

The Rhetoric of Networked Publics

Studying Social Network Sites as Rhetorical Arenas for
Political Talk

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Abstract

As social network sites have become a central part of the modern media landscape, they have also become important arenas for political talk between citizens. The possibilities these new arenas offer for social interaction and public participation have generated what social theorists describe as a restructuring of publics into “networked publics”. Numerous studies and theories suggest how the emergence of networked publics influences political participation and democracy. Still, we know little about the nature of discourse in these arenas and how they shape rhetorical practice.

This dissertation explores the rhetoric of networked publics by studying the practices and experiences of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook in Norway. It asks: What characterizes social network sites as rhetorical arenas? And what characterizes political rhetoric on social network sites?

The dissertation adds to the growing research literature on vernacular rhetoric and political talk in everyday settings, and offers new ways to explore these perspectives in qualitative studies of online political discourse. Theoretically, it combines perspectives from the fields of rhetoric, political communication and sociology in a new framework designed to analyse and describe how changes in technological and social circumstances affect rhetorical action.

The main empirical contribution is a series of 32 in-depth interviews with “expert citizens”. The informants are identified through a snowball sampling process as central actors in a network of well-established voices from the media, politics and academia that use Twitter and Facebook as arenas for political talk and public debate. An analysis of these interviews yields the users’ own experiences that bring new dimensions to our understandings of rhetorical practice in these arenas and to how they shape political talk.

Through four thematically separate chapters the analysis of the interviews demonstrates how: 1) the informants see themselves as part of socially and discursively distinguishable networked publics described as the “tweetocracy” and the “Facebook-public”; 2) these networked publics are believed to sustain local argument cultures that separate them from both formal political processes and “ordinary” citizens; 3) these networked publics facilitate a particular kind of individualization of

political debate, as they promote strong connections between people's identities and political convictions; 4) these networked publics are preoccupied with "social media-friendly issues" that are easy to personalize and bring attention to political identities and values.

The empirical study is concluded with an analysis of the viral spread of the hashtag #ihaveexperienced on Twitter in the spring of 2015. Here, text analysis is used to explore topical and discursive structures that are suggested in the interviews. The analysis illustrates how the particular kind of individualization that social network sites facilitate plays out in a situation revolving around a typical social media-friendly issue. It thus exemplifies how insights gathered from interviews can inform and inspire rhetorical text analyses.

Drawing on basic insights from theories of structuration, the dissertation outlines how social network sites can be studied as "rhetorical arenas" and analysed as practice on the meso-level. This represents an alternative to analyses of rhetorical genre and rhetorical community. By paying more attention to social and technological conditions for rhetorical practice, this approach is better suited for studies of environments in which situational circumstances are fragmented and continuously changing.

The dissertation also offers a new understanding of political rhetoric that includes the different forms of political and civic behaviour found in online environments as well as more traditional forms of political engagement. This understanding of political rhetoric includes perspectives on deliberation, framing and agenda-setting, and epideictic rhetoric, within the same conceptual framework, and opens new ways to understand the political potential of participatory media.

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Chapter 1: Networked Publics as New Rhetorical Arenas

In the fall of 2014, the Norwegian cultural elites were intensely involved in a debate about Austrian playwright Peter Handke and the Balkan war. The background was the decision to award Handke the International Ibsen Award. Many thought Handke's previous support for Slobodan Milosevic and particularly his participation in Milosevic's funeral in 2006 were incompatible with the intentions of the prize. The "Handke-debate" turned out to be one of the fiercest literary debates in Norwegian history. In addition to Handke's authorship and political thought, the debate revolved around tensions between art, ethics and politics, and the relationship between an artist's work and public role.

The "Handke-debate" is an illustrative example of a type of political debate that regularly appears in the Norwegian public. It is typical, not because of its topic, but because of the people it engaged and how it played out. The debate moved between different areas of civic life, involving questions of politics, ethics, culture, and aesthetics, and took place within and across a variety of media platforms, from literary reviews and talk radio to tabloid newspapers and social network sites. On one hand, the debate evoked old themes and conflicts from different areas of society and different discursive communities. The debate had clear similarities with previous literary debates in Norway, such as the controversies surrounding the Nobel-laureate Knut Hamsun and his Nazi-sympathies, and with reactions to Handke in other countries, like the so-called "Handke-affair" in Germany in 2006.¹ Also, the debate revealed different understandings and experiences of the Balkan conflict and its aftermath, which gave the debate a sense of gravity and importance. This way, the debate evoked lasting tensions between discourses of international politics, political ideology and art.

On the other hand, there was something novel about the way the debate progressed. It was clearly characterised by the opportunities made by the new hybrid

¹ An English overview of this debate is found here: "The Peter Handke affair. A chronicle of the debate in the German-language press". <http://www.signandsight.com/features/809.html> (retrieved August 17th, 2017).

media environment and the new networked publics it supports. Particularly Facebook had a huge impact on the form and intensity of the debate by facilitating direct and informal exchanges between both central and not so central participants. Here, writers, journalists, politicians, editors, historians and other academics engaged in often heated discussions in the intersections between literature and politics (Mollerin & Hagerup, 2015, p. 203ff).

A year after the “Handke-debate”, over 600 pages of material was collected and published (Mollerin & Hagerup, 2015). A significant part of this material was extracted from Facebook-pages. Like exchanges in newspapers and the literary reviews, the transcripts of these discussions are filled with references to history, literature and philosophy, but the tone and style of debate is distinctly different. They combine broad expertise, internal references, aggressiveness, meta-comments, local argumentation norms, familiarity and friendliness in a way that is not comparable to any other forms of public debate or discussion. As a form of political talk, they reflect on society and its challenges in a way that defies both party politics and the attention of “ordinary” citizens. This way, they assume a level of familiarity with both the issues and the participants that is typical for the networked publics of the digital era and separates them from all other forms of political discourse.

In this dissertation, I examine what kinds of political talk the rise of social network sites are accompanied by from a rhetorical perspective; thus, I understand these forms of political talk as a source of persuasion, identification, and engagement. This way, it is also important to the formation of public opinion. My goal is to assess the status of social network sites like Twitter and Facebook as arenas for rhetorical practice by describing how they influence how people act rhetorically and how they interpret the acts of others. The focus of the study is on rhetorical discourse, not on network structures. However, the network structures found on Twitter and Facebook form a particular discursive setting that in turn makes it possible to talk about a rhetoric of networked publics.

Twitter and Facebook have come to play a major role in public debate. These network sites allow users to express opinions and share content not only about their personal life, but also about events and social issues that concern them. To understand

how people use these new media, and how they function rhetorically, should be a key concern for anybody who wishes to understand the relationship between media, discourse and democracy in modern society.

Today, Twitter and Facebook can hardly be described as new or unexplored phenomena. A well-established field of social media research has given us extensive knowledge of how people use these media and their increased relevance in political communication. However, we still lack systematic knowledge of how social network sites influence different forms of rhetorical practice. This is not necessarily a fault of the existing research-field. Much suggests that the kind of networked publics that these arenas facilitate are particularly changeable and variable. Therefore, as social network sites become increasingly important arenas for public life, we need studies that are not only concerned with the general premises or outcomes of network logics, but also with how this logic manifests in particular networks that engage in particular issues in particular socio-cultural contexts.

As a theory and an analytical approach, the field of rhetoric is well equipped to deal with these kinds of questions. Rhetorical theory encourages us to study opinion-formation on an individual level and account for the individual's ability to act persuasively in different situations. At the same time, contemporary rhetorical theory promotes a broad understanding of both "opinion-formation" and "persuasion". Studies of rhetoric in digital environments are concerned not only with persuasion in a traditional sense, but also with formations of individual and collective identities and constructions of new relations and encounter settings (Eyman, 2015; Zappen, 2005). It is this wider concern with the complexity of the communication from the perspective of the rhetor that makes a rhetorical approach potentially useful when capturing the dynamics of political talk in networked publics.

Through theoretical discussions, in-depth interviews and a case-based text analysis, this study investigates how Twitter and Facebook functions as rhetorical arenas for political talk among expert citizens in Norway. My focus is not on formal or institutional political discourse, but on everyday talk about political and civic issues among a particular network of politically engaged media users.

The case is focused on particularly engaged and politically informed citizens. Previous research has demonstrated how this segment of users tends to dominate online discussions forums (Albrecht, 2006). Also, as this study primarily draws on people's experiences and perceptions of own practice, I have chosen to focus on users that are likely to have more reflective attitude towards how they act and how they read the actions of others.

By giving a rare detailed description of one form of rhetorical practice distinctive for social network sites, this study provides new understandings of the nature of discourse in networked publics.

The Research Questions

This study has two main research questions that provide the overall focus in the dissertation. The first relates to what kind of rhetorical practice characterizes social network sites. The second relates to what kind of political discourse and political action social network sites facilitate. Combined, they allow us to describe the characteristics of social network sites as rhetorical arenas for political discourse.

RQ1: What characterize social network sites as rhetorical arenas?

RQ2: What characterizes political rhetoric in social network sites?

These research questions motivate all parts of the dissertation, including the theoretical chapters that clarify the meaning and significance of “rhetorical arenas” and “political rhetoric”. I do not attempt to define a general “rhetoric of social network sites” or to separate the rhetoric of networked publics from other forms of rhetorical action. However, I suggest that there are certain stable factors to these social network sites and the usage of them that influence how people perceive rhetorical situations and the available means of persuasion. These stable factors allow us to describe elements of rhetorical practice as characteristic of that practice. By “characteristic” I here mean elements that are recurring and typical, and that help the actors separate what goes on in these rhetorical arenas from other rhetorical arenas.

RQ2 lifts the answers to RQ1 from description to analysis. To answer this question is to suggest in what way political talk on social network sites can contribute

to formations of political opinions, how it relates to other forms of political discourse, and what role it can play in the democratic system.

In order to answer the two overarching research questions, I have divided them into seven sub-questions. The core of the dissertation is organised around a set of interviews with active Twitter and Facebook users. The interview guide and the analysis of the interviews are structured around these sub-questions. A central contribution of this dissertation is the construction of a theoretical framework to describe and analyse new and established rhetorical arenas. I suggest that the structuring properties of *rhetorical arenas* can be observed as *topical structures*, *rhetor-audience relations*, *rhetorical affordances*, and norms that govern the actors' sense of *decorum*. The first group of sub-questions will provide an answer to RQ1 based on these analytical concepts. The first group of sub-questions will provide an answer to RQ1.

RQ1.1: How do active participants describe the dominant rhetorical affordances of these arenas?

RQ1.2: How do active participants describe the dominant topical structures of these arenas?

RQ1.3: How do active participants describe rhetor-audience relations in these arenas?

RQ1.4: What are the norms that influence the participants' understanding of situations and *rhetorical decorum* in these arenas?

By asking how active participants perceive and describe these structuring properties, the sub-questions are possible to answer by using interviews. Moreover, I understand rhetorical arenas as “virtual communities” in line with social theories of practice. How people perceive and make sense of structuring properties is not simply seen as secondary to action, but is also what forms and structures rhetorical practice, as it is directly associated with how people define rhetorical situations and identify the means of persuasion available to them.

The second group of sub-questions will provide an answer to RQ2.

RQ2.1: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on political deliberation?

RQ2.2: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on processes of creating salience for political issues?

RQ2.3: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on collective identity formation?

Another important theoretical contribution of the dissertation is the formulation of an understanding of political rhetoric that is compatible with the complexity of political discourse in modern society. I argue that to approach rhetorical events as political is to ask how they relate to three basic communicative processes in society: processes of *collective decision-making*, processes of *creating salience* in the public realm, and processes of *collective identity formation*. To ask what particular constraints and possibilities social network sites place on these processes is to ask how the particularities of these arenas influence the communicative processes that amount to a rhetorical understanding of the political.

The Challenges of Social Network Sites to Rhetorical Studies

Anybody who wishes to answer these questions must first find a way to deal with the multiple challenges that social network sites pose for qualitative studies of political communication. Social network sites have different boundaries and different action possibilities than traditional mass media in terms of interactivity, connectivity and ethos-formation. Often described as a networked public (boyd, 2010), social network sites are shaped by the blurring of public and private, the loss of common context, high degree of circulation, and little control over the message. This is frequently emphasised as challenges for rhetorical studies (Gurak & Antonijevec, 2009; Warnick & Heineman, 2012; Zappen, 2005). Social network sites are in their essence formed by users' content and participation. This emphasizes the participatory role of users as active rhetorical agents, but it also contributes to the much-described complexity, fragmentation and changeability of the contemporary media society.

Moreover, the logic of social network sites calls for more intimization of political content and more medialized public intimacy, both online and offline (Hirdman, Kleberg, & Widestedt, 2005). This can in turn affect people's understandings of what constitutes "political". Processes of public opinion formation are changing as "everybody" contributes to the circulation and re-mediation of content. This way, the context provided by social network sites blurs the line between public and personal opinions. Everything people do in these arenas add to their "profile": the sum of their identity, tastes and preferences (Vatnøy, 2017).

Social network sites also represent some substantial, and still largely unresolved, difficulties for those who wish to conduct rhetorical studies of content. First of all, it has become increasingly difficult to isolate contexts that can meaningfully be described as rhetorical situations or events. Like in most online-environments, we are forced to clarify what constitutes the "text", the "audience" and the "rhetor". Of course, these questions are not new. Phenomena like "inter-textuality", "flow" and "fragmentation" have been discussed since long before the Internet. In this regard, digitalization only enhances certain inherent aspect of the communicative process. Still, the challenges these phenomena represent must be addressed if we are to provide relevant descriptions and valuations of rhetorical practices in new media.

As I see it, the challenges are twofold. On one hand, rhetorical studies oriented towards this new media ecology should be both mindful of the fact that rhetoric has always dealt with fragmented, intertextual and complex situations, and open to the possibility that new perspectives and new methods of analysis are needed. On the other hand, fundamental changes in social and technological circumstances will not only have consequences for how we best study rhetorical practice, they will also have a profound impact on the nature of this practice. Jens E. Kjeldsen has suggested that the current media ecology, in which rhetorical situations are more complex, fragmented, changeable and incalculable than ever, has led to a "new sophistic condition" that "revives questions of rhetorical agency and relativism, and provides new importance to Kairos" (Kjeldsen, 2006, p. 254).

This is to place emphasis on the contingency of rhetoric: that rhetorical practice will always change in line with social and technological realities. This calls not only for new methodologies, but also for new theoretical perspectives. Today, the explanatory potential of antique rhetoric is challenged by growing cultural and social fragmentation and new forms of mediation. Still, rhetorical theory can offer a perspective on persuasion and human reasoning that is relevant across changing social contexts, but the methods and focus of rhetorical research must change as the institutions and processes that maintain these discursive functions change. This also implies that rhetorical studies must adapt to theories of democracy that are better suited to describe our current political system. Rather than being considered as a holistic perspective on discourse and democracy, “political rhetoric” then comes to represent a particular viewpoint that can be applied within, or in combination with, a broad range of social science research.

It is against this background that the contributions of this dissertation should be understood. In line with rhetorical scholars like Burke and McGee, I maintain that “studies of rhetoric should contribute positively to understanding the social processes and the human condition” (McGee, 1975, p. 247f). There are primarily three ways in which this dissertation contributes positively to understanding the social processes that face us in networked publics.

First, the dissertation provides a comprehensive description of one type of practice that is made possible by the introduction of social network sites. Studying active participants through in-depth interviews, we get an understanding of what kind of political content they are exposed to and interact with in these arenas, and how it affects political views and values, civic engagement and political identity.

