Dealing with the great unknown:

A qualitative study on how representatives justify their decision-making

Maria Melve Kvåle

Master's thesis

Spring 2023

Department of Comparative Politics
University of Bergen

Abstract

Representatives are doomed to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. Yet there is no scarcity of the information that they must deal with. Representatives are key decisionmakers, and in order to fulfil this function they must first direct their attention and make some choices regarding the information they consume. Yet, in the field of political decision-making there has been a significant lack of research into the role of information. This thesis tackles the topic of how representatives justify their decision-making, and how this connects to their roles as representatives.

To this end I have carried out interviews with representatives in the Norwegian parliament to gain insight to their perspective and performed a qualitative content analysis of the interview content. Throughout the thesis I have addressed the methodological challenges of studying so called "political elites" and have discussed the meanings this holds for the analysis. By using named sources, I have conducted verifiable research which has been lacking in this field.

As an answer to the research question, I found four sets of ways that the representatives justify their approach to decision-making. They can be summarized as premises, practicality, principles, and resignation. Representatives justify their decision-making through the idea that they were elected on some premises they should live up to, by being practical-minded and treating the world as simple enough to deal with, by connecting their decisions to principles such as ideology and values they hold, and lastly by resigning themselves with the fact that perfect decision-making is impossible, and they will make mistakes. The active processing of information and the subsequent justifications of how they utilized this in their decision-making I found to be an integrated part of the roles of the representatives. Through defending the interests they believe in, the representatives connect themselves to those they represent, because through these justifications their actions can be said to become representative. Furthermore, I have used the results to modify an existing typology on the information selection of political elites and extended it to representatives. Specifically, I have added an inner sense of duty and trust in others as attitudes that help representatives cope in an arduous information environment, satisficing as a heuristic that helps them filter information, and rejecting redundancy and revisiting previous solutions as procedures that aid this filtering.

Acknowledgements

Først og fremst, takk til informantene mine som stilte opp, uten dere ingen oppgave!

Takk til mine romkamerater på Sofie Lindstrøm, særlig Trygvekontoret, for uvelkomne distraksjoner, snækks, småprat, og fellesskap.

Ellers setter jeg pris på mine gode stunder og gode folk.

Takk til Yvette Peters som var med meg i unnfangelsen av denne oppgaven, og særlig takk til Per Selle som var med på fødselen av den. Du har vært en optimistisk og positiv jordmor.

Studentersamfunnet, du har vært denne oppgavens bitre fiende, men vi kom i mål.

Sist, men ikke minst vil jeg sitere Cordozar Calvin Broadus, Jr.

Kanskje bedre kjent som Snoop Dogg.

«Last but not least, I wanna thank me

I wanna thank me for believing in me

I wanna thank me for doing all this hard work

I wanna thank me for having no days off

I wanna thank me for, for never quitting»

Table of contents

List of figures

1. Introduction

1.1 Setting the stage.

The last couple of years the covid pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine have served as examples of serious and somewhat unpredictable events that representatives have had to deal with. Representatives are doomed to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. Yet there is no scarcity of the information that they must deal with. In fact, technological advance and an increasing role of expert knowledge in political life arguably make the bombardment of information representatives must deal with more present than ever (Christensen, Gornitzka, and Holst 2017, 239). Representatives are key decisionmakers, and information selection can be considered to be at the core of that decision-making (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 229-231).Yet, in the field of political decision-making there has been a significant lack of research into the role of information (Marcella, Carcary, and Baxter 1999, 178). Therefore, the research question I will tackle in this thesis will be:

How do representatives justify their decision-making and how does this connect to their roles as representatives?

1.2 The research gap

Why is this field of research underdeveloped? While representation constitutes a cornerstone of modern political organization and democracy, the specific subject of this thesis is relatively unexplored. Even though representatives are key actors within democratic systems, few studies focus on creating comprehensive pictures of how they deal with their decision-making.

Instead, research on representation often focus on uncovering inequality in representation and measuring congruence and responsiveness (Lupu and Warner 2021; Giger, Rosset, and Bernauer 2012; Peters and Ensink 2015; Gilens 2005, 2009; Soroka and Wlezien 2008). Rarely is the time taken to zoom in on the representatives themselves in this larger picture, even though calls have been made to look further up the policy-chain at decision-making itself (Weber 2020, 1789). These large-scale quantitative studies also typically develop from a different theoretical and methodological starting point from mine.

The most prominent focus on individual representatives themselves is found in the construction of typologies on representatives, where they are classified according to their selfreliance and the responsibility, they feel to enact public will (Mansbridge 2011, 621; Andeweg and Thomassen 2005, 507). These typologies develop categories charting the self-conception or the subsequent expected behaviour of representatives but does not deal directly with information selection or its consequence for decision-making.

On the other side, some research on how representatives relate to information exist, but is not very extensive. These studies are more concerned with descriptions of how politicians perceive information, without tying this explicitly to representation. Representatives have been found to perceive themselves as recipients of overwhelming amounts of information, but these studies do not go further in exploring how they deal with this fact (Marcella, Carcary, and Baxter 1999; Galtrud and Byström 2019).

Furthermore, the main study on the matter of how politicians deal with this information overload does not contextualise this as research on representatives, and is constrained to top politicians from one case (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017). Their analysis of interviews with Belgian top politicians lead to the creation of a typology on information selection and coping mechanisms in top politicians. This typology is divided into procedures and heuristics that are used for information filtering, and an attitude of self-confidence to compensate when those fail. Since representatives functions as essential decision-makers, I argue that the two fields, representation on the one hand and information in decision-making on the other hand, can benefit from being united.

1.3 Approaching the research question

To explore the research question, I have treated the two parts of it, decision-making on the one hand, and the place this plays in the roles of representatives on the other, as intrinsically connected. I link them together in the theoretical framework, through the argument that the representation relationship is actively constructed through the dynamic where issues are made visible to and politized by representatives (Pitkin 1967, 213, 604). I lay the foundation to tackle the research question by considering the representatives as not just reactive, but active participant in the choices they make.

I will operate under the assumption that decision-making contains information selection at its core, which is embedded in bounded rationality (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 229-231). Accordingly, what representatives choose to devote their attention to bears consequence for their representative function. The theoretical starting point furthers the perspective that representatives are linked to those they represent, not purely through the actions they undertake, but that the justifications they use for those actions are essential to their representative function (Pitkin 1967, 213). To explore the research question, I have therefore interviewed Norwegian representatives in parliament to gain insight to their perspective. The interviews were carried out between October 2022 and March 2023, and laid the foundation for the qualitative content analysis I have conducted.

In my approach I depart from formal models where representation is treated as a more straight-forward relationship between citizens and representatives, and where much of the emphasis is placed on congruence of responsiveness. Rather than viewing representatives as strategic actors, I utilize the bounded rationality approach to the research question, meaning that I consider the representatives as imperfect actors attempting to navigate a complex and demanding information environment (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274; Conlisk 1996, 670).

1.4 Contributions and key findings

I will situate this thesis in a gap between two different fields and as such merging the two provides a novel perspective. Consequently, I have conducted a type of research that is scarce in the representation field and contextualized the research in a manner that is missing from the information selection field. In addition, I contribute to growing an underdeveloped field of research on the information selection and decision-making of politicians. The existing typology on information selection in politicians is built upon only one case, and so strengthening the result by including another case constitutes a contribution itself. I have done so not by replicating the study, but by tackling some of the same themes from a different perspective. Accordingly, a main contribution is the development of the typology to apply to "second-tier politicians", in other words representatives (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 242). Furthermore, my research is built upon named sources, making my results the first verifiable ones of its kind.

As an answer to the research question, I found four sets of ways that the representatives justify their approach to decision-making. They can be summarized as premises, practicality, principles, and resignation. Representatives justify their decision-making through the idea that they were elected on some premises they should live up to, by being practical-minded and treating the world as simple enough to deal with, by connecting their decisions to principles such as ideology and values they hold, and lastly by resigning themselves with the fact that perfect decision-making is impossible, and they will make mistakes.

The active processing of information and the subsequent justifications of how they utilized this in their decision-making I found to be an integrated part of the roles of the representatives. This is because they justify their decision-making through the commitment they believe they have made on behalf of their voters, their political party, the people from their electoral district, and a sense of right and wrong connected to an intrinsic duty. Through defending these interests, the representatives connect themselves to those they represent, because through these justifications their actions can be said to become representative.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

I have chosen to structure the thesis as follows. In the second chapter I detail the theoretical perspective and the framework for my approach. I first present the discourse on the concept of representation and take the stance that Dish's interpretation of Pitkin is a fruitful perspective to start from. Then, I present different mediators in the dynamic of representation, and discuss how these can bring forth information to and potentially influence representatives. In the last sections of the chapter, I defend bounded rationality as an appropriate approach for the purpose of the thesis and present the most similar research on the matter.

In the third chapter I present the research design, explaining how a single-case study and interviews are conducive to the research question. Furthermore, I discuss the challenges and limitations of studying political elites such as representatives and the impact this holds on the thesis. I keep this in mind while presenting the data and the means for interpreting it.

The fourth chapter is the analysis, where I begin with confronting some of the underlying assumptions to my approach. Afterwards, I lay out the meat of the analysis. I have chosen to structure it by first presenting a detailed account of how the representatives deal with tangible modes of information retrieval and their reflections around these. Then I move on to the second part of the analysis where I discuss the findings through the lens of the information selection typology, by first presenting strategies, then heuristics, and lastly attitudes. While some of the finding mimic those in the original typology, there are some differences, and I include more than one attitude.

Lastly, the fifth chapter contains the discussion and my conclusions. I discuss the results of the analysis directly up against the research question, address the limitations of my contributions, and present a modified version of the information selection typology. My modified suggestion of the typology includes more heuristics and strategies, as well as making self-confidence a type of the overarching category attitudes, as I have also made additions there.

2. Background and theoretical framework

2.0 Chapter introduction

In this chapter I discuss conventional perspectives on the concept of representation. I argue against formal models that rely on the notion of rational actors, and instead advance an alternative theoretical perspective based on the writings of Pitkin (1967) and Disch (2012). This perspective focuses on representatives as key actors within complicated systems consisting of structures that enable representation. Representation is therefore not reduced to a pure interaction between citizens (voters) and representatives but is made up of an overarching system that ensures that matters are made visible to the representatives so they can enter the representation process. Furthermore, I present some of these structures, that are typically assumed to mediate the relationship, such as constituency control, organized interests, and media.

Then, I build upon the theoretical stance I have taken on representation by arguing that bounded rationality is an appropriate approach to the research question by treating representatives as irrational actors within complicated and information heavy environments. In accordance with this framework, I treat information selection and the allocation of attention as essential to decision-making. Lastly, I discuss the relevance of research on information selection in top politicians from Belgium and conclude that they have not viewed it through the lens of representation or connected it to the role perception like I will.

2.1 Perspectives on representation

2.1.1 Representation in democracy

Plotke claims representation to be crucial in constituting democratic practices (Plotke 1997, 19). Representation as a democratic tenet is often viewed as a normative good in itself, but also found to legitimize democratic governance and justify state coercion that betters governance (Mansbridge 2014, 9). Others claim the relationship between representation and democracy to be far more complex, attributing an inherent tension between the two. Pitkin contends that while representation is often thoughtlessly equated with democracy, the two have a problematic relationship (Pitkin 2004, 335). Przeworski ascribes this to the incoherence of representation, which makes it difficult to harmonize with the confines of democratic theory (Przeworski, Ortega, and Rapoport 1997, 12-14). Democracy itself has a rich tradition of differing conceptualizations that have been subjected to scholarly debate, and the purpose of this thesis is not to solve that puzzle. However, the representation that will be examined takes place within modern democracies, and whether in tension or in symbiosis representation bears consequence for democracy. Some claim the key to reconciling democracy and representation lie in how to understand the nuances of the latter (Runciman 2007, 102-103).

Robert Dahl argues that it is necessary for democracy that citizens be considered as political equals, and that the government be responsive to their preferences. To this end citizens must have real opportunities to formulate and signify their preferences, and have them weighed equally in the conduct of government (Dahl 1971, 1-2). Accordingly, from preferences are signified to how they are weighed, they must reach the representatives through some means, and be processed internally by them.

2.1.2 The concept of representation

The signifying of preferences and subsequent responsiveness are central themes within the discussion of representation. One of the most notable scholars on representation Hanna Pitkin explored and challenged the notions of political representation in her seminal work *The concept of representation* (1967). In the introduction she sets the stage of the complexity of ideas she will introduce by claiming the book to be an exercise in language philosophy (Pitkin 1967, 7). She proposes a definition of representation as “the making present *in some sense* of something which is nevertheless *not* present literally or in fact” (Pitkin 1967, 8-9). The linguistic paradox rooted in the etymology of the term “re-presentation” implies both the absence and presence of something simultaneously, encompassing a variety of approaches to the term which she presents.

Descriptive representation focuses on representatives’ characteristics. A representative body is so because its composition corresponds to its people, so to represent in this sense is to stand in for others. Representatives’ attributes such as ethnicity, gender, and social class makes present something by resemblance or reflection (Pitkin 1967, 11, 61). Heads of state represent in the capacity of being a symbol for the unity of its people through *symbolic* representation (Pitkin 1967, 93). The *formalistic* approach views the defining feature of representation to be not representatives’ actions themselves, but in circumstance temporally preceding or succeeding them. In other words, to represent means to act after being given authority to do so, or before being held accountable for those actions from the represented (Pitkin 1967, 59). However, the perhaps most prevalent type in political science, and the concern of this thesis, is what Pitkin labels *substantive* representation.

Rather than their characteristics, or the formal arrangements surrounding them, those represented are made present in the action of the representative (Pitkin 1967, 144). The focal point is the substance of the activity itself, representation as acting for others (Pitkin 1967, 12). But what acting for others entail is a source of controversy. This stems from a distinction between acting on someone's *preferences* and acting in their *interest*. Pitkin calls this *the mandate-independence controversy*, while others have labelled it *the trustee-delegate problem* (Pitkin 1967, 144-145; Rehfeld 2009, 214). The idea is that to represent someone, more than mere imitation is required, both conceptually but also to be realistic about the nature of interactions between citizens and representatives. Due to the large effort it takes to acquire political knowledge, it may be assumed that not all citizens' preferences are the same as what they would be had they held all relevant information. In fact, there is reason to doubt that people have clear ideas of available policy, or know which best promote their interests (Brennan and Hamlin 1999, 115-116). If they do not even know the available policies, how can they be expected to formulate accurate preferences on them?

It follows that representatives should have some leeway to enact policies that the constituents do not explicitly wish for, under the assumption that they may have felt different had they known the things the representatives know. Another argument within discussion of democratic representation emphasises how simply mirroring preferences can lead to outcomes that severely harm minorities (Rehfeld 2009, 216). However, ascribing representatives the power to make independent choices based on their own judgements has been criticised as elitist and hierarchical (Pitkin 1967, 168-169; Mansbridge 2011, 623). Consequently Pitkin argues "the representative must pursue his constituents' interest, in a manner at least potentially responsive to their wishes, and that conflict between them must be justifiable in terms of that interest" (Pitkin 1967, 213). In other words, for it to still constitute as representation there are limits to how much the representative can deviate from the preferences of the represented, and there must be a good reason. Representation cannot be pure responsiveness, but it seizes to be representation if responsiveness is not present.

One way of conceiving of this relationship is through the principal-agent model. Borrowing from economic approaches, people are modelled as rational, strategic, and in pursuit of their own interests. Political representatives are imagined as *agents* that act on behalf of the citizens- the *principals.* Both parties, agents and principals, are assumed to attempt to maximise their utility through this relationship (Lane 2009, 369-371). The principals outsource the job of governing to someone else trusted to act on their behalf to minimise *transaction costs*, the cost of gathering and processing information on political issues at an enormous scale. This leaves the agents with some leeway, and while they are imagined as self-serving, they are induced to act on behalf of the principals by institutional design (Brennan and Hamlin 1999, 110). Agents are said to weigh the preferences of those they represent, others' preferences, and their own view of overall welfare (Plotke 1997, 29). Should their decisions cross into unacceptable territory for the principals, they can express their dissatisfaction and replace the agents through elections (Lane 2009, 370).

However, the principal-agent model has garnered criticism for being too removed from the reality of political life. Political representatives are responsible to their constituency, who consist of people with widely diverse and even conflicting political opinion (Higgs 2018, 479-480). Therefore it raises the question of whether it is even possible for them to have a coherent interest for the agent to pursue (Pitkin 1967, 215). Moreover, if it is not the people with their individual wills but the constituency as an entity that constitutes the principal, it obfuscates responsiveness which has already been established as important to qualify something as representation.

It is worth noting that while the principal-agent model is an inaccurate simplification, all models are simplified representations. "All models are wrong, but some are useful" as the quote attributed to statistician George E.P. Box goes (Box 1979). Accordingly, while the principal-agent model is false, what matters is whether it is useful and illuminating. What Pitkin and subsequent scholars argue is essentially that the model crosses onto an unacceptable threshold in its deviation from reality, and neglects answering questions that are central to the concept of representation.

Pitkin critiqued the principal-agent model and found shortcomings in the contemporary discourse on representation yet did not necessarily provide a clear and coherent alternative. In the book she concedes that while she discusses many of the tenets of representation, she fails to offer a satisfactory conclusion to exactly what representation is, and to reconcile that practice with the workings of representative democracy (Pitkin 1967, 235). Her definition being so broadly vague, the subsequent understandings gleaned from it have contrasted and often bore incompatible implications and assumptions (Pitkin 2004, 336). Nonetheless, others have read Pitkin as bringing radical contributions to the field that she just failed to recognise fully herself. This is the argument put forth by Lisa Disch, that implicit in the writing of Pitkin there are arguments that are present but not brought fully to fruition. Subsequently the nuance of her ideas seem to have failed to register to many of those who have read it (Disch 2012, 605-606).

In Pitkin’s own words “Political representation is primarily a public, institutionalized arrangement involving many people and groups, and operating in the complex ways of large-scale social arrangements” (Pitkin 1967, 221). It is not a singular act by any one participant, but the overall structure and functioning of a system, patterns emerging from the multiple activities of many (Pitkin 1967, 221-222). This, Disch claims, was a bold move on Pitkin’s part, casting democratic representation as systemic, impersonal, and anonymous (Disch 2012, 603). Thus, she rejects citizen preference as a principal force in a representative system. This resolves some of the issues that comes with needing citizens to signal cohesive preferences and staying informed to do so. Still, citizen opinion must play some part in the system we speak of to qualify it as representative. Representing in this interpretation of Pitkin is both anticipatory and constitutive, but also necessarily reciprocal (Disch 2012, 603).

This approach to representation denies that constituencies and their interests can be treated as a given, but also that they can be scripted by elites. They do not pre-exist the representative relationship but become objects of representation through it. Later scholars have labelled this the *entrepreneurial* aspect of representation. Constituents and their interests are not represented in the literal sense. Rather, what is represented is created in the dynamics of the representative relationship where wants, values, and judgements are made publicly visible and politicized (Pitkin 1967, 604). Representation finds ontological and normative positions in tension. Representatives are obligated to act in the interests of their constituents, while they only come into focus as they are contested in the representative process. The normative conditions of representation are at odds with the temporal sequence.

This is what Disch claims as Pitkins’ most radical contribution, that democratic representation must defer to an origin to which it cannot literally lay claim (Disch 2012, 605). She also highlights that the representative relationship is not linear in nature, but iterative. The representatives often give direction to the relationship, but they in turn pursue what they perceive to strike a chord with the represented (Disch 2012, 606). The literal participation of the electorate is subordinate to a representatives’ conception that the electorate is active and attentive. Accordingly, representation is impacted by the imagination of the representatives, which in turn may be expected to be influenced by the surrounding environment. Representation involves subjective actors at the heart of large-scale social arrangements and impersonal systems.

There are two main components of Dischs' interpretation that shapes my research. First, that essential to representation is the overarching structure of a society. Representation is a process that is informed by an overarching architecture containing the forms of organization that give rise to rules, policy legacies, modes of campaign financing and popular participation, systems for information transmission and other structural forces (Disch 2012, 605). Secondly, at the centre of this structure are the representatives who are the key-actors that wants, values, and judgements are made visible to (Pitkin 1967, 604). This invites questions of when, how, or why something reaches the representatives or not.

In order to look into this, I first lay out typical features of representation. That is, the typical structures that exist to bring about information to representatives enabling others to influence their actions. This is the means through which issues are made visible and politicized, it other words, how they enter the representation dynamic. In other words, the mechanical aspect of representation can be presumed to lay out conditions for the psychological one. While the focus of this thesis are the psychological mechanisms that influence representation they are connected to the mechanical ones, and acknowledging the latter can further the understanding of the former.

2.2 The architecture of representation

2.2.1 Constituency control and elections

Representation, as established, is made up by actors that are shaped by, and reacting to the structures surrounding them. Representation lies in action, but the action possible or likely to be undertaken is impacted by structural constraints, by everything that makes up and mediates the relationship between representative and those represented. The systems and structural forces shaping the conditions for representation may be labelled as the architecture of representation itself. Before moving onto focusing on the representatives and the psychological aspect of representation, I will discuss the mechanical framework it is embedded in. To better understand the moves of the players, it is useful to first know the game.

One such mechanical element, is that those politically represented are typically organised into constituencies. They are grouped together based on their geographic location and share representative(s). Perhaps they are assumed to share some common interests based on their proximity which contributes to justifying their clustering. Regardless, this is the practical way most modern representative democracies organise themselves. Constituencies make up an important structure mediating the representative relationship. Miller and Stokes (1963) point to two different ways the represented as constituents can control the policy actions of their representatives. These are not exhaustive determinants of representative behaviour but do constitute important components that regulate the relationship between representative and the represented (Miller and Stokes 1963, 51). This serves as an example of how architectural elements of representative democracies, institutional structures, impact representatives.

The *first* manner of policy control is for the constituency to elect representatives that closely share their views, so that when that representative follows their own conviction, they act in accordance with constituency will. The actions of the representative and the opinion of their district is connected through the representatives own policy attitude (Miller and Stokes 1963, 50). The *second* manner of constituency influence is that representatives follow what they perceive to be constituency attitude in order to win re-election. Miller and Stokes find both pathways of constituency control to play a role, with some variation across policy areas as to which is more important (1963, 51). Constituency control thus involves both a mechanical component, *elections*, and a psychological, *perceptions*. Figure 1 illustrates the two manners of constituency influence.

