gets, the more are aesthetic sensibilities geared towards extreme, noisy and disruptive expression. This is a finding that resonates with Attali's (1985) argument that the way music – as organised sounds – are conceived to constitute either "music" or "noise", is reflective of power structures. A similar argument is also brought forward by Hebdige (1979) who, in the context of ideologically subversive subcultures, showed how stylistic 'noise' or semiotic disruption is a key strategy in articulating ideological opposition.

(A) politicised aesthetics? Moreover the findings suggest that the political left maintains a generally *politicized aesthetic*, where music is good *because* it is political and in opposition to what is perceived to be the established power structure. This tight and self-conscious fit between musical taste and political-ideological orientation found on the left can be seen as a continuation of the politicized life-

style that was molded in the context of the radical left in the 70's. As such, there has been a shift from the relatively speaking organic and gentle sounds of folk and rock to the more aggressive sounds of (hardcore) punk and electronically programmed beats of hip hop. However, the taste for punk and hip hop does suggest an aesthetic sensibility consistent with that of the 70's in that it is directed towards works of art that are *explicitly politically expressive*.

Why is it then that the preference for political music and the degree to which music is invested with political significance is only minimal among the members of the youth wings on the right? A simple answer may be that there is not much of a political tradition of music to mobilize or renew at the political right in Norway – neither in terms of a repertoire of artists or songs, nor in terms of lifestyle. The absence of a right wing repertoire of political music is given evidence by the findings of this survey: when the right wing respondents were asked to name three artists they consider to be “political”, the overwhelming majority of artists identified are associated with ideology, causes or organizations of the political left. Furthermore the findings suggest a lifestyle where musical taste and political orientation are significantly less coherently fitted together, in fact a good proportion of the respondents from the right actively reject the notion that these two components of lifestyle bear any relevance to each other. Similarly the high preference for mainstream music and music characterized by a pleasant and non-disruptive aesthetic at the political ideological right suggests an aesthetic sensibility less oriented towards explicit expressiveness and more towards an aesthetic of ease and pleasure.

Opposition and hegemony across the spectrum. Georg S. Lewis' (1992) suggestion that the processes whereby individuals acquire, and form groups around, musical taste also entail a political dimension – comprising taste cultures that are either supportive, alternative or oppositional to the dominant order – offers further explanation of how musical taste and political-ideological orientation interrelates on the political field. This dimension can be seen at play both in terms of the young politicians' preference for (political) music and in terms of their endorsement of other musical attributes.

The musical taste found among the members of RU and SU, but also to some degree in AUF – all placed towards the political left – suggests that these tend towards an *oppositional* taste culture. For one thing, the taste found in these youth wings comprises a number of artists that are either expressively critical to the dominant power structure or who by popular association are connected to ideologies, causes or organizations promoting change of the status quo. For another, they emphasize in their attitudes both the importance of agreeing with the perceived politics of both music and artists, and the importance of social critique as part of the musical expression. Moreover, the high preference for genres and bands that are profiled as indie or non-mainstream, is indicative of an oppositional taste culture as these, at least in their idealized form, are positioned outside and in

opposition to the established music industry. Lastly, the taste for music entailing an disruptive and noisy aesthetic, such as that of the (hardcore) punk bands or the agitative hip hop groups, are indicative of an oppositional taste culture in terms of the challenges this kind of aesthetic may pose to conventions of aesthetic pleasure and quality.

On the other hand, the musical taste found among the respondents of youth wings of the right, UH and FPU suggests that these tend towards a *supportive* taste culture. Firstly, there is minimal occurrence of artists that are expressively critical towards the dominant power structure or that is popularly associated with ideologies, causes or organizations promoting radical change of status quo. The music typically listened to in these two youth wings may rather be characterized as *ideological* in the sense that John Street (2012: 44) employs the term: "...the perspective(s) of the world and the relationships within it..." offered by the music of the right generally works hegemonically. The rejection of the idea that music should entail social critique, evident in their attitudes and the high preference for "mainstream" and chart based music entrenched in the music industry, gives further indication of a supportive taste culture. The preference for music characterized by an aesthetic of ease and comfort is also indicative of a supportive taste culture as it to a lesser degree does not challenge or interfere with dominant discourses of aesthetic pleasure and quality.