The study demonstrates how political talk in these arenas has a strong potential to make new issues, or aspects of issues, salient in the public domain. Also, the networked publics that this study focuses on tend to see political talk as a way to emphasize, challenge, and potentially form political and social identities. Rather than trying to influence political decisions directly, this new type of political discourse is suited to display and process individually held political opinions.

By providing an example of how interviews can be used to produce new data, this study also offers an answer to the methodological challenges that face rhetorical studies of new media. Recently, central voices from within the field have argued that rhetoricians should turn to field methods when interested in local expressions and modes of interaction that are not collected and stored (McKinnon, Aasen, Chavez, & Howard, 2016) The multiple difficulties of separating and reconstructing a stable situation for analysis make it difficult to analyse rhetorical practices using traditional text-oriented research-methods. The interviews are thus used as a way to access the informants' own experiences of "the field": "the nexus where rhetoric is produced, where it is enacted, where it circulates, and, consequently, where it is audienced" (McKinnon et.al 2016, p. 4).

Second, I propose a new way to describe how changes in technological and social circumstances affect rhetorical action. Rhetorical studies have always been concerned with the balance between the particularities of situations and the forces of continuity and convention that makes it possible for a speaker to identify the means of persuasion that situations offer. However, other theoretical traditions provide more elaborate frameworks to describe how the relationship between continuity and change affects social practices. In this dissertation, I combine rhetorical theory with structuration theory in order to describe how social network sites, despite their changeability, also form stable encounter settings for rhetorical action. The social systems that maintain these stable encounter settings are here referred to as *rhetorical arenas*. Our public sphere consists of a multitude of such arenas in which people act in particular ways as audience and speakers. By isolating and analysing them, we get a better understanding of the different local rhetorical practices that new technologies and new media support. This theoretical framework allows me to describe how the networked publics of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook in Norway maintain local argument cultures and a particular kind of political talk, "chatter", that distinguish them from other areas of the public.

Third, the dissertation offers a way to describe the function and scope of political rhetoric in new media and between new and old media. To grasp the nature of political communication in networked publics, we need a theoretical framework that is

broader than one that limits its rhetorical component to deliberative and electoral processes. Rhetoric is a theory of communication that can be applied to multiple understandings of politics and democracy. As a general theory of communication, it is also well suited to capture the potential functions of political communication beyond its role in political processes and political institutions. I suggest that political rhetoric should be seen as all utterances and events relating to three communicative processes: 1) processes of collective decision-making; 2) processes of creating salience in the public realm, and 3) processes of collectivization. This includes perspectives on deliberation, framing and agenda-setting, and epideictic rhetoric within the same conceptual framework.

Background: Digital political communication and digital rhetoric

Political communication research has always been concerned with how communication technology influences the nature of political discourse and democracy (Miller & McKerrow, 2010; Rogers, 2004). This interest is evident in the field's origin in the overlap of mass media communication and political practice, as well as in recent decades' focus on agenda-setting, news events and media genres as key analytical units to understand the communicative processes of modern democracies (Rogers, 2004). With the rise of participatory media, a central interest for political communication research has thus been to explore its potential and actual impact on political and democratic processes. Political communication scholars are interested in the use of social network sites in election campaigns (Dutta & Bhat, 2016; Enli & Moe, 2013; Jungherr, 2015), their impact on civic engagement (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Boulianne, 2015; Skoric, Zhu, Goh, & Pang, 2016), and their role as platforms for social movements and political activism (Bennett, 2012; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Beyer, 2014; Papacharissi, 2015). In recent years there has also been an increased interest in describing the nature of "social media logic" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Kalsnes, 2016; Klinger & Svensson, 2014; van Dijck & Poell, 2013), understood as the sum of "the norms, strategies, mechanisms, and economies underpinning its dynamics" (van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Scholars promoting this view are interested in how this logic influences the nature of discourse in social network

sites, but also in how the ways of thinking and acting it assumes are gradually invading other areas of public life.

Adding to this increased interest in new media platforms, there has been a significant focus on how the digital networks facilitated by these media platforms are changing the underlying conditions of political communication (Castells, 2010; Couldry, 2015; van Dijck, 2006). The most optimistic commentators have praised the democratic potential of networks (Shirky, 2008). Some suggest that the new lines of dialogue and conversation that participatory media allow can have a profound impact on the nature of modern democracy (Dahlgren, 2013). Others argue that “networked individualism” is empowering individuals (Rainie & Wellman, 2012), enforcing new forms of self-identity (Papacharissi, 2010), and changing the way people relate to political movements and political causes (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013). On the other hand, sceptics have warned against the perils of “echo chambers”, in which opinions are rarely confronted but always reinforced (Sunstein, 2009), and that the revolutionary potential of these new forms of political discourse eventually will be normalized by the socio-political reality and strengthen already powerful political institutions (Hindman, 2009; Margolis & Resnick, 2000).

The prevailing attitude today seems to be moderately optimistic (Loader & Mercea, 2011). As network locations have become both more widespread and more stable, researchers seem to be less concerned with potential consequences and more concerned with actual practice, asking how these network locations can influence people’s understanding of the public (Wright, 2012), what exactly is new about these new media platforms (Gripsrud, 2009), and what exactly digital networks transform (Couldry, 2015).

Along this development, there has been close association between qualitatively oriented political communication research and rhetoric (Gronbeck, 2004). Historically, scholars who have developed the rhetorical side of political communication research have combined insights from classical rhetoric with understandings of the political media of the times (Gronbeck, 2004; Hall Jamieson, 1988; Hart, 1994; Kjeldsen & Johansen, 2012). This has proven particularly useful when generating knowledge about the persuasive potential of mass media. Along with the growing body of Internet

research, there has also been an emergence of new rhetorical perspectives which seek to adjust classical rhetorical knowledge to a digital reality. These include “digital rhetoric” (Eyman, 2015; Lanham, 1992; Zappen, 2005), “online rhetoric” (Warnick and Heineman, 2012), “screen rhetoric” (Welch, 1999) and “new media rhetoric” (Brooke, 2009) (for the sake of simplicity, I will refer to all these as “digital rhetoric”).

Similar to those who promote a notion of social media logic, this new field has placed great emphasis on describing the structural implication of digitalization to rhetoric, its characteristics, affordances and constraints (Brooke, 2009; Gurak, 2001; Gurak & Antonijevic, 2009; Warnick & Heineman, 2012). James Zappen (2005) formulates in general terms the central concerns of digital rhetoric:

Studies of the new digital media explain some of the basic characteristics of communication in digital spaces and some of their attendant difficulties. Such basic characteristic function as both affordances and constraints and so help to explain how the new media support and enable the transformation of the old rhetoric of persuasion into a new digital rhetoric that encourages self-expression, participation, and creative collaboration (Zappen, 2005, p. 320)

The shift, from the “old rhetoric of persuasion” to a new digital rhetoric of “self-expression, participation, and creative collaboration” that Zappen observes, emphasizes the continuous relevance of rhetorical studies of the media of politics. Still, few empirical studies contribute to map the different sides of this shift. Studies of digital rhetoric have generally been more interested in the influence of digitalization on discourse from a writing- or literacy perspective, than other structural properties of digital media, such as the social network they support, different local expressions, or the potential influence of digital discourse on other forms of political rhetoric.

Studies of Political Talk as Political Communication

There are particular two lines of research that inform the interests of this study. One is the interest in everyday talk as political discourse from the perspective of political communication research. This is often overlapping with interests in network structures and new media logics. The other is the similar interest in vernacular expressions from the perspective of rhetorical research. Both examine the nature and functions of

dialogue between citizens, and between citizens and politicians, in ways that are relevant for studies of political discourse in participatory media.

In recent decades, political communication scholars have become increasingly interested in the functions and significance of everyday talk, or “ordinary democracy” (Rosanvallon, 2008), for political opinion and cognition. This line of research promotes an understanding of public life as an interpersonal and everyday activity (Carey, 1995; Walsh, 2004). Some have promoted studies of conversations and discussions among citizens as a vital piece missing from theories of deliberation (Eveland, 2004). Others are more interested in the importance of individuals and personal relations to the course of political opinion and cognition (Lenart, 1994; Mutz & Mondak, 2006; Scheufele, 2000; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000), in line with earlier research on political psychology and opinion-makers’ role in everyday settings (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1957). Much of this interest in political talk is influenced by theories of the public sphere and questions of how to secure (a more deliberative) democracy (Graham, 2015; Jacobs, Cook, & Carpini, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2008; Mansbridge, 1999). A growing body of research suggests that everyday talk about political issues can increase political knowledge (Bennett, Flickinger, & Rhine, 2000; Eveland, 2004; Jackman & Sniderman, 2006; McClurg, 2003; Toka, 2009) and engagement and interest in public affairs (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; Klofstad, 2007; Mcleod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999).

Because of the particular possibilities they offer for citizen-to-citizen communication, researchers have been particularly interested in the role of political talk in online environments. Many have investigated and discussed whether these environments can live up to deliberative standards (Davis, 2005; Dunne, 2009; Jensen, 2003; Kies, 2010; Loveland & Popescu, 2011; Stromer-Galley, 2007), and to what extent everyday talk in online forums facilitate contact between opposing ideas and opinions (Brundidge, 2010; Stromer-Galley, 2003; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). The result of this research is indeterminate, but there seems to be a growing consensus of opinion that digital environments do not support established norms of deliberation. This has lead commentators to reject the explanatory potential of deliberative theory in these environments (Chadwick, 2009; Janssen & Kies, 2005) and to call for alternative

ways to understand the significance of online political discussions (Coleman & Moss, 2012; Dahlgren, 2005).

Another line of research focuses on what kind of public arenas these environments are and how they are likely to shape and influence practice. Here, studies explore the potentials of participatory media to form new public spaces (Wright, 2012; Wright, Graham, & Jackson, 2016; Wright & Street, 2007), or how apparently non-political sites become arenas for political talk (Graham, 2010; Jackson, Scullion, & Molesworth, 2013; Ytre-Arne, 2015). Others explore the relation between communicative practice, interaction design and affordances (Bendor, Haas Lyons, & Robinson, 2012; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013b), and how talk in these environments differs from face-to-face settings (Baek, Wojcieszak, & Carpini, 2012; Davis, 2005; Wojcieszak, Baek, & Carpini, 2009). Early studies of digital networks have examined how participants in online communities separate their activities from other groups by different ways of speaking and reasoning (Becker & Mark 1999; Becker & Wehner, 2001; Poster, 1995).

Yet others focus on social compositions in digital environments (Coleman & Blumler, 2008; Dunne, 2009; Witte & Mannon, 2010). Particularly relevant for this study is the attention paid to the “dominant” minority of particularly engaged participants, called “super participants” (Graham & Wright, 2013). Several studies suggest that political debates in open online fora are dominated by a minority of highly committed and often very knowledgeable participants (Albrecht, 2006; Anstead & O’Loughlin, 2011; Davis, 2005; Kies, 2010).

These lines of political communication research have opened our understanding of the nature and relevance of political talk both in offline and online environments. This includes how political opinions are formed in interactions between citizens, and how these interactions tend to take on local expressions in different environments rather than model the communicative ideals of institutionalized political processes. The research has also given us a better understanding of the various functions of political talk, like its potential to spread political information and strengthen “social capital” (Scheufele, 2000), its influence on civic relationships (Eveland, Morey, & Hutchens, 2011), and its ability to prepare citizens and the political system at large for

political behaviour (Graham, 2015). However, most studies do not examine in any great detail the nature of discourse in local environments, beyond measurable factors such as frequency and deliberative quality. This is also the case for political talk in online environments. Although much online discourse is readily available for research, few studies examine discourse in online environments using qualitative methods. A natural next step for researching political talk in digital environments, then, is qualitative studies that examine particular types of talk and how they relate to social and political networks.

The Vernacular Turn in Rhetorical Studies

This dissertation builds on this research on political talk and supplements it with perspectives from rhetorical theory. Through the concept of “the vernacular”, rhetorical theory offers a more precise and operational understanding of “talk”, that does not only focus on its dialogical and casual form, but also on the type of authority it evokes and how it can function as a source of persuasion, identification and engagement.

In what can be described as a “vernacular turn” in contemporary rhetorical theory, rhetorical studies have seen the same increased interest in interpersonal communication and everyday talk as source of political opinion and cognition, both in relation to online environments and in general. More attention is paid to the rhetorical potential of everyday situations (Duffy & Nystrand, 2003; Smith, 2010). Gerard Hauser has developed the theory of *vernacular rhetoric* as a distinctly rhetorical perspective on the public sphere that also accounts for the multitude of local and informal norms and practices that informs modern public life (Hauser, 1998, 1999b; Hauser, 2007). Glenn Robert Howard has further developed the theories of vernacular rhetoric with perspectives from both folklore and rhetorical theory (Howard, 2005, 2010), and suggested how this can be utilized in studies of digital spaces (Howard, 2005, 2008a, 2008c). Chris Ingraham (2013) has suggested how the concept of vernacular rhetoric can describe the immediate and direct form of political action that distinguishes the masses from the elites. Rhetorical scholars have also promoted a renewed interest in the local arenas of political participation that “ordinary” citizens

have both access to and influence over (McCormick, 2003; Tracy & Durfy, 2007; Tracy, McDaniel, & Gronbeck, 2007).

Parallel to the growing interest in rhetorical practice in everyday settings, there has also been an increased interest in the rhetorical aspects of citizenship (Asen, 2004; Dahlgren, 2006). Robert Danisch has introduced the term “rhetorical citizenship” to explain the participatory and pragmatic nature of citizenship in modern democracies (Danisch, 2007, 2011, 2015). The same term has also been developed in Scandinavia, by Lisa S. Villadsen and Christian Kock (Kock & Villadsen, 2012, 2014, 2017; Villadsen, 2017). Here, these perspectives have also been used to describe the quality of political discourse (Berge, 2014) and online deliberation (Rønlev, 2014).

Howard (2010) is one of the few who have used the concept of vernacular rhetoric to describe particular examples of online discourse, through a study of vernacular and institutional modes of discourse in political campaign blogs. In this context, he does not define the vernacular as casual or everyday talk, but more precisely as appeals to non-institutional authority. This structural conception of the vernacular can help account for the common resource of non-institutional expression that individuals are engaged in online while also acknowledging that institutional agents can engage in vernacular talk (Howard, 2010, p. 241). This understanding of vernacular rhetoric can thus account for the blurring of the distinction between the institutional and the non-institutional that takes place in much participatory media. Participatory media allow institutional actors to use forms associated with the vernacular to their own discursive ends. This is what happens when political actors establish blogs or Facebook-pages.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the term vernacular rhetoric to emphasize the local and the non-institutionalised nature of political discourse in these arenas. Although the informants interviewed in this study have easy access to political processes and established media, participation in social network sites is seen as an individual and personal activity separated from the institutionalised discourses of political parties and news media. The interviews show that much of what the informants see as characteristic and typical of political talk on Twitter and Facebook is also what differentiates them from other arenas of public life. The particular kind of

conversation these media facilitate, and the impressions and relations they allow people to form of each other over time, amount to a type of political talk that is not only different from debates in the press and the broadcast media, but is also believed to represent a contrast and an alternative to them. When analysing the interviews, I describe this local rhetorical practice as dominated by an individualization of political debate, an inclination towards discussing “value issues” and a particular kind of ironic attitude. Many key elements of these patterns are best described in terms of vernacular rhetoric, as they are drawn from local idiomatic forms of expression and ways of arguing. Also, the concept of vernacular rhetoric allows us to describe the rhetorical potential of new interactive functions, like the rhetorical significance of “likes”, “shares”, “re-tweets” and emoticons.