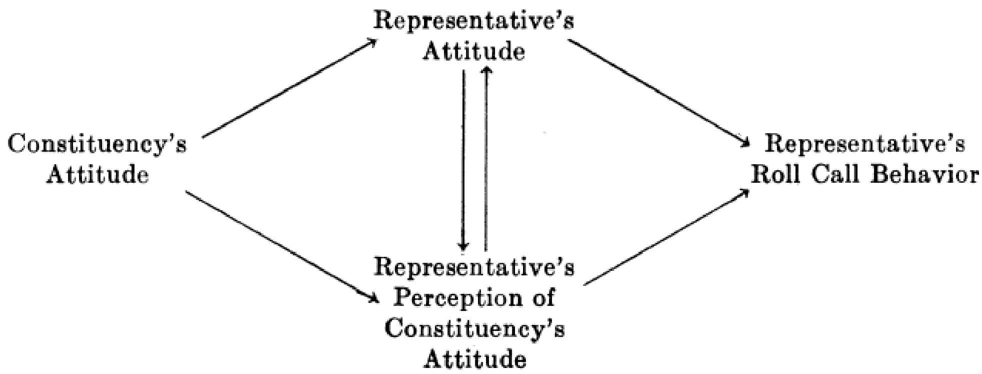

Figure 1. "Connections between a constituency's attitude and its Representative's roll call behaviour." (Miller and Stokes 1963, 50).

Evidently, elections play important parts in both manners of constituency control. They are viewed as fundamental to representative democracies. Elections are a means of expressing preference open to almost all, and a primary way of influencing politics in representative democracies (Dalton 2002, 125). Through them representatives are elected, the representatives are legitimized, and ideally, they are also incentivized. The salary and office-perks, as well as the value of improving policy and other psychic benefits should incentivize representatives to pursue re-election (Ashworth 2012, 185). Recall institutional design, like this, should induce representatives to act on behalf of their constituents according to principal-agent theory. Within reasonable bounds representatives are expected to take the course of action they believe secures them another term. Elections themselves are not just mechanical architectonical features, they also have psychological elements that connects to both voters and the elected (Harfst et al. 2018, 90).

The second form of constituency control centres the *perception* that representatives may be held electorally accountable, regardless of whether that holds from the electorates part. Miller and Stokes themselves point out that the *belief* of the representative that they may be electorally punished matters, regardless of whether that is actually true (Miller and Stokes 1963, 53-54). The explanation that Miller and Stokes bring up for the second mechanism, that representatives adjust their behaviour because they overestimate their own visibility to the constituents, underlines how the imagination, the impressions that representatives hold affect representative action. Later studies have also found that the more politicians feel that they will be held electorally accountable, the more they pay attention to the voters (Soontjens and Walgrave 2021, 11). This does not, however, mean they hold more accurate perceptions of them. Subjective impressions held by representatives therefore have very real consequences, even as representation is considered systemic, impersonal, and anonymous.

It is worth noting that the expression of political preference through elections are asymmetric, and an important strand of research in representation focus on the impact this has on who truly is represented. Even the transmission of preference emanating from the simple act of voting do not reflect all citizens. A wide range of research ranging from the United States to Finland and to Europe as a whole indicate class bias in voter turnout, with lower classes being underrepresented (Franko, Kelly, and Witko 2016, 356; Lahtinen et al. 2017, 395-398; Peters and Ensink 2015, 593; Wilford 2020, 325-326). It is important to remember that not all access points to express preferences are equally available or utilized by citizens.

However, elections typically only take place every couple of years. Information on preference and interest of voters necessarily reaches representatives in between those occasions as well. While elections are viewed as fundamental, representation includes the continuing interaction between representatives and the represented, that help shape their relationship. After all, as Pitkin writes, the information representatives have that may influence their policy actions is construed by numerous mediating agencies such as parties, organizations, personal relationships and media (Pitkin 1967, 223-224).

2.2.2 Organized interests, parties, and people

Other interactions that inform the impressions of representatives, and in this manner, help drive the representative relationship are more continuous. Representative democracies contain multiple entry points for expressing political opinion, a range of different means to participate in signalling preferences to the representatives (Kitschelt and Rehm 2014, 303). On account of political representation being actively constructed in the dynamic between represented and representatives, the structures and institutions affecting the interaction are also an integral part of what constitutes representation. Representation is comprised of structures that not only facilitates the relationship between those who represent and what or who is represented, the structures *are part* of that relationship.

Social movements, non-governmental organizations, labour unions, and other types of interest groups convene to affect political conditions (Bryucker and Rasmussen 2021, 909). Many scholars, particularly within pluralist theory, have emphasised the importance and impact of competing organized interests outside of party politics linking citizens with the state (Norris 2002, 137). When issues display a high level of associational engagement, more congruence between representatives and citizens can be observed (Rasmussen and Reher 2019, 1648).

Interest groups can act as intermediaries between citizens and representatives, distributing information and facilitating contact, though research from the EU indicates this works primarily if they represent segments that converge with the support base of the representatives, indicating that representatives do not absorb information symmetrically and uncritically (Bryucker and Rasmussen 2021, 923). The opportunity for citizens to affect politics is therefore conditional on the mentality of the representatives. Similar research from the United States finds that enhancing congruence through participation delimit itself to co-partisans and to highly partisan and salient issues (Leighley and Oser 2018, 328). In addition, the representatives background can help shape the information they are likely to digest, such as working class legislators who have more contact with worker organizations (Hemingway 2022, 5-9). This underscores how representation is contingent not only on the structures providing opportunity for interaction, but also on the representatives' personal beliefs and the regulation of their attention.

One of the most important institutions mediating the representative relationship are political parties. By grouping together people with similar views and "owning" some issues they make the political terrain more comprehensible for voters. It is often with the parties themselves that interest groups seek to influence or collaborate with, rather than individual representatives (Otjes and Rasmussen 2017, 98; Otjes and Green-Pedersen 2021, 620-621). Depending on the legislative institutions party leaders may hold significant sway over the opinions of the parties' representatives (S.E. Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge 2016, 623). Other laws, such as those regulating campaign financing, also influence the incentives for representatives to pay attention to different actors (Flavin 2015, 77).

Furthermore, media is also a medium that impacts representatives in their work. Mass media form a significant source of information for political representatives, and can affect the political agenda (Aelst and Walgrave 2016, 499-500). Different forms of media can be used to *frame* political messages to impact the attention and opinions of representatives (Lindekilde and Olesen 2015, 91-92). As such, media can be a powerful tool for different actors to vie for the attention and sympathies of representatives to their cause. Inevitably media therefore make up a segment of representatives' information environments.

In summary, structural factors like party influence, pursuit of re-election through the constituency, and influence from organized interests all have the potential to affect representatives. However, it is not solely their existence that determine political influence, but their potential to do so and therefore be a part of the representation process is conditional on the mentality of the representatives. The circumstances governing the attention of mentality of the representatives is crucial to the interaction.

2.2.3 The role of knowledge and information environments

Knowledge and information play central roles in representation. The need for specialized knowledge contributes to the justification of having representatives, people whose job it is to gather and employ policy relevant knowledge. Knowledge about how the potential drawbacks and benefits of a policy can help shape an impression of how it corresponds to the interests of the citizen. Representatives may also process information about citizen preference. The conceptual discussion earlier in this chapter underscored how the ability to justify policy as in the interest of the citizens or assign it to citizen preference is crucial to labelling the relevant actions *representative.* In other words, knowledge and information are central to political representation (Christensen, Gornitzka, and Holst 2017, 239).

Therefore, the systems for how knowledge is brough to the representatives are crucial. The Nordic region in particular is at the forefront of transition to what has been labelled "the knowledge society" rendering the issue even more relevant for my case, Norway. Relevant to the representatives are a range of institutions and organizations that produce and spread policy-relevant knowledge, as well as how these are governed (Christensen, Gornitzka, and Holst 2017, 239). This encompasses both the generation and provision of knowledge. That is both the machinery that generates data, research and policy recommendations, as well as the interlocking set of actors and organizations that provides recommendations to policy-makers. (Christensen, Gornitzka, and Holst 2017, 241-242). In other words, the institutions for knowledge provision are central to the delivery of information on preference and especially interests to representatives.

Consequently, these structures help shape the representatives' *information environments.* The term information environments lack a consistent definition. While it is used in research, it remains somewhat vague and is often not defined. It is most used in accounting and finance literature, though it is used inconsistently even within those strands (Jonnergård, von Koch, and Nilsson 2020). Within political science the term information environments have been utilized in works with themes like citizen knowledge, news consumption, and candidate evaluation (Rahn 1995; Jerit, Barabas, and Bolsen 2006; Sindermann, Kannen, and Montag). Even though the term is central within these works it is rarely defined. Carlin et al. on the other hand, refer in their research on economic perception to information environments as "the political climate in which information is disseminated" which structures the connection between economic activity and economic perceptions (Carlin et al. 2021, 1500).

Information environments as it is utilized within the context of this thesis signifies the totality of the formal and informal channels that spread information either relevant to policy or political enactment to a political representative, that reaches the representative so it may influence their knowledge or perception about something. This delimits the actors in the information environment to those that reach the representative and does not include those who may have relevant knowledge that they attempt to show representatives but fail. This satisfies the criteria for creating a functioning definition (Karlsen 2015, 21-29). Like Carlin et al. I want to highlight that the information environment structures the connection between the mechanical and the psychological, the perceived. While knowledge regimes are comprised of mechanical elements, a system to provide information, information environments are what is actually picked up by representatives. Information environments go beyond formal structures and may include things like contact with other representatives and outside social ties. After all, we perceive political reality through the people with whom we are in contact. This includes aforementioned structures such as parties and organizations, but also personal relationships and media (Pitkin 1967, 223).

It is important to note that just because a piece of information is available to a representative, and even in their information environment, it is not enough for it to be noticed by them, they still need to process and interpret it. Information undergoes subjective interpretation impacted by the previous ideas and values a representative hold. This bears consequence for the importance a piece of knowledge is ascribed, and how and if the information is used.

2.3 Selecting the approach, a defence for bounded rationality.

2.3.1 Why bounded rationality?

To analyse the research question, I draw upon theory from political psychology in my approach. This stands in contrast to economic inspired angles such as principal-agent theory and formal models, which I already have implicitly rejected in this chapter as an appropriate approach to the research question. To examine *how representatives justify their decision-making and how they connect it to their roles as representatives* I find a more inductive approach to be fitting. Rather than viewing the representatives as responding to the voters or making rational and strategic choices that further their own interests, I treat them as fallible individuals navigating a complex environment.

Therefore, I use bounded rationality which rests on the same premise. Bounded rationality was developed as an attempt to base a theory on decision-making on scientific principles of observation and experiment (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274). It was precisely to rebut assumptions of rationality in economic theories, specifically rational *decision-making* that provoked the creation of the bounded rationality framework (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274). Many studies had shown that individuals struggle with even simple mental tasks, demonstrated through tests where a correct conclusion exists, that people fail to arrive at. This undermines the sort of strategic reasoning ascribed to agents in economic theories (Conlisk 1996, 670).

Representatives as fallible and ultimately not rational is confirmed in later experiments. Vignette experiments from Belgium, Canada, and Israel indicate that members of parliament show significantly more sunk-cost tendencies than citizen who are not representatives (Scheffer et al. 2018, 308). At the same they are not invulnerable to many of the same fallacies and limitations found in the electorate, such as exhibiting status quo bias, and being susceptible to the way information is framed to them (Scheffer et al. 2018, 315; Walgrave et al. 2018, 547). This indicates that decision-making in practice does not match a rational ideal where people are calculated and strategic. Consequently, an approach that acknowledges this is a good starting point.

Within bounded rationality, people are considered to be goal oriented. However, they fail to achieve their goals in the interaction between traits in their cognitive architectures and the complexity of their environment. This is *the principle of intended rationality* (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274). Actors, such as representatives, may hold rational desires, but their actions do not end up being "rational" in the sense of necessarily being what is needed to achieve their goal. This can be explained by the fact that they are exposed to so much information at any given time and subsequently have a hard time orienting themselves in a complex information environment.

2.3.2 Representatives as prisoners to their limited attention spans

It is not difficult to imagine that the environment representatives operate within is complex and information rich. As previously noted, many structures and opportunities exist to reach out to and try to affect representatives. It is within this space they must navigate, and attempt to make choices that serve them. For example, did representatives in the UK in the late nineties' express frustration at the amount of information available. They found the sheer volume overwhelming, and that was before the internet integrated itself fully in our lives as the information source and communication tool it is today (Marcella, Carcary, and Baxter 1999, 177-178). Twenty years later Norwegian representatives were claimed to be, as Galtrud and Bystöm (2019) put it, "information-rich, but time-poor".

Within bounded rationality the environment representatives operate within consequently is perceived as influencing their behaviour, even when it comes to directing their attention or rationalizing choices internally. A core tenet is *the principle of adaption* which claims that much of human behaviour can be explained by the task-environment. Human thought is not static, but adaptive. An example may be found in how representatives in government and in opposition react to different political frames, where what conflict frames attract the attention of representatives differs between those two (Walgrave et al. 2018, 564). The difference in their allocation of attention can be explained by differences in their task-environments.

2.3.3 Dealing with information, and cognitive shortcuts.

However, politicians fulfilling their representative functions are not mere product of their environments. At the heart of the systems for representation are individuals who not only responds, but also drive the relationship through their own preferences, values, and personality traits. Bounded rationality acknowledges that it is precisely the interaction between subjective and imperfect individuals and their environments that matter. Human beings are fallible, but this fallibility is not completely random or unsystematic.

Consequently, there are some trends that are relevant to how representatives make their judgements. In the face of uncertainty, people often use cognitive shortcuts called *heuristics*. This allows them to bypass large amounts of information, to inform probabilities, available outcomes, and fill information gaps (Steenberg and Colombo 2018, 1-2). In other words, representatives are not actually expected to examine all information available to them thoroughly, which probably would be impossible. Instead, they rely on some shortcuts to help them sort or filter parts of the available information so they can land on something. Heuristics may include things like the representatives filtering through their ideological lens, professional and personal identification, or already existing organizational practices (Jones and Thomas 2012, 278).

A key strategy within bounded rationality is a tactic called *satisficing.* Satisficing is a heuristic that outperforms many others when it comes to explaining decision-making and is a prominent tenet of bounded rationality (Bendor, Kumar, and Siegel 2009, 1-2) Its premise is that decision-makers such as representatives do not typically take the optimal course of action, but rather an available satisfactory one (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274-276). Decision-makers tend to apply a pre-packaged solution from memory, rather than thoroughly analyse the relevant problem-space. They do not endlessly analyse the problem-space to reach the optimal conclusion, instead they go for something that seems “good enough”. Because complex and demanding environments such as parliaments operates with time constraints, satisficing can be a way of getting things done. This assumption is strengthened by previous research that find elite politicians to appear easily satisfied as long as their short-term needs are met quickly and effortlessly (Galtrud and Byström 2019, 413).

Another strategy representatives may use to orient themselves in their information-rich environment is to utilize *perceived utility* as a tool for where to devote their attention. Research from Belgium indicate that members of parliament (MPs) do exactly that. They devote attention to news coverage based on its prominence and perceived utility. They are more likely to talk about, remember, or intend to act on news that have a perceived partisan usefulness, or caters to their individual political specialization (Sevenans, Walgrave, and Joanna Epping 2016, 622-623). In other words, perceived usefulness seems to not only regulate the direction of not only their immediate attention, but also which information they retain and act on in a bigger perspective.

2.4 Presenting a comprehensive approach.

2.4.1 Relevant research

I have already argued that representatives find themselves in complex information environment, where different structures of influences, such as elections, interest groups, media etc. vie for their attention. Whether they get it is, according to the bounded rationality framework, conditional on the representatives' traits such as their ideology, personal interests, and other heuristics and strategies. Representatives cannot process all information potentially available to them in their decision-making, and from subconscious choices to deliberate strategies, they must filter some out.

Note that the relevant research presented so far typically is conducted on one separate structure for information transmission, e.g., how interest groups influence representatives. These different modes of information transmission are rarely viewed from a comprehensive perspective with the representatives as starting point. Both internal and external conditions make representatives navigation of their role in their information environments complex. The interaction is messy, and hard to detangle. Several scholars have underlined how information is an important component in the political process, and a number of studies explore its role as a link between voters and representatives (Carlin et al. 2021; Van Aelst et al. 2017; Sindermann, Kannen, and Montag ; Jerit, Barabas, and Bolsen 2006). However, research that focus on the representatives' side of the information topic is scarcer, though not completely absent.

In addition to what I have already presented, survey-research from the United Kingdom members of the European parliament on the role of information in their work found that all the members surveyed had research assistants to help them with their duties, usually several. Most undertook some research on their own in addition to using their assistants, but some delegated all research. Interestingly, unofficial, informal contacts were found to be the most frequently used while respondents showed much less enthusiasm for official sources (Marcella, Carcary, and Baxter 1999, 176). Likewise, interviews with Norwegian parliamentary members in opposition claim information from colleagues as a useful resource (Galtrud and Byström 2019, 415-416). This indicates that it can be useful to reach beyond formal institutionalised structures when analysing the information selection and perception of representatives. Therefore, I believe it can complement existing research to utilize an open-minded and comprehensive approach that focuses on what the representatives themselves presents as important to them.

2.4.2 The information selection typology

Relatively little research on this topic already exists, and more research on the role of information in decision-making has been called for (Marcella, Carcary, and Baxter 1999, 178). The ones who most notably have rose to the challenge are Walgrave and Dejaeghere, who used an inductive approach to develop a typology on information selection for top politicians. Like I, they utilize the bounded rationality framework, and their starting premise is that information is a vital resource for politicians that is available in abundance. Therefore, the question is how they can avoid information overload. They further the argument that information selection is at the core of decision-making, and therefore fundamental to political processes. They too, claim that while information-selection is an important and fundamental task for representatives, it is understudied (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 229-231).

To explore the topic, they have conducted interviews with 14 Belgian party leaders and ministers on how they deal with information overload. As a result, they present a mixture of organizational *procedures*, *heuristics*, and *attitudes* that help top politicians select information and cope with navigating an information-rich environment. Together these make up a funnel of how top politicians filter information, how it is evaluated or processed internally, and a last line of defence if the previous mechanisms fail. The typology is presented in figure 2.

The procedures that emerged from the interviews were that the politicians uses specialized staff, routine meetings, information templates, and confidants. The information templates and routine meetings were presented as means to streamline incoming information, so it was easy to digest. Using staff and confidants are ways to delegate some of the filtering to others, and involve a level of trust that those selected others will derive the information that is important for them (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 236). It is worth noting that these were interviews with top politicians in the form of party leaders and ministers, and so the organizational procedures available to them might not be generalized to representatives in general. While ordinary representatives may have advisors, they do not have the same elaborate specialized staff as top politicians. This makes it interesting to see if the tactics employed by the politicians interviewed will hold for other kinds of representatives.

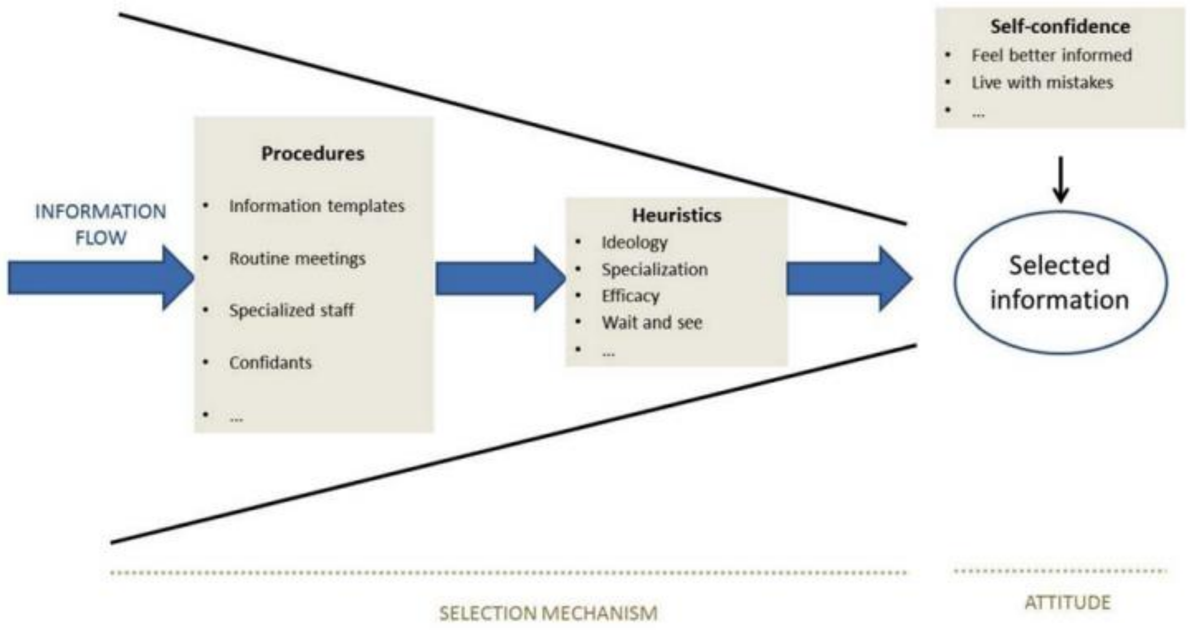

Figure 2. "Information Selection and Coping Mechanisms Employed by Top Politicians" (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 235)

The second filtering device, which concerns how the politicians evaluate the information once it reaches them, revealed four sorts of heuristic filters. Firstly, they prioritize processing information that is ideologically relevant. Secondly, they concentrate on some areas they are specialized on. Thirdly, they focus on the areas they believe they are more likely to succeed in. They select information that they believe will lead them to results. The last heuristic is a "wait and see" strategy, where they simply do not act on information that they do not assess that they need to at the moment (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 237-238).

Lastly, the possibility that the information selection occasionally may deprive them of something important that could have consequence to them, is not daunting to them. They compensate with an attitude of self-confidence (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 239-240).

Consequently, the attitude is a coping-mechanism rather than a device for information selection.

The typology presented does not constitute a comprehensive theory, and the researchers stress that it is a humble beginning to be further developed (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 240-241). In addition, while this research is relevant to my research question, and something that I will build upon, it does not adequately address my research question. Therefore, I uphold that this topic needs further exploring. I am looking at how representatives justify their decision-making and how it connects to their roles as representatives. Accordingly, the population under study is representatives, and not limited to top politicians. Furthermore, what makes the relevant politicians germane to me is the representation aspect, not primarily the elite aspect of their information selection.

I therefore desire to explore further how aspects related to decision-making connect to their role-conception, something which the Belgian study does not address. Part of what makes decision-making by representatives interesting to look at is not just its practical political consequences, but the fact that is intrinsically connected to their roles, that is their functions as representatives. However, I share the core assumption that information selection is at the core of decision-making, and it is through exploring how representatives select their information and how they prioritize that I expect to gain insight into the justifications they make.

3. Research design

3.0 Chapter introduction

In this chapter I present the research design, consisting of a single-case study on Norway where I have conducted interviews with representatives in parliament. I address how the methodological approach answers to the research question, lay out the empirical procedures of data collection, and discuss key arguments for interpretation. Throughout I discuss what is gained and what is lost from interviewing representatives- who I claim fall under the category of “elites” in the research context. I argue that there are inherent limits to the dependability of the knowledge that can come from interviewing them, but that this does not mean such research should not be conducted. Instead, I advocate transparency in all stages, and rigorous scrutiny of both the process and the results.