This resonance between taste and ideology can also be seen to support Simon Frith's (1996:272) proposition that deriving pleasure from a piece of music, and in turn acquire a taste for it, involves an agreement with its ethics. The findings suggest that the acquirement of taste among the members of the youth wings also involves an *agreement with the politics* of the music. This agreement might be self-conscious and explicit as in the case of the youth wings at the left, or less recognized as in the case of those of the right.

Towards a politics of musical distinction. Lastly I want to draw attention to how music may also work as a symbolic means of political differentiation among young politicians, or what can be thought of as a political dimension of musical distinction. Elaborating on Bourdieu's ideas about the socially differentiating qualities of music, Bryson (1996) argues that musical taste is a particularly potent reinforcer of symbolic boundaries between individuals and the categories of people they might want to differentiate from (Bryson's focus was on class and ethnicity). Bryson further emphasizes the significance of musical dislikes (negative preference), both in the symbolic constitution of these boundaries and in terms of how to methodologically uncover such boundaries. I would argue that music may also function as the symbolic material for *political differentiation*. The reciprocity of musical distaste between the two ideological opposites, RU and FPU, suggests symbolic boundary making that works along political-ideological lines. At the level of genre (Table 1, B) the members of RU indicate significant negative preference for dance-music – a genre that enjoys a high level of popularity in

FPU. At the level of artists (Table 1, D) the members of RU indicate significant negative preference for *U2*, *Lady Gaga*, *Postgirobygget* and *David Guetta*, all of whom enjoy high preference in FPU. Reciprocally the members of FPU indicate significant negative preference for *Gatas Parlament* and *Rage Against the Machine* which both enjoy high preference in RU. Given the comparatively high importance of music among the members of RU, both in terms of lifestyle, the politicized musical traditions of the past, and what seems to be a high degree of musical identity, it can be hypothesized that they are more inclined to use musical distinction as a means of symbolic boundary making than the members of FPU.

Musical taste and political transformation

The findings from this study (as summed up in table 3) show that the young politicians of the left and the right have divergent tastes and divergent aesthetic sensibilities. These divergences must, as discussed in this article, be understood as lifestyle expressions rooted in habitus, but also in light of the divergent historical traditions in which the integration of music with political engagement varies greatly from the left to the right. These divergences between the left and the right can also be explained in terms of different taste cultures where musical taste and aesthetic sensibilities are shaped by how the young politicians identify their own position in relation to dominant ideological order. However, in order to arrive at a clearer and more finely grained understanding of *how* (musical) aesthetics and politics are integrated with the young politicians' lifestyle(s), and with their political actions and engagement, in depth interviews and ethnographic approaches should prove a fruitful course for further research.

The findings from this survey primarily tell us something about how aesthetic sensibilities and musical taste connects to political orientation among the confined group of young politicians in Norway. Being a part of a youth wing may very likely involve a process of socialization that also affects members' orientation towards culture – not least given their young age. Further, members of the different youth wings also routinely engage with each other in various political settings, and quite possibly also at social level. Nonetheless, it is plausible to assume that the findings from this study highlight more general tendencies. As documented in several recent and broader studies of social background and lifestyle from middle-class strata in Norway (Gripsrud et al 2011; Jarness 2015; Jarness *forthcoming*), cultural taste and political orientation do systematically connect to each other, in ways that closely resonate with the findings from this survey. Hence, the findings from this study may be *indicative* also of how musical taste and political orientation integrates into the lifestyles of young middle class Norwegians in general.

Whereas this study provides empirically based knowledge about, and elucidation of, how musical taste and political orientations integrate into the lifestyles of members of youth wings, it does not tell us much about how the divergent tastes and sensibilities affect their conduct as politicians. It is, however, plausible to assume that many of their members will eventually come into positions where

they negotiate, deliberate or exercise politics. It is further plausible to assume that the divergences in taste and sensibilities may inform the ways in which they as future politicians' prioritize and assess cultural expressions in society at large – not least within the field of cultural policy.

A bigger and perhaps more important question that is largely left unanswered by this study, is how music is *put to work* for particular political ideologies, agendas or organizations, or more broadly stated: how music enters processes of political transformation. Music can in the case of the youth wings be seen as a resource for recruitment, social identity formation, electoral mobilization and oppositional critique. However, future empirical studies of how, and under what conditions, music enters processes of political opinion-formation and action – either as a means to inspire political engagement, inform public discourse or as an autonomous part of discourse itself – are here key to our understanding of the role music may play in political transformation.