The Norwegian Context

The Norwegian political public provides a rich case for studies of the rhetoric of networked publics. Norway has the highest number of internet users for any population over one million.² Over 80 percent of the population has a smartphone,³ and over 60 percent of the population state that they use social media on an average day (usually Facebook), making Norway among the countries in the world with the largest proportion of its population active on social network sites.⁴ Of a population of 5,2 million people, approximately 3,8 million have a Facebook-account and 1,1 million have a Twitter-account.⁵

The use of social network sites has also increased dramatically in Norwegian politics in recent years (Enjolras, Karlsen, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebæk, 2013; Enli & Skogerbø, 2013; Kalsnes, 2016), and it is well established that they have become important arenas for political discourse between citizens and between politicians and citizens (Enjolras & Bock Seggaard, 2011; Kleven, Aardal, Bergh, Hesstvedt, & Hindenes, 2013). Moreover, for those who are interested in studying political

² The International Telecommunication Association, 2017: <http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/facts/default.aspx> (accessed August 17th 2017)

³ Medienorge.uib.no: <http://medienorge.uib.no/statistikk/medium/ikt/379> (accessed August 17th 2017)

⁴ Medienorge.uib.no <http://medienorge.uib.no/statistikk/medium/ikt/412> (accessed July 27th 2017)

⁵ According to an approximation made by sosialkommunikasjon.no:

<http://sosialkommunikasjon.no/brukertallene-i-sosiale-medier/> (Accessed July 27th 2017)

discourse, the introduction of social network sites has meant the *mediation* of political talk and the potential access to a form of political discourse that until now has been largely unavailable.

In order to understand the implications of this development, one should have a general idea of the particular socio-cultural context. With approximately five million inhabitants, Norway is a relatively small democracy and language community. It is a constitutional monarchy with a multi-party parliamentary system and an example of what in political theory is known as Scandinavian “consensus-democracies” or “consensual-democracies”, characterised by “a distinctly Scandinavian culture of consensus and structures for conciliation and arbitration” (Elder, Thomas, & Arter, 1982). Culturally, Norway is an egalitarian society with small cultural and economic differences. The egalitarian culture has had significant influence on the political system and the public sphere. Norwegian politics are characterised by small political differences, bi-partisan co-operation, broad political coalitions and low levels of political polarization.

The Norwegian media-system is characterised by large news consumption, small differences between news providers and high trust in news media. In Hallin and Mancini’s comparative overview, the Norwegian media system fits into the democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This is characterised by a “historical coexistence of commercial media and media tied to organized social and political groups, and by a relatively active but legally limited role of the state” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Compared to other western democracies, Norwegian media have a strong position in the political system. The national public broadcaster (NRK) has a uniquely strong position in the public (Syvertsen, Enli, Mjøs, & Moe, 2014), and maintains a role as arena for political debate and political news coverage in and between election campaigns (Kleven et al., 2013). Despite the media institutions’ different backgrounds and political profiles, Norwegian media users also have high degrees of trust in various other news providers (Knudsen, Hoem Iversen, & Vatnøy, forthcoming).

In sum, Norway, like other Scandinavian countries, seems to have sustained a more integrated national public sphere than other larger parliamentary democracies,

like Germany or the UK. This also means that the Norwegian public sphere has had some special preconditions and challenges when it comes to digitalization. Norwegian newspapers have been particularly vulnerable to the financial competition from major international actors like Google and Facebook. Norway has also seen relatively big changes in the relation between media and political organisations, as political organisations have started to use media that allow them to communicate directly to the voters. Also, some Norwegian newspapers have been early adapters to the new digital environments (Kvalheim, 2016). This includes embracing social network sites as potential marketing channels for journalistic content.

These conditions inform at least three structural changes that interrelate with the development of networked publics and that are actualized through this study.

First, the combination of a relatively small language community and an egalitarian political tradition promotes formations of networks across political and geographical differences. The case study in this dissertation demonstrates how networks on a national level are maintained through social network sites. It also demonstrates how different forms of boundary-work and perceptions of insider- and outsider-actors are drawn primarily from knowledge and practices associated with particular public roles and positions. It is the highly informed and politically engaged citizens that form a national network of political talk on Twitter and Facebook in Norway.

Second, the changing conditions of the press have led to an increased focus on opinions and political commentary in news media. This type of content is cheap, original and easy to promote in social media, as it exploits the interactive functions of social network sites by inviting responses and debate. The case study demonstrates how the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook are closely connected to the op-ed-content of the news media. They are considered both important sources of content and important arenas for spreading content.

Third, the development of networked publics is fused by the personalization of politics on the Internet. The new media environment has led to increased attention to individual “profiles” and what in Norway is described as individual “voices”. This development can be observed in media, in politics, in academia and among voters and

social movements. The case study demonstrates how perceptions of a network of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook are fused by peoples' ability to form personal and individual impressions of other actors over time. The informants describe how participating on social network sites has given them a better impression of individual journalists and individual politicians. The analysis also demonstrates how the encounter settings of social network sites promote a strong connection between a person's identity and political convictions.

Combined, these conditions form the context for my study.

Defining Terms: Rhetoric, Social Network Sites, Expert Citizens

This dissertation draws on insights from many different theoretical traditions. For the purpose of clarification, I offer a definition of some of the most central terms in this section. Some of these terms – or elements of them, like “networks” and “experts” – have everyday connotations that both have analytical value and are important for connecting the informants' experiences to theoretical explanations. Hence, the aim of the definitions is not rigour, but precision.

Rhetoric

By *rhetoric* I refer to the use of communication as a means to an end. This is in line with numerous rhetorical scholars that have a prominent position in this dissertation. Jens E. Kjeldsen defines rhetoric as “purposive and effective communication” (Kjeldsen, 2004, my translation). Similarly, Gerard A. Hauser has defined rhetoric as “an instrumental use of language”. According to Hauser, rhetoric is not communication for communication's sake, but is “concerned with the use of symbols to induce social action” (Hauser, 2002, p. 3) Jim Kuypers defines rhetoric as “[t]he strategic use of communication, oral or written, to achieve specifiable goals” (Kuypers, 2004). Michael Billig (1991) sees rhetoric as a bridge between public deliberation and the physiological processes of making decisions, thus making processes of decision-making central functions of rhetoric. Similarly, Kjell Lars Berge defines political rhetoric as “ [...] every utterance that seeks to persuade and thus affect collective action in society” (Berge, 2014, my translation).

As these definitions suggest, a defining feature of rhetoric is to see communication as intentional activity. The speaker is thought to adjust her communication to the audience and the situation to best achieve her communicative goals. In a rhetorical perspective, communication is always seen as contingent and situated (Kjeldsen, 2014). Not only the outcome of the case in question, but also what is likely to be the best or most efficient rhetorical choice of action, will depend on the particular circumstances. This way, rhetorical communication is always inextricably linked to the entire situation in which it occurs.

How we understand “situations” has thus major importance for a rhetorical approach. Depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the structuring properties of the context or the acting agent, rhetorical research have either seen the speaker as reacting to a set of situational demands (Bitzer, 1968), or viewed the speaker as creator of a situation by defining and drawing attention to certain issues (Vatz, 1973). Without dismissing the analytical usefulness of these approaches, contemporary rhetorical theory has increasingly turned to an understanding of rhetorical situations as social constructs that are the result of inter-subjective definition (Miller, 1984). This approach emphasizes rhetorical communication as a cooperative two-way process that requires mutual understanding and trust. These approaches emphasize the constructionist influence in rhetorical theory by drawing attention to the contingently produced nature of different aspects of the rhetorical process. The renewed interest in the inter-subject aspects of rhetoric is also observable in studies and theories that focus on identity as the primary function of public rhetoric, either by studying identity through ideology (McGee, 1980), identity through style (Brummett, 2008), identity displays (Condor, Gibson, & Abell, 2006), or identity through linguistic traits (Condor, Tileaga, & Billig, 2013; De Cock, 2011; Maitland & Wilson, 1987; Moss, 1985; Myers, 1999; Peterson, 2007; Ventsel, 2007; Wilson, 1990).

Throughout the dissertation, I refer to a broad selection of different rhetorical theories and scholars. I will not offer a rigorous definition of rhetoric. I will, however, maintain that rhetoric should always be understood as intentional, contingent, situated and inter-subjective.

These intrinsic qualities of rhetorical communication also show how a rhetorical perspective differs from a political communication-perspective. When I use the term *political communication* in this dissertation, it is understood as: “All communication between social actors on political matters – interpersonal and mediated” (Negrine & Stanyer, 2007, p. 1). This is the same phenomenon that a political rhetoric perspective is interested in.

Compared to a rhetorical approach, studies in the political communication paradigm tend to be more focused on formal political processes of decision-making. This is evident in for instance Brian McNair’s definition of political communication as “communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objects” (McNair, 2012, p. 4). Comparing the two traditions, Beasley (2009) has pointed out that “[r]ather than being evaluated as an art, then, the political communication paradigm tends to evaluate discourse in terms of its efficacy as a stimulus” (Beasley, 2009, p. 591). Although I maintain that rhetoric will always be intentional, rhetorical studies are concerned with all potential functions of utterances in their situational context. A political communication-perspective is better suited to uncover the designation of structural power in political processes and in and between the dominant institutions of the public sphere. However, when concerned with particular situations, studies of political communication can benefit from theories of situated communication. It is in this regard that rhetorical theory can be a valuable supplement to political communication studies.

Social network sites and networked publics

In the following, I understand social media as “internet-based services that facilitate social networking as well as creation and sharing of content between users” (Moe, forthcoming). However, I do not seek make any claims about social media in general. When I use the term “social media”, it is usually based either on the informants’ statements or in reference to other sources. A better term for the purpose of this study is “participatory media”, which is preferred by Robert Glenn Howard (Howard, 2010). This draw attention to how these media sites constitute people as active participants in rhetorical situations. When no other considerations are made, I use *participatory*

media as a collective term for all “internet-based services that facilitate social networking”.

More relevant for this dissertation is the term *social network sites*. boyd and Ellison offer a three-part definition of social network sites:

“We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site” (boyd & Ellison, 2007)

This definition emphasizes profile-management and connectivity as the defining functions of social network sites. They are thus understood as a particular kind of participatory media that is structured around online personas and relations. How these technical functions facilitate and shape rhetorical practice is a central question in the dissertation. In the following, I use the term “social network sites” in line with boyd’s definition. It should be emphasized, however, that all empirical claims are based on Facebook and Twitter.

Beyond this technical and functional definition, social network sites have also been popularly framed and perceived as *virtual communities* (Parks, 2011) and *networked publics* (boyd, 2010; Langlois, Elmer, McKelvey, & Devereaux, 2009). Malcolm Parks (2011) describes how forces of *community* grow from network sites’ tendencies to valorise internal language and imagery and establish norms for who can join, how they can express themselves and how they can form connections to other individuals. The sense of online community that follows does not necessarily overlap with the media platform, but occurs between people who use these media for similar purposes.

Focusing on the kind of social and public space they create, boyd has described social network sites as a particular kind of *networked publics*:

“Networked publics are publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such, they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice” (boyd, 2010)

A similar definition of networked publics is offered by Langlois et al. (2009) in their exploration of the relation between “code” and “politics” on Facebook:

“We define networked publics as those publics that come into being through online informational processes. The online informational systems provide the material, communicational, and social means for a public to exist, and this takes place through the implementation of a network that defines the parameters of agency of a public and its specific communicative affordances” (Langlois et al., 2009, p. 430).

While definitions of social network sites focus on the technological features of these sites, descriptions of networked publics draw attention to the social space participatory media open and to how they potentially contribute to deeper changes to the arrangement of the public sphere and its influence on political processes. As both boyd (2010) and Langlois et al. (2009) emphasize, networked publics are seen as intrinsically linked to online technologies that allow smaller groups of people to congregate online.

The idea of a *networked public sphere* I see as a theoretical conceptualization that demonstrates how earlier perceptions of the public sphere pair with networked media technologies. A networked public is composed of both technological and social factors that allow people to act and connect in new ways and in new surroundings. They allow people to connect with people beyond the private sphere and gather for social, cultural and civic purposes.

Social scientists have approached the concept of networked publics, and the idea of our contemporary public as a networked public, as a fundamental feature of contemporary society that has impact far beyond the boundaries of social network sites (Benkler, 2006; Castells, 2010; Friedland, Hove, & Rojas, 2006; Terranova, 2004). This tradition sees networked publics as a more profound and comprehensive consequence of digitalization, and maintains that contemporary society can be described as a “network culture” (Terranova, 2004) or a “network society” (van Dijck, 2006). In his account of networks as the structuring metaphor of modern society, Manuel Castells concludes: “Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation

and outcomes in processes of production, experiences, power, and culture” (Castells, 2010, p. 500).

Castells is concerned with the network society as the logic of the new globalized capitalist system, but it will also have profound effects on the nature of politics and democratic processes. Today, all types of political actors are increasingly influenced by computer-mediated communication networks. All politics has to be framed in the language of electronically based media, which will have a profound impact on the characteristics, organization, and goals of political processes, political actors, and political institutions (Castells, 2010, p. 502).

Castells understands *networks* in the following way:

“Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they are able to communicate within the network, namely as long as they share the same communicative codes (for example, values or performance goals). A network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance” (Castells, 2010, p. 502).

Castells thus sees networks as social entities. He maintains that the network society is made possible by new technology that creates new electronic information networks, but is less concerned with how networks are technologically determined and more concerned with how they are socially and discursively constructed.

In this study, I propose a rhetorical approach to networked publics that is consistent with all the theoretical descriptions presented here. In line with other scholars that focus on participatory media, I assume that networking technology play a crucial role in formation of networks. By describing them as rhetorical arenas maintained by a particular segment of users, I show how the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook can simultaneously constitute a space and an imagined collective (Marwick & boyd, 2010). Moreover, as network ties are not simply technical, but social and discursive, I suggest how they can be studied with the tools of rhetorical analysis.

Expert citizens

Henrik Paul Bang describes *expert citizens* as a role assumed by particularly able actors in social and political movements (Bang, 2003, 2004, 2005). The term is not originally used to describe actors in participatory media. However, it is an accurate description of how the informants are portrayed by themselves and others.

The term also brings attention to the debate of whether there is, despite the much praised democratizing potential, an elite control in politically engaged networks of participatory media (Meraz, 2009). In Norway, Twitter in particular has been described as an arena dominated by elite participants and elitist voices (Aalen, 2015). In this context, “expert citizens” can possess many of the qualities associated with “opinion makers” (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1957), “super-participants” (Graham & Wright, 2013) and media “elites” (Gustafsson & Breindl, 2010; Meraz, 2009), without assuming all the critical and theoretical implications of these concepts.

In the following, I use “expert citizens” to describe the self-reported role of the informants as they are performed on social network sites. In the interview situations, and therefore also in some of the quotes, I use the term “opinion-makers”, as it is a more established term in Norwegian than “expert citizens”. However, while “opinion-makers” assumes some kind of rhetorical effect, “expert citizens” refers solely to people’s qualities and activities.

According to Bang, expert citizens are “most often new professionals, particularly in voluntary organizations, who feel they can articulate and do policy as well, and even better, than politicians and other professionals from the public and private domain” (Bang, 2004, p. 28).

Bang’s research is focused on social movements and political campaigns. He thus identifies some traits of expert citizens that are not as relevant or valid when concentrating on participatory media and adjustments should be made when this term is applied to social network sites. Still the informants’ experiences are largely coinciding with that of expert citizens.

Bang offers a four-point list over the typical qualities that expert citizens possess. First, expert citizens have “a wide conception of the political as a discursive construct; a full-time, overlapping, project identity reflecting their overall life style”

(Bang, 2004, p. 28). This means that expert citizens are active and determined participants in different levels of the public debate. In this study, I do not assume a “project identity” to be reflected in the informants’ “overall life style”. Rather, I assume that it will be reflected in their digital presence.