First, I will explain why my chosen methods suit the research question while acknowledging the fundamental methodological concerns. Then, I discuss key facets of single-case studies and interviews. Afterwards I present my process for acquiring my data, including challenges and choices I have made. Lastly, I show how I will use qualitative content analysis to explore my data and address the concerns of internal validity more directly.

3.1 Selection of research design

3.1.1 Addressing the research question.

When developing the research design, it is important to consider what best addresses and generates insight into the research question (Moses 2020, 4). It must be realistic, both in terms of the resources it will take to implement, and about what it can actually tell us about the research question (Lewis and Nicholls 2014, 49). Recall the research question. *How do representatives justify their decision-making and how do they connect it to their roles as representatives?*

The key to developing a research design that addresses this research question can be found in the term *justify.* An “objective” description of what influences representatives in their roles is not the goal, in addition to the fact that it would be quite challenging to actually research. Necessarily, the methodological approach must be one that attempts to generate some insight into the perceptions of the representatives themselves.

Recall that the theoretical starting point is one that conceives of representatives as important drivers of the representative relationship, as well as beings that respond to the structures surrounding them. Therefore, I make the case that semi-structured interviews to generate data on the conceptions of representatives combined with the information-richness of a single case study constitutes the best approach to examine the research question.

3.1.2 Methodological concerns when studying representation.

There are some general concerns, or challenges, when researching representation that can be fruitful to bear in mind. A notable challenge within the field is to merge complex theoretical accounts with actual doable research on the topic. Rehfeld (2009) points out that there is a discrepancy between theorists and empirical scholars in how they treat representation. In essence, these two camps are having different conversations on the same topic without really speaking with each other.

For instance empirical scholars have a tendency to reduce representation to responsiveness or correspondence in their research (Rehfeld 2009, 216). This has the advantage of making representation easier to measure, compare, and consequently say whether it is "good". Thus, they treat it with artificial precision. For instance, scholars have devoted considerable resources to documenting permeating political inequality in representation (Lupu and Warner 2021; Giger, Rosset, and Bernauer 2012; Peters and Ensink 2015; Gilens 2005, 2009; Soroka and Wlezien 2008). However, as Rehfield claims, a lot of these accounts explicitly or implicitly operationalize representation as a link between citizens and representatives without including the mediators that form this relationship.

In the previous chapter I argued for a more complex theory-oriented approach, and accordingly my research should spring out from this theoretical account of Pitkins' and Disch. Thus, I find myself grappling with one of the big challenges within the representation field, embracing the complexity of what representation is with what can be realistically researched. Rehfeld asserts that theoretical scholars often treat representation in an overly gross manner, lacking clarity (Rehfeld 2009, 216). I believe the conceptual account I have presented, and the subsequent research is most vulnerable to this critique. Representation as an interplay between the internal process of representatives and external stimuli in their environment is inherently difficult to do meaningful research on. I recognise these limits and discuss them throughout the chapter, and combat it through being rigorous in my approach, transparent in my choices, and thoroughly discussing methodological issues like validity.

The topic of the research I will conduct is an answer to calls for more research devoted to looking further up the policy chain at the sources in representation rather than just e.g. its unequal output, because the full picture of representation includes action that is not perceived directly through output (Weber 2020, 1789). This is inherently more challenging to research than output, but it constitutes a puzzle piece that is lacking from the overall research on representation. Therefore, my research zooms in on a small part of representation and examines it in depth, even if it entails some uncertainty.

3.1.3 Defining representatives.

To best address the research question, it is useful to operationalize the key term *representatives* as it pertains to the research. While the term representation has already been delimited to political representation in the theoretical discussion, representatives could conceivably include a larger segment of representatives than the ones I have interviewed. The representatives in question refer to nationally elected political representatives, that is representatives in parliament. When I use the term representatives, they are the ones I refer to, even though it is possible to be a representative on a more local level such as the municipality, or a supranational level such as in the EU.

However, to delimitate the research and provide richer description that can further understanding, I have chosen to focus on only one level of representation. The national representatives can be presumed to operate within a more hectic and information rich environment. In addition, they are all in parliament, which is both practical for conducting the interviews, and gives means they exist within a somewhat similar context. This also aids interpretation. The environment they operate within and react to is more equal than if I were to address municipal representatives across the country. Therefore, representatives as I will refer to them are national representatives, and generalizations to representatives at other levels should be done with caution.

3.2 The single-case study approach

3.2.1 Why this method?

Single case studies are characterized by intensive study of a single case for the purpose of gaining richer understanding of a phenomenon (Gerring 2004, 342). Since there is not an abundance of previous research on my topic, and few fully developed theories, a single-case study that allows for a more in-depth exploration makes a good fit. Since it is a tool that allows the possibility of identifying new explanations and variables it is generally considered as appropriate for developing theory (George and Bennett 2005, 43, 59). Qualitative single-case studies makes it possible to further understanding and study complex phenomena such as representation, where a myriad of different actors, structures, and variables are involved.

The single-case study has been met with criticism and should, like all methods, be used with caution. George and Bennet warns that utilizing a single-case can lead to incorrect inferences and indeterminate results (2005, 59). The results should be interpreted carefully, especially when it comes to making broader generalizations. To this end I thoroughly discuss the validity of the findings and what they potentially could contribute both throughout this chapter, and in the analysis. However, George and Bennet note that using numerous observations such as the multiple interviews I have conducted, greatly combats these issues and strengthens the usefulness of the case-study approach (2005, 59).

While one should be cautious about generalizing when conducting single-case studies, the advantage is that it allows for deeper richer understanding of the case in question. When interviewing representatives understanding the context they operate within is of the utmost importance. Both because they are presumed to respond to this environment, and because representatives in different countries may wield social power in the interview-interaction differently (Bygnes 2008, 6). Consequently, delimiting the research to one case is both a practical methodological choice as well as theoretical one. Adding cases usually means less information about each case, which could rob me of the tools to sufficiently interpret the data critically (Creswell 2013, 101).

There are also some practical concerns that guide the choice of a single-case study. The method chosen needs to not only address the research question, but also be appropriate for the scope of the research. There are several reasons why I do not consider multiple cases as a viable option within the constraints of the master thesis. Firstly, my research involves generating original data that is in itself resource demanding. Comparing with other national representatives could also increase the resource costs connected to interpretation and translation of data (Pepinsky 2019, 194). To summarize, there is a strong pragmatic argument for utilizing the single-case study. Additionally, if comparing with representatives from other countries, language barriers may also challenge the validity of the findings.

A notable strength of a well conducted single-case study is the strong internal validity that it often accompanies (Pepinsky 2019, 194). Interestingly, struggles of internal validity is a central question to my research as interviews with representatives entails some extra challenges to generating and assessing authenticity in the data.

3.2.2 Norway, land of representatives

My choice of case is my own country, Norway. There are of course strong pragmatic reasons for this, but also methodological ones. As I will expand on, getting a hold of representatives for interviews is an extensive and arduous task. Trying to conduct the research on another country would probably be even more strenuous, and designing the research project like that would probably result in insufficient data. Case selection is in part an opportunistic process (George and Bennett 2005, 113).

When navigating interactions with challenging informants it is an advantage to have extensive knowledge of the cultural codes, and share language that ensures smooth communication (Yeo et al. 2014, 181-184). Notably, Norway is a country where emphasis is put on equality, and this egalitarian ideal extends to representatives (Bygnes 2008, 5-6). The Norwegian population put a comparatively high degree of trust in their representatives (OECD 2022). This may create a conducive environment for meaningful interview interactions, where the barriers for accessing valuable information is lower.

Norway as a country is governed by some norms and structures that may influence the perspectives and priorities representatives hold. The Norwegian electoral system weighs each vote from population scarce areas such as the north heavier than for example those in the capital (Dokka 2017). Physically representatives sit in parliament according to their electoral districts. A symbolic emphasis is therefore put on the geographical belonging of the representatives. Furthermore, the Norwegian parliament is a “working parliament” where the representatives retain notable influence on policy even if they are in opposition. The representatives are organized into committees where they work on their designated area (Heidar and Rasch 2017, 118-119).

Norway is also characterized by what Rokkan called the functional-corporatist channel which is an addition to the numerical-democratic channel of voting. This means that strong organized groups such as interest groups, corporations, and other organized interests are institutionally integrated into the political system, and are able to make their interests known and potentially affect policy (Rommetvedt 2017, 171-173). Notably, corporatism is not as strong as it used to be, but it is still a relevant characteristic. In tandem with this decline lobbyism has increased (Heidar and Rasch 2017, 174-178, 186). Policymaking is characterized by “governing through knowledge” and a myriad of systems exist to deliver this knowledge to the representatives. Additionally, there has been an increased emphasis on specialized knowledge (Christensen, Gornitzka, and Holst 2017, 239, 252-253). Overall, this amounts to representatives that operate in an environment that is both open and complex. All in all, Norway contain a myriad of channels to reach out to and potentially exert influence on the representatives. This makes it an appropriate case to examine perspectives on how representatives deal with information-rich environments and the interests they find themselves in the middle of. Therefore I consider Norway to constitute a most-likely case that can help further theory development in the area of information-handling for representatives (George and Bennett 2005, 292; Bogaards 2019, 63).

3.3. Interviews

3.3.1 Why interviews? Benefits and challenges to the interview-approach

I have chosen to use interviews in order to examine the research question. This choice is shaped both by the nature of the research question, as well as practical concerns. My research topic concerns internal mechanisms and personal attitudes, beliefs, and values. This makes in-depth interviews an appropriate approach, as they are well suited for gaining deeper understanding of personal context, and for exploring issues in depth and detail (Lewis and Nicholls 2014, 59). My aim is to achieve a greater understanding of the perceptions of members of a relatively small group- the representatives. What makes them interesting to me is their specific roles, and how this tie to their navigation of their particular environment. Interviews combine exploration of external structures, the outward-facing social context that representatives operate within, with their inner life making them a good fit to my specific research project (Yeo et al. 2014, 181).

This explorative dimension to qualitative interviews can provoke the revelation of new information that the researcher did not think of (Diefenbach 2009, 877). As such, it makes a good fit since the information selection of representatives is not a fully fleshed out field. The procedures for information selection and attentiveness in representatives are not thoroughly documented (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 231). Interviewing the representatives then can help further develop a theoretical framework and gain new insight into their perspectives. My interviews are semi-structured, as I have prepared the topics, but adapt the order and exact shape of the questions according to what generates the best flow in the interviews (Yeo et al.

2014, 188). This is useful to further authentic responses and may therefore aid me in the quest for internal validity.

Conducting interviews in person also allowed me to observe their responses visually, to judge whether they showed emotional cues that could be connected to for example the authenticity of their response, and it gave me the opportunity to clarify if needed. Additionally, I was interested in how they manage lots of information and how they weighed their priorities. I knew that they may not have deliberate conscious strategies for this, which could mean that they were sorting unconscious practice into strategies during the interview itself. Whether they themselves had a conscious strategy or priority list, or whether they appear to just become aware of it during the interview was in itself interesting information to me. In summary, the interview allows for a depth, and a broader opportunity for generating new information.

There are some alternative angles to my research topic, where other methods could be used. While I have put forth several reasons for why I consider interviews to be a fitting method for my research it is important to recognise its limitations. What I can gain understanding about from the interviews is simply their perspectives, or alleged perspectives. While observing their interaction with their environment in order to study how they respond to the structures they operate within would be interesting, it would be extremely resource demanding, and is unrealistic to achieve. And while deeper understanding of how the psychological mechanisms that affect them would be interesting, I again predict that orchestrating, and getting national representatives to volunteer for experiments to test this would be difficult to achieve. In other words, while other approaches from the plethora of methods that exist could theoretically be interesting or relevant to use, practical concerns imposes some limits. Representatives are notoriously busy, and the population is not too large (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 234). This consequently affects the ability to conduct research on them.

The topic I am researching largely consists of an internal process. It is invisible and is not necessarily something the research subject are fully aware of themselves. Accordingly, it is a subject that is inherently difficult to research. That does not mean we should not try. While the data I generate in this research project may be limited in what it can tell us and with what certainty, I do not believe that negates the choice of topic. Representatives are key decision-makers that wield power in our society, and as such there is an inherent value in attempting to gain more understanding of them and their position. Instead, it is important to recognise and reflect critically on what can be achieved and be rigorous and transparent in the analysis.

The data I use is generated as a joint effort between myself, the interviewer, and the informants, the interviewees. The data is therefore a product of our social interaction, not something that exists neutrally outside of it. While subjectivity on the researchers part is always a danger, a qualitative method such as interviews, where I as a researcher myself am taking part in the data-generation process, is particularly vulnerable to the possible downsides it brings (Diefenbach 2009, 876-877). However, this does not discredit the method, but entails that methodological issues are taken seriously into account (Diefenbach 2009, 878).

3.3.2 Interviewing "Political elites"

The "elite" term in social science manages to both be widely used and disputed. The problem seems to be that many utilize the term without reflecting critically on its meaning and specific application to their research. The methodological challenges are ignored (Harvey 2010, 195). Some complain that there lacks a clear cut definition, and point to an asymmetric adoption across the social sciences (Harvey 2011, 432-433). Others argue that the approach to interviews that come attached with the elite-term is often applied uniformly, without considering how differences in social structures or other variables such as gender or ethnicity impact the interview-interaction (Puwar 1997; Bygnes 2008, 4-7). I heed these warnings and argue that the "elite-research" angle captures some challenges that are essential to bear in mind when both conducting and interpreting the research on Norwegian representatives.

Despite the lack of one clear cut definition, constituting national representatives as "elite" subjects seems fairly uncontroversial. While the literature does not necessarily agree on the exact threshold for being considered elite in a research context, it would seem that my informants qualify according to most definitions. When for example Hoffman-Lange say that elites are defined by their influence on strategic decisions that shape the living conditions in society, it can hardly be argued that the people with legislative power is not in this group (Hoffmann-Lange 2007, 1).

Furthermore, there are some practical challenges and considerations in conducting research on elites that I find to fit with my design. Recognising some subjects as elite can help identifying methodological challenges that comes with researching elites, and much of the literature on elite research is devoted to the particular challenges it entails. Research on elites often share a range of characteristics. Some concerns when designing a research approach to elites as informants are difficulties of access, managing power-differences in the interview situation, and recognising challenges to the truthfulness of the responses and subsequently to how meaningful the contribution can be to the research area (Harvey 2010, 196; 2011, 433; Bygnes 2008, 1).

Representatives, like many other elite groups, have extensive media-training (Harvey 2011, 433). They are used to portraying themselves in a certain manner, and they have a vested interest in appearing favourably. Consequently, it can be difficult to assess the authenticity of their responses in the interviews. To combat this, I find it particularly important to scrutinize what potential interest could lie behind their responses. In addition, I made it clear that my goal was not to examine them as individuals, but to generally gain some insight into the perspectives of representatives on the topic. I also offered them the opportunity of anonymity.

While some warn that inexperienced researcher should not attempt to interview elites, I want to propose the idea that my relative young age and status as a master student may aid the interviews (Harvey 2010, 195). Others have experienced research interviews as being treated similarly to media interviews by the informants, which means that the informants were more cautious and mindful in their response (Harvey 2011, 433). I believe I have come across as relatively harmless and my informants appear to have treated the interviews more like conversations. To this end I followed best practices for interviews, by being attentive and engaged, monitoring eye-contact, asking relevant follow-up questions and appearing calm (Yeo et al. 2014, 184-185). This I believe aided the authenticity of the responses. I also kept focused and had my attention on the informant during the interviews for any auditive and visual cues that could add to the interpretation. Additionally, I do not believe the research topic to be especially sensitive. In other words, in general I do not believe there is a strong incentive for the representatives to misrepresent themselves when it comes to the subject of my thesis.

Still, these considerations do not absolve the interviews of issues of authenticity. Representing themselves in a certain way is not necessarily a conscious choice. Informants can still follow cultural scripts on how they should behave or answer questions without being conscious of them. Even though I have taken steps to hinder voluntary misrepresentation, or having my interviews conflated with those of journalists, they are still vulnerable to internal subconscious reactions that can affect the responses (Diefenbach 2009, 280). This is a general truth, but may be even more pronounced in my informants, who probably have internalized political rhetoric and internalized contextual scripts in relation to public appearances, but also have a vested interest in appearing favourably.

It is interesting to note that not all aspects of elite research seem applicable to my case. A challenge that is typical in the literature on elite interviews is that the elite will leverage their power in the interview-setting. This can happen in subtle and insidious ways, controlling the agenda and dynamic of the interview. This dynamic is sometimes an underlying assumption in the elite research literature (Harvey 2011, 433). Accordingly, the interviewer must manage this power-relation during the interview, and resist the informants attempt to control the agenda (Puwar 1997). However, I did not find this to be an issue when conducting my interviews with Norwegian representatives. Sometimes they would go on a tangent about something, but I attribute this more to personal enthusiasm than them controlling the agenda or the content of the interview. These tangents did not hinder the gathering of relevant data material, and like any interview situation simply demanded follow-up questions that brought the informant to a relevant subject again.

This experience contradicting what is typically portrayed in the literature on elite research can be attributed to the context in which my interviews take place. Specifically, egalitarian structures permeate Norwegian society including social norms and role scripts. This promotes an outward rejection of elitist cultural expression or obvious hierarchy (Bygnes 2008, 6, 7). This does not render the elite concept useless for my research, but rather emphasizes the importance of cultural context. This point also underscores the strength of my chosen methodical approach, that it invites the consideration of contextually relevant information that shape the research. This is exactly the point Bygnes makes, that being mindful of cultural context help the researchers' understanding of the field (Bygnes 2008, 7).

3.3.3 Ethical considerations when interviewing representatives.

The ethical considerations and dilemmas that arise are often method specific in qualitative research. Accordingly, the researcher should carefully consider the specifics of their research rather than just apply a general checklist (Webster, Lewis, and Brown 2014, 82). Conducting research on smaller groups often warrants additional considerations. While representatives are not a particularly vulnerable group, they are public figures and the population my informants are drawn from are limited.

I predicted that this would entail some additional challenges regarding preserving anonymity. I knew that if I had to be extra cautious about which information I included as it could more easily be connected to the informants. I was careful to obtain informed consent from all informants, which is another important ethical principle (Creswell 2013, 174; Webster, Lewis, and Brown 2014, 83). To this end I clearly laid out that participation was voluntary, could be withdrawn at any time, and they could be anonymous if they wished. I presented named or unnamed participation as equal options. I also laid out the research objective clearly as one should, and this seemed to be what prompted them to consent to being named (Creswell 2013, 174). Some added that they were comfortable changing their mind if they felt the content of the interview warranted it, but that they did not think it would be needed. Consequently, indicating this was not a subject they considered very sensitive, and so it was easier for them to answer truthfully and publicly. Even though all the informants said they were fine with disclosing their identities, I was careful to keep their information private until publishing with the final approval of their quotes. Accordingly, I made sure to keep the recordings and transcripts safe, and the transcripts did not include information about who the informants were. In the end all my informants chose to participate with their full name, and they all approved the quotes I included.

This has the advantage of strengthening the verifiability of my research. Who the informants are is also a part of the research design, and being explicit about as many facets of it as possible makes me more likely to reach my research objective, and make an actual contribution that can be built upon (Bogaards 2019, 62). It makes it easier for others to appraise my research. On the other hand, I was mindful that the informants might be less forthcoming in their answers if they were going to be named. However, I did not get the impression that was the case, especially since some were open about that they would consider anonymity as an option if needed. I also experienced that someone asked that something would not be cited while we were still carrying out the interview. I take this as a positive indicator that I was able to facilitate a comfortable environment that encouraged openness. Clues like this led me to believe that lack of anonymity did not hinder truthfulness in the interview. I have of course not used the relevant quotes, and luckily, they were not essential to my analysis. I have referenced the omitted quoted at one point, but anonymised and with consent.

3.4 Data acquisition

3.4.1 The challenge of access: Sampling selection and potential bias.

Since the selection of informants carry great consequence to whose worldviews and perspectives will be taken into account, it is especially important to describe who were interviewed, and what their statuses are (Diefenbach 2009, 880). Of the ten political parties represented in the parliament, I was able to get a hold of informants from seven of them. In total nine informants have participated in my research. From the Labour Party I interviewed Mani Hussaini, Helge Njåstad from the Progress Party, Sveinung Rotevatn from the Liberal party, Rasmus Hansson from the Green Party, and Sofie Marhaug from the Red Party. I also got two informants from the Centre Party, Maren Grøthe and Erling Sande, and Ove Trellevik and Svein Harberg from the Conservative Party. I was unfortunately not able to get a hold of the Patient Focus Party (PF), the Christian Democratic Party, or the Socialist Left Party. Especially from the PF and the Christian Democratic Party this is unsurprising as they have few seats in parliament, only one and three respectively. However, I consider the informants I acquired as sufficient to produce meaningful material for the analysis. While there is not a quantitative relation between interview data and their interpretation, data from different informants allowed me to compare the data and develop a broader picture. There is no exact way of determining the number of informants sufficient, but I found that conducting several interviews in several rounds lead me to uncover patterns in the data and develop new insights. Towards the end I experienced a saturation, where further interviews did not appear necessary as the interviews more repeated the findings rather than introducing new ones.

Both difficulties in gaining access to the representatives, and getting them to dedicate enough of their time for the interviews to generate meaningful content were challenges that not only my advisor warned me about specifically when it came to recruiting the Norwegian representatives, but that are typical in the research of political elites (Puwar 1997; Harvey 2010, 196). Getting the informants to dedicate enough time was not a huge issue. While some of them indicated in advance a limit to how long the interview could last, most did not, and I simply prepared thoroughly and focused the interviews. My interviews all lasted between 45 minutes and an hour depending on the flow of the conversation, and I found that to be sufficient to get the answers I was seeking.

As predicted, it was getting the representatives to participate in my project in the first place that constituted a challenge. I contacted many representatives by email and made sure to address them specifically. Minimally by name, but in the case of the smaller parties I also underscored the importance of recruiting someone from their party. Interestingly, some of my informants validated my approach during the interviews, by pointing out that they prioritize responding to requests that seem specific to them. All the emails contained an attachment that explained the purpose of my research and other relevant details in a concise manner. I sent out a lot of emails in several rounds, and many of those I contacted never responded. Some responded stating that they unfortunately could not participate, and some of those who accepted did so weeks or months after I contacted them.

Contacting specifically the ones who represent my electoral district was a more effective way of getting a hold of informants than otherwise. In these emails I underscored that I am both a current resident in Bergen, but also native to the city. Again, some of the informants directly stated that this had a part in why they agreed. I also pursued other avenues of recruitment. One informant I met in a separate setting and was able to recruit them there directly. Another I acquired through a common acquaintance that I was able to ask for help to recruit the informant. To summarize, acquiring informants for my research project proved difficult and resource-demanding like predicted.