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Notes

- ¹ RU's homepage <http://rødungdom.no/english>
- ² FPU's Manifest <http://fpu.no/fpu-mener/manifest/>, authors translation. p. 1
- ³ The survey was conducted in 2011. Consequently, The Green Party (Miljøpartiet De Grønne), who in the 2015 local elections had considerable electoral success, is left out of the analysis.
- ⁴ Although this may vary according to national context, Gripsrud et al (2011) found that Norwegian students who inhabit a high level of inherited cultural capital reported high preference for indie rock and hip hop, low level of inherited cultural capital was linked to preference for dance music, mainstream rock and heavy metal.
- ⁵ Norwegian Marxist hip hop-act.
- ⁶ Norwegian Marxist folk group from the 70's.

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Appendix

Table 4. Social characteristics of the respondents (in percentage)

	RU	SU	AUF	UH	FPU
Gender					
Female	53	56	46	33	25
Age					
18-21 y.o.	72	72	50	62	52
Present education/work. etc					
Higher education	25	41	39	42	26
High school	30	30	14	16	11
Working	36	16	39	32	42
Place of birth/upbringing					
City (100 000 +)	35	35	17	30	44
Region of upbringing					
Eastern part of southern Norway	49	35	36	41	22

Table 5. Social characteristics of respondents' parents (in percentage)

	RU	SU	AUF	UH	FPU
Mother's level of achieved education					
Primary-,secondary- and high school	27	14	29	35	50
1-4 years higher education	58	62	31	47	36
Master- or PhD-degree	15	24	33	18	14
Father's level of achieved education					
Primary-,secondary- and high school	41	24	58	36	52
1-4 years higher education	45	41	22	42	32
Master- or PhD-degree	14	35	12	24	16
Mother's level of income (NOK)					
Less than 300 000	32	34	20	30	26
300 000-600 000	47	41	53	56	53
600 000 +	4	7	11	9	7
Don't know / not relevant question	12	19	17	6	15
Fathers level of income (NOK)					
Less than 300 000	19	10	12	18	13
300 000-600 000	49	58	46	36	40
600 000 +	6	15	24	39	27
Don't know / not relevant question	26	17	19	9	19

Mother's type of education					
Humanities/ social science	16	29	10	21	8
Education / health	28	39	24	35	32
Mercantile/technological	16	11	18	9	10
Other/ Don't know / not relevant question	40	21	48	35	58
Father's type of education					
Humanities/ social science	10	22	11	10	5
Education / health	14	18	7	15	3
Mercantile/technological	25	29	34	37	34
Other/ Don't know / not relevant question	51	31	48	38	56

List of genres (41 in total)

Classical barock
 Wiener classicism
 Opera
 National romantic (Classical)
 Norwegian traditional
 Black Metal
 Folk
 Protest music
 Nashville Country
 Reggae
 Drum'n bass
 Dance
 Elektronika/house
 Mainstream rock
 Mainstream pop
 Funk/Soul
 Free jazz
 Fusion jazz
 Traditional jazz
 Prog rock
 Hip hop
 Heavy metal
 Dance band
 Punk
 Hardcore punk
 Balkan folk music
 Latin
 African folk music

List of artists (39 in total)

U2
 Coldplay
 Gatas Parlament
 David Guetta
 Lady Gaga
 Miles Davis
 Burzum
 Ole Ivars
 Vassendgutane
 Arne Nordheim)
 Nina Simone
 Postgirobygget
 Pet Shop Boys
 Kaizers Orchestra
 Joni Mitchell
 Bob Dylan
 Arcade Fire
 Susanne Sundfør
 Jon Olav Nilsen
 Dixie chicks
 Toby Keith
 Kurt Nilsen
 Angelique Kidjo
 Sigvart Dagsland
 Hellbillies
 Joke & Valentinerne
 Røyksopp
 Rage against the machine

Eurovision
60's and 70's pop / rock
50's rock
Rock from mid-Norway
(Trønderrock)
R'n'B (modern)
Musical
Alternative country
Joik (indigenous sami chanting)
Indie
Gospel
Bluegrass
Noise / industry
Contemporary classical music

Metallica
My Chemical Romance
Karpe Diem
Mari Boine Persen

James Brown
Jay Z
Sex Pistols
Turboneger
Anbjørg Lien
Bruce Springsteen
Bob Marley