Second, expert citizens have “the necessary expertise for exercising influence in elite networks” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). Here I understand “elite networks” as formal and informal networks of people with close connection to political processes and mass media, and “the necessary expertise” as the vocabulary, the expert knowledge, and the particular social skills that are required in order to have credibility within these networks.

Third, expert citizens prefer “negotiation and dialogue before antagonism and opposition” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). Whether such claims about motivations and preferences hold true for expert citizens in social network sites is yet to be tested. However, for Bang, the preference for dialogue constitutes a defining feature of experts. Expert citizens, as they are observed within political movements, build “networks of negotiation and cooperation with politicians, administrators, interest groups, media and private companies across conventional boundaries” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). This sounds a lot like how resourceful and determined citizens might utilize networked publics.

Fourth, expert citizens have “a view of themselves as an autonomous part of the system, rather than as identical with it or external and oppositional to it” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). A hallmark of expert citizens is that they are able to both promote their own opinions and beliefs and critically oppose or challenge opposing views.

I assume that these qualities in varying degrees inform the role of expert citizens in social network sites. In chapter 7, I offer a lengthy discussion of how the self-reported role of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook in Norway confirms and supplements Bang’s observations.

Outline of the Chapters

The rest of the dissertation is structured in the following way:

In chapter 2, “Decision-making, Saliency, and Collectivisation”, I present an understanding of political rhetoric that can include all the different forms of political

communication that we encounter in both social network sites and more traditional parts of the public sphere.

In chapter 3, “Meso-Level Analysis of Rhetorical Practice”, I discuss the need for new ways to analyse rhetorical action on the meso-level. I argue that the rhetorical concept of genre is insufficient to describe much of the practice that we are confronted with in social network sites, and suggest how rhetorical studies can benefit from perspectives from structuration theory.

In chapter 4, “A Structuration Approach to Rhetorical Arenas”, I suggest an understanding of rhetorical arenas as stable encounter settings for rhetorical practice organised as social systems surrounding particular locales. The structuring properties of rhetorical arenas can then be analysed as rhetorical decorum, rhetor-audience relations, rhetorical affordances and the topical structures of the arena.

Chapters 5-10 are devoted to the case study. In chapter 5, “Methodology and Research Design”, I give an outline of the research process and of the methodological and ethical reflections that inform the research design.

In chapter 6, “The Chattering Classes of Participatory Media”, I explore how the informants see themselves as expert citizens and how they understand this position in relation to the arena and to the public at large. The informants see themselves as part of network publics described as the “tweetocracy” and the “Facebook-public”. I describe what kind of practice the informants associate with these networked publics, and discuss them in light of theories of the public sphere and rhetorical irony.

In chapter 7, “The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics”, I suggest how local argument cultures are sustained between the elite networks of academia, politics and media, and “ordinary citizens” on Twitter and Facebook. I also suggest how these argument cultures imply important boundary-work for the insider participants, as they contribute to a sense of belonging to a network through the maintenance of argumentation norms.

In chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”, I explore the relation between social network sites and processes known as personalization or individualization of politics. I argue that the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook facilitate a particular kind of individualization of political debate. This

involves three conditions: a strong connection between person and beliefs; an individualistic approach to public and professional roles, and argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreements.

In chapter 9, “Topical Structures and Individualization”, I discuss the topical structures of Twitter and Facebook. I argue that these rhetorical arenas favour issues that are easy to personalize. These issues involve immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech – issues that some of the informants describe as central to an ongoing “culture war”. These issues are thought to encourage people’s personal opinions and evaluations and do not require much expert knowledge. The findings are discussed in light of theoretical descriptions of obtrusive versus unobtrusive issues on the public agenda and in light of the understanding of political rhetoric outlined in chapter 2.

In chapter 10, “#ihaveexperienced”, I offer a rhetorical analysis of the viral campaign surrounding the hashtag #ihaveexperienced in the spring of 2015. The analysis of the tweets in the campaign demonstrates how they established a particular propositional attitude, implied in the act of sharing personal experiences, and a consistent personal perspective, formed by the speakers’ deep personal connection to the issue. This way, the Twitter-campaign managed to break down the barrier between personal experience and social issue.

Finally, in chapter 11, “Discussion”, I revisit the research questions and give a description of the characteristics of social network sites as rhetorical arenas for political discourse are. The discussion here is structured around the analytical concepts developed in chapters 2 and 4.

Chapter 2: Decision-Making, Salience and Collectivisation

The aim of this chapter is to present a working definition of political rhetoric that can include the different forms of political and civic behavior found in online environments as well as more traditional forms of political engagement.

I suggest that to approach rhetorical action as political rhetoric is to see it as directly or indirectly related to processes of collective decision-making about future action. These decisions take place on all levels of society and are the results of both formal and informal interactions. The defining features of collective decisions are that they are made on behalf of the community and that they are binding for the members of this community for some period of time. According to the understanding of political rhetoric I suggest here, political issues present themselves in the form of a question: What should we do about this?

However, engagement with such issues will always imply at least two other questions: What is “this”? And who are “we”? Determining how we as a society should act on an issue requires a notion of who “we” are and what the issue is. As answers to these questions are always implied in processes of collective decision-making, political rhetoric will always to some degree constitute the social reality it actualizes.

A working definition of political rhetoric should cover the most prevalent forms of political behavior in the areas of society we want to study. Today, much political behavior does not introduce solutions to predefined issues. People form ideological convictions through comments on current events, they voice their opinions on the “performance” of politicians, they partake in public events that celebrate their nation and their community, and they express their thoughts on the economy, on immigration, on traffic, on the school system and countless other issues, whether around the kitchen table, at the work place, in bars, cafes or in participatory media. To include such discourse as political rhetoric is to draw attention to how they are relevant for processes of decision-making, big or small. Through all these types of interaction, people form opinions, beliefs and values that can be actualized in deliberative and electoral processes by influencing their understanding of their political community and

what political challenges and possibilities this community is confronted with. Political disagreements include disagreements about how issues should be resolved, how they should be understood and how and why they are relevant to us.

In order to fully understand the nature of political participation in modern democracies we need a broader theoretical framework than one that limits political rhetoric to deliberative and electoral processes. This holds particularly true for political behavior in participatory media. Political parties and candidates use Facebook and Twitter as ways to reach voters, bring issues and perspectives onto the media agenda and facilitate contact between party members and the organization. This, however, is only part of the political behavior that takes place in social network sites. As the case study in this dissertation shows, social network sites have also become arenas for spontaneous political discussions and debate between citizens. In order to properly grasp the implications of these forms of political behavior, we need an understanding of political rhetoric that is relevant for the context of social network sites.

The understanding of political rhetoric I propose here is formed by three kinds of basic communicative processes in society. The first kind is the processes of collective decision-making. This includes processes of deliberation on different levels of society, but also the debates and the electoral processes that lead to designation of decision-making power. The second is the processes of creating salience in the public domain. This describes the socialization of conflict into political issues. The third kind is the processes of collectivization. This describes the formation and re-formation of collective identities as the foundation for political community.

To study utterances and events as political rhetoric, then, is to ask how they fit into these processes. This gives us a framework to describe the different ways in which rhetorical utterances can be perceived as political. Many of the genres and practices that are usually included in descriptions of political discourse clearly actualize all three of these processes. A political speech can make a case for a particular outcome of a political issue, while at the same alter the perception of the issue by emphasizing certain elements and down-playing others, and invoke a certain understanding of the community by recycling particular narratives, symbols and values.

Letting these processes inform our understanding of political rhetoric draws attention to how apparently non-political utterances and practices can still be politically relevant. A novel can bring an issue to the public's attention and thus contribute to making an apparently private theme salient as a political issue that requires some kind of collective decision, as was the case with many gender and class-related issues in the 19th century (Habermas, 2005; Morris, 2004). Similarly, an action movie can convey a profound idea of a society's values through portrayals of virtues like heroism, patriotism and self-sacrifice. Indeed, Hollywood gives shape to many notions of American identity and values that are converted for political purposes. According to the understanding of political rhetoric I suggest here, asking how these movies form and maintain collective identities is to study them as instances of political rhetoric.

Furthermore, this framework is well suited to study emergent forms of political rhetoric in new media environments. As the case study in this dissertation will show, much of what the active participants in the networked publics of the Norwegian social media-sphere describe as political or civic debate is not focused on the outcome of political issues. Rather, this content takes the form of discussions and arguments about what should be considered the defining values of Norwegian society, disagreements about the meaning of current events, relations and tensions between different social groups, and so forth. To properly understand such debates, we should ask not only how they relate to future decisions, but also how they contribute to the formation and performance of political identities, and to the formation of political issues.

In the rest of this chapter, I elaborate on this perspective of political rhetoric as the study of how members of a community are continuously engaging in these communicative processes and through them deal with the basic questions of political life: How do we as a society move forward on issues that require collective decisions? What is the nature of the issues that require such decisions? And on what basis are these decisions made?

Although the processes of dealing with these questions will always overlap and interconnect, they can be separated for theoretical and analytical purposes. This is what I will do throughout the rest of this chapter. First I will give an outline of how

processes of decision-making inform contemporary rhetorical theory. The Aristotelian concept of deliberative rhetoric is still used by many rhetorical scholars as an explanatory model of the role of rhetoric in decision-making processes. Others are more critical towards the explanatory potential of this approach and the analytical and critical position it offers. Such disagreements ultimately rest on different assumptions about how democracy works and how it should work. This also implies different ideals for how collective decisions are made.

Although assumptions about democracy are rarely elevated or discussed directly in rhetorical studies, they are central to how we view political rhetoric as decision-making and on what grounds we do critical rhetorical studies. In an attempt to practice theoretical sorting I identify two opposing views on rhetoric as decision-making. In one view, rhetorical deliberation is approached as an overarching process of collective reasoning that should secure the best possible outcome in all practical issues affecting the political community. In the other view, rhetorical deliberation is not considered decision-making in itself but as the processes leading up to the designation of decision-making power. I argue that rhetorical studies can benefit from both, as they draw attention to different functions of political discourse.

Moreover, I will suggest how political rhetoric can also be approached as creation of salience in the public domain. This emphasises the much-debated concepts of agenda-setting and framing as rhetorical processes. Rhetorical scholars have suggested similar theoretical approaches, but none have the same potential to explain the complex processes through which issues arise and unfold in modern societies. To adopt such theoretical concepts is to recognize the fact that the field of rhetoric need to incorporate insights from other fields that are better suited to explain the intricate processes that take place in modern societies.

Finally, I will give an account of political rhetoric as processes of collectivisation. Contemporary theories of epideictic rhetoric provide a framework to describe how collective identities are constituted through shared values, knowledge and beliefs. Collective identities form the basis of political communities, and have decisive impact on how collective decisions are made.

Political Rhetoric as Collective Decision-Making

The conception of political rhetoric as collective decision-making about future actions originates from Aristotle's description of the deliberative speech genre (*Art of Rhetoric* I:III).⁶ Here, the role of the political orator is to instruct the political assembly on future course of action in matters of the state. Deliberative rhetoric deals with the affairs of the city-state that the political assembly has authority to debate and decide upon. In a more general view, these issues will include all collective decisions about future actions of a democratic community.

In the Greek democracy, the decision-making power was placed in the hands of the citizens gathered as audience. Ultimately it was the audience that would cast the vote and decide the outcome of the issue. The citizens' involvement as a voting audience provided legitimacy to decisions that were binding for their own lives and actions. This way, collective decision-making was placed at the heart of democratic participation and political life. In Bruce Gronbeck's words: To act politically within this society was "to do the decision-making work needed in the polis" (Gronbeck, 2004, p. 135).

Modern conceptualizations of political rhetoric must be understood in light of this origin. In the long line of theorists following Aristotle, rhetoric has persistently been understood as fundamentally linked to argumentation concerning choice of action for the political community (Condor et al., 2013; Kock, 2009; Kock & Villadsen, 2012). Such choices are typically the issues that dominate the public sphere and form the basis of civic and political life. Therefore, throughout the history of rhetorical theory, the term "political rhetoric" is often used interchangeably with the Aristotelian description of deliberative rhetoric and the approach to political discourse this represents.

Still today, orientation towards collective decisions about future events is probably the most commonly used description of political rhetoric. Christian Kock is one of the rhetorical scholars who have argued that the central domain of rhetoric and rhetorical argumentation should be understood as issues concerning choice of action in

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, all classical references are gathered from the Loeb's Classic Library, Harvard University Press

the public sphere. Kock maintains that the core of Aristotle's understanding of rhetoric is that rhetoric is about "issues that we resolve with ourselves what is our will" (Kock, 2009, p. 62). These are issues that cannot be dialectically or philosophically resolved, but in which we have to decide to effectuate either one or the other possibility (Kock, 2009, p. 68).

Kock aims to explore the domain of rhetorical discourse in general, and not the role of political rhetoric in particular, but it is clear that his emphasis is placed on the public and political domain. Not only Kock's attention, but also what he sees as the attention of the field of rhetoric, is focused on collective decisions on public issues. The strong influence of Aristotle's description of deliberative rhetoric thus invites us to view political rhetoric as structured around the basic question: What shall we do about this?

When processes of collective decision-making are given such a determining role in political rhetoric, it should be clarified what exactly "collective decisions" and "processes of collective decision-making" mean. Drawing on the rhetorical tradition, I here understand collective decisions as decisions about future action that are made either directly by, or on behalf of, the political community. Such decisions are considered to be legitimate expressions of the community's will and priorities and are therefore treated as binding for the community, at least for a period of time.

As a community we do not decide on matters of fact or philosophical truths, but on what to do and how to do it. Collective decisions are in this regard always practically oriented. They seek to coordinate future action. This is the kind of influence or impact people seek through political rhetoric. Actors do not argue for argument's sake, or even to find the truth; actors engage in issues because it matters how they are decided, both for themselves and for the community. This is what makes behaviour political.

These kinds of collective decisions are made on all levels of society. On the national level, they include the major and minor political decisions that concern the future of the country and the nation. On local levels, they will include everything from town hall meetings to discussions among neighbours about the building's parking rules and all other issues in which the community have the power to make decisions on

behalf of its members. Not all such decisions are binding in a legal sense. Still, they might have significant societal effects. Consumer actions, corporate responsibility, norms of public behaviour etc. are clearly matters of public concern and they will often imply some kind of collective decision-making. Collective decisions can also be made by accretion (Mansbridge, 1986). In many cases it is impossible to identify a clear decisional point, but as norms and practices change, it is fair to say that in a general way the majority has made a decision.

On a more abstract level, collective decisions are considered to be legitimate expressions of the community's priorities in the face of disagreement. This does not mean that all collective decisions reflect the will or interests of all or even a majority of the members of the community. Nor does it mean that the community at large is involved in the process of making decisions. Political leaders can make decisions on behalf of the community without paying any attention to public debate. These are still political decisions, but not necessarily collective decisions. The essential feature is that collective decisions are not attributable to single individuals, but products of inter-subjective processes that secure the potential for actual persuasion. Ideally, people accept collective decisions as binding because they are perceived as the legitimate will of the political community, as opposed to threats of sanctions or promises of personal gain.

The interest-scope of political rhetoric includes all interactions directly or indirectly related to such decisions. This is what I in this dissertation refer to as processes of collective decision-making. These processes are not limited to situations that have actual decision-making power, but include all kinds of situations that revolve around issues that entail such collective decisions. Everyday conversations between ordinary citizens about public issues are thus considered relevant expressions of political rhetoric, even if the participants in the conversations do not have the power to actually make a decision on behalf of the community. The actors still form and express their own opinions, and by doing so they also contribute to the potential formation and resolution of the issue.