This is a problem highlighted in the elite research literature, and I also knew that other research in national representatives conducted at my institute had a somewhat low participation rate. For instance in the Panel of Elected representatives survey from 2020 only 27 of the 169 Norwegian members of parliament responded (Peters et al. 2021, 5). Taking a survey can be done when it fit the schedule of the representatives, and probably requires less time than participating in interviews. The very fact that my informants are representatives presumably puts them in an environment where I am de facto competing with a lot of other actors for their attention. Therefore, I expected recruitment to be an uphill battle, and I was able to start early and vigorously.

The difficulties in recruiting representatives affects the composition of my informants. I do not consider the lack of representatives from all parties to be a significant weakness, even though I would prefer full participation. The informants I do have are from parties new and old, small and big, left, right and centre, and while some representatives had been in parliament a long time, others were only one year into their first period. In other words, there was room for a range of different perspectives in these informants. That is the purpose of variation in party background. It makes the data more applicable to representatives, rather than speaking from the perspective of one party. However, there is another aspect concerning potential homogeneity in my informants that warrants discussion.

While this is not a quantitative study and I do not abide by the rules for statistical generalization, there is still some concern that there is a bias in the sample selection (Diefenbach 2009, 879). The concern is that some perspectives may have been lost. This is due to the proximity of my research design with my research question. As I have already argued, there are few alternative routes to researching this subject, but the fact remains that there may be some inherent bias in my research design, that is perhaps unavoidable, but that definitely needs to be accounted for. The motivation to research representatives is to some extent to explore how they manage themselves in a demanding environment and how they prioritize. Interestingly, my request for them to participate in my project therefore cannot be separated from other requests and possibilities they are presented with.

In accepting my request to have them participate in my research, the representatives have already made a choice that is relevant to what I am researching. This is somewhat self-evident, but several of the informants chose to point this out themselves. As my informant Sveinung Rotevatn from the Liberal Party put it: *"to use an hour on a master students' thesis, it is in a sense a meaningless way to spend time when it comes to reach voters, right? Master theses are rarely read by more than three people".* It is not unreasonable to believe that my informants might capture perspectives of a certain type of representative, rather than representatives as a whole.

I reached out to a significantly larger number of representatives than the informants I ended up with, and those who chose to participate may hold certain attitudes, beliefs, values, or priorities that those who did not. Perhaps more concerningly, there is a chance that those who do not prioritize entertaining master students have other perspectives than those who appear in my research. This of course does not invalidate the information in the data I have gathered, it just means that there might exist more relevant data that systematically is lacking from these kinds of studies. In other words, that theories developed on the basis of this type of research are likely to be incomplete.

3.4.2 Physical vs digital interviews

While the question of whether to hold interviews physically or digitally is not a new one, it is particularly relevant post-pandemic now that digital meetings have become more widespread. As I have already outlined, accessing representatives is a resource-demanding endeavour, and face-to-face interviews meant that I had to find times in the representative schedules that were compatible, and travel to Oslo to carry them out. While it therefore involved higher resource-costs in the form of planning, money, and travelling, the strong emphasis in the literature on the interview-setting as interactive, responsive, and interpretative convinced me to pursue physical interviews. While these are arguments in favour of in-person interviews, it is worth noting that the evidence of the impact of choosing physical or digital interviews is inconclusive (Yeo et al. 2014, 182-183). Nevertheless, by carrying out physical interviews, I was provided the opportunity to observe and judge the informants' responses, which I consider an advantage of the interview method.

However, one interview I held digitally. One informant had to cancel our appointment while I was in Oslo, and so that specific interview had to be held later on Teams. The informant in question Rasmus Hansson belongs to the Green Party, and was their first ever representative in parliament in 2013 (Wernesen 2013). The Green Party is comparatively new in the Norwegian political landscape and does not have the same solidified party organization as a lot of other parties. Therefore, I thought that he could hold a perspective that would enrich the research project. I assessed that it was better to hold the interview digitally than not at all. While using Teams provided me the opportunity to observe facial expressions, I could not observe other contextual clues such as body language. While this is regrettable, my impression is that this did not hinder the interview significantly, and it may have helped that I already had held eight other interviews.

3.4.3 Transcribing the interviews.

Transcribing interviews involve a myriad of decisions and choices. Therefore, I find it important to be conscious and transparent about the choices I have made. Doing so strengthens the validity of the research and speaks to epistemological concerns. While transcribing interviews may sometimes be treated as merely a behind the scenes chore of data management, it can be viewed as an object of study in its own right, and should not be reduced to a technical detail that precedes analysis (Oliver, Serovich, and Mason 2005, 1273; McLellan, Macqueen, and Neidig 2003, 64).

One of the most fundamental choices when transcribing interviews is whether to pursue a more naturalized or denaturalized transcription practice. The two approaches are thought of as representing differing ends of a continuum, and endless variations of elements of both exist in between (Oliver, Serovich, and Mason 2005, 1273-1274). Naturalism finds language to represent the *real* world and the transcripts contain as much detail as possible, verbatim depictions of speech. In denaturalized transcripts details such as involuntary vocalizations and nonverbal are not included, and the denaturalized approach views speech to be something that contains the perceptions and meanings that *construct* our reality. Oliver, Serovich and Mason warn that one must choose a transcription practice that matches ones research objective (2005, 1274).

To this end, I have chosen a transcriptions style that borrows more from denaturalism. The goal of my research is to use the interviews to study perceptions on representation and decision-making, not to scrutinize the participants or interpret the interviews from a linguistic or sociological perspective. In addition, my informants speak different dialects. A perhaps extreme interpretation of naturalized transcription practices could be that the interviews should be transcribed in the original dialects, and not in one of the written Norwegian standards. After all, doing so is a closer representation of reality, of the conversation that took place. It is also worth mentioning that transcribing utilizing one of the written Norwegian standards inevitably means that the conversation of some of the informants will be altered to a larger degree than others, as some dialects are more similar to the different written standards. Despite this, I have chosen to transcribe them by using the written standard Bokmål.

By putting forth this argument I wish to highlight that all transcription involves some sort of translation from reality and dialogue to textual data which will have imbedded in it some interpretation on the transcribers part. If I were to attempt to transcribe the dialects as they are spoken, I would be forced to make a stand on how to write different words that do not as of yet have a written standard, leaving it up to me to invent it. I believe that it is important to recognize that all translation from speech to text involves some degree of that speech being "forcibly interpreted".

In addition, the actual data I am analysing are the interviews themselves, not the transcriptions. The transcriptions are just an aid to perform the analysis. I take the stance that inherent to the interview method is that it is a social interaction between interviewer and informant, and consequently it is that interaction that must be analysed. The transcripts are what Kvale labels a "bastard" of that interaction (1996, 280). As such, the textual data will never encompass fully the material of the interview and all that takes place.

3.5 Interpreting the data.

3.5.1 Qualitative content analysis

While the formal analysis constitutes its own step, analytical thinking permeates the entirety of the research process. Preliminary ideas born from intuition, theory, and previous research leads to beliefs of what questions are useful to ask in the interviews (Spencer et al. 2014, 276-277). Kvale also emphasized this, that to produce meaningful data through interviews it is important to formulate what the goal of the interviews are in advance (Kvale 1996, 276-277).

The method of analysis chosen bears consequence for the execution of the interviews. The question I had to ask myself is how I should conduct my interviews so I could analyse their meaning in a coherent and productive way afterwards.

My research question is quite open and is centred around exploring perceptions of what guides representatives in their decision-making, I designed the execution of the interviews and subsequent analysis from this. With interviews conducted for exploratory purposes it is considered useful and appropriate to pursue the different interesting aspects of the individual interviews and to interpret them in greater depth (Kvale 1996, 278). This can also be seen in connection with the loose structure that I chose for the interviews, which allowed me to follow up interesting threads that the representatives shared and provoke new angles which I may not have thought of. Accordingly, I attempted to keep an open but not empty mind, like researchers should (Lewis and Nicholls 2014, 52).

I took the typical structures for representation, ways purported in the literature to influence representatives as a starting point, and then explored their responses from there. To this end, I asked mapping questions, starting with quite open and general ones about how they spent their time and how they prioritize, and then asked more specific follow up questions to explore their thought process (Yeo et al. 2014, 193). See appendix A for an example of an interview guide. The first interviews uncovered what pathways seemed more useful to pursue than others, and what formulations bore more fruitful results which I took into account when conducting the next interviews. There were several months between the first and last interviews, meaning I to some extent was collecting data and analysing it simultaneously. This also provided me with the opportunity to adjust the interview questions, so they were increasingly conducive to the analysis.

This back and forth and adaption of the interviews is something I carried into the analysis. Analysing the data has been an iterative process. That being the case, I utilized an abductive approach. My research springs out from some trends and assumptions in the literature on representation and information, but I am not trying to test the implications of existing theories or explanatory models. I also find it important to recognise that previous research, such as the information selection typology developed by the Belgian interviews probably have influenced me in my analysis, as it makes up a pattern I could measure my results up against. I did not use this as a stencil in my analysis, but after identifying preliminary themes I choose a similar classification method of my findings. I have considered it important to try to go deeper into the interviews and recognise latent content which can be difficult to do when using a more data-driven approach. Accordingly, I find it appropriate to characterize my method of analysis as abductive (Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman 2017, 30-31).

In the analytical process I utilized typical strategies to the method, such as starting with short summaries and complementing them with my own clearly separated interpretations (Eggebø 2020, 112). I moved from overall themes to more specific codes, and moved and changed the codes when suitable to further develop the classifications. The preliminary coding focused more on the manifest content, while I later moved on to what I perceived as the more latent content, such as displaying an inner sense of duty or appearing self-confident. The question of how to move from large amounts of text to meaningful categorization is a recurring one, and the preliminary stages are sometimes characterized as chaotic (Malterud 2012, 796-797). However, I had heeded the warning to avoid this chaos as much as possible, by coming into the interviews with the intent on adjusting and building theory and paying close attention to the analytical value of the things that came up in the interviews already while they happened. I had taken notes during the interviews which assisted me in later interpretations, and I could compare the impression I got from pure text with the ones I had experienced in the interview situation.

To assist me in the analysis of the interviews, I used NVivo to code from the transcripts. Utilizing digital tools like NVivo aids the process of coding and analysing, it does not replace the analytical work of the researcher. In other words, NVivo is a tool, and I am the craftsman that wields it. This is important to note as a strength in qualitative research lies in its ability to be context sensitive (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011, 82). NVivo helped me keep an overview over a relatively large amount of data, and to work in a structured and flexible manner.

It both allowed me to structure the coding process and execute it in several rounds without it being messy, and also helped keeping the coding process flexible as I could easily chance the coding, code text in several different nodes simultaneously, and create subcategories within the nodes (Dhakal 2022).

3.5.2 The question of internal validity

So far, the internal validity of the study has been problematized. The nature of the subject under research invites this scrutiny, and the interview method invites the question of intersubjectivity as it is a method where the researcher becomes visible in their work. I, the researcher, engage in interviews with the informants, and so I actively participate in the data-generation. Therefore, it is important to consider the impact of my presence when interpreting the interviews. This is essential to qualitative interviews as the internal validity of the data is so influenced by the researcher (Diefenbach 2009, 884). My presence may have impacted the interviews through conversational choices I have made in the interviews, or through prompting the representatives to give responses to appear certain ways towards me.

Validity is in essence a question of the correctness or precision of the research. Internal validity specifically concerns the accuracy of the data and the extent to which the research project addresses the research question in an accurate and unbiased manner (Lewis et al. 2014, 356). How to judge internal validity and the appropriate strategies for assessing it in a given study is method specific (Lewis et al. 2014, 357). The question of how to ascertain internal validity in qualitative interviews and with what certainty is somewhat disputed, as perspectives on it differs with epistemological positions.

This is because qualitative interviews inherently is a method used to explore social reality and relationships. The goal is not to describe actions objectively, but to understand and investigate the perceptions and conceptions of individuals. Accordingly, a positivistic approach to such a subjective and complex social reality is probably not conducive to making an actual research contribution (Diefenbach 2009, 883-884). By engaging in the matter of internal validity through the lens of positivism the validity would be ascertained in the method always leading to the same result. This is both difficult in real world investigations and strict requirements of intersubjective reliability for interview analysis can lead to a tyranny of the lowest possible common dominator. That is that only findings that are so basic that they are obvious to everyone will be considered valid. That would deprive us of more sophisticated and complex interpretations that can contribute to the field of research (Diefenbach 2009, 878; Kvale 1996, 279).

At the other extreme adapting completely relativistic and postmodern approaches to the question of validity can quickly lead to a rejection of validity itself, and subsequently undermine the value of the contribution to theory and to the wider field of research (Kvale 1995, 21). Validity and generalization are after all closely connected, and the latter becomes difficult if the interview interaction is viewed as too unique to contribute to a more general narrative (Yeo et al. 2014, 180). Instead, I advocate a constructionistic approach for my research design.

This is an approach that focus on understanding lived experiences from the point of views of those who hold it. In consequence strengthening the validity of the research involves examining if the interpretations of the data matches the understanding of the informants (Creswell 2013, 248; Kvale 1995, 27). I have done this both by approving the quotes that I use with the informants afterwards, who therefore have confirmed my understanding, but also in the interviews themselves through checking actively that I understood the meanings of the informants by asking follow-up questions and using summarizing statements. This has constituted a strength of using interviews, the possibility of actively checking interpretations and understandings at multiple moments in time and validating the data through interaction with those whose perspectives I am exploring.

Furthermore, recognising potential biases, both in myself and in the informants during the process of analysis also strengthens the findings (Kvale 1995, 27). Both in this chapter, and in the following where I present the analysis, I have attempted to keep a keen eye on potential distortion of the interpretation. I cannot actually determine whether it takes place, but I can be transparent of where it is likely to occur, that is, where there is incentive for the representatives to be completely authentic or forthcoming. Constructionism also emphasises that I must understand the meaning of the social interactions that make up my research within the context of the material conditions my informants and I live within (Ormston et al. 2014, 11-13). This I take to be an argument for my single-case study of Norway, which allows me to examine the interviews with contextual understanding.

Lastly, the fact that my analysis is built on interviews from named informants make them verifiable. This I believe to be a notable strength. However, it is worth noting that what is made visible through the analysis is just the tip of the iceberg. The quotes I have incorporated in the analysis are chosen because they are concise or particularly illustrative. Yet the background of the interpretations I advocate is much more extensive than what is gleaned through the analysis chapter. This is because the analysis reflects an overall impression gained through extensive engagement of the nine interviews. Some of the points I make include more empirical examples through quotes than others. This is simply because human beings engaging in conversations do not always phrase themselves elegantly, concisely, or coherently. Therefore, I have chosen to include examples where it is conducive to the illustration of the analysis, on the premise that they convey wider trends in the material unless otherwise stated. For more information on access to the data see appendix B.

4. Analysis

4.0 Chapter introduction

Interviews proved a useful method to shed light on the research question. Many times, the informants contextualized their reasoning in specifics of recent events or structural traits of Norwegian politics. The representatives referenced topical issues to exemplify how they dealt with different things, such as covid, the war in Ukraine, and the powercrisis. They also referenced Norwegian geography several times, and consequently my contextual understanding of these things helped ease the interpretation. As such, conducting the interviews as a single-case study focused on Norway helped interpret their responses and shed light on the underlying meanings.

In this chapter I first corroborate some of the premises for my approach through the interviews, mainly that the representatives experience themselves as operating within complex and information-rich environments and that they hold some beliefs and values that lead them to pursue certain courses of actions. Then I present procedure for information retrieval as described by the informants, Throughout I interpret and contextualize the findings, as well as questioning their validity when appropriate. This is the case especially when discussing values. Afterwards I move on to the more latent content, the strategies, heuristics, and attitudes I interpret the representatives to have displayed in the discussions of their procedures. Accordingly, I present the findings of my analysis partially in the context of specific mediators of the representation relationship, and partially in a form that mimics the typology of information selection.

4.1. Examining the premises for the thesis.

Before moving on to examining how the representatives perceive information-retrieval, decision-making, and how they connect it to their roles as representatives, it is fundamental to discuss how assumptions in the theoretical framework harmonize with the content of the interviews. To this end there are some underlying premises that spring out from the theoretical account I have presented. The relevant assumptions are that the representatives operate within an information-rich environment and that they experience this as intrinsically rich with choices for directing their attention and subsequently their actions derive form prioritization.

Furthermore, they hold strong core-beliefs that influence their actions, and they drive the representation relationship through actions that they take. This assumption is addressed throughout the chapter by looking at the justifications the representatives make, and through their descriptions of themselves as active rather than purely reactive actors. The assumptions about how representatives perceive their environment are crucial for considering bounded rationality an appropriate framework, and the latter spring from the Disch/Pitkin account of representation. By acknowledging these and tackling them, it is possible to gauge the value of the interviews more accurately in contributing to the research field.

The first underlying premises I will adress is that the representatives operate within an information rich environment, and this necessitates that they must make choices and find strategies to direct their attention. Part of what makes the bounded rationality approach appropriate is the argument that the representatives operate within a complex environment where they cannot possibly consume and process all relevant information. Accordingly, an integral part of the role as representative is that you must be selective. This was largely confirmed by the informants, who underscored that they constantly had to make choices and prioritize. Accordingly, they perceived it as an information-rich environment. The representatives described an environment where they constantly are bombarded with information and requests. Ove Trellevik from the Conservative Party characterized it as *"a colossal amount of inquiries"*.

The representatives highlighted that the large number of incoming inquiries meant that not everyone or everything would get a response. Following up everything was consistently portrayed as unachievable. The representatives I interviewed described constant inquiries by email and social media. Accordingly, not everyone would get an answer or be followed up further. Conservative Party politician Svein Harberg described a constant information influx. *"In my position here, there are probably some people who don't get a response. But there are emails that obviously, perhaps don't expect to get a response, but they just had to say it. Right, you, you get a lot of* ***information****, you get input on a matter. Uh, true. And they ask me to read it, like "I hope you read through this." So, I read through it, and then I can't respond to it. I receive, it fluctuates a bit, but around 100 to 200 emails every day."* Overall, this was the reality described by the representatives. From what I garnered they perceived themselves as being constantly exposed to information and inquiries that demanded they make choices and prioritize their attention. However, how they responded to this environment differed, at least in terms of their emotional response and how they dealt with the inability to meet all requests.

While the interview material presents a trend of representatives being bombarded or overwhelmed with information, some representatives described guilt and frustration in the face of the endless amount of work to do.

One representative, Sofie Marhaug from the Red Party, shared how difficult it was to lead the election committee in her party while sitting as a representative in parliament. *"And I don't have time for it, I have too little time to do the job properly. And that's my biggest... sin. I have had an incredible amount of guilt for work like that. I don't get anything done".* This sentiment was echoed by Maren Grøthe from the Centre Party *"And I often feel like "Now I should have done this, now I should have done this, now I should have done this" in terms of time. I strongly feel the time pressure, always feeling like I should have done more. It never feels like it's enough."* These statements indicate representatives who experience their environment as demanding, even to the point of it provoking feelings of inadequacy or guilt in the face of all that must be down prioritized. Accordingly, finding some way to cope with alle the possible choices of what to spend their time on seemed like an integral part of the role for the representatives. Consistently, the interviews provide evidence that supports the basic assumption of bounded rationality, that information exists in abundance and so does the choices in where to direct their attention. Consequently, the representatives must be selective and make delimitations.

Still, while the representatives acknowledged that being selective is necessary, not everyone displayed frustrations or struggles with it. Some displayed a more carefree attitude. In addition to more specific selection strategies, the interviews revealed three things that had helped the representatives. The first was advice from more experienced colleagues which they received either previously in their political career or after being elected for parliament. Representatives were warned about how the transition to their role as a nationally elected representative would impact them. For example, Maren Grøthe (Centre Party) shared *"I was warned when I entered this position that there will eventually be a mental breakdown".* Mastering information flow and decision-making seems to be integral to the representatives, to the degree that they are advised by others that they must master it to function as representatives.

Secondly, representatives drew upon their experience to help them cope with the hectic environment. At some point there was a learning curve for them where they picked up how to filter information and to be selective. Some highlighted this as something they experienced after being elected to parliament, while others drew on experience as local representatives.

For instance, Helge Njåstad from the Progress Party pointed to his previous political experience as helpful. *"But now, I come from a background in local politics, having served as a full-time mayor for ten years. So, I've likely made those beginner's mistakes there, not prioritizing properly and getting overwhelmed at the start."*

Lastly, simply displaying a more relaxed attitude seemed to be how some representatives coped with a hectic information environment. Operating with some guiding principles for how to choose what they devote their attention to; they lived comfortably letting the rest go. Generally, the interviews provided a narrative that deprioritizing some things are inevitable, and that is simply something to live with if they were to function as representatives. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) underscored that if there something he considered important it would get done eventually. *"Early in my political career, I had an experienced municipal manager who, during a hectic period when I was busy, said something that has stuck with me ever since. He said that time is something you only get more of. So, time comes, it does not leave. But if you have time, you will only get more of it. And then you have time. And then, you don't need to stress."* As demonstrated, taking it easy and keeping their priorities in mind is one way representatives can cope with the demands of their environment. This does invite the question of exactly what those priorities are.

Simply put, the fact that the representatives are bombarded with so many requests, inquiries, and information all the time means that they must make choices in where to direct their attention. Either they get crushed under the weight of it, or they develop strategies that help them cope. The interviews showed mastering the flow of information and developing some strategies for prioritizing as an integral part of the role for the representatives. Erling Sande from the Centre Party stressed the importance of taking an active role in this prioritization. *"You can spend the entire parliamentary term just dealing with the issues that come up because they constantly arise. Mhm. But then you might find yourself at the end without having done what you actually wished you could do. It's also a difficult balance, deciding which issues to spend your time on."* In other words, according to his perspective the representatives have to take an active role and not just be passive in their information selection and decision-making.

Several representatives highlighted that there is a theoretical possibility of doing the bare minimum in their roles, but none seemed to believe that this was something that happened in practice. As Erling Sande (Centre Party) said: *"Certainly, in theory, you can be a Member of Parliament and attend the sessions from Tuesday to Thursday, vote, and fulfil your* *obligations in those meetings, and that's it."* Later he added "*The point is to highlight that the tasks I must undertake in my role are quite manageable, but there is a vast array of tasks that I should and can take on. There is considerable freedom in how I shape my role as a Member of Parliament, and if I want to have political influence, I must put in significant effort.”*.

4.2 Procedures for information retrieval

4.2.1 The importance of the electoral district.

As I argued in the theoretical account, a myriad of structures exist to bring forth information to representatives, and potentially reach their attention. Through the interviews I have explored how the representatives themselves reflect on what draws their attention, and what they consider important sources of information. By asking broad, mapping questions, I was able to get them to share many reflections on how they retrieve and evaluate information. As such, the interviews have been conducive to illuminate the research question. Embedded in the specific answers provided by the representatives on their handling of information, they also revealed general strategies they utilized, which I will return to. Before moving on to the more latent content I have interpreted, I will present the more straightforward exploration of how representatives prioritise.

