

Real Time, Stream and Flow: The Temporal Experience of *Skam*

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Skam (2015-2017), heralded as the “future of television” by *Vanity Fair*, is a Norwegian teen web series produced by the Norwegian public service broadcaster NRK. *Skam* is distributed as relatively short webisodes with a runtime between 2 and 20 minutes. The narrative is told through screen grabs of the characters’ messenger chats and Instagram updates. In season four a YouTube channel run by a group of the characters was included into the multimedia narrative. The clips, messenger screen grabs and the POVC’s Instagram updates are published on a distinct webpage *Skam.P3.no*. The show’s diegetic time is in temporal alignment with the user’ time and the clips, screen caps and Instagram updates are released as the events portrayed happen in the characters’ lives. The users follow the story on the website as it unfolds in ‘real time’ appearing in the website feed, just like the users follow their real friends “stories” on social media. The story fragments are intended to be consumed immediately on the go, at school, work, in coffee shops and on public transport - on smart phones, tablets and laptops. The program’s distributional mode thus caters to teen users’ daily rhythms and media habits, situating them in a viewing mode in which the teen users frequently refresh and update the *Skam*-webpage to follow the unfolding lives of the characters. I want to explore the ramifications for television flow in a digital context as it merges with the social media stream, and will in particular focus on the temporal implications of social media and television flow.

Television and social media are both dynamic media and defined by their continuously processed content in opposition to static or archival media like film and photography or even static webpages. How time is mediated and experienced are quite similar. Both social media and television are experienced as immediate, here-and-now and are usually defined by its constant, never ending stream of events and information. In television, liveness and flow have long been its defining features just as real-time web and the stream are foundational to the experience of social media time. Central to both social media and television time is the lack of closure of the stream and the flow. Flow, according to Raymond Williams, describes the television experience as an indefinite flow of segments. These segments are dispersed into intervals of program content and constitutes the fundamental experience of television. Time is always present in the flow without a beginning and end – a continuous stream of segments. This is also the case for the social media stream, which is a random flow that is not organized by programming schedules but everyday rhythms. Social media is in many ways structured by the fear of missing out, that something important might appear suddenly at any moment driving its user to constantly check for updates, waiting for something to happen. The real time storytelling of *Skam* takes advantage of this constant waiting of social media. The waiting time between clips and updates is key to understand the experience of *Skam*. In all instances there is a promise of an unknown future driving us to consume. Waiting for events to happen is part of the everyday rhythm of social media and television. The flow of *Skam*’s storytelling is a flow where the story segments merge with social media segments creating a feed or flow of events and updates. While

Skam is segmented like other television programs, its flow is not part of the constant stream of television but rather integrated into the social media stream and everyday rhythms of teens.