Also, rhetorical studies are not only concerned with what happens before a decision is made. They are also concerned with how decisions are implemented,

communicated, evaluated, criticised, justified, and so forth. We can see these functions in relation to decisions that are made, or we can see them in relation to future decision-making. Public reactions to political decisions shape people's perceptions of issues, their attitudes towards different actors and the values and beliefs they summon in future arguments, discussions and elections.

Many rhetorical utterances are not directly connected to political decisions, but are still politically relevant. Approaching such utterances as political rhetoric is to emphasize their potential impact on collective decisions. By using processes of collective decision-making as the structural nexus through which particular situations are observed, studies of political rhetoric draw attention to how specific utterances and events relate to collective decisions. A central question for all political rhetorical analysis, then, is how particular utterances relate to these processes.

The Primacy of Decision-Making in Political Rhetoric

There are at least three reasons why collective decision-making should be considered the primary function of political rhetoric. First, it is through collective decisions the political speaker is able to create change in the world, and the potential to create social change is, as previously stated, a defining feature of rhetoric. It is also the outcome in form of collective decisions that allows us to talk about rhetorical success or a potential effect of political rhetorical practice. An orator is successful to the extent he is able to persuade his audience in accordance with the end goal of the speech genre. In the forensic genre, an utterance should have some positive impact on the verdict or the sentencing in order for us to reasonably describe it as successful or effective. Similarly, the potential success or impact of political rhetoric is related to the outcome and evaluation of decisions made on behalf of the community.

Second, it is the processes of decision-making that determines the political nature of the other processes. It is their relation to processes of decision-making that allows us to describe processes of creating salience and processes of collectivization as political. When processes of creating salience are considered an integral part of political rhetoric, it is because they can bring forth political issues. These are issues that involve an element of choice on behalf of the community. When studying political rhetoric as processes of creating salience in the public realm, then, we are not

interested in any kind of issues, but the issues that invites collective engagement through the question “What should we do about this?” Also, when processes of collectivization are approached as political rhetoric, it is because they produce and reproduce the foundations of a political community that is both responsible for and responsive to the outcome of decisions.

Third, in order to evaluate rhetorical practice as “good” or “bad”, or more or less constructive for democracy, we need a firm understanding of what we mean by “democracy” and of the role of rhetoric in democratic processes. Rhetorical scholars often imply normative positions through the research questions they ask: Is the debate informative for the voters? Does the debate cover all sides of the issue? Does the speech give an honest representation of the issue? Such normative standpoints are ultimately grounded in the model of democracy they assume. From the position of rhetorical theory, models of democracy are models of decision-making. Although democracy necessitates both a sense a community and some kind of joint attention span, it is how decisions are made that ultimately defines democracy as a form of government. How we view processes of decision-making determines how we make normative and critical assessments of political rhetorical practice.

There is no single, unified way to conceptualize the relation between democracy and decision-making within rhetorical studies. Different rhetorical studies emphasize different aspects of decision-making processes, and normative positions will vary with what kind of questions we ask and what kind of critical evaluation the situation invites. Furthermore, rhetorical researchers rarely discuss the underlying models of democracy on which normative positions are built, making it difficult to get an overview of the different critical positions.

This does not mean that there are not commonalities in the way rhetorical studies view decision-making. I suggest that most normative positions towards political rhetoric balance elements of what can be described as an ideal and a democratic view of the relation between democracy, rhetoric and decision-making. Few practical studies will align perfectly with either one of these views. Rather, they can be imagined as opposite ends of a continuum. One way to describe the normative position of studies of political rhetoric, then, is to place it on a continuum from an

ideal view of rhetoric as a way to produce the best possible outcome of every issue, to a democratic view of rhetoric as the mediation of conflict.

Ideal and Democratic Views of Political Rhetoric

An ideal view of political rhetoric applies Aristotelian deliberation as the primary theoretical model for descriptions of political discourse. By emphasising deliberation as the structural complexity through which most political discourse can be described, it invites us to observe political rhetoric as dialogical processes through which issues progress and are resolved. Democratic procedures and institutions are then primarily seen as things that should support the deliberative process.

An example of this view is Jens Kjeldsen's recent description of the function of political rhetoric as "to guide societal decisions towards the best possible views and actions for the community" (Kjeldsen, 2015, my translation). In such statements, deliberation is presented as an overarching process of collective reasoning that should secure the best possible outcome of all practical issues. The implication is that all forms of political discourse, as opposed to institutionalised processes of decision-making alone, may fruitfully be described through structures of deliberative reasoning.

This view can be described as "ideal" because it tends to approach political decisions as a direct result of deliberative processes. It assumes that these processes, if properly functioning, have an intrinsic potential to make good decisions and change society for the better. In this way, the rhetorical process can be regarded as a form of wisdom-producing process. The deliberative choices will reflect the ethical basis of the society that facilitates it. As a consequence, the presence of actual deliberative processes is considered to be vital for democracy to fulfil its function. This is in line with Aristotelian thought, in which the intrinsic purpose of deliberation is to reach decisions based on the common good that will preferably lead to the "good life" for the community as a whole (*Politics*). The rhetorical processes that surround issues of choice increase our chances of reaching prudent decisions that reflect the shared values of the community.

Quite differently, a democratic view of political rhetoric sees rhetoric primarily as the mediation of conflicting interests in society. Supporters of this view argue that people only occasionally make collective decisions based on discussions. More often

they promote their own views and try to reduce the visibility of others – and then the voters vote and the rulers rule. This view places emphasis on institutionalisation of decision-making power as the foundation of democracy.

As a representative of this view, Scott Welsh has argued that contemporary rhetorical practice is not primarily distinguished by the demos engaged in processes of collective reasoning, but by the institutionalized struggle for power among political representatives (Welsh, 2013). By focusing on political rhetoric as collective reasoning, we overlook the ways in which political decisions are actually made. And by emphasising the wisdom-producing potential of rhetorical practice, we infuse it with a rationale that makes us less able to see the actual motivations and functions that are at play.

As an alternative understanding, Welsh promotes a realist view of democracy as a better-suited framework to evaluate actual processes of decision-making. He argues that the function of democracy is not to secure the best or wisest outcome of collective decisions. A dictator or a monarch can make just as “good” or wise decisions as a democratic assembly. And there is certainly no lack of evidence of democracies making poor decisions based on actual rhetorical processes. To view such outcomes as democratic malfunction due to an ill-informed electorate or devious leadership can probably help us identify some aspects of the political system that is in need of improvement, but it does not affect whether or not the process is democratic. Democracy is not based on collective decisions, as Welsh points out, but on legitimate decisions based on the collective acceptance of the democratic process. We elect leaders that we trust to make decisions for us and to balance the many issues that arise when different priorities and interests collide. If they fail to do so, the people have the power to remove them from their positions. That is the core of democracy.

In this view, the rhetorical process is thus not seen as inherently wisdom-producing or a guarantee for the “best possible outcome”. Welsh argues that such a view is reductionist in regards to both rhetoric and democracy. It reduces rhetoric to production of practical wisdom, and it reduces democracy to “the inclusive pursuit of practical wisdom” (Welsh, 2013, p. 9). This is not only a failed understanding of democracy – it is also a poor defence of it. If we were to find a better or more efficient

way to identify the sound decisions based on the common good, what keeps us from abandoning democracy all together?

In real life democracies, most political decisions are the result of compromise. Parties compromise on issues to get influence on others, to secure their voter-base, to accommodate special interests, to balance different priorities, and so forth. The potential for persuasion is still present, but often it is not directly associated with actual decision-making. Public debate fulfils many important democratic functions, like test of coherence, moral justification, balancing of interests, and, not the least, rationalization and defence of political positions, but this is not the same as a wisdom-producing, open-ended deliberative process. According to the democratic view on political rhetoric, then, the object of rhetorical studies is not how we collectively decide things, but the communicative practices that surround decisions made on behalf of the political community.

The different views of political rhetoric as decision-making ultimately rest on different understandings of democracy. By having different understandings of what the rationale of democracy is, the two views also have different understandings of the role of rhetoric in democracy.

The differences between the ideal and the democratic views have many similarities with what in other occasions have been described as the “republican” and “liberal” models of democracy. Rarely do rhetorical scholars explicitly apply or adhere to such models, but these models can still be descriptive of the different understandings of democracy that is implied in different rhetorical studies. Here I depend on Jürgen Habermas’ description of the different normative models of democracy (Habermas, 1994). Habermas present them comparatively and place attention on their influence on political discourse.

The ideal view often implies a republican model of democracy. This is not primarily concerned with democratic processes and institutions, but with the relation between community, citizenship and political decisions. According to Habermas, the *raison d’être* of the state in the republican model of democracy lies primarily in “the guarantee of an inclusive opinion- and will-formation in which free and equal citizens reach an understanding on which goals and norms lie in the equal interest of all”

(Habermas, 1994, p. 2). The aim of the republican model is thus to produce and articulate some kind of collective position representative for the people at large. Like the Aristotelian tradition, the republican view presumes the existence of a common ethical foundation for the political community that is maintained in a reciprocal relation to the participatory nature of citizenship. This is clearly in line with, and also largely influenced by, Aristotle's concern with how the "common good" can and should be realized through civic participation.

Aristotle is a big inspiration to this tradition of democratic theory.⁷ In the republican tradition, the objective of a democratic system is not that all the people should have their legitimate share of influence in the governing of society, but that society is governed in accordance with the people's will. This is more in line with the "meaning" of the ancient democracy, where individual rights or interest-groups were not influential elements in systemic thought. A similar argument about the classical democracy is made by Oswyn Murray who has suggested that in the polis, "... the purpose of politics was unity, not compromise" (Murray, 1990, p. 21).

As the ideal view of political rhetoric assumes that deliberative processes should produce "the best possible outcome", it must also assume that such an outcome can be extracted from a collective understanding of the "common good". The deliberative process thus presupposes some kind of ethical and social community that not only exists prior to rhetorical processes, but one that is also maintained and strengthened through such processes. However, the idea of the citizenry as a moral community is difficult to maintain in modern society, as modern democracies are not based on social unity in the same way as the city-state. Although Aristotle is an important precursor to the republican view, present day conceptions of Aristotelian deliberation have therefore made necessary adjustments to modern representative democracies.

The ideal view of political rhetoric can in practice be said to have similarities with what Jürgen Habermas calls the "discursive model of democracy". This combines the republican model with elements of the liberal, right-based model of democracy. It

⁷ Habermas also suggests that the republican model is the one that best preserves the original meaning of democracy (Habermas, 1994: 3).

is strongly influenced by Habermas' discourse theory that deals with the inter-subjectivity of communication processes (Habermas, 1994, 2004). The model sets us up for normative assessments of the communicative processes of democracy on the grounds that a properly functional democracy should facilitate inter-subjective will-formation through communicative practices.

The ideal view of political rhetoric has clear similarities with this Habermasian model. It assumes that members of a political community share an ethical foundation that allows for a collective conception of the "common good". This ethical foundation is ultimately made relevant by successful rhetoric that bridges the particularities of the issue and the shared doxa of speaker and audience. Also, it does not limit the concept of deliberation to clear-cut deliberative settings, but is open to the notion that it can be a fruitful perspective on rhetorical issues that live beyond particular contexts.

The ideal view of political rhetoric, then, gives centre-stage to the deliberative rhetorical process and its potential to bring forth wise decisions. The idea of something being democratic is here closely connected to the community's ability to make prudent decisions based on a functional rhetorical process that should lead to collective will-formation. This has both analytical and critical consequences for rhetorical studies. Analytically, studies in line with the ideal view invites us to conceptualise processes of collective decision-making as deliberative processes. Particular events or particular rhetorical utterances can be seen as arguments presented in a kind of over-arching conversation, which in turn will provide the proper context to understand the function and potential impact of individual utterances in the decision-making process. Critically, studies in line with the ideal view have a normative foundation for rhetorical critique that includes both the process and the outcome. The process is thought to bring forth all the relevant sides of the issue and weigh them against each other. This will ideally lead to the best possible outcome of the issue.

In contrast to the ideal view, the democratic view often implies a strict liberal model of democracy. This view is concerned with how democratic institutions and processes secure the individual citizen's rights within society vis-à-vis the state and other citizens (Habermas, 1994, p. 2). In many regards, this is the dominant model of democracy today. Usually, when something is described as "democratic" it is because

it secures reasonably equal influence of all the actors that have a legitimate claim to participate in the process.

By assuming a position that is closer to what is often described as political realism or competitive democracy, the democratic view of political rhetoric sees political discourse primarily as the medium in which power is won and lost. The democratic potential is related to actors' abilities to pursue their own interests without threatening the other actors' rights and abilities to do the same. Approaches grounded on a liberal view of democracy are thus primarily concerned with political discourse as mediation of conflicting interests or ideas. The normative and critical contributions are related to whether or not political and civic institutions and practices maintain the citizens' democratic rights. This includes critical perspectives on whether the citizens are informed, if their rights to free speech are properly maintained, and so forth. Typically, studies that reflect this view of political rhetoric will be concerned with whether or not election-debates or news-coverage are giving voters the necessary information to make informed decisions; whether individuals or groups of citizens have the necessary communicative tools to pursue their political interests; whether or not politicians communicate their policy and priorities in a transparent and accessible manner and so forth.

It should be noted that the distinction I identify here between an ideal and a democratic view of political rhetoric is not all new. When I here use the terms "ideal" and "democratic" it is in clear reference to Harvey Yunis' work on antique democratic thought (Yunis, 1996). Yunis describes how both empirical and ideal criteria were used for assessing political rhetoric in the Greek polis. To a large extent, it is assumed that the Athenian democracy was "wholly instrumental" for everyone but the leading politicians (Finley, 1983; Yunis, 1996, pp. 26-27). It was simply rational for the citizens to pursue their interests within the existing democratic system. However, many central antique sources, like Plato, Thucydides and Demosthenes, assumed that political discourse, by introducing rationality and reason-giving to the public realm, had the potential to make the citizenry wiser and therefore better (Yunis, 1996, p. 29).

Another corresponding approach is Frank Michelman's identification of two ideal-types of politics: the "instrumental" and the "dialogical" (Michelman, 1989). The

“instrumentalist” view – or “pluralist”, as it is often called – understands politics as a process of balancing preferences. The “dialogical” view, on the other hand, imagines politics as a normative activity, involving not only questions of preference but of values. It also has a fundamentally pragmatic view on political argument, meaning that political argument is “animated and constrained by a consciousness of its situation within, and answerability to, a public normative culture and history – within and to, if you like, a normative practice” (Michelman, 1989, p. 258).

By implying different normative models of democracy, the two different views of political rhetoric thus draw attention to different aspects of rhetorical practice. One encourages us to see political discourse as dialogical, whilst the other encourages us to see it primarily as instrumental; one invites us to see political discourse as a potential source of unity and collective will-formation, whilst the other sees it primarily as a medium for conflicting interests; and one elevates the democratic potential in the outcome of deliberative processes, whilst the other is concerned with the democratic potential as it is maintained and secured by the processes in themselves.

The ideal view implies that rhetorical processes can serve higher democratic functions than simply act as a medium for citizens’ preference. As the basis of democratic participation, rhetoric can have a formative effect on society by bridging different interests through the power of persuasion. Ideal views of political rhetoric emphasise how political discourse is not only a way to reach an acceptable outcome on behalf of the community, but that it constitutes, and thus also alter and change, the social and discursive basis of community. This way they also invite us to reflect on how collective identity, sense of community and participation in tradition come to affect collective decision-making.