First, I will present how representatives I interviewed claimed to handle information relevant to their role. Information could be something that reached the representative passively or something they sought out actively. In addition, information could be policy specific, or pertaining to citizen opinions. Inherently, it is difficult to separate impressions into separate areas, and many of the procedures for information retrieval are interconnected. Nevertheless, I have made an attempt to divide them into different sections for structure and simplicity’s sake. This is native to the method of content analysis. To construct categories, simplification is needed. While the goal is rich description, commonalities are brought about through focusing on the material. Rasmus Hansson from the Green Party described how different arenas for information retrieval adds to his overall understanding “*But the most comprehensive picture comes from a combination of traditional media, which is the clearly most important and implicitly social media. And additionally, meetings with business representatives and professional groups which then again are a combination of people who represent some interest, but who ultimately are people.”*

The representatives themselves put emphasis on the fact they actively seek out information a lot of the time. The interviews revealed that the representatives found it important to not only be exposed to a lot of information, but to actively take measures to seek out different kinds of information. This active information seeking included everything from policy relevant information to information about popular opinion or matters important to the voters. In the interview with Mani Hussaini from the Labour Party, he asserted: *“We are constantly on the hunt for new information, new knowledge, new arguments. This can help make our own beliefs appear, and be more fact-based, and allows us to present strong arguments as well. Those two considerations don't always get along, but if you have both it's very good”*. Interestingly, he points out that not all information they seek out is done so with the primary purpose of increasing their knowledge, but also to help them argue their case. This may seem self-explanatory, but I take it as a good sign for the overall authenticity of the interview-material that the representative was transparent about it. Likewise, Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) told me *“And sometimes the minister makes absolutely horrible decisions, but that very rarely happens because they haven't received enough information or haven't been warned in advance [...] No, then it's politics. [...] we disagree with the professional advice. And that's how it should be in a democracy. It's the politicians who decide. But they need to know what they're doing before they do it.”* He indicated that information plays the role of letting the representatives make a well-informed decision, not necessarily letting the information dictate the decision. Other considerations could take precedence, and as bounded rationality posits, sometimes the decisions made are not the optimal ones according to the information available.

In this section I present different types of information retrieval emphasized by the representatives in the interviews. The first type of information retrieval is connected to the electoral districts, which I will present before moving on to informal contact, organized interests, committee work and media consumption. As I highlighted in the theory chapter the electoral district is often considered an important structure that regulates the representatives in their roles and ties them to their constituents. Through the interviews the representatives appeared to be mindful of their relationship to their electoral district. However, how much importance they put on it as an information source and how detrimental to their role they considered it seemed to vary.

They did, however, seem in agreement that being a representative for their electoral district was a part of their role, and something that impacted how they operated as representatives.

The connection to the electoral district was laid out like it was connected to their roles as representatives. One informant, Ove Trellevik (Conservative Party) put it like this: *"I am elected from an electoral district. So, in the Parliament chamber, we sit in rows according to our electoral districts. So, every morning, we are actually reminded of a role as a representative elected by our electoral district."* The symbolic importance of being seated by electoral district was echoed by Erling Sande (Centre Party), who went further to emphasize the inner sense of duty this bestowed in him. *"We represent an area and the people in that area, the businesses within that area. While we represent the entire country, because we are a national assembly, this division creates an awareness that, yes, I represent everyone, and then I have a responsibility to address the interests of the people in Sogn og Fjordane, which is my electoral district. So, if I were to point out, I believe that it is an essential part of the job, the role of being an advocate for the people in my electoral district."* In other words, being elected from a geographic district and representing the people from that place seemed to provide guidance to representatives I have interviewed. A sense of duty bestowed upon them from this further induce them to keep this responsibility in mind through their actions as representatives.

Some representatives shared that they kept tab on their electoral districts to see if any relevant information or matters came up. Maren Grøthe (Centre Party) was one of these representatives and put forth her electoral district both as an information source, and as something she tied to an intrinsic duty as representative. Note how she mentions her partisanship, the Centre Party is typically seen as a party especially for the districts. *"And for my part, especially within my party, we pay attention to our own county. I keep track of all the local newspapers in Sør-Trøndelag, for example. So, if there's something that engages people in Malvik or in Indre Fosen municipality, I often become aware of it."* This indicates that she used her electoral district consciously to retrieve information relevant to her role as she saw it. In the interview she put forth her electoral district as an area within which she focused her attention, and which subsequently helped structure her attention. The representatives' electoral districts can both be a conscious arena for information collection, and connected to inner values that induce the representatives to pursue certain decisions.

This sense of obligation was prominent in several of the interviews. For instance, Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) also felt a commitment to the voters from his electoral district: *"I am elected by them, so I feel obligated. By law, almost, to work for the interests of my voters. And I am also an Akershus patriot, so that's just fine."* Mani clearly communicated that working for the interests of those who had voted for him, and his electoral district was a priority to him, and emphasized that those were his people. Throughout his interview he stressed the value of being in contact with people from his neighbourhood.

Not only an inner sense of duty, but also the practical concern of re-election can incentivise the representatives to keep close contact to their electoral district. After all, they hold some power over the election of the representative. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) shared a story about how he recently had had to choose between a committee obligation and a meeting with the fishermen of Hordaland, where he ended up prioritizing the latter. *"That's because there are going to be major issues and debates in the next six months, and it's crucial to maintain contact with them to be their ombudsman."* In his statement the two considerations are interconnected. He claims importance in being their advocate while at the same time apparently contextualizing that importance in that there is an election coming up. It is however important to note that it will not be a national one, so on a personal level this will not affect him. However, on behalf of his party those types of strategic considerations could be beneficial.

In general, there were some indications that the representatives seemed to believe they would be electorally punished if they underperformed. Several underscored that being a representative in parliament allows them a lot of freedom, and that while they theoretically could slack off it would mean consequences the next election. This is just as Miller and Stokes theory on constituency control claims, that the *belief* that the representatives will face electoral consequences makes them adjust their behaviour (Miller and Stokes 1963, 53-54). This indicates that the representatives perceive themselves as visible to electorate. Regardless of whether it is actually the case that voters pay sufficient attention to the representatives to oust them, the *belief* that they did seem to be latently present in the representatives and guiding their actions.

It varied between the representatives how much they emphasised their electoral district in the interviews. Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) did not portray the electoral district as so important in his decision-making as some of the other representatives. *"And there's nothing that suggests that just because you're from Voss, you should have a completely different view on drug reform compared to someone from Kristiansand. Right. So you are elected based on geography and have an affiliation there, representing the voters there. But there aren't too many issues in the Parliament that are geographical battles. Some are, but not too many."* He still stressed the importance of the fact that those are the voters he represented, but his specific electoral district seemed less like a guiding principle in his day-to-day life than some of the others. Consequently, it can be remarked that the representatives generally considered their constituency as important to their role-conception, but whether it held a larger significance in guiding their information seeking and decision-making differed.

Several representatives asserted that the importance of the electoral districts were asymmetric according to which one the representatives are from. Putting more emphasis one ones' own electoral district seemed to be perceived as more legitimate for some places than others. Ove Trellevik (Conservative Party) put it like this: *"But from Northern Norway, it's obvious that you are allowed to speak up because of your region, right? There's outmigration and a poor basis for livelihood and business, and everything. So, it's legitimate to do so for Northern Norway, rather than Western Norway."* Thus, he connected the importance and legitimacy of acting as an advocate of one's electoral district to its relative power and distance to the capital. Other representatives repeated this sentiment.

Likewise, Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) from Oslo explained that the fact he was a representative from the capital induced him to be less focused on the geographical aspect of representation, especially since all of his parties' representatives were from that electoral district. Both individual differences, and circumstances such as where the representatives are elected from and who else represents their party were highlighted in the conversation. *"It varies greatly from person to person. And I am probably among those who are least concerned about the electoral district. There are two reasons for that. Firstly, representatives from Oslo tend to be among the least locally oriented, to the detriment of poor Oslo. But that's just classic, right, people from Nordland and Sogn og Fjordane and such are much more focused on local and district issues in their politics compared to Oslo representatives, who tend to see themselves more as party representatives and parliamentarians in general. That's one reason. The other reason is that I am the second representative from Oslo. Lan is number one. Lan has been an Oslo politician and is dating an Oslo politician, so she is much closer to the Oslo party than I am."*

4.2.2 Political parties as a guiding influence

An important guiding feature that the representatives put forth that structures their actions as representatives are their belonging to their political parties. The interviews showed political parties as both an institution that sets some guidelines for the actions and decision of the representatives, and that provides them with an arena for producing new decisions. For instance, within the parties they conduct discussions to produce stances and decisions, and deal with new issues that arise. Erling Sande (Centre Party) laid out how these internal discussions are important to guiding the representatives in their positions. *"In that case, we have to collectively, as a party, if we haven't stated anything about it, discuss and work towards reaching a position on the matter."* The representatives constitute more than individuals with individual priorities but are also part of a collective that they must adhere to. Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) kept the representative as an individual in focus while still stressing that the party plays and important role to them. *"The allocation of time will vary from representative to representative because they make different assessments of what is worth their time. It has to do with their position within the party, what the party represents, and their personal beliefs about what constitutes a good use of time."* The party is portrayed not as the sole decider, but a considerable influence on decision-making.

Ove Trelleviks (Conservative Party) statement illustrated how the priorities of the representatives and their subsequent allocation of their attention can be coloured by their partisanship *"What does this mean for the Conservative Party? It is like they say, think every day will there be any voters from this? In the service of the party, do you gain voters by doing what you are doing now?"* This was a sentiment echoed by other representatives as well, that a way to structure their thoughts and their priorities was to frame things in the perspective of what it contributed to their party. This was a simple rule that helped them filter information and choose what they considered their appropriate actions. What they and their part could gain or not from doing something was put forth as a helpful tool for deciding what and who to give their attention to.

The political parties also provided the representatives with some guidelines, and the party manifestos were references as tools the representatives used to decide their course of action. Maren Grøthe (Centre Party) put it succinctly. *"We are largely governed by the party manifesto and the government platform that we have negotiated."* In summary, the parties functioned as important not only by laying some ground rules for what courses of actions the representatives should pursue, but also as a platform for discussions conducive to decision-making and constituting an interest the representatives attempt to protect through their actions.

Furthermore, I was told of differences between the parties in how streamlined the representatives were expected to act, and some claimed more autonomy and room for individual movement than others. This indicated party culture as something that also could affect the leeway for the representatives and their decision-making. However, this was partially speculation on the informants' part, and I was asked not to quote them on the matter. However, I obtained consent to include this observation.

4.2.3 Informal arenas for information retrieval

In the interviews the representatives emphasized how important being in contact with ordinary citizens were to them. Informal contact and interaction with people outside of formal structures of representation seemed to matter to them. Some displayed a sense of duty to show themselves as approachable and be a good representative in this way. For instance, Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) said *"I have a goal of showing that it is very easy to get in touch with a politician and that it is also easy to receive a response. No magic tricks needed. You don't have to hire Firsthouse."* The interviews were conducted in the aftermath of commuter housing scandals in Norway, which may have driven representatives to stress their connection to "ordinary citizens" more. Several newspapers had reported lower trust in politicians, bringing the sunken trust into the public eye (Bredeveien 2022; Nymoen 2022; Lysberg 2021). The need to prove that they are trustworthy and reachable is something that was referenced in several interviews. Yet it is worth noting that this downturn in trust in politicians took place in a context of generally high levels of trust and political trust (Oppøyen 2022).

Furthermore, representatives claimed that informal citizen interaction brought them useful information and helped shape their impression of things were going. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) could tell stories of not only getting approached at the grocery store by people complaining, but witnessing a woman writing down the cost of individual products made impressions on him about the economic situation for those outside the "privileged bubble" the representatives can find themselves in. Accordingly, he highlighted how everyday interactions could bring about issues to his attention that he might not catch otherwise. *"So, there is value in getting out and about. When you meet people, they may start thinking, "Maybe I have an issue that he would never have considered, but now I should send an email to the Parliament about it," or "I need to raise this concern." A lot can happen in the interaction between people*." The narrative provided by the informants were that not only could those interaction feed representatives' information though brief impressions, but also open up future communication because people appeared more at ease contacting representatives they had already interacted with. Consistently, the representatives seemed to believe that interactions with people could be a learning experience for them or raise issues that they otherwise might not reflect on. Some connected this to the danger of being caught in their own political bubble in the capital, where interacting with people throughout the country in other settings could help combat this. Contact with citizens was presented partially as something that happened naturally when the representatives lived their everyday life, and partially something they consciously sought out to gather information. Svein Harberg emphasized the latter *"But I am definitely the type of parliamentarian who is constantly around and talking to people. I visit businesses and organizations frequently. I am very interested in hearing what people think, not just those who are in my circle or who share the same views as the Conservative Party."* This echoes the sentiment by Erling Sande (Centre Party) presented earlier, that representatives should be active and not just reactive to fulfil their individual goals and add to their representative function.

The interviews gave the impression that seemingly random interactions could impact the representatives and induce further action on their part. Several representatives told stories of how they had met someone in their hometown or other such circumstances, and then became a contact person for that citizen on an issue later on. From the perspective of the representatives, it seemed like many of the people they met had a substantially lower threshold for contacting them afterwards. Ove Trellevik (Conservative Party) provided a succinct example of this. *"Yes, I had a person, I received an email from a teacher who had met me. And which... as a result, I sent a written question to the Minister of Education yesterday."*

Interestingly, the representatives mainly focused on how they themselves functioned as access points and did not themselves bring up that those access points may be distributed unevenly. This illustrates the complexity of interview interactions; they consist of the interplay between what is said and what is not said. The latter can be just as relevant, but obviously more challenging to interpret, at least with any certainty (Kvale 1996, 283). It is noteworthy to me that the representatives did not reflect on *who* the citizens they interact with are and what this means for their impressions of peoples attitudes unprompted. However, it is difficult to attribute any specific meanings or motivations to this silence. It could indicate a lack of reflexion on their part, or simply that did not consider it relevant to the interview. When I specifically invited them to reflect on the consequence that more or less random contact might not portray a fair picture of the viewpoints of the population, they acknowledged this, but it did not seem to trouble them. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) pointed out *"It's probably not a representative cross-section of the population, I can see that. It's not the entire population I* *interact with [...] No, it's mostly the resourceful ones who reach out, in many cases. The very angry and the resourceful ones. So, there are many who never reach out at all."* This was echoed by other informants as well, that they perceived those who reached out as more engaged and emotionally driven. Further reflections on exactly how this could skewer their perceptions did not take place in the interviews.

Contact with individual citizens could also take the form of digital communications with people they had not prior met. The representatives still shared that they found it important to respond in many cases and to show that they were reachable. As such, this can be connected to a larger sense of responsibility as a representative. This encompassed the need to set a good example for people. The informants greatly stressed that they had duties deriving from the fact that they were representatives. Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) told me *"I have used the phrase "servant of the people." That's how I see myself. I'm here to ensure that my constituents, those who vote for the Labour Party, have both easy access to power[...] but also that there should be a short distance between them, actually everyone, and those in power, that I should contribute to that."* This quote displays a belief in the value of being accessible to the people.

Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) also shared that this inner sense of duty was a driving factor for him *"Which is that I believe that, okay, all the priorities of the Green Party, which constitute maybe 80 or 90% of what I do, while I believe in elected representatives in a democracy. Where being involved and supporting and contributing to and maintaining that democracy and the knowledge about it. That... societal knowledge that I represent, I prioritize that. I believe it is a task that all Members of Parliament, regardless of party affiliation, should feel - That's why I prioritize responding to people like you."* Accordingly, the way representatives approached citizen interaction appeared coloured by their own values and respect for the position they held. However, it is worth mentioning that these utterances could have been influenced by a wish to appear a certain way. Representatives who hold great respect for their position and the mission they have on behalf of the country is certainly sympathetic. Acknowledging this does not counteract the content of the representatives' statements, it just means that it is important to keep in mind that representatives may have a vested interest in how they are perceived when assessing authenticity. Additionally, as I pointed out in the last chapter, those who accepted the invitation to be interviewed may skew the picture of this sense of duty, as it is connected to the likelihood of saying yes.

4.2.4 Organized interests as intermediaries

The interviewees provided rich accounts on their relationships to organized interests such as interest organizations. According to what emerged in the interviews, dealing with organized interests was a regular occurrence that provoked active deliberation. The informants claimed organized interests as something that served a functioning as providing the representatives with different perspectives. Accordingly, they highlighted organized interests as a means for issues to become visible and politized, but also something that garnered their attention. The representatives showed signs of facing the information from different interests with self-confidence, bypassing deliberation if the relevant group was one similar to their party, and in few cases displaying some uncertainty. While they mostly claimed that it was obvious that interest groups and organizations who came lobbying would be partial, some were more open to meeting those with competing perspectives than others.

From the perspective of the representatives, organized interests made up an important mediator in the relationship between the representatives and those represented. From what the informants presented organized interests appeared as an integral architectonical element of the representation relationship, an arena for competing interests and perspectives to fight for the attention of the representatives. As such, they treated organized interests as representing larger sectors. Exactly how critical they were to the perspectives presented, and how open they were to meet different interests seemed to depend on their party affiliation. Typically, representatives would say they were more sceptical towards organization with political agendas further from their own, while being quite open to the information deriving from the ones close to themselves.

For example, Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) said *"We in the Green Party are particularly concerned about environmental organizations and civil society. This includes environmental organizations, aid organizations, and other non-profit organizations. We are kind of an idealistic party, who recruit heavily from these types of organizations. Therefore, we are especially focused on listening to what they have to say. We consult with organizations such as the Nature Conservation Association, Nature and Youth, and Ethical Trade, among others, to gather their input on various issues. We strive to maintain strong ongoing communication with them, ensuring that they feel confident that we understand and represent their perspectives."* His statement indicates strong ties to specific organizations and perspectives, which share some values or perspectives with the party. While this certainly has its own reasons, strategic, historical, ideological, it arguably also supports the claim that similarity is a guiding principle for representatives. Differing judgement on organized interests based on similarity to one's own organization can be seen as a strategy for bypassing critical evaluation. This lightens the load of information processing and allows representatives to use information to reach decisions quicker. Consequently, this may be seen as a heuristic that help representatives navigate their environment.

Some put forth that they were on the lookout for information that would aid them politically. As such, the interests they came in contact with played a useful role in helping to further the representative's agenda. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) emphasized *"Providing examples is indeed useful. While we are aware that electricity costs are a problem for businesses, having a specific company share their experience and serve as an example always helps. It adds value, even if we already agree on the issue before we meet."* Consequently, contact with organized interests provided a cost-efficient manner of increasing information that was considered helpful to the representatives. Again, similarity was perceived as an aid to the representative. One could believe that meeting with interests who echoed already formulated political standpoints could be considered redundant, but the representatives clearly considered it constructive to nourish the relationship with certain sectors. This allegedly provided them with useful, relevant information that they could utilize in their roles as representatives. The partiality in how representatives evaluate the information from different actors also clearly demonstrates how information intake is not neutral, but contingent on the representatives already existing beliefs.

The representatives did not necessarily dismiss the information from those with an agenda further away from their own. However, they seemed to provoke more deliberation, and thus may potentially demand more from the representatives cognitively. In a fast-paced environment one can speculate that representatives are incentivised to seek out organizations that fit with their existing worldview, not evaluate all relevant information equally to optimize the outcome. This also highlights the importance of trust in the day-to-day life of representatives. To navigate large amounts of information, some faith is put in specific actors or individuals to bring forward what matters to their attention. Sofie Marhaug (Red Party) shared how she still attempted to be open to those with differing interests to her own and her party. *"Those who engage in the most extensive lobbying efforts towards me, I believe, are Norwegian Oil and Gas, now Offshore Norway, as they systematically engage with the entire committee I sit on. And it is legitimate because we handle the Oil and Energy Budget, so it is completely legitimate. But... Yes, I think that is the highest pressure I face. However, it is also* *enlightening. I must, of course, maintain a critical perspective, but I must also remember that they possess a great deal of knowledge about oil and gas. I cannot simply ignore them completely."*

Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) displayed great confidence in his ability to evaluate the information from organized interests critically *"And I understand very well that when someone comes to a meeting with me, they have their own self-interest."* Overall, the representatives claimed to be aware of the interests different actors meeting them held, and considered themselves capable of discerning that they were in play. In the dialogue on their interactions with interest groups representatives often displayed an attitude of self-confidence that helped them filtrate the information proved them. However, in some cases they demonstrated that they operated with greater uncertainty. Specifically, especially resourceful interests were thought to hold stronger influence on the government and parliament. Facing actors with greater power and resources the representatives became more unsure, attributing this to the ability to devise intricate plans and lobbying strategies. As Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) put it "*It is often the case that the larger and wealthier they are, the more difficult it becomes to discern exactly which facts are strategically positioned and which are not."* Apparently, the representatives are forced to accept some degree of uncertainty in the process of conducting their decision-making.

To a lesser degree, the interviews also included some reflections on the limitations of organized interests in representing broader sectors towards the representatives. For instance, Svein Harberg (Conservative Party) reflected about the credibility of the organizations to represent the interests of their members *"They have organized themselves in an organization, and there are spokespersons who speak on their behalf. It can be challenging at times because, and this might sound disrespectful, if the leadership of that organization is based in Oslo and has Oslo's interests in mind when discussing matters, it may not always align with the perspectives of Setesdalen or Stord."* Hence key actors as spokespersons for larger segments of the population was problematized some, but this was not the dominant perspective amongst the interviewees. Mostly, they reflected on convenience, their own ability to judge information communicated by vested interests, and that some of those interests required more deliberation.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the representatives' interactions with organized interests were not only something that they were approached with passively. The representatives also told that they actively sought them out to hear their perspective, and to use them to gain deeper understanding on issues. Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) told me *"For example, things that I don't fully grasp, there are many complex issues here. So, sometimes we ask experts in the field to come and provide us with briefings [...] We do that as well, we invite Telenor and we invite Statkraft, and we invite the major, reputable actors when we need more knowledge on a matter. But ultimately, we're the ones who have to make up our own opinions."* Erling Sande (Centre Party) could also tell me how he had a tactic of contacting organized interests because the information that emerged from that method was sometimes different, or more comprehensive than if they themselves dictated the agenda of the conversation.

4.2.5 Specialization through committee work

As hinted at in the previous section, who contacts the representatives is closely tied to which committee they belong to. This forces them to specialize in a particular sector of issues. The representatives described the committees they belong to as essential in directing their attention, which echoes the bounded rationality sentiment that output is a product of an interaction between individuals and their task-environment. The output in this case is where the representatives direct their attention, and the resulting decisions from this.