This means that we can envision political discourse as processes of reason and persuasion, not just of will and power. Furthermore, the dialogical conception invites us to envision political discourse as situated within what Michelman calls “a public normative history” (Michelman, 1989, p. 258). The conception of democracy and political discourse as fundamentally dialogical will thus include questions about how political discourse contributes to the interpretation, invocation and transformation of the values and identities that are inscribed in a society’s history and traditions.

On the other hand, the democratic view draws attention to how political discourse always will involve competition not only about the outcomes of issues, but also what the issues are and how they should be understood. An instrumentalist-view on political discourse will be more concerned with how some actors are able to put issues on the political agenda and “frame” them in line with their own political convictions and interests. The public cannot pay attention to all the relevant conflicts that take place in society at a given time. Neither ordinary citizens nor politicians are able to engage actively in all decisions that are made in modern democracies.

This also posts another challenge: Political actors (organizations, individuals, institutions etc.) do not simply assert and defend their own positions – they will also actively seek to isolate and silence their opponents’ positions. A lot of political behavior can be understood as a competition to socialize or privatize conflict. How political discourse draws attention to certain issues and give them meaning – and also how they draw the attention away from others, by, consciously or unconsciously, silencing or down-playing alternative views – are the result of choice. And different actors have very different opportunities to make such choices. This makes the question of who has the power to set the agenda relevant.

In practice, rhetorical studies will balance elements from both of these different views of political rhetoric. Studies can draw attention to the dialogical aspects of political discourse and critically evaluate its ability to bring forth wise decisions, while still recognizing that the individual actors can act instrumentally and strategically to secure a favorable outcome for themselves, with no regards to other actors or to how their mutual participation can secure the “best possible outcome”. This way, a rhetorical approach to political discourse can be informed by both of these views and the critical positions they imply. How we balance elements of the two has determining impact on what grounds we make normative evaluations.

Agenda-Setting and Framing as Political Rhetoric

Thus far I have focused on political rhetoric as a society’s way of dealing with issues that require collective decision-making. I have argued that the primary function of political rhetoric is to make collective decisions about future actions, and that to study political rhetoric is to ask in what way rhetorical actions contribute to such decisions.

However, any process of collective decision-making suggests some minimal agreement about what the issue is and how it should be understood. Engagement with the question “What shall we do about this?” might be the defining trait of political behavior. But this question always implies the question “What is “this”? What is the issue?”

While classical rhetorical theory could list the “issues of the state” that a rhetor would have to deal with in the political assembly (Aristoteles, 2004), modern democratic societies are far too complex for us to list all the issues that political rhetoric will deal with. Still, a description of what political rhetoric is should give us some clues to what it is “about”. In practice, much political behavior is best understood as struggles to socialize or privatize conflict. A key function of political rhetoric is thus to bring issues into the public domain as political issues. This is what I refer to when describing political rhetoric as processes of creating salience in the public realm.

The word “salience” has at least two different meanings in this context. In one sense, it refers to the idea of perceived importance. That something is salient means that it is associated with some kind of exigency. It suggests that the issue is something that the community should deal with and hopefully resolve. In another sense, “salience” also points to an idea of cognitive accessibility. Some aspects of an issue will always seem more prominent, more likely or more relevant than others. What is salient is what is on the “top of our minds” (Takeshita, 2006). Here I see both of these meanings as relevant. Processes of creating salience encompass both how some issues become subjects of political attention and how they come to be understood as particular types of political issues.

Rhetorical scholars have oftentimes made the observation that people understand and interpret situations and events through their linguistic and symbolic constructions. One description is found in Kenneth Burke’s concept of “terministic screens” (Burke, 1966, p. 45ff). This is “[...] a screen composed of terms through which humans perceive the world, and that direct attention away from some interpretations and towards others” (Stob, 2008, p. 131). Through the language we choose to use, we combine images and ideas in ways that support particular opinions

and beliefs. “Terministic screens” describe the persuasive aspects of the rhetor’s worldview. If an audience accepts a rhetor’s presentation of an issue and the perception of the world it implies they are more likely to accept his propositions for how they should act in relation to the issue. The concept also allows us to describe how people interpret messages through their own vocabulary and perspectives of the world. As terministic screens are contingent, different people will interpret words and concepts differently at different times. Our terministic screens thus contribute to the complexity of meaning.

A similar approach is found in Richard Vatz’s argument about rhetorical situations. According to Vatz, situations are constructions of facts and events communicated to us by our sources of information. They are thus the result of choices that make some aspects of events more salient than others: “The very choice of what facts or events are relevant is a matter of pure arbitration. Once the choice is communicated, the event is imbued with salience [...]” (Vatz, 1973, p. 157). On these grounds, Vatz describes “the art of linguistically or symbolically creating salience” as the *sine qua non* of rhetoric (Vatz, 1973, p. 160). Such a view will also place more responsibility on the individual rhetor for the nature of public discourse, as it does not perceive discourse as a result of the surrounding situation, but rather the source of the meaning we assign situations.

Vatz’s description of salience is closely related to what Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca call “presence”. Through this concept, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca describe how a rhetor, by selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, also implies their importance and relevance to the argument. This way, they are endowed with a kind of presence that provides meaning beyond mere existence (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991). In Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s understanding, the things that are perceived as nearer the actors are given more weight and attention in argumentation. Through rhetorical figures a rhetor can lend presence to things distant in time or space, and thus make them relevant for the argumentation in question. In fact, rhetorical actors will to a certain degree always do this, as they will always lend presence to some elements and deemphasize others.

Burke, Vatz and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theories draw attention to how salience is not external features of situations, but are ultimately constructed by the actors' interpretation and communication of situations. These theories thus provide us with an understanding of rhetoric not only as a responsive activity, in which the actors involved debate predefined issues from different angles, but include issue-formation and the creation of situations as an integrated part of the rhetorical process.

Such an understanding of rhetoric is particularly relevant if we wish to understand political behavior in modern democracies. Much of the political talk that surrounds us is not oriented towards previously established political issues, but must be understood as attempts to define what the relevant issues are, how they should be understood or how news events represent political challenges that call forth collective decisions. Political actors actively try to normalize their understanding of what the dominating political issues are, just as they will try to undermine or silence other understandings.

However, Burke, Vatz and Perelman's theories are not primarily developed as analytical approaches. They do not offer ways to systematically explore these phenomena or a terminology well suited to describe how they usually take form within the complex of the contemporary public sphere. They do not account for the institutions and the organization of modern democracies that give such processes systemic form and shape them in accordance with familiar structures of meaning to fit into existing perceptions of politics, ideological differences and news worthiness.

The theoretical complexes of "agenda-setting" and "framing" provide elaborate descriptions of the ways in which news producers, political organizations, academic institutions and entertainment industries have a structuring effect on issue-formation. Both agenda-setting theory and framing theory are grounded on the premise that there are patterns to how some issues come to dominate the public agenda. News media in particular have a structural impact on the public's attention. And when issues are put on the agenda, they are shaped in accordance with familiar structures of meaning. Agenda-setting and framing theory provide a framework to describe how the dominant institutions of public life shape the public's attention, both what the public is talking about and how they are talking about it.

Processes of Creating Salience in the Public Domain: Agenda-Setting

Here I understand agenda-setting in line with Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) as “the idea that there is a strong correlation between the emphasis that media place on certain issues and the importance attributed to these issues by mass audiences” (D. A. Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Theories of agenda-setting describe how different agents and organizations contribute to the formation of the media agenda, the public agenda and the political agenda (Rogers & Dearing, 1988). They are particularly concerned with the systemic role of news media in the formation of public opinion. The basic assumptions in agenda-setting theory is that the news media do not simply reflect reality, but filter and shape it, and that the concentration on a few issues in the media leads the public to perceive these issues as more important than others. This is due to a cognitive process known as “accessibility”: The more the media covers an issue, the more accessible it becomes in the audience’s memory (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). The public’s exposure to an issue through the media will thus affect how relevant and important they perceive the issue to be.

To include agenda-setting within the interest scope of political rhetoric is to recognize that there is a persuasive potential in this cognitive process. The complexity of modern democracies suggests that it is impossible for the public to engage in real debate about all issues involving choice on behalf of the community. The ways in which issues are put on the agenda impact how the actors perceive and define rhetorical situations, and therefore also how situations play out and can lead to collective decisions. For actors to successfully pursue their political interests through collective decision-making, the issue of interest must first be on the agenda of the political community or representatives of the community. Actors who control or influence these processes have a strong influence on where the limited attention span of the public is focused.

Theories of agenda-setting also raise the basic question: What is an “issue”? (Lang & Lang, 1981). “Issues” have been variously conceptualized as concerns, key problems facing the country, political alternatives, public controversy, and the underlying determinants of political cleavage (Lang & Lang, 1981, p. 281). Not only agenda-setting theory, but all theories of political discourse will have to deal with the

fact that “public issues” is a fluid category, and empirical studies must be open to how different actors understand issues differently. Agenda-setting theory reminds us of the systemic role of the media in determining the understanding of what constitutes a public issue. Because agenda-setting theories are developed through extensive empirical studies of these processes, they also provide us with important contextual understandings of the contemporary public sphere. Agenda-setting theories provide descriptions of how processes of creating salience typically unfold in interplay between the media and the public and between the media and political institutions.

In practice this suggests that journalists and editors are powerful actors in contemporary political discourse. By giving attention to some issues rather than others as newsworthy, and by emphasizing some elements and downplaying others in their stories, the media’s representations make some elements more salient. As Bernhard Cohen has observed about the media institutions’ agenda-setting function: “(they) may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (Cohen, 1963).

The concept of inter-media agenda-setting has also been used to describe how different news media in a national or international context influence and shape each other’s agenda (Golan, 2006; McCombs & Funk, 2011). In recent years, it has been used to describe the potential agenda-setting functions between participatory media and established media. Scholars have discussed the question of power redistribution (Sauter & Bruns, 2013), the influence of blogs and social network sites on the news cycle (Meraz, 2009; Wallsten, 2013), and its influence on the gatekeeping function of traditional media (Grzywinska & Borden, 2012; Karlsnes, Krumsvik, & Storsul, 2014). The case study in this dissertation describes how several of the interviewees actively and consciously use participatory media as a way to influence the news agenda, the political agenda and the public agenda. Some use Twitter and Facebook in an attempt to be picked up by representatives of the newspapers or talk-radio. Others express more long-term commitment to change how major political issues, like immigration or the role of religion in society, are covered by the media and discussed among ordinary citizens. Throughout the interviews, it is clear that all the participants

see their participatory media activity not simply as an attempt to affect the outcome of political conversations but also what the conversation is about.

Processes of Creating Salience in the Public Domain: Framing

Just as it is important for political actors to gain media attention towards the issues that they have interests in, it is important for them to influence how the journalists and the media portray the issues and construct the mediated reality. This is the focus of framing theory. Framing theory is concerned with the “framing” of issues as particular kinds of political or civic issues. Some elements of issues are made more salient than others, which in turn affect how people perceive and evaluate particular issues.

In one of the most quoted definitions of framing, Robert Entman suggests that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993, p. 52, italics in original).⁸ Similarly, Stephen D. Reese defines frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p. 11, italics in original). Others have offered a broad understanding of frames as “patterns of interpretation” rooted in culture and articulated by the individual (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 61; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Pan & Kosicki, 2003; Reese, 2007; Van Gorp, 2007), or as “interpretive packages” that help us “make sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (Modigliani & Gamson, 1989, p. 3).

As “organizing principles” or “patterns of interpretation”, frames provide context and promote certain understandings of issues. Whereas agenda-setting is involved in making an issue more accessible, framing affects how issues and objects are perceived by altering their descriptions. Scheufele and Tewksbury describe the distinction between the two theoretical traditions as “the difference between whether we think about an issue and how we think about it” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p.

⁸ Entman describes framing as a fractured paradigm. Others have describes it as being multiparadigmatic (D’Angelo, 2002). However, some more general assumptions on framing are shared by many researchers today – for instance that frames are patters of making sense of the world or that they have structuring effect on action. Here I base my argument on this understanding of framing.

11). Exposure may be enough to achieve agenda-setting effects, but is in itself not sufficient to prompt framing effects. Also, how societal groups “try to shape public discourse about an issue by establishing predominant labels” is an area of interest to framing but not to agenda-setting (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 14). David H. Weaver have also noted that “framing” seems to include a broader range of cognitive processes than agenda-setting, “such as moral evaluations, causal reasoning, appeals to principles, and recommendations for treatment of problems” (Weaver, 2007, p. 146). It is through these cognitive processes that frames “work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese, 2001, p. 11).

These understandings of framing mirror the theory’s origin in both psychology and sociology. On one hand, framing theorists are interested in the psychological aspects of frames and framing. Drawing on insights from social cognition theory, scholars in political psychology and media studies have explored the relation between frames and cognitive “schemas” (Druckman, 2001; Entman, Matthes, & Pellicano, 2009; Entman, 2003; Scheufele, 2006). These schemas are collections of organized knowledge that people interpret the social world through. Framing theorists are interested in how framing exploits different cognitive schemas, enforcing or altering them in the process. On the other hand, framing theorists are interested in the structuring effects of frames on public discourse. It is assumed that framing occurs on different locations in society and are initiated by different actors: politicians and public actors try to strategically frame their message in accordance with their worldview; journalists frame their news stories, and media users frame the information they receive through the media (Entman, 1993). Organizational, institutional and cultural structures will influence the processes of creating salience in political and civic issues. Empirically, framing theorists have placed most emphasis on the study of “media frames” or “news frames” (Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, & Ghanem, 1991, p. 3), suggesting that these play a dominating role in determining how the public understands public issues. Such news frames describe both how the institutionalised frames of the news media work as a form of communicative contract between news producers and readers that allows them to manage and communicate information

complexes quickly and effectively, and how the same frames potentially influence how the public understands issues in ways that may have influence on political judgements.

There are particularly two ways in which framing theory is a relevant supplement to studies of political rhetoric. First, framing theory offers a set of accessible concepts and dichotomies that are useful when describing the communicative situations in which ordinary citizens encounter political discourse. Most of these concepts and dichotomies revolve around the news media and how news media shape the public's attention. Second, framing theory offers a way to describe how "patterns of interpretation" travel beyond particular situations and how they shape people's perceptions of situations. The ability to shape what political issues are "about" has become an increasingly important feature of modern political rhetoric. To include this feature, we must describe how political issues and political debates progress beyond particular situations. Rhetorical theory is primarily concerned with how salience is created in situations. The focus of framing theory is placed beyond particular situations, but still in the realm of the concrete, in which persuasion happens.

The main distinction in framing theory runs between generic frames and issue-specific frames (de Vreese, 2002, 2005). Generic frames are not confined to specific issues but can be applied in all political and civic issues. Such generic frames are often used to describe the news frames of the media: conflict, human interest, economic consequences and so forth (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Today, if politicians or other political actors are to get their frames wholly or partly across in the media, they have to adjust to certain news conventions and genre demands (Allern, 2001a, 2001b; Ihlen & Allern, 2008). The actors' abilities to influence how an issue is understood and communicated in the public – which can have decisive impact on future decisions – depend on their ability to adapt this view to the generic frames of the news media.

Issue-specific frames are frames that contribute to the collective understanding of a specific issue. They define what the problem is, make diagnoses about what causes the problem, evaluate and recommend remedies (Entman, 1993). Matthes and Kohring (2008) suggest that issue frames are operationalized as specific combinations of four frame elements: problem definition, causal interpretation, evaluations and

treatment recommendations. Combinations of these elements are developed through public debates and alter and change as debates progress (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Reconstructing and exploring different combinations of these elements have also served as a formula for content analysis of public debates (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 63f).