One representative, Maren Grøthe (Centre Party) shared that her place in the education committee heavily influenced what she paid attention to. According to her, she simply could not read up on everything, and that meant she prioritized what was relevant for her committee. *"What maybe surprised me a bit is how focused you become on the work you do in your own committee. Because everyone you meet to a large extent, or all the issues that I delve deeply into, they fall under my own committee."* Hence, the representatives experienced themselves as becoming highly specialized in the area of their committee, and decreasingly being the generalists they perhaps experienced themselves to be in the campaign leading up to the election. Their placements in their committees induces them to focus their attention on matters relevant to that work. Embedded in this is that they probably are more likely to filter out information not relevant to that work, and prioritize information relevant to their sector. Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) repeated this sentiment and provided an example *"So, one becomes, one becomes—and it's much easier because if you ask me about offshore wind, I can answer that. But if you ask me, "What has the government done regarding the crisis in primary healthcare or not?" then I can only provide a superficial response."*

Their attention being specialized on what was relevant to their committee can be attributed not singlehandedly to their environment, but also to internal values which made them focus on this. While, as some representatives underlined, there are few mandatory tasks for the representatives and they hypothetically could to a shoddy job in their work, they displayed attitudes of prioritizing their committee work. This appeared to be both because they were induced to do so by their environment, but also as a result of intrinsic senses of duty to represent their party through that work. Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) illustrated both those observations concisely *«I prioritize my time in a way that I first focus on the tasks I need to do as a member of parliament. That means carrying out the committee work, specifically in the Committee on Industry. There, a stream of proposals and motions come in, and it is my responsibility to ensure that the policies of the Green Party are represented."*

4.2.6 Media consumption in the name of representation

Another important information source according to the representatives was, unsurprisingly, the media. While they were even more eager to talk about how the media was an important medium for them to reach out to and be visible to voters, they consistently also highlighted that reading newspapers and consuming other sorts of media was an integral part of their information retrieval. The representatives displayed solid beliefs in media bringing matters to their attention. Using media to pick up on current topics and gathering information relevant to their work is something they consistently highlighted that they did though the interviews. Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) put it succinctly: *"And, of course, I follow the media closely and try to stay informed in a somewhat strategic manner. I keep an eye on the media to capture the important picture."*

In the interviews, the representatives seemed mindful of how they used media, and their purposes with it. While the representatives generally emphasized that they consumed media regularly and put importance on it, the interviews highlighted three more specific purposes in how they approached media as an information source. Firstly, representatives used media to gain an overall picture of what was happening. They shared that they skimmed the news and headlines to form an idea of what was current issues, and what they potentially should follow up. In general, the representatives claimed not to pay too much attention to details and used media as a way to form an overall impression and filter out specific issues they wanted to look more in to. Secondly, some then followed up these specific selected issues more closely, but generally emphasized that this too was to analyse and understand the totality of something rather than to memorize details.

Lastly, media was claimed to be used strategically to pick up on issues that were important to voters. Some informants underscored how they considered media an important tool which allowed ordinary people to bring issues to their attention. They indicated that they used media as a way to keep tabs on the opinions of voters. For instance, Maren Grøthe (Centre Party) suggested that she held great faith in media as providing a link between citizens and voters *"One should not underestimate the value of ordinary people putting issues on the agenda, as ultimately it leads to those issues being brought up by politicians. That's what I experience. So, it becomes a combination where it eventually makes it onto the media agenda, which ensures that it receives enough attention and comes forward."*

The representatives also spoke about the importance of media outside of traditional newspapers and slow news. Living in the digital age means that information through media is constantly available, and that appeared to affect how the representatives retrieved information. One representative noted that digitalization meant an increase in the bombardment of information through media.

According to this perspective, development in communication methods and transmission of information may have accentuated traits of an already information-rich environment. Svein Harberg (Conservative Party) shared how his relationship to media as a news source had changed since he was younger *"Before, it was newspapers in the morning and the evening news, which reveals how old I am. True. It was convenient to deal with because you could pick up the newspaper again several times throughout the day and read a piece, finish what you didn't have time for, or reread it. But now, it's constant news updates. And that has changed a lot."* This once again echoes the perspective of the representatives having to wade through a constant stream of information.

The representatives emphasized that social media now also constituted an important source to them. Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) reflected on how much space social media took in his attention *"So, either I sit and Google things I'm curious about, or I sit and read news. So, I probably spend about the same amount of time on Facebook as I do on newspapers."* Here he puts Facebook equal to traditional media in the time spent on the medium, and he mentions Google which he uses for specific information retrieval, not just passive intake of information. However, while the representatives spent time on social media and connected it to a type of information retrieval, they appeared more critical of the content there, and placed greater emphasis on factchecking and evaluating the sources there than other types of media.

From what was revealed in the interviews, social media was primarily used for the third purpose I mentioned, to monitor public opinion and shorten the distance to citizens. According to the representatives, one of the ways that this happened was in the form of proving a platform where "anyone" could contact them easily. As Helge Njåstad (Progress Party) said *"And the general threshold for reaching out on social media and Messenger, it has never been easier to access politicians in Norway than it is now with social media. So the threshold is indeed low. Yes."* Furthermore, social media was used to observe citizens in their natural habitats so to speak, to gain a purportedly genuine impression of public opinions on issues. Social media then, was presented primarily to purposefully try to capture current issues. It was therefore presented as a tool some representatives said they used to gather information on popular issues, and to bring to their attention matters that may otherwise not have reached them.

At the time of the interviews high costs of power had plagued Norway, meaning more expensive electricity bills for many (Blaker 2023). Within this context, some of the representatives informed that they took part in Facebook-groups that centred around citizen engagement in the electricity prices and similar issues connected to the situation. For instance, Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) said about how he paid attention to citizen opinions *"Probably not enough, but I'm on social media. Trying to catch what's there. I'm in various electricity-groups, as they are called[...] Yes, that's why I'm on Facebook pages. To catch up on things. I don't write much myself."* The informants underscored that they did not use these groups to actively communicate about these issues, but that they were mere spectators who gathered information and took a temperature of the public mood. This provided an example of how representatives claimed to use social media as a tool for information retrieval. Sofie Marhaug (Red Party) also said she did this but cautioned that the information retrieved through this manner needed to be scrutinized and not blindly accepted as fact *"This is somewhat controversial, but I use those Facebook groups [...]and there, I catch a lot of new information as well. However, you always have to double-check. Especially with information from individuals who are not organized or verified sources."*

4.3 The strategies of representatives

4.3.1 Filtering through others

Embedded in the general approaches I have outlined in the precious section; the representatives revealed some general strategies for handling information and making decisions. I will now take the more latent content that revealed itself in the previous section and categorizes it in the form of concrete strategies utilized by the representatives to cope with information abundance. Therefore, this second section of the analysis chapter is in many ways based on the previous one, moving from the tangible to the more intangible. Like Walgrave and Dejaegheres' information selection typology I have found it fruitful to divide the strategies into procedures, heuristics, and attitudes. First, I present the procedures, which mainly deal with using others to filter information, and rejecting information they considered redundant. Furthermore, I uncovered several heuristics utilized by the representatives in order to reach decisions. Lastly, the representatives seemed confident in themselves and appeared unbothered when faced with the fact they did not hold all relevant information.

An important strategy for representatives in retrieving and evaluating information, is simply to filter that information through others. This is evident in what they told about their interactions with organized interests, but also in what they shared about using their advisors for instance. Rasmus Hansson (Green Party) was quite straight forward about it "*We have many meetings with experts. A great privilege of being a member of parliament is that you can ask anyone about anything. And they come running and tell you in a structured and great way. It's absolutely magical. And we do that a lot. Asking people about things. And visiting companies and so on. Reading a bit too little. There are a lot of meetings and little reading. But when it comes to reading, we rely on people. Or advisors.*" Accordingly, the rough filtering and the detail work were in many cases left to others. Implied by this procedure for information retrieval was that there were some people or actors that the representatives trusted to this information procurement for them, putting faith on both their competence and to some extent their honesty or impartiality. Trusted advisors, experts, and organized interests with similar values were all used to filter and evaluate information.

4.3.2 Rejecting redundancy.

The representatives also had procedures for compressing information by rejecting redundant requests or information and avoiding repetition. Svein Harberg (Conservative Party) shared that he had implanted a strategy where he simply shortened the time available for each meeting. The representatives highlighted that a lot of information reached them through meetings, and that they received a lot of requests. Harberg dealt with this by giving people thirty minutes to make their case, and according to him this worked just as well as when they would get an hour to make the same point. The representatives also displayed a strategy of cutting down time spent on meetings and incoming information by treating similar actors as the same. In other words, recognizing that those who held similar interests were likely to share the same type of information with them. Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) shared an example of him having done exactly that recent to the interview *"And then I simply said, "I've had quite a few meetings about this already, so if you have a completely different perspective from the other companies, I'll have a meeting with you. But I don't need another meeting with a power company that has the same view as the other three".*

4.3.3 Revisiting previous solutions.

Another strategy outlined by the representatives that saved them time and effort in processing matters, was looking back to previous statements, politics, and the party manifesto. These things provided important reference points that helped out the representatives. Simply put they looked to what they or they party had done before so they could be consistent in their appearance and saved them costs in applying pre-packaged solutions to the relevant issues. Erling Sande (Centre Party) stressed the importance of taking previous stances into account. "*And then it will, of course, be important if you have said something in the election campaign, manifesto, or political documents where you have said that this is where the party will stand."* This can once again be connected to the tenants of bounded rationality, that people often utilize pre-packaged solutions to issues rather than fully and thoroughly analysing the relevant problem space. However, it is worth repeating the point that cutting corners effort wise is not the only thing incentivising the representatives to do so, but that appearing consistent to the voters can be a goal in itself that drives them to deploy this tactic. Nevertheless, utilizing previous behaviour to decide on future behaviour appears to be something the representatives do according to their own statements.

4.4 Heuristics

4.4.1 Ideology

The representatives spoke of several heuristics that helped them in their decision-making and that they utilized to filter and quickly evaluate information. The interviews revealed ideology to be an important heuristic for several of the representatives. While they did not use the term heuristic, they clearly displayed that ideology provided them more easily available answers in the face of complicated decisions. As such, their ideological standpoint helped them bypass processing every available angle and tidbit of information, and instead take a shortcut to a seemingly appropriate conclusion.

One representative, Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party), also underscored how representatives should take values and ideology as guiding principles, and how voters should take this into consideration *"[...] But that politician have to make decisions on thousands of other issues over the next four years. And then you should be pretty confident, as a voter, that this is a person that thinks somewhat similarly to me. Has about the same values as me. And this is something I am passionate about; therefore, I believe that ideology is important".*

Several representatives indicated that their ideology was an important starting point for them when it came to decision-making, at least if they or their party did not hold a clear prior position. Erling Sande (Centre Party) shared that *"there are some issues where you may not have a totally clear party position on where you stand. But it can be helpful to read some ideological threads then, within your own party, such as the Center Party that I know so well".* For him ideology appears as a guide to make sense of a complicated political landscape when making decisions. *"It's about thinking for yourself, but trying to tie it to an ideological course…it often provides an okay answer".* Clearly, ideology is suggested as a useful heuristic when it comes to decision-making.

For instance, Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) left no doubt to how indispensable he considered ideology to representatives. In the interview he said *"Values are, and ideology, I believe are the most important thing in politics".* This was in accordance with several other representatives who also highlighted the importance of ideology in the face of uncertainty and unpredictable issues. While the party manifestos and issues from the election campaign were useful guides, new issues that did not have clear concrete answers in their politics yet would sometimes arise when serving as a representative. In these cases, ideology constituted an important tool to filter and process information. *"Well, there's definitely a lot of ideology, at least that's my starting point when it comes to those issues. But then, there too we need to gather information."* Svein Harbergs' (Conservative Party) statement illustrates how ideology can be utilized by the representatives in symbiosis with their information processing, by delimitating the information considered relevant.

In summary, ideology was displayed as a useful heuristic in the interview material, especially in situations where the representatives could not lean on previous stances from themselves or their party. Ideology made a useful heuristic in new situations, illustrated by the covid pandemic and the war in Ukraine, that called for action without previously formulated policy on those concrete issues, and guided the representatives. Ideology was also put forth as a useful manner of delimitating which information to digest.

4.4.2. Satisficing

I also found evidence of *satisficing* in my interviews. Satisficing is an unsurprising strategy in a complex and information-rich environment, as is exactly a tool for arriving to decisions and moving on. My interviews indicated that representatives gathered the information perceived as needed to make a decision, rather than all possible available information. Mani Hussaini (Labour Party) defended this strategy *"So you have to efficient, you can go around pondering thing for 100 years, but then nothing happens, and the world does not wait for you. So, it is about learning to quickly familiarize yourself with matters to such an extent that you can make a decision"*.

This sentiment was echoed by other representatives, in order for things to get done they have to make choices, even if that means those choices will be suboptimal. The alternative could be being stuck in decision paralysis which could impose further cost through everything that would not get done. Satisficing and speed in decision-making was especially prominent in examples regarding covid and Ukraine, where there existed a lot of uncertainty and pressure to act. For instance, Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) shared his experience with dealing with covid. *"So, the country is hit with a devastating force of a disease that causes businesses to shut down. People have to stay at home. And everyone understands that the decisions the government must make cannot wait for a half year of hearings; they have to be made within hours. In that moment, you don't know what the consequences of those decisions will be. But what we do know is that if you take too long to act, it certainly won't turn out well."* Consequently, the decisions sought are not necessarily the best ones, they are the ones who will have to suffice, that are good enough.

4.4.3 Specialization

Representatives showed that they filtered information by prioritizing what they considered relevant to them and their specialization. In their daily life they were on the lookout for what they considered relevant to them specifically and filtered other information. Svein Harberg (Conservative Party) told how he filtered inquiries by what policy area they concerned *"Then I have to see if it affects something that I specifically work on. Otherwise, I will have to leave it to my colleagues."* Alternatively, if it came from his electoral district he could also feel a duty to prioritize it.

Their specialization was often closely connected to their work in their committees. While this was not always voluntary, some pointed out that they had focused little on their specific area prior to election, now that it was a part of their duty, they focused on it. Some also shared that they felt specialized in other areas due to personal interest or previous experience. In those cases they attempted to stay informed on those issues as well, even though it was not actually necessary. Admittedly, some shared that it was difficult to do so in the face of everything else they had to do. Still, personal interest appeared to help direct their attention.

4.4.4 Seeking similarity.

Lastly, from what the representatives shared in the interviews they did not appear to evaluate all information equally. They appeared to seek out those who they felt shared the same values and engage less critically with that information. The representatives showed signs of requiring more deliberation in the face of actors they did not see themselves and their own values in as much, indicating that similarity helped them circumvent a more difficult process of evaluating the information.

4.5 Attitudes

4.5.1 An attitude of self-confidence

Like Walgrave and Dejaeghere I find signs that the representatives cope with uncertainty by being confident in themselves and their decisions. Overall, they seemed prepared to live with mistakes, but generally seemed to believe in themselves and their ability to minimize them. While acknowledging that the choices are not always easy, they seemed content to live with them. This included when expert advice went against their own politics. This confidence came across in how they dealt with various issues. When it came to acknowledging that the people they were in contact with could skew their picture of citizen perception, the representatives displayed an attitude of ease, of not being bothered by this. The representatives showed an acceptance of the limitations of their knowledge and appeared unbothered.

Sveinung Rotevatn (Liberal Party) for instance, indicated high confidence in his ability to filter information and make good judgements, and suggested experience as a factor. *"I believe I am quite good at filtering. It comes with experience, of course. I have been involved in politics full-time for a long time and have been in government for several terms, so I am familiar with the challenges. And I am not naive."* The representatives appeared to deal with the fundamental uncertainty of their role in the environment they operate within by believing in themselves.

4.5.2 A sense of duty

The representatives' inner sense of duty seemed to be another tool that directed their attention. A feeling of some sort of higher obligation is something the representatives claimed to experience in several different questions. Latent in the section on procedures this is present several times. The representatives display a sense of duty to their voters in their electoral district, and a duty to their country or to democracy. They profess a need to be good examples and act in such a manner that they help maintain the people's belief in their democratic institutions. It is important to note that this sense of duty exists as a shortcut to prioritize some information, not really to bypass evaluating the content of it properly.

This is also an attitude that should be scrutinized closely. Because, as I have underscored, a dutiful representative true to their democratic and people-oriented values forms a sympathetic picture that they might have an interest in purporting. As such, it is important to keep in mind that this might be exaggerated, or it could be true, but what the representatives themselves say is not a final answer to this question. However, I can say that this is the perspective that the representatives have shared with me through the interviews. If the content of those interviews hold true, then the representatives' sense of obligation is a noticeable influence that affect the representatives' actions.

4.5.3 Trust in others

As I have noted in previous sections of the analysis, the representatives have displayed an attitude of trust that can be connected to their decision-making. To reiterate, the representatives appear to put faith in some selected others to filter information for them. While several representatives underscored that they evaluate information that they receive critically and consider the interests of the groups they meet with when they interact together, they still display some faith in some selected others to filter information for them. Using advisors could be a clear example of this, where the representatives could delegate the details to them, and subsequently need to trust that what they are being told from that is the essence. In addition, while noting partiality and selective presentation of information in those they meet, they generally trust them to not serve them straight up lies. The overall level of trust displayed by the representatives I interviewed can be contextualized in the generally high level of trust that is found in Norway (Oppøyen 2022).

5. Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Addressing the research question

In the thesis I have explored the research question: *How do representatives justify their decision-making and how does this connect to their roles as representatives?* In order to do so I have treated decision-making as containing information selection at its core, specifically through utilizing the bounded rationality framework. My approach has been that representatives are imperfect actors at the centre of complex information environments, who deal with many structures and potential arenas for representation. To explore the research question, I have interviewed representatives to gain insight to their perspective.

While the research question is twofold, justification of decision-making on the one hand, and the place this plays in the roles as representatives on the other, I have treated the two as intrinsically connected. The two are linked in the theoretical account on the concept of representation, where I have supported the argument that the representation relationship is actively constructed through the dynamic where issues are made visible to and politized by representatives. Furthermore, the representatives are considered to be not just reactive, but also active in the choices they make, and accordingly what they choose to devote their attention to bears consequence for their representative function. It is not just the actions that link the representatives to those they represent, important to their ability to serve as representatives is the justification they use for their actions according to Pitkin (1967, 213).

To address the research question, I have looked at several subthemes that I have considered relevant. I have looked into the role of information in decision-making. I have looked at how representatives claim to prioritize and how they explain these priorities, and I have examined how the justification for decision-making can be connected to their roles as representatives.

I found that representatives deploy several tactics for filtering information that enables them to make decisions more easily. These tactics include filtering through others, rejecting redundant information and compressing it, and revisiting previous solutions. When it comes to what they weigh in their actual decision-making I found that ideology played a part, as well as a commitment to their individual party and the interests of their electoral district. In addition, they displayed a sense of duty in how they operated to be good examples that upheld democratic values. In other words, representatives justify their decision-making though the commitment they believe they have made on behalf of their voters, their political party, the people from their electoral district, and a sense of right and wrong connected to an intrinsic duty. Through defending these interests, the representatives connect themselves to those they represent, because through these justifications their actions can be said to become representative.

5.2 How do representatives justify their decision-making and how does this connect to their roles as representatives?

5.2.1 The justification of their decision-making

I have in this thesis explored how representatives justify their decision-making and how these justifications relate to their roles as representatives. This has been done by exploring the research topic through the theoretical lens of bounded rationality. Bounded rationality does not constitute a theory to be strengthened or weakened by my research, and the purpose has not to been to do so. Instead, bounded rationality has functioned as a backdrop for addressing the research question. It informs an approach to the research question by prescribing some assumptions and rejecting others, namely that of rejecting rationality and embracing representatives as limited actors in complex environments. However, this assumption was strengthened though the interviews.

To address the results of the research question I will first present the findings of the first part of the research question, concerning how the representatives justify their decision-making. The decision-making in question is not just pure policy decisions that take the form of voting on issues in parliament but expands to the very decisions on how they direct their attention which enables some matters to be made visible to them, to be politicized, and to enter the representation dynamic are relevant. What they end up voting for and against is just an output of this more general decision-making.

In my exploration of how the representatives justify their decision-making I found four sets of justifications. They can be summarized as premises, practicality, principles, and resignation. The first way I found representatives to justify their decision-making was through the idea that they were elected on some premises they should live up to. These premises appeared as justifications for different prioritizations in their decision-making. Among the guiding premises were the notions that they were supposed to enact their party manifesto, represent their political party, work for their party in their committee, and further the interests of their electoral district.

The second way I found representatives to justify their decision-making was by being practical-minded and treating the world as simple enough that they could deal with it. Since the world is too complicated and the information and choices the representatives are exposed to are too many for the representatives to pursue them all, they process them by simplification. This is done by compressing and simplifying information, and by treating organized interests as illustrative of interests in society.

The third way I found representatives to justify their decision-making was through connecting them to their values. This included ideology as a guiding principle, as well as a sense of duty to their voters and to uphold democratic values themselves. Taking actions to be closer to "ordinary people" and further their perspectives were also ways I found representatives to prioritize and justify their decision-making.

Lastly, the representatives justified their decision-making by acknowledging the fact that doing all and pleasing all is an impossible task. I label the last type of justification as resignation because I found the representatives to justify their decision-making by satisficing, accepting fallibility, and not always digging further. In other words, they justified themselves by being resigned with their fate as imperfect decisionmakers.

5.2.2 The connection to the representative role

In this section I address how the justification of the representatives' decision-making connect to their roles as representatives. To be transparent this is something I have furthered partly as a theoretical argument, but it is also something that has been explored and supported through the analysis. The theoretical interpretation of Pitkin by Disch promotes the view that citizen preference is not the principal force in a representative system, instead representation is anticipatory and constitutive (Disch 2012, 603). To act as representatives necessitates having to justify oneself in the name of some interests, if not they are not considered representatives. This is what spurs the new contribution to the representation field because much of the research on representation is based on monitoring citizen preference. Accordingly, this part of the research question is concerned with how to contextualize the findings.

Nevertheless, this contextualization is not just theoretical, but also embedded in the perspectives furthered in the interviews. To reiterate, I found that the representatives claimed active information seeking as essential to them, and they did this through a myriad of ways. This included actively seeking out organized interests to gain insight through a different lens than when they met those same actors through prepared and planned meetings, but also actively attempting to expose themselves to the opinions and issues of laypersons in informal settings. This was framed as something they not only could but should do. In other words, the representatives I interviewed portrayed active information seeking as integral to their roles. Moreover, a minority stated directly that collecting information was primarily essential to the ability to make a decision, not to the outcome. That is, that they mean they should be able to make informed decisions, where they could ignore some of that information as long as they knew that was what they were doing.