Both these types of frames have parallels to rhetorical theory. Descriptions of generic frames have strong resemblance with the rhetorical concept of *topoi*. Both concepts have been used to describe how actors must adjust to institutional and cultural structures in order to reach their communicative goals. However, the framing approach, with its strong focus on news frames, gives us a more concrete impression of the cognitive and linguistic patterns that structure political issues in the media society. Similarly, descriptions of issue-specific frames resemble the rhetorical stasis theory and elements of modern rhetorical argumentation theories. The central difference is that the rhetorical theories maintain a focus on the particular situation, whilst the concept of issue-specific frames draws attention to framing elements that have effect beyond particular situations.

Another useful distinction runs between frame sending and frame setting. This distinction is drawn from Michael Brüggermann's conceptualization of journalistic framing practices. Frame sending describes how journalists passively pass on interpretations provided by sources and other actors, whilst frame setting describes how journalists actively provide the audience with their own individual interpretations of a situation (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 62). Brüggermann sees these two concepts as nodes on a continuum. Journalists will always to some degree present the frames of others and rely on their own frames (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 62). When studying how the media frames public issues, framing scholars seek to describe how these functions are balanced and explain how different organizational, cultural and individual differences affect this balance or how journalists offer a filtered account of political issues.

For rhetorical scholars, the distinction between frame sending and frame setting could prove particularly useful when dealing with fragmented situations. Most of the time, people encounter politicians' arguments through news media, making the frame

setting of journalists a key component of the rhetorical situation. Brüggermann's distinction allows us to describe how media-reports of political issues are the product of a combination of the journalists' choices, their negotiation with the sources and organisational structures and collective sense-making within the newsroom (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 65).

Brüggermann's distinction between frame sending and frame setting rests on a prior distinction between journalist frames and advocacy frames (de Vreese, 2010). Advocacy frames, or actor frames, are attributed to non-journalistic actors who promote their political interests in the media. As long as the news media are central agenda setters, public actors will try to influence them and get their own frames across. Advocacy frames can explain how actors are able to promote their views on issues to the public, even if they are not able to communicate to the public directly. Journalist frames, on the other hand, can explain why advocacy frames do not always translate into news coverage (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 63). As Brüggermann emphasizes: "[...] even the most "objective" or "neutral" journalism will inevitably contribute to the social construction of reality" (Brüggermann, 2014, p. 65). The dynamic between advocacy frames and journalist frames can thus help us describe the dynamic between different actors and different voices as they appear in the news media.

Today, as most citizens are likely to get most of their political information from news media, we are left with communicative situations that are far from the traditional rhetorical situation in which the rhetor addressed an audience about a given issue. The challenges of what rhetorical scholars have described as "rhetorical fragmentation" (Kjeldsen, 2008) – changing and incalculable communication situations, multi-mediation, polyphony and "bricolage" – are immanent in everyday encounters with political rhetoric. By including these conceptual pairs into the interest scope of political rhetoric – generic and issue-specific frames; frame sending and frame setting, and advocacy frames and journalist frames – rhetorical studies are better equipped to describe how processes of creating salience today are intertwined with the institutional structures of the news media.

Joint Interests: Framing and Rhetoric in Political Communication Studies

In order to describe how frames work – that is, how they make some aspects of the perceived reality more salient than others – qualitative oriented political communication scholars have turned to linguistic figures that are perhaps best developed in the rhetorical tradition, such as metaphor, narratives and synecdoche (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). A notable example is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s “conceptual metaphor thesis” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In this theory, Lakoff and Johnson describe how individuals’ understanding of complex phenomena are influenced by the central metaphors they use. Applying this theoretical perspective on political discourse, Lakoff describes how the conservative and the liberal tradition in American politics can be conceptualized as different mindsets built around metaphorical constructions, or frames (Lakoff, 2004, 2008, 2016; Lakoff & Wehling, 2012). Lakoff’s concept of framing thus becomes a way to describe different ideological positions and deeply rooted disagreements through the metaphors people use.

Lakoff gives the following description of the role of frames in political life: “Frames are mental structures that change the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what count as a good or bad outcome of our actions. In politics our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out politics. To change our frames is to change all of this. Reframing is social change” (Lakoff, 2004, p. xv). Following Lakoff, the moment of change that determines rhetorical success can be identified in the construction of an issue.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson is another scholar whose work has drawn the attention of rhetoricians towards framing as a key feature of modern political discourse. Through the case study of Ronald Reagan, Hall Jamieson emphasizes the synecdoche as a particular trait of the mass mediated rhetoric of the electronic age. According to Hall Jamieson, television has made us more likely to understand events and issues “in the snapshots into which television framed them than we are from the words accompanying those snapshots” (Hall Jamieson, 1988, p. 114). The speaker that is able to exploit this media logic by reducing situations and issues into synoptic statements

exercises the power that comes from shaping the definitions of key events. Although Hall Jamieson does not explicitly lean on framing theory, her argument echoes many of its central points. In the electronic age, the key rhetorical trait is the ability to exploit the logic of the media to influence how people view and understand the world around them and the political issues that face them.

Journalist and rhetorical scholar Mark Thompson has made a similar, but more recent argument. In his critique of the current state of political discourse, Thompson ascribes the strong polarization of the political debate in UK and the US the last decade to the spread of some particularly effective frames that has come to redefine the debate. The political debate has been re-framed from involving disagreements about how issues of common interest can be solved to involving fundamental differences in values and beliefs (Thompson, 2016, p. 12ff).

Thompson's argument picks up where Hall Jamieson left off, when mapping the changing relationship between media institutions, political actors and the expression of political discourse from the 1990s and onwards. Central to this story is how the concept of "spin" has become an unavoidable term when dealing with political rhetoric. The term "spin" often implies the use of disingenuous and deceptive tactics. It suggests that the actors are solely concerned with how an issue is framed to their benefit, with little or no regard to facts or alternative views.

The increased attention paid to framing and spin points not only to what the dominating explanatory theories within rhetoric and political communication studies currently is, it is also a result of the changing nature of political discourse. Today, professional communication workers and public relation strategists pull the political discourse away from deliberative ideals and towards the "organizing principles" of news stories and marketing. Their interest is to influence the public's understanding of what the issue is and to "spin" the facts to their advantage. Strategic attempts to influence how the media frame particular issues are not just the result of unconscious and unspoken adaptations to the structuring features of the news media, but are oftentimes the results of well-planned and often professional communication strategies.

Hall Jamieson and Thompson's analyses emphasize the dynamic relationship between the media landscape, rhetorical expression and the ways in which political debates are framed. The nature and characteristics of political rhetoric change in accordance with changing institutional, technological and cultural contexts. A central part of this context today is the dominance of actors who actively seek to exploit the media logic for strategic purposes. Different ways of exploiting the media logic and framing issues have become prevalent strategies for political actors. To pay more attention to processes of creating salience in the public domain is thus not only an adjustment to changing contexts, but also a necessary adjustment to what has evidently become a central part of the actors' behavior and rhetorical strategy.

Finally, a rhetorical approach to framing and frames can be a fruitful supplement to framing theory and to political communication research in general. The bulk of framing research is derived from social scientific orientations and is grounded in quantitative assumptions (Kuypers, 2010, p. 287). However, if frames can influence how people understand and evaluate issues, this form of persuasive effect must ultimately be grounded in situated discourse.

On this basis, Jim A. Kuypers makes the argument for rhetorical frame analysis (Kuypers, 2009, 2010). Its potential is found in the ways in which frames operate in situ. Frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies (Kuypers, 2009). These communicative functions of (issue-specific) frames are very similar to what is usually considered the domain of rhetoric. Furthermore, to locate a frame, one should look within the narrative construction of issues or events (Kuypers, 2009).

Rhetoric is the field that describes and explores the potential functions of such features. Rhetoric offers the tools and the analytical approach to do in-depth studies of how frames are linguistically and symbolically established in particular situations and across situations. A rhetorical perspective invites us to view discourse as intentional and thus potentially strategic, but is also open to the notion that discourse does not always have to be intentional for it to have persuasive effect. People will inevitably influence each other's perceptions of situations, phenomena and events without paying attention to the rhetorical functions they utilize in doing so (Kuypers, 2010).

The form of rhetorical frame study that Kuypers promotes consists of a systematic exploration of frames and how they are linguistically constructed (Kuypers, 2009). The rhetorical critic presents an argument by formulating assertions rooted in particular events and presenting examples and quotes as evidence for these assertions. This way, rhetorical framing perspectives seek to interpret rather than explore the length of a phenomenon.

Summary: Agenda-Setting and Framing as Political Rhetoric

Although I here consider involvement with processes of collective decision-making to be a defining feature of political rhetoric, it is impossible for a modern democratic citizenry to engage in debate about all issues involving collective decisions. For actors to successfully pursue their political interests, the issue must first be given attention and priority in the political community. A key function of political rhetoric is therefore to bring issues into the public and to establish the necessary agreement about what the issue is and how it should be understood. This way, processes of creating salience in the public realm are key functions of political rhetoric.

Here I have suggested how a working definition of political rhetoric can benefit from theories of agenda-setting and framing. These theories provide elaborate descriptions of how issue-formation takes place in modern democracies. Combined, they describe what the public is talking about and how they are talking about it.

Focusing on what the public is talking about, theories of agenda-setting describe how the news media influence the public's attention. This way, the news media also influence how people perceive and define rhetorical situations, setting the stage for how situations can progress and be resolved. Focusing on how the public understands political issues, framing theory is concerned with how issues are "framed" as particular kinds of political or civic issues. Framing theory describes how the mediated reality is constructed and how political actors actively seek to frame issues and events in order to persuade public opinion in their favor.

I have also suggested some ways that agenda-setting theory and framing theory can prove valuable for studies of political rhetoric. Agenda-setting theory and framing theory offer concepts and dichotomies that are useful when describing the communicative situations in which ordinary citizens encounter political discourse in

modern democracies. They offer ways to describe how “patterns of interpretation” travels beyond particular situations and how they shape people’s perceptions of situations. They describe how processes of creating salience have a structuring effect on human perception and expression beyond particular situations. Through numerous empirical studies, they describe how the news media and other central institutions of modern democracies structure political and civic discourse. This way, these theories offer important contextual insights for studies of political rhetoric.

I have also suggested that rhetoric can prove a valuable supplement to studies of frames and framing and thus to political communication research in general. The majority of this research is grounded in quantitative assumptions. Rhetorical analysis can give us a better understanding of how frames and framing work in particular situations, which in turn can lead to a better understanding of their persuasive potential.

Epidictic rhetoric as political rhetoric

So far I have described two of the three communicative processes that inform the understanding of political rhetoric in this dissertation: processes of collective decision-making and processes of creating salience in the public domain. These processes describe how issues are rhetorically constructed as political issues and subsequently how the members of society deal with and find solutions to such issues.

Determining how we as a society should act on an issue also requires a notion of who “we” are and what the issue is. This is the concern of epidictic rhetoric.⁹ To include the epidictic as an always-present element of political discourse is to recognize how the formation and re-formation of collective identities always will be a central part of political life. This is necessary if we want to give a comprehensive description of political communication in modern societies.

Based on modern theorizations of epidictic rhetoric, there are particularly three ways in which the epidictic is actualized in a rhetorical approach to political discourse. First, epidictic discourse plays a significant role in shaping the grounds for decision-making. Epidictic rhetoric has the ability to define central premises for

⁹ The following outline of epidictic rhetoric is partially based on the literature review in Vatnøy, Eirik (2016) “Leaders Response to Terrorism: The Role of Epidictic Rhetoric in Deliberative Democracies”, *Journal of Public Deliberation*

public issues and shape the beliefs that impact future decision-making. This way, the epideictic is often described as a preparation for political action. Second, epideictic discourse has the potential to strengthen the common values and virtues that the citizens are socialized into. The epideictic is understood as a way to shape the actors' perception of community. And third, epideictic discourse represents an important display of community and the values and virtues that shape the perception of a "common good". This way, epideictic rhetoric is in itself a way to "perform" community through almost ritualistic rhetorical performance.

The concept of "epideictic rhetoric" stems from Aristotle's categorization of the three different rhetorical speech-genres. As mentioned previously, this categorization is based on the different kinds of audiences that are found in the Athenian public. In epideictic rhetoric, the audience is an "observer" of the orator's skills as he gives praise or blame to things in the present. As our modern public sphere and democratic processes are immensely more complex than the Greek polis, the role of the citizens as audience has become ever more complex. Still, the Aristotelian distinction can be thought of as a more or less exhaustive categorization of collective judgment, but contemporary rhetorical theory will suggest that there are some fundamental functions of rhetorical practice that can be observed across genre particularities. This implies that these branches should not be understood as mutually exclusive genres, but rather as rhetorical functions that can be realized in and across different forms of social action. A particular situation can contain both forensic, epideictic and deliberative elements. This holds particularly true for situations surrounding political issues. Modern political discourse, removed from the immediacy of direct democracy, will include both evaluation of past events, debates about future course of action and reflections upon the present state of society.

Unlike the deliberative and forensic genres, the epideictic is not directly linked to any future decision or democratic institution in Aristotle's model. Rather, it reflects upon the situational and cultural context in which it takes place. Aristotle does not reflect much on its social function, but attaches it to a series of ceremonial events in which members of the audience are observers that merely evaluate the orator's skill (*The Art of Rhetoric*). Based on this description, epideictic rhetoric has often been

reduced to ceremonial “praise or blame” speeches or to displays of eloquence, which have led many scholars to place it under literary studies rather than rhetoric. However, in the last decades, there has been a revival in the understanding of epideictic speech and its role in society. This revival is the result of new observations on Aristotle’s writings on the subject (Hauser, 1999a; Oravec, 1976), renewed interest in sophistic thought (Carter, 1991; Chase, 1961; Duffy, 1983) and redefinitions of the epideictic in line with contemporary rhetorical theory (Beale, 1978; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991).

In a review of modern principles of epideictic rhetoric, Celeste Michelle Condit (1985) argues that influence on subsequent argumentation is only one of three functional pairs that epideictic discourse serves: definition/understanding, display/entertainment and shaping/sharing of community (Condit, 1985). By explaining a social world, epideictic speech can give the speaker the power of definition, at the same time as the audience gets new understanding. Eloquence can both display the speaker’s skills and virtues and arouse the audience’s interest. And by developing a sense of community, the speaker can simultaneously shape collective identity and invite the audience to participate in the community that is articulated.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have emphasized the first function (definition/understanding) in their attempt to redefine the role of the epideictic in the public realm and its interconnection with the other speech genres. In *The New Rhetoric* (1969), epideictic speech is considered preparation for action (Perelman, 1982; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1991), it is central to all argumentation, “because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing the adherence to the values it lauds” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991, p. 50). In line with a modern rhetorical understanding of genre, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca thus focus less on the ceremonial functions and aesthetic qualities of epideictic speech and more on its performative functions and its effect on future argumentation.

Other scholars have been more interested in the latter of Condit’s functions, the shaping and sharing of community (Daneef, 1973; Danisch, 2008; Duffy, 1983; Oravec, 1976; Rosenfield, 1980; Sullivan, 1993b; Weaver, 1953). This focus is usually

grounded in a reinterpretation of the ancient notion of “praise and blame” and a closer attention to epideictic discourse’s educational and philosophical functions. Bernard K. Duffy (1983) argues that the purpose of epideictic oratory is to “represent, however imperfectly, timeless values distilled from past experiences” (Duffy, 1983, p. 85). The philosophical purpose of epideictic discourse, according to Duffy, is centered on educating the audience on the ideas that underlie human judgment. Dale L. Sullivan (1991, 1993a, 1993b) has argued that a successful epideictic encounter “creates an aesthetic vision of orthodox values” and through that instructs the auditors and invites them to take part in a celebration of communal traditions (Sullivan, 1993b). Through praise and blame, the orator can thus enforce the cultural and political values that make a society a community.