Furthermore, much of their justification for how they directed their attention and made decisions was based upon underlying ideas of what a representative should do, and some sense of duty to the premises they were elected on. When claiming the motivation of acting behalf of others, such as their voters, their electoral district, their parties, or even on behalf of values, they make a connection between their justifications for their decisions and their role-conception. In summary, the active processing of information and the subsequent justifications of how they utilized this in their decision-making was found to be an integrated part of the roles of the representatives.

5.3 The research limitations

5.3.1 Assessing the validity.

The first challenge to my findings that I have noted is assessing the validity of them. The question of authenticity has permeated the entirety of the thesis. I have attempted to be as forthcoming as possible to stimulate scrutiny of the results where it is necessary. To reiterate, researching elites is difficult because they have extensive media-training and a vested interest in appearing favourably. I have not attempted to deem the utterances by the representatives as truthful or not. Instead, my chosen method has been to discuss what potential interests could lie behind the responses where I thought it was particularly relevant. This enables a critical perspective on the relevant findings. It does not devalue or undermine them in my eyes but speaks to a fundamental uncertainty that exists when researching certain subjects. This uncertainty should be on the forefront of one's mind when assessing results, and I have attempted to address it directly where relevant.

I took a range of measures to aid generating authentic responses which I believe helped. This is largely connected to my own conduct during the interviews where I encouraged an informal and genuine atmosphere, as well as being careful to underline that my subject was not them as individuals, but that I wanted the representatives' perspective on the subject. I believe they considered me as relatively harmless, and they appeared not to imagine that many people would read my thesis, which is conducive to letting their guard down and giving genuine responses.

This could raise some ethical concerns, but they have approved the quotes later and have appeared comfortable with the result. In addition, I experienced that some wished some quotes to be left out which I take to confirm my suspicion that I created a dynamic that generated authentic responses in the interviews. The fact that my informants all are named participants makes my research verifiable, which have been lacking from previous studies. Others interviews with representatives have anonymous informants, which prevent the interpretation from being verified. Being able to use verifiable sources is therefore something that I consider a contribution in itself to the field. After all, some go as far as to argue that if qualitative research is to be taken seriously, it has to be possible for others to assess its credibility and wider applicability, something which my research allows (Lewis et al. 2014, 357). Accordingly, I argue that the internal validity of my research is relatively strong considering the topic of research.

Another aspect of my research that may bear consequence for the validity of the results, is the fact that the topic I am researching is so intrinsically intertangled with the research method. As I discussed in the chapter on the research design, those who chose to participate have by the act of consenting to participate potentially shown signs of some of the things I am alleging in my analysis. More specifically I refer to an inner sense of duty or civic duty that could affect them in their decision-making in general, that also may have guided them to partake in a master student's thesis, and a tendency to court, or feel responsible to those in their electoral district which I in several cases belonged to.

On the one hand, this may introduce bias into my research, and it might even be reasonable to assume so. The questions is whether the bias is detrimental to the analysis. I have previously argued that this might exaggerate some findings, but since this is not a quantitative project, I do not consider that a huge problem. I am not attempting to make statements on the prominence of each particular finding, but to contribute to a general understanding of the contributing factors in the decision-making of representatives. However, there is a potential for bias in the shape of justifications that are left out, and so it is noteworthy that my results should not be considered exhaustive. On the other hand, while the relevance of certain types of justifications may introduce bias, they can also be interpreted as evidence in favour of the findings. That is, that electoral courtship and an inner sense of duty are strengthened as explanations. This conundrum speaks to the difficulties of isolating variables when researching a complex social reality.

5.3.2 Assumptions and methodological limitations

To accurately describe the value of the contribution I would like to summarize the assumptions it rests upon, and the limitations of the results. Fundamentally, my approach rests on a number of assumptions that are not directly tested. Information selection is assumed to be at the core of decision-making, and while it is logically sound, this is not something that is directly observed (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 231). Such is the nature of several of the premises in the bounded rationality framework. Bounded rationality acknowledges that it is precisely the interaction between subjective and imperfect individuals and their environments that matter. Neither internal values or an effect from the surrounding environment are phenomenon that can be directly observed. These are the premises that my research project is built upon.

Furthermore, the interview method has bestowed me with insight into reasonings of representatives, but those reasonings should not be mistaken for absolute truth. It is important to note that the research I have conducted is limited to how representatives perceive something. That they view thing a certain way does not make it true. Accordingly, my results cannot be used to predict outcomes in the form of the actual decision-making, but that was not the intent either. However, I have contributed to laying out a foundation that future researchers may build upon, and perhaps one day aid the quest for causality.

5.3.3 The question of generalization

As mentioned in the research design chapter, the purpose of a case study is to shed light on a larger class of cases. The case is studied in order to generate knowledge about the phenomenon more generally. The question remains of whether the findings and results in the analysis can be generalized outside of the Norwegian representatives. As representatives operating within a complex and information heavy environment, similarities can be drawn to other representative democracies with open opportunity structures.

While some of the particular findings connected to for instance the asymmetric geographical emphasis of different electoral districts or responses to perceived sunk trust in politicians can be presumed to depend on specific factors and structures in the cases, it is not inconceivable that some of the general strategies, prioritizations, and justifications of the representatives will hold true in other cases as well. After all, some of my findings echo those from interviews with Belgian politicians. This points to some generality, and the possibility of a larger theoretical contribution than a mere case description for Norway. I have already addressed the validity, and there is a strong link between the strength of the validity and the extent to which generalisation can occur, which further strengthens this belief (Lewis et al. 2014, 357).

5.4 Theoretical implications

5.4.1 Revisiting and revising the information selection typology.

In light of my findings, I revisit the typology I presented in the theory chapter and make some modifications. The original typology is repeated here for a clear comparison.

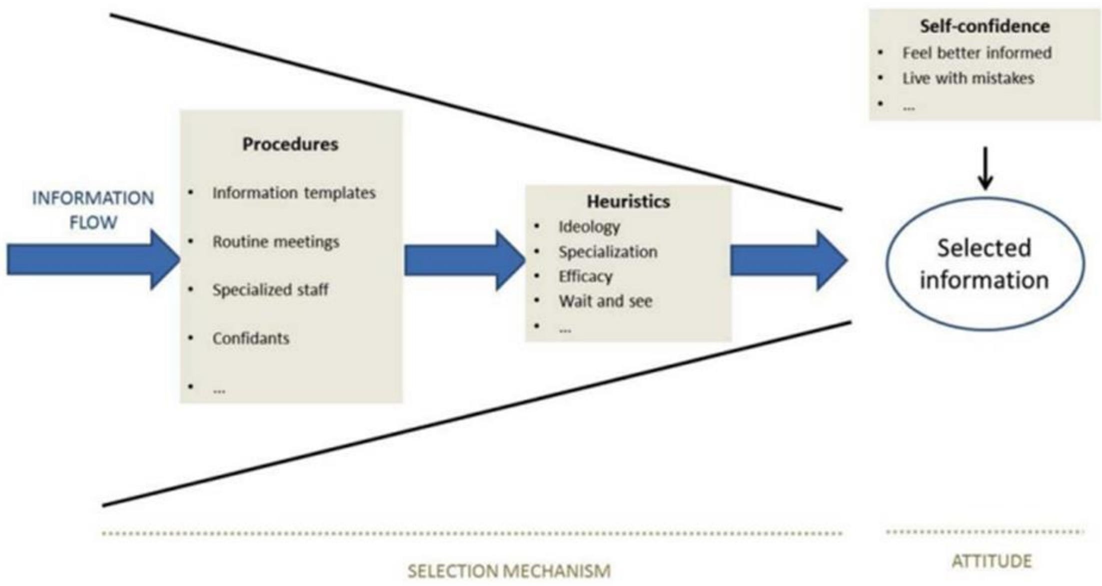

Figure 2. “Information Selection and Coping Mechanisms Employed by Top Politicians” (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 235)

While I did not set out to repeat the study that was conducted in Belgium, I believe the research I have conducted is still relevant to the typology at hand. If I were to do a direct comparison this would be done best by comparing the raw data, which I did not have access to, and while looking at information selection and coping mechanisms in representatives is relevant to my research question, it does not encompass it as a whole. Thus, I have approached this topic from a slightly different angle, and what I suggest here is building upon the research from Belgium, not making a comparison.

Furthermore, I consider Belgium as a country similar enough to Norway on some relevant aspects to make it possible to further develop the typology in this manner. I will not go into a case comparison here as that requires a more thorough and systematic effort, but I simply claim that the two countries have sufficient similarities to not render building on their findings out of the question. Belgium is also a representative democracy with coalition governments, proportional representation, corporatism, and all in all a fair amount of access points and structures that mediate the relationship between the representatives and their citizens (Heidar 2013, 185, 195).

My interviews did not give sufficient confirmation to the use information templates as a strategy that the representatives utilized, but I chose to include the procedure in the modified typology anyways, as I did not find evidence to the contrary, and I honestly did not dig deep into the matter. Furthermore, some anecdotal evidence such as asking people to condense their information to one page, or demanding meetings to be only 30 minutes could be interpretated as forms of templates even if they did not constitute main findings. Regardless, I have chosen to include mechanisms that I did not find substantial proof of, to expand upon the typology rather than simply making my own version restricted to my own main findings. Not all strategies will be utilized by all representatives, and modifying the typology is more about adding the tools found in the toolboxes of the representatives rather than claiming ultimate knowledge of which strategies they utilize. The modified typology is presented in figure 3.

I have also classified specialized staff and confidants which were separate procedures in the original typology, as subsections of filtering through others in my version. I believe they are concrete examples of the main strategy or procedure, which is to filter information through others. However, my analysis also indicated that these were used by the representatives, I have simply chosen to modify their categorizations a bit. Advisors, which were both presented as specialized staff and confidants in some cases, are examples of this. Arguably, experts and “allied” interest groups could also be included as subsections of this tactic, as I demonstrated they are used by the representatives to bring them tangible, condensed information on issues.

Among the heuristics I found substantial evidence in the interviews with the representatives that supported ideology and specialization as key heuristics to them. The *wait and see* heuristic was not prominent in my material. However, that particular heuristic was first and foremost used by party leaders according to the original study, and I have not interviewed party leaders in my research (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 238). Thus, not finding remarkable evidence in support of this heuristic is in line with the previous research. The *efficacy* heuristic I did find some support for in my material, but it was not particularly distinguished, and I question why the original researchers separated it as its own heuristic as well.

The argument presented by the original researchers is that their informants further choose a few projects within their specialization to invest themselves in. Furthermore, they decide to act only on those few micro-domains on which they have a high chance of being successful (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 238). In short, the supposed efficacy heuristic is a pragmatic strategy of pursuing what the representatives believe to produce successful outcomes. However, I am not fully convinced by this argumentation. Firstly, I would not classify further specialization within their specialization as something other than the specialization heuristic. Secondly, *efficacy* is not a recognized heuristic. It does constitute a rule of thumb, and is relevant for prioritization of attention, I believe the development of a new heuristic should involve more evidence and a more thorough discussion leading up to the definition. Lastly, I concur that filtering out information that the representatives do not believe will secure them success is a recognizable strategy, which I even uncovered traces of in my own interviews, but the identifying traits of this heuristic should be developed further. In summary, I do not reject the existence of this alleged heuristic, but I find the supporting argumentation to be weak, and I believe the concept should be developed further. However, I have still chosen to include it in the modified typology as I see the potential, and I as I have stated wish to primarily add rather than subtract to it. One suggestion is to repackage it as *perceived utility* which I presented in the section on bounded rationality in the theory chapter.

I also found evidence of *satisficing,* as I stated in the analysis, and have included this in the new typology. I find it somewhat strange that this was not a finding included in the original typology. As stated in the theory chapter satisficing is considered a key-strategy within bounded rationality and is an actual recognised heuristic. Perhaps there was not evidence in favour of it in the interviews with the Belgian top politicians, or even that it is not something they do. The latter I find doubtful as satisficing is so closely connected to the premises of bounded rationality itself, that decisionmakers apply a pre-packaged solution rather than conducting a thorough and resource-demanding process of analysis (Jones and Thomas 2012, 274-276). However, it could be that they did not include satisficing in their typology because it is difficult to find evidence of document "directly" so to speak. The representatives will probably not say that they do the bare minimum to reach their decisions, however they will stress the fact that getting things done sometimes means acting on incomplete information. In my case, this was most easily prompted in the context of dealing with specific events like covid.

Lastly, I changed the self-confidence section to a more general category of attitudes, which includes self-confidence. I added an *inner sense of duty* and *trust in others* as additional prominent attitudes which I found support for in the analysis. It could be argued that these belong to the heuristic section, or as other forms of information selection mechanisms. However, while I concede some truth to this, I still find them to function as attitudes primarily. The objection could be made that the attitudes are not meant to be tied to information selection. In the original typology the self-confidence attitude is presented as a coping mechanism that is employed when the selection strategies fail, and I concur that the line between when something constitutes a heuristic, or an attitude is not totally clear.

Nevertheless, I still argue that an inner sense of duty and trust in others can constitute coping mechanisms when information selection is inevitably imperfect. While putting trust in others is an aid to the selection process because it facilitates filtering through others, it also is a coping mechanism in my eyes. That is because it constitutes a way of coping with the fundamental uncertainty of a hectic information environment. Likewise, an inner sense of duty can provide some guidance for which issues to prioritize and be tied to information-selection in that manner. However, it also incentivizes representatives to deal with the uncertainty they must face in their roles, and to keep going even when they make imperfect decisions. As such, I argue that an inner sense of duty can perform the same function as an attitude as self-confidence, even though I am open to the argument that it should be classified differently.

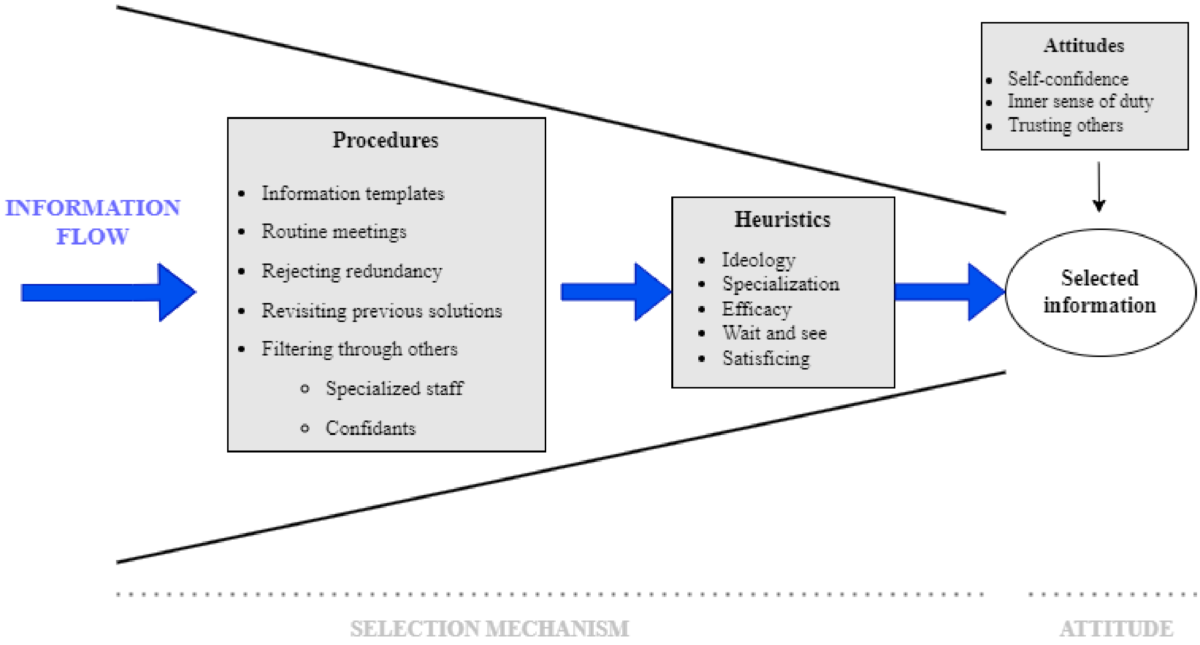

Figure 3. My modified version of the Information Selection Typology

5.4.2 Additional indications of interest

I will now present some further findings which are not essential to the theories emphasised in my research, but that bear implications that can be shed light on through other perspectives. The foundation of these findings are rather thin, but are still interesting to acknowledge, and both concern the imagination and perceptions that representatives hold and how it can affect them.

The first additional indication I want to draw attention to is the role of re-election for the representatives. Through my interviews I had someone emphasize that doing the bare minimum would be insufficient not only because of their own sense of responsibility, but also because realistically no one would get re-elected for doing only what they must. Other representatives referenced this as well, that they would want to be remembered well and thought of in good terms, as someone who tried their best for their voters. This indicated that they conceive themselves as somewhat visible to their electorate. This is the point of Miller and Stokes, that representatives adjust their behaviour because they overestimate their own visibility to the constituents (1963, 53-54). When asked directly the representatives appeared more restrained in this belief, by claiming that the voters probably knew less about their actions than ideal.

Despite these statements, the anecdotal evidence indicates that they overestimate their visibility and the consequences of their actions. To me they displayed an attitude of being observed that is not in accordance with what is likely the case. Previous research indicates that voters are not rational either, and that they do a poor job at judging their representatives for their performance. This is because they have a hard time detangling representatives' performance from local or global conditions, are affected by non-political events, or do not understand relevant political information well enough (Bartels 2008, 151; Healy and Malhotra 2013, 290-296; C.J. Anderson 2007, 279-280). Furthermore, one representative suggested she might not pursue re-election, removing her personal incentive to please the voters. This is not to say she did not have other incentives such as a wish for her party to succeed, but it serves as a reminder that an assumption that is often taken as a given, that representatives are incentivized to and will seek re-election, is not always applicable (Ashworth 2012, 185).

Moreover, another finding that I hint at in the analysis, but that should be regarded with suspicion, is the notion that representatives do not actively reflect on how their interactions with citizens may present them with a skewed perception. While they do stress that they operate within an environment that probably does not reflect the population, they did not demonstrate much contemplation of this. That in itself could potentially bear interesting implications. However, extrapolating findings from what is *unsaid* is to find oneself on very shaky ground, and the scientific value of it is dubious as best. Nevertheless, what is noteworthy in the interview interaction is not just what is said, but also what is not. This indicates a possibility, which should not be overstated, that representatives do not actively reflect on how citizen interactions can affect their impressions in an unrepresentative manner. Interestingly, this argument has been put forth in the United States, that the political parties there are affected by an information asymmetry that induces them to take on positions that are not electorally optimal. More specifically, they have found evidence that the representatives there held systematic misperceptions of the distribution of opinions. They suggested that this was due to certain kinds of citizens being overrepresented in their contact with the representatives. For instance, gunowners and members of the NRA were significantly more likely to contact their representatives (Broockman and Skovron 2018, 544, 558). Subsequently, the importance of the impressions bestowed upon representatives should not be underestimated.

5.5 Concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

In my thesis I have explored how representatives justify their decision-making and how they connect to their roles as representatives. My contributions have been contextualising the information research in a novel perspective of the representation field. Furthermore, I have found that representatives justify their decision-making through premises, practicality, principles, and resignation, and that the first three are seen as closely tied to the roles of the representatives. Lastly, I have contributed to the further development of an information selection typology through independent research on original data from another case than the original, strengthening the model. I also utilized “second-tier” politicians in my research that lacked in the Belgian study, expanding the use of the typology (Walgrave and Dejaeghere 2017, 242)

Like Walgrave and Dejaeghere I agree that a relevant suggestion for future research is to test the findings on a larger scale (2017, 242-243). While there are many interesting avenues to potentially pursue, it is likely difficult to get enough representatives to contribute to such research for it to produce statistically significant results. While the route of large-scale quantitative research to produce further findings seems unlikely, more qualitative research on the matter could still provide interesting results. Furthermore, to keep on developing this field, more cases that differ from the Norway and Belgium on relevant traits should be explored. It could be interesting not only to compare more countries, but to see if the results held up with local representatives, or if their perspectives are different due to operating within a different context. For instance, closer ties to their local community and a less information-rich environment could mean other considerations in the decision-making process.

References

Aelst, Peter Van, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2016. "Information and arena: The dual function of the news media for political elites." *Journal of Communication* 66: 496-518.

Anderson, Christopher J. 2007. "The End of Economic Voting? Contingency Dilemmas and the Limits of Democratic Accountability." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (1): 271-296. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.050806.155344. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.050806.155344.

Anderson, Sarah E., Daniel M. Butler, and Laurel Harbridge. 2016. "Legislative Institutions as a source of party leaders' influence." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 41 (3): 605-631.

Andeweg, Rudy B., and Jacques J. A. Thomassen. 2005. "Modes of Political Representation: Toward a New Typology." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 30 (4): 507-528. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3598548.

Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (1): 183-201. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-031710-103823. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-polisci-031710-103823.

Bartels, Larry M. 2008. *Unequal democracy: The political economy of the new gilded age*. New York: Russel sage foundation.

Bendor, Jonathan Brodie, Sunil Kumar, and David A Siegel. 2009. "Satisficing: A 'Pretty Good' Heuristic." *The B.E. Journal of Theoretical Economics* 9 (1). https://doi.org/doi:10.2202/1935-1704.1478. https://doi.org/10.2202/1935-1704.1478.

Blaker, Magnus. 2023. "Et år med full strømkrise: Dette er hva som skjedde." *Nettavisen*, 2023.

Bogaards, Matthijs. 2019. "Case-based research on democratization " *Democratization* 26 (1): 61-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1517255. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2018.1517255.

Box, G. E. P. 1979. "Robustness in the Strategy of Scientific Model Building." In *Robustness in Statistics*, edited by Robert L. Launer and Graham N. Wilkinson, 201-236. Academic Press.

Bredeveien, Jo Moen. 2022. "Et spørsmål om tillit: Noen småskremte refleksjoner om lobbyregister og tillit i vanskelige tider." *Dagsavisen*, 2022.

Brennan, Geoffrey, and Alan Hamlin. 1999. "On Political Representation." *British Journal of Political Science* 29 (1): 109-127. http://www.jstor.org/stable/194298.

Broockman, David E., and Christopher Skovron. 2018. "Bias in perception of public opinion among political elites." *American Political Science Review* 112 (3): 542-563.

Bryucker, Iskander De, and Anne Rasmussen. 2021. "Blessing or curse for congruence? How interest mobilization affects congruence between citizens and elected representatives." *Journal of Common Market Studies* 59 (4): 909-928.

Bygnes, Susanne. 2008. "Interviewing people-oriented elites." *Eurosphere Working Paper Series* (10).

Carlin, Ryan E., Timothy Hellwig, Gregory J. Love, Cecilia Martínez-Gallardo, and Matthew M. Singer. 2021. "When Does the Public Get It Right? The Information Environment and the Accuracy of Economic Sentiment." *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (9): 1499-1533. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414021989758. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0010414021989758.

Christensen, Johan, Åse Gornitzka, and Cathrine Holst. 2017. "Knowedge regimes in the Nordic countries." In *The Nordic models in political science*, edited by Oddbjørn Knutsen, 239-255. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
Conlisk, John. 1996. "Why Bounded Rationality?" *Journal of Economic Literature* 34 (2): 669-700. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2729218.
Creswell, John W. 2013. *Qualitative inquiry & research design*

Choosing among five approaches. Nebraska: SAGE Publications Inc.
Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and opposition*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Dalton, Russel J. 2002. *Citizen politics: Public opinion and political parties in advances industrial democracies*. Vol. Third edition. New York: Chatham house publishers.
Dhakal, Kerry M. A. A. M. L. S. 2022. "NVivo." *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 110 (2): 270-272. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2022.1271. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/nvivo/docview/2670682496/se-2?accountid=8579 http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Ahealthcompleteshell&atitle=NVivo&title=Journal+of+the+Medical+Library+Association&issn=15365050&date=2022-04-01&volume=110&issue=2&spage=270&au=Dhakal%2C+Kerry%2C+MAA%2C+MLS&isbn=&jtitle=Journal+of+the+Medical+Library+Association&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.5195%2Fjmla.2022.1271.

Diefenbach, Thomas. 2009. "Are case studies more than sophisticated storytelling?

Methodological problems of qualitative empirical research mainly based on semi-structured interviews." *Qual Quant* 43: 875-894. https://doi.org/DOI 10.1007/s11135-008-9164-0.
Disch, Lisa. 2012. "Democratic Representation and the Constituency Paradox." *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (3): 599-616. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23260181.
Dokka, Åsmund Gram. 2017. By mot land- kampen om mandatene.
Eggebø, Helga. 2020. "Kollektiv kvalitativ analyse." *Norsk sosiologisk tidsskrift* 4 (2): 106-122. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-2512-2020-02-03. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-2512-2020-02-03.
Flavin, Patrick. 2015. "Campaign finance laws, policy outcomes, and political equality in the American States." *Political research quarterly* 68 (1): 77-88. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912914554041.
Franko, William W., Nathan J. Kelly, and Christopher Witko. 2016. "Class Bias in Voter Turnout, Representation, and Income Inequality." *Perspectives on Politics* 14 (2): 351-368. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716000062. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/class-bias-voter-turnout-representation-income/docview/1871094608/se-2?accountid=8579 http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Apoliticalscience&atitle=Class+Bias+in+Voter+Turnout%2C+Representation%2C+and+Income+Inequality&title=Perspectives+on+Politics&issn=15375927&date=2016-06-01&volume=14&issue=2&spage=351&au=Franko%2C+William+W+%3BKelly%2C+Nathan+J+%3BWitko%2C+Christopher&isbn=&jtitle=Perspectives+on+Politics&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.1017%2FS1537592716000062.

Galtrud, Åse, and Katriina Byström. 2019. "Information-rich, but time-poor: Exploring members of parliament's approaches to information by Chatman's "small world"

conception." *Journal of Documentation* ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-03-2019-0057.
George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences* London: MIT Press.
Gerring, John. 2004. "What is a case study in what is it good for?" *The American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 431-354.
Giger, Nathalie, Jan Rosset, and Julian Bernauer. 2012. "The Poor Political Representation of The Poor in a Comparative Perspective." *Representation* 48 (1): 47-61.
Gilens, Martin. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (5): 778-796.
---. 2009. "Preference Gaps and Inequality in Representation." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42 (2): 335-341. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096509090441.
Graneheim, Ulla H., Britt-Marie Lindgren, and Berit Lundman. 2017. "Methodological challenges in qualitative content analysis: A discussion paper." *Nurse Education Today* 56: 29-34. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2017.06.002. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0260691717301429.
Harfst, Philipp, Sarah C. Dingler, Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, Julian Noseck, and Sven Kosanke. 2018. "Elusive indeed – The mechanical versus psychological effects of electoral rules at the district level." *Electoral Studies* 53: 90-98. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.04.001. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261379417304079.
Harvey, William S. 2010. "Methodological approaches for interviewing elites." *Geography Compass*: 193-205.
---. 2011. "Strategies for conducting elite interviews." *Qualitative research* 11 (4): 431-441. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1177/1468794111404329.
Healy, Andrew, and Neil Malhotra. 2013. "Retrospective Voting Reconsidered." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (1): 285-306. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-212920. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-polisci-032211-212920.
Heidar, Knut. 2013. "Belgia." In *Politikk i Europa*, edited by Knut Heidar, Einar Berntzen and Elisabeth Bakke, 181-199. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
Heidar, Knut, and Bjørn Erik Rasch. 2017. "Political representation and parliamentarism." In *The nordic model in political science*, edited by Oddbjørn Knutsen. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
Hemingway, Alexander. 2022. "Does class shape legislators' approach to inequality and economic policy? A comparative view." *Government and opposition* 57: 1-24.
Higgs, Robert. 2018. "Principal–Agent Theory and Representative Government." *The Independent Review* 22 (3): 479-480. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/principal-agent-theory-representative-government/docview/2333625286/se-2?accountid=8579.
Hoffmann-Lange, Ursula. 2007. "Methods of Elite Research." *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behaviour*, edited by Russel J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter KlingemannOxford University Press.
Jerit, Jennifer, Jason Barabas, and Toby Bolsen. 2006. "Citizens, Knowledge, and the Information Environment." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (2): 266-282. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3694272.
Jones, Bryan D., and H.F. Thomas. 2012. "Bounded rationality and public policy decision-making." In *Routledge Handbook of Public Policy*, edited by Eduardo Araral, Scott Fritzen, Michael Howlett, M. Ramesh and Xun Wu. London: Routledge.

Jonnergård, Karin, Christopher von Koch, and Ola Nilsson. 2020. "Information environment – An exploration and clarification of the concept based on prior literature." *Advances in Accounting* 50: 100486. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adiac.2020.100486. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0882611020300560.
Karlsen, Gunnar. 2015. *Språk og argumentasjon*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
Kitschelt, Herbert, and Philipp Rehm. 2014. "Political participation." In *Comparative politics*, edited by Daniele Caramani, 303-317. Oxford: Oxford university press.
Kvale, Steinar. 1995. "The social construction of validity." *Qualitative Inquiry* 1 (1): 19-40.
---. 1996. "The 1,000-Page Question." *Qualitative Inquiry* 2 (3): 275-284. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780049600200302. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/107780049600200302.
Lahtinen, Hannu, Mikko Mattila, Hanna Wass, and Pekka Martikainen. 2017. "Explaining Social Class Inequality in Voter Turnout: The Contribution of Income and Health." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 40 (4): 388-410. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12095. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-9477.12095.
Lane, Jan-Erik. 2009. "POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FROM THE PRINCIPAL–AGENT PERSPECTIVE." *Representation* 45 (4): 369-378. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344890903235421. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344890903235421.
Leech, Nancy L., and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie. 2011. "Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo." *School Psychology Quarterly* 26: 70-84. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022711.
Leighley, Jan E., and Jennifer Oser. 2018. "Representation in an Era of Political and Economic Inequality: How and When Citizen Engagement Matters." *Perspectives on Politics* 16 (2): 328-344. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1537592717003073. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/representation-era-political-economic-inequality/docview/2039270686/se-2
http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Apoliticalscience&atitle=Representation+in+an+Era+of+Political+and+Economic+Inequality%3A+How+and+When+Citizen+Engagement+Matters&title=Perspectives+on+Politics&issn=15375927&date=2018-06-01&volume=16&issue=2&spage=328&au=Leighley%2C+Jan+E%3BOser%2C+Jennifer&isbn=&jtitle=Perspectives+on+Politics&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.1017%2FS1537592717003073.

Lewis, Jane, and Carol McNaughton Nicholls. 2014. "Design issues." In *Qualitative research practice*

A guide for social science students & researchers, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholis and Rachel Ormston, 47-76. London: SAGE Publications.
Lewis, Jane, Jane Ritchie, Rachel Ormston, and Gareth Morrell. 2014. "Generalising from qualitative research." In *Qualitative research practice*, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls and Rachel Ormston. London: SAGE publications.
Lindekilde, Lasse, and Thomas Olesen. 2015. *Politisk protest, aktivisme og sociale bevægelser*. Latvia: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Lupu, Noam, and Zach Warner. 2021. "Affluence and Congruence: Unequal Representation around the World." *The Journal of Politics*: 1-36. https://doi.org/10.1086/714930. https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/714930.

Lysberg, Magnus. 2021. "Kraftig fall i tilliten til politikerne etter pendlerbolig-avsløringene: – Dette er en sak som opprører." *Aftenposten*, 16.12.2021, 2021. https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/7d4dzw/kraftig-fall-i-tilliten-til-politikerne-etter-pendlerbolig-avsloeringene-dette-er-en-sak-som-opproerer.

Malterud, Kirsti. 2012. "Systematic text condensation: A strategy for qualitative analysis." *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health* 40 (8): 795-805. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45150634.

Mansbridge, Jane. 2011. "Clarifying the Concept of Representation." *The American Political Science Review* 105 (3): 621-630. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41480861.

---. 2014. "What Is Political Science For?" *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (1): 8-17. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1017/S153759271300368X. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-political-science/docview/1518239165/se-2?accountid=8579

http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Apoliticalscience&atitle=What+Is+Political+Science+For%3F&title=Perspectives+on+Politics&issn=15375927&date=2014-03-01&volume=12&issue=1&spage=8&au=Mansbridge%2C+Jane&isbn=&jtitle=Perspectives+on+Politics&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.1017%2FS153759271300368X.

Marcella, Rita, Iona Carcary, and Graeme Baxter. 1999. "The information needs of United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)." *Library Management* 20 (3): 168-178. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/01435129910259667. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/information-needs-united-kingdom-members-european/docview/198863148/se-2?accountid=8579 http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Aabiglobal&atitle=The+information+needs+of+United+Kingdom+Members+of+the+European+Parliament+%28MEPs%29&title=Library+Management&issn=01435124&date=1999-04-01&volume=20&issue=3&spage=168&au=Marcella%2C+Rita%3BIona+Carcary+and%3BBaxter%2C+Graeme&isbn=&jtitle=Library+Management&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.1108%2F01435129910259667.

McLellan, Eleanor, Kathleen M. Macqueen, and Judith L. Neidig. 2003. "Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription." *Field methods* 15, no. 1.

Miller, Warren E., and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *The American Political Science Review* 57 (1): 45-56. https://doi.org/10.2307/1952717. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952717.

Moses, Jonathan. 2020. "Ontologies, Epistemologies, and the Methodological Awakening." In *the SAGE Handbook of Political Science*, edited by Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Bertrand Badie and Leonardo Morlino. SAGE Publications ltd.

Norris, Pippa. 2002. *Democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Nymoen, Ole Christian. 2022. "Undersøkelse: Tilliten til politikerne slår sprekker." *Nettavisen*, 2022. https://www.nettavisen.no/nyheter/undersokelse-tilliten-til-politikerne-slar-sprekker/s/5-95-772395.

OECD. 2022. *Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions in Norway*.
Oliver, Daniel G., Julianne M. Serovich, and Tina L. Mason. 2005. "Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research." *Social Forces* 84, no. 2: 1273-1289.
Oppøyen, Madeleine Schlyter. 2022. Yngre har minst tillit til fremmede.
Ormston, Rachel, Liz Spencer, Matt Barnard, and Dawn Snape. 2014. "The foundations of qualitative research." In *Qualitative research practice*, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls and Rachel Ormston, 1-26. London: SAGE Publication.
Otjes, Simon, and Christoffer Green-Pedersen. 2021. "When do political parties prioritize labour? Issue attention between party competition and interest group power." *Party politics* 27 (4): 619-630.
Otjes, Simon, and Anne Rasmussen. 2017. "The collaboration between interest groups and political parties in multi-party democracies: Party system dynamics and the effect of power and ideology." *Party politics* 23 (2): 96-109.
Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2019. "The return of the single-country study." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 187-203.
Peters, Yvette, Troy Saghaug Broderstad, Mari Skåra Helliesen, Arjan Hille Schakel, and Marte Samuelsen Skogen. 2021. *Representantpanelet*

Resultater fra tredje runde. https://www.uib.no/sites/w3.uib.no/files/attachments/per_3_rapport-3.pdf.
Peters, Yvette, and Sander J. Ensink. 2015. "Differential Responsiveness in Europe: The Effects of Preference Difference and Electoral Participation." *West European Politics* 38 (3): 577-600. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.973260. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.973260.
Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The concept of representation*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of california press.
---. 2004. "Representation and democracy: An uneasy alliance." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27 (3): 335-342.
Plotke, David. 1997. "Representation is Democracy." *Constellations* 4 (1): 19-34. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.00033. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-8675.00033.
Przeworski, Adam, Juan Manuel Ortega, and Sara Gordon Rapoport. 1997. "Una defensa de la concepción minimalista de la democracia." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 59 (3): 3-36. https://doi.org/10.2307/3541371. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3541371.
Puwar, N. 1997. "Reflections on interviewing women MPs'." *Sociological Research Online* 2 (1).
Rahn, Wendy M. 1995. "Candidate evaluation in complex information environments: cognitive organization and comparison processes." In *Political judgements: Structure and process*, edited by Milton Lodge and Kathleen M. McGraw. Michigan: The university of michigan press.
Rasmussen, Anne, and Stefanie Reher. 2019. "Civil society engagement and policy representation in Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 52 (11): 1648-1676.
Rehfeld, Andrew. 2009. "Representation Rethought: On Trustees, Delegates, and Gyroscopes in the Study of Political Representation and Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 103 (2): 214-230. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055409090261. https://www.cambridge.org/core/article/representation-rethought-on-trustees-delegates-and-gyroscopes-in-the-study-of-political-representation-and-democracy/A6D5583CFF57FC81D5E0C7D38245C14D.

Rommetvedt, Hilmar. 2017. "Scandinavian corporatism in decline." In *The nordic model in political science*, edited by Oddbjørn Knutsen. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
Runciman, David. 2007. "The Paradox of Political Representation." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15 (1): 93-114. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2007.00266.x. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2007.00266.x.
Scheffer, Lior, Peter John Loewen, Stuart Soroka, Stefaan Walgrave, and Tamir Sheafer. 2018. "Nonrepresentative Representatives: An Experimental Study of the Decision Making of Elected " *American Journal of Political Science* 112 (2): 302-321.
Sevenans, Julie, Stefaan Walgrave, and Gwendolyn Joanna Epping. 2016. "How Political Elites Process Information From the News: The Cognitive Mechanisms Behind Behavioral Political Agenda-Setting Effects." *Political Communication* 33 (4): 605-627. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1153543. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1153543.
Sindermann, Cornelia, Christopher Kannen, and Christian Montag. "The degree of heterogeneity of news consumption in Germany—Descriptive statistics and relations with individual differences in personality, ideological attitudes, and voting intentions." *New Media & Society* 0 (0): 14614448211061729. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211061729. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/14614448211061729.
Soontjens, Karolin, and Stefaan Walgrave. 2021. "Listening to the people: politicians' investment in monitoring public opinion and their beliefs about accountability." *The Journal of Legislative Studies*: 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2021.2011649. https://doi.org/10.1080/13572334.2021.2011649.
Soroka, Stuart N., and Christopher Wlezien. 2008. "On the limits to inequality in representation." *Political science and politics* 41 (2): 319-327.
Spencer, Liz, Jane Ritchie, Rachel Ormston, William O'Connor, and Matt Barnard. 2014. "Analysis: Principles and processes." In *Qualitative research practice*

A guide for social science students & researchers, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls and Rachel Ormston, 269-294. London: Sage publications ltd.
Steenberg, Marco R., and Céline Colombo. 2018. "Heuristics in political behaviour." *The Oxford handbook of behavioral political science*, edited by Alex Mintz and Lesley Terris. Online publication: Oxford university press. https://doi.org/ 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190634131.013.9.
Van Aelst, Peter, Jesper Strömbäck, Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Claes de Vreese, Jörg Matthes, David Hopmann, Susana Salgado, Nicolas Hubé, Agnieszka Stępińska, Stylianos Papathanassopoulos, Rosa Berganza, Guido Legnante, Carsten Reinemann, Tamir Sheafer, and James Stanyer. 2017. "Political communication in a high-choice media environment: a challenge for democracy?" *Annals of the International Communication Association* 41 (1): 3-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551.
Walgrave, Stefaan, and Yves Dejaeghere. 2017. "Surviving information overload: How elite politicians select information." *Governance: An international journal of policy, administration, and institutions* 30 (2): 229-244. https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12209.
Walgrave, Stefaan, Julie Sevenans, Camp Kirsten Van, and Peter Loewen. 2018. "What Draws Politicians' Attention? An Experimental Study of Issue Framing and its Effect on Individual Political Elites." *Political Behavior* 40 (3): 547-569. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9413-9. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-draws-politicians-attention-

experimental/docview/2090550849/se-2
http://openurl.bibsys.no/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Apsychology&atitle=What+Draws+Politicians%26rsquo%3B+Attention%3F+An+Experimental+Study+of+Issue+Framing+and+its+Effect+on+Individual+Political+Elites&title=Political+Behavior&issn=01909320&date=2018-09-01&volume=40&issue=3&spage=547&au=Walgrave%2C+Stefaan%3BSevenans%2C+Julie%3BKirsten+Van+Camp%3BLoewen%2C+Peter&isbn=&jtitle=Political+Behavior&btitle=&rft_id=info:eric/&rft_id=info:doi/10.1007%2Fs11109-017-9413-9.

Weber, Til. 2020. "Discreet Inequality: How Party Agendas Embrace Privileged Interests." *Comparative Political Studies* 53: 1767-1797. https://doi.org/10.1177/001041420912286.

Webster, Stephen, Jane Lewis, and Ashley Brown. 2014. "Ethical considerations in qualitative research." In *Qualitative research practice*

A guide for social science students & researchers, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls and Rachel Ormston. London: Sage publications ltd.

Wernesen, Camilla. 2013. MDG på Stortinget for første gang. *NRK*.

Wilford, Allan M. 2020. "Understanding the Competing Effects of Economic Hardship and Income Inequality on Voter Turnout." *Politics & Policy* 48 (2): 314-338. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12344. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/polp.12344.

Yeo, Alice, Robin Legard, Jill Keegan, Kit Ward, Carol McNaughton Nicholls, and Jane Lewis. 2014. "In-depth interviews." In *Qualitative research practice*, edited by Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls and Rachel Ormston, 177-210. London: Sage Publication ltd.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interview guide, English & Norwegian version

Interview guide, English version.

Introduction and obtaining consent, including to record the interview.
Participation in the study is voluntary and can be withdrawn entirely or partially.
Participants have the choice to remain anonymous or participate with their names.
Meanwhile, the transcriptions and audio recordings are stored securely without any names.
Participants will receive the quotes used in the study for review.

Introduction, Experience of information and Requirements:

- Can you go through what a typical day for you at the Parliament actually looks like?
  - How do you spend your time?
  - How do you structure/prioritize your time?
  - Can you explain in more detail how you proceed?
  - What trade-offs do you make? How do you weigh different considerations
- How do you choose what to say yes to and what not to?
  - How did you come to these priorities?
  - Has anything surprised you about how you spend your time or is it different from what you envisioned?
  - (When relevant) Does this look the same in a position versus in opposition?

Information Handling and Selection:

- How do you go about familiarizing yourself with issues?
  - Where does the information come from?
  - When do you consider yourself satisfied?
  - How do you form your stance on issues?

- Has there been a time when this changed your opinion on something? When? Why?
- How do you distinguish between political information and your life outside your role? (Is there a distinction?)

- Do you feel you receive the necessary information as a representative?
  - Do you believe all perspectives reach you?
  - What characterizes those who do?
  - How certain do you feel that you know the opinions of your constituents, your voters, the general public? Do you pay attention to that?
- What role do these considerations play for you? How do you weigh different considerations?

The Role of a Representative:

- How would you describe your role?
- How does information seeking fit into this?
- How do you deal with making decisions that go against the wishes of those who voted for you?

Intervjuguide, Norsk Versjon

Spørsmål om samtykke til å ta lydopptak av intervjuet.

Deltakelse i oppgaven er frivillig, og kan trekkes tilbake helt eller delvis. Deltakere velger selv om de ønsker å anonymiseres eller vil delta med navn. I mellomtiden lagres transkripsjonene og lydopptakene trygt, og uten navn. Man vil få tilsendt sitatene som benyttes i selve oppgaven, slik at disse kan ses gjennom.

Innledende, opplevelse av informasjon og krav

Kan du gå litt gjennom hvordan en typisk dag for deg på Stortinget egentlig ser ut?

- Kan du gå litt gjennom hvordan en typisk dag for deg på Stortinget egentlig ser ut?
    - Hva bruker du tiden din på?
    - Hvordan strukturerer/prioriterer du tiden din?
    - Kan du forklare mer i detalj hvordan du går frem?
    - Hvilke avveininger gjør du?
- Hvordan velger du hva du sier ja til og ikke?
    - Hvordan kom du frem til disse prioriteringene?
    - Er det noe som har overrasket deg med hva du bruker tid på eller som er annerledes enn du så for deg?
    - (Når relevant) Ser dette likt ut i posisjon kontra opposisjon?

Informasjonshåndtering og seleksjon

- Hvordan går du frem for å sette deg inn i saker?
    - Hvor kommer informasjonen fra?
    - Når sier du deg fornøyd?
    - Hvordan danner du sakssyn?
    - Har det skjedd at dette har endret meningen din om noe? Når? Hvorfor?
    - Hvordan skiller du mellom politisk informasjon og fritiden din? (er det noe skille)

- Opplever du at du får den informasjonen du trenger som representant?
    - Tror du alle perspektiv kommer frem?
    - Hva kjennetegner de som gjør det?
    - Tror du at du vet hva velgerne dine mener? Hva folk generelt mener? Følger du med?
    - Hvilken rolle spiller disse hensynene for deg? Hvordan vekter du ulike hensyn?

Representantrollen

- Hva vil du beskrive at rollen din egentlig er?
- Hvordan passer informasjonssøking inn i dette?
- Hvordan forholder du deg til at du tar avgjørelser som går mot det de som har stemt på deg ønsker?

Appendix B: Overview of informants

Included is the list of informants, including party belonging and electoral district.

The transcriptions from the interviews are not made publicly available. To obtain access contact me by email me at dev007@uib.no or mariamelve@hotmail.com

Erling Sande - the Centre Party, Sogn og Fjordane

Maren Grøthe – the Centre Party, Sør-Trøndelag

Svein Harberg – the Conservative Party, Aust-Agder

Ove Trellevik – the Conservative Party, Hordaland

Rasmus Hansson- the Green Party, Oslo

Mani Hussaini- the Labour Party, Akershus

Sveinung Rotevatn – the Liberal Party, Hordaland

Helge Njåstad – the Progress Party, Hordaland

Sofie Marhaug – the Red Party, Hordaland