Gerard A. Hauser (1999) argues that epideictic discourse concerns the shared assumptions of civic norms on which the enthymemes of deliberative and forensic rhetoric ultimately rest. Thus, epideictic discourse can educate the people in the civic virtues on which their public role as democratic citizens is built (Hauser, 1999a, p. 18). Robert Danisch is also concerned with epideictic discourse as a way to bridge conflicting values in society, but makes his argument on a far more present matter. In his study of African–American culture in the US, Danisch explores how epideictic expressions can create cooperation and dialogue between different value systems within a society (Danisch, 2008).

Connecting epideictic rhetoric to modern speech act theory, Walter H. Beale has introduced the notion of “the rhetorical performative” as a primary definer of epideictic speech. Reinforcement of values is a central characteristic of the epideictic, but it is seldom an explicit function, Beale argues (Beale, 1978, pp. 221-222). Rather, epideictic speech is a way of performing these values. Based on John L. Austin’s speech act theory, Beale suggests that epideictic rhetoric should be understood as the composed and more or less unified act of rhetorical discourse that does not merely comment on or claim something about the world of social action, but that constitutes a significant social action in itself. In the situation traditionally associated with epideictic rhetoric, the audience’s attention is not typically drawn to the “facts of the

case,” the locutionary aspects, but to the “communal and historical significance of the speech itself,” the illocutionary aspect (Beale, 1978, p. 229).

In her rereading of ancient sophistic sources, Cynthia M. Sheard (1996) finds a conception of the epideictic as a vehicle for change with a central role in the public sphere. She suggests that we should understand epideictic rhetoric less as a genre with a fixed set of rhetorical elements and more as “a persuasive gesture or mode we might locate in any number of discourses, including those we might regard as deliberative or forensic” (Sheard, 1996, p. 774). In this view, epideictic rhetoric is a force that can inspire and compel people to act. It does so through its ability to move the audience toward a process of critical reflection that “goes beyond evaluation toward envisioning and actualizing alternative, possible worlds” (Sheard, 1996, p. 787).

In sum, contemporary scholars of epideictic rhetoric can be said to make a close connection between the epideictic and the political. The role of epideictic discourse in the public sphere and in processes of collective judgment is repeatedly emphasized. However, unlike deliberative discourse, epideictic discourse does not address the question “What should we do about this?” Rather, it constitutes the common grounds that make a communicative resolution of this question possible. The ecology of political discourse requires the maintenance of community, which is a constitutive function of rhetoric. Either if one has an ideal view or a democratic view of the role of rhetoric in democracy, a rhetorical perspective will always assume that the citizens will pass some kind of judgment on matters of collective concern. These judgments are derived from the citizens’ prior knowledge, values and opinions, and from their knowledge and understanding of the issue at hand. This is the domain of epideictic rhetoric. It is through “praise and blame” that we define ourselves as political subjects. In this sense, the epideictic is profoundly political.

Constitutive Rhetoric and Constructions of “The People”

Other rhetorical scholars have placed the communicative functions that are associated with epideictic rhetoric at the very center of political discourse. Two such approaches are Maurice Charland’s theory of constitutive rhetoric and Michael C. McGee’s conception of the people as a rhetorical construct.

The term constitutive rhetoric has strong connections to what Condit calls the shaping and sharing of community, as it refers to how narratives create, alternate and uphold collective identities. An elaborate description of the constitutive functions of language is given by Maurice Charland in “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois” (Charland, 1987). Charland argues that, if we are to have a theoretical understanding of the power of discourse, we must account for the audiences that are addressed. A theory of rhetoric simply as persuasion will not do that, as it “requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity and within an ideology” (Charland, 1987, p. 134). It is indeed easier to praise Athens before Athenians than before Lacedaemonians. However, to focus on the praise as persuasive or as more or less deliberate will give us a limited understanding of the reasons. We need to account for the audience’s social identification. Such social identifications are rhetorical, according to Charland, since they are “discursive effects that induce human cooperation” (Charland, 1987, p. 133). These identifications logically precede persuasion and, one could add, deliberation. To study deliberative processes without considering how the issues and the actors are rhetorically constructed would be to ignore the rhetorical process that qualifies both the issues and the citizens’ judgment.

A similar argument is presented by rhetorical theorist Michael C. McGee in his exploration of the rhetorical function of “the people”, as it is invoked by politicians and others who claim to speak on their behalf. In McGee’s account, “the people” must be understood as a social and linguistic construct that is both object reality and social fantasy at the same time. “The people”, McGee argues, “are more process than phenomenon” (McGee, 1975, p. 242). It exists as an objectively real entity, but only as long as the rhetoric that defines it gives it force. After that, it withers away or is replaced by other constructions of “the people”.

McGee thus describes the notion “the people” as a process of collectivization with different identifiable stages. There is a defining rhetoric to every stage of this process of collectivization. First, the “seeds of collectivization” stay dormant in the ideologies, reasonings, aphorisms, maxims and commonplaces of a culture. Here lies the rhetorical foundation of what “the people” potentially can be. Occasionally, rhetorical agents connect such cultural content with specific problems in specific

situations, creating “political myths”, or as McGee so vividly describes it: “visions of the collective life dangled before individuals in hope of creating a real “people”” (McGee, 1975, p. 243). A new kind of rhetoric then emerges when the masses begin to respond to a myth, thus ratifying “the people” as an objective real entity. Finally, there is rhetoric of decay as the political myths lose their force. Such rhetoric, McGee argues, is often marked by hostility towards collectivism and a renewed appraisal of individualism or the beginning of a new “people” (McGee, 1975, p. 245f).

At the heart of the collectivizing process, then, are the political myths. According to McGee, “the people” are the social and political myths they accept” (McGee, 1975, p. 247). Such myths are purely rhetorical constructions, which is also why “the people” can be described rhetorically. As long as “the people” adhere to the basic myths, there is unity and collective identity. When they question them, they create a crisis of faith that gives room for new rhetoric and a new mythology (McGee, 1975, p. 245). Rhetorical analyses have the potential to give us a portrait of “the people” at a particular time. This way, McGee’s rhetorical approach to “the people” presents not only a way to understand how “the people” is awakened as a rhetorical function in political discourse, it also suggests how rhetorical analysis can contribute to our understanding of the social process that shapes collective life.

Summary: Epideictic Rhetoric as Political Rhetoric

The ecology of political discourse requires the maintenance of political community. Contemporary theories of epideictic rhetoric, Charland’s theory of constitutive rhetoric and McGee’s rhetorical construction of “the people” all suggest how we can conceptualize the formation and maintenance of political community as rhetorical processes.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca emphasize how the epideictic is preparatory to action by establishing and re-establishing the premises on which deliberative arguments are built. This demonstrates the relevance of epideictic discourse for rhetorical perspectives primarily concerned with processes of decision-making. Similarly, Sheard suggests how the epideictic can be a vehicle of change by expanding the people’s apprehension of what is possible to do.

Others, like Beale and Carter, demonstrate how epideictic rhetoric not only sets the premises for practical reasoning, but also in itself is a form of “performing” of society. Making epideictic rhetoric a central part of political rhetoric demonstrates how political life does not merely revolve around collective decisions, but also guides social life in other ways.

Understanding processes of collectivization and identity-formation as epideictic discourse also suggests how we can approach them analytically. Modern approaches to epideictic rhetoric present a vocabulary and a theoretical framework to describe the political and social “myths” that contain the civic norms and virtues that the citizens are socialized into, and that are formative for collective identities. Charland suggests how we can approach these through the active narratives, symbols and metaphors of society. McGee invites us to explore the aphorisms, maxims and commonplaces of a culture, and how these ideological premises emerge as active myths connected to specific problems and situations. This way, these theories represent a way to conceptualize the ideological nature of identity in a way that is approachable by rhetorical analysis.

Furthermore, this form of rhetorical analyses should not be limited to what is usually understood as the political realm, but can potentially include all discourse that has political relevance. This will include art, education, popular culture, religion etc.; all arenas of society that can be thought to influence the narratives, metaphors and common-sense-knowledge that form the basis for civic norms and collective identity.

The kind of issues that are frequently described as social media-friendly in the case study – immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion and freedom of speech – all involve reflections on the social norms and values that form the basis for social life. The respondents describe these issues as “hot button issues”, articulating “principles”, “moral aspects” and “an element of something private”. They are perceived to involve “personal and collective identity”, and being “controversial”, “touchy” or “flammable”. Thus, political talk in social network sites insists on a strong connection between person and belief, challenging the separation of the public and the private.

As the debates in social network sites closely follow the news agenda, they focus not so much on decision-making per se, but on condemning or praising actions, actors and event. Their focus is placed not so much on what the best possible outcome of political issues is, but on what the essential characteristics of Norwegian society that should form the basis for political decisions are. This way, approaching political talk in the networked publics of participatory media as processes of collectivization and identity-formation opens up new dimensions for analysis.

Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to present a working definition of political rhetoric that can include the different forms of political behavior found in online environments in addition to more traditional forms of political engagement. This definition should not only include formal political processes, but also informal settings and vernacular talk that ordinary citizens engage in on an everyday basis. This is the kind of political behavior we encounter in participatory media.

In this dissertation I view political rhetoric as the expression of three types of basic communicative processes in society: 1) Processes of collective decision-making, 2) processes of creating salience in the public domain, and 3) processes of collectivization through the formation and re-formation of collective identities. Combined, these three processes form a framework to describe in what different ways rhetorical utterances can be perceived as political and how they potentially inform and influence political opinions. To study utterances and events as political rhetoric is to ask how they fit into these processes.

Letting these processes inform our understanding of political rhetoric also draws attention to how apparently non-political utterances and practices can be politically relevant. This is essential when studying new, emergent forms of political discourse. Social network sites are not developed for the sake of political debate or political participation. Therefore, studying social network sites as arenas for political rhetoric requires an understanding of political rhetoric that is wide enough to capture the political relevance of seemingly non-political discourse.

I have also argued that processes of collective decision-making should be understood as the primary function of political rhetoric. It is their relation to processes

of decision-making that allows us to describe processes of creating salience and processes of collectivization as political. Even though these processes are always implied in political rhetoric, it is primarily through collective decisions that political actors are able to induce change in the world.

From the position of rhetorical theory, then, models of democracy are models of decision-making. How we conceptualize processes of collective decision-making is thus entangled with our understanding of democracy and the role of rhetoric in democracy. Here I have described two different normative views on rhetoric as decision-making that can be identified within the field. In the ideal view, political rhetoric is approached as an overarching process of collective reasoning that should secure the best possible outcome in all practical issues. In the democratic view, political rhetoric is understood as the processes leading up to the designation of decision-making power.

These different views of political rhetoric as decision-making ultimately rest on different understandings of the essence of democracy. In the ideal view, the idea of something being democratic is closely connected to the community's ability to make prudent decisions based on a functional rhetorical process that should lead to collective will-formation. The democratic view, on the other hand, is concerned with how the democratic system secures the individual citizen's rights vis-à-vis the state and other citizens. Here, political rhetoric is primarily seen as a medium for conflicting interests. One of the strengths of a rhetorical perspective on political discourse is that it can balance both these views depending on the particular situation.

The second kind of process that informs this understanding of political rhetoric is the processes of creating salience in the public realm. Before any collective decisions can be made there must be some agreement about what the issues are and how they should be understood. In the modern media society, much political discourse is not motivated by pending collective decisions, but is better understood as struggles to socialize or privatize conflict and getting one's own interests on the agenda.

The theoretical complexes of agenda-setting and framing describe how the dominant institutions of public life shape the public's attention in modern democracies. Agenda-setting theory describes how the news agenda is formed and

how it can influence the public's attention. From a rhetorical perspective, theories of agenda-setting can help us describe how news media influence people's understanding of rhetorical situations. Framing theory is concerned with how issues are "framed" as particular kinds of political or civic issues. It describes how political actors actively seek to frame issues and events in order to persuade public opinion in their favor.

I have suggested three ways in which rhetorical studies can benefit from agenda-setting and framing theory. First, these theories offer a framework that is useful when analyzing the communicative situations in which ordinary citizens encounter political discourse in modern democracies. Second, they describe how patterns of interpretations and structures guiding our attention persist over time. And third, they provide empirically grounded descriptions of the context of modern political rhetoric.

The third kind of process is the processes of collectivization. These describe the formation and re-formation of collective identities as the foundation for political community. The political community is the source and the subject of all collective decisions. How collective identities and a sense of community are maintained through rhetorical practice is the concern of theories of epideictic rhetoric. To include the epideictic as an always-present element of political discourse is to recognize how the formation and re-formation of collective identities always will be a central part of political life.

I have suggested three ways in which theories of epideictic rhetoric inform the decision-making function of political rhetoric. First, epideictic rhetoric can be understood as preparatory to political action. Epideictic rhetoric defines premises and shape beliefs and values that people utilize in their decision-making. Second, epideictic rhetoric shapes and strengthens the values and beliefs that people are socialized into and that form their understanding of what it means to be a citizen. And third, epideictic rhetoric represents an important display of community and of the values and virtues that shapes the perception of community and of a "common good". This way, epideictic rhetoric is in itself a way to "perform" community.

As democracy is understood as way to organize collective decision-making, political participation can always be understood as motivated by the underlying

question What should we do about this? Engagement with such issues will always imply the questions What is “this”? and Who are “we”? Here I have presented an understanding of political rhetoric based on the always on-going communicative processes that surround these questions. Together these three processes form a comprehensive understanding of the rhetorical nature of political life.

Chapter 3: Meso-Level Analysis of Rhetorical Practice

In this chapter, I ask how we can best approach the question of systemic form when dealing with rhetoric in networked publics. As the complexity of modern society makes the delineation of rhetorical situations more difficult, it also becomes increasingly difficult to describe how people distinguish between different practices and environments. Social network sites contain many different communication situations simultaneously, and they thus allow participants to balance different kinds of genres and practices. A major challenge for rhetorical researchers is to find the appropriate level of analysis to best identify and describe how people “read”, classify, and make sense of these environments, and how these “readings” in turn instruct actions.

Within rhetorical studies, such categorisations are most often done in terms of genre, understood as categorisations of action on the situational level. However, applying the concept of genre on social network sites can be difficult. It assumes that the analyst is able to identify and delineate particular situations that correspond with the participants’ experiences. Thus, the atomization of context, and the consequences it is likely to have for people’s shared experiences of situations, gravely affects our ability to effectively perform genre analyses in these environments.

In this chapter and the next, I suggest that social network sites might more conveniently be described as rhetorical arenas. Drawing on basic insights from structuration theory, I propose how rhetorical arenas can be seen as systemic forms on the meso-level, or what in sociology is known as middle range. On this level, rhetorical studies are concerned with patterns beyond particular situations and genres. This includes formations of local communities and public spaces. Also, meso-level analysis can reveal connections between micro- and macro-levels and give us a better understanding of the connection between concrete political discussions and people’s sense of being part of a political community or contribute to a public sphere.

The chapter has a three part structure. In the first part, I argue why rhetorical genre theory is not an optimal approach to describe networked publics. In the second part of the chapter, I present two theories which give an impression of what rhetorical

theories at the meso-level can look like: Carolyn Miller's descriptions of rhetorical communities and Gerard Hauser's rhetorical model of the public sphere. Finally, I discuss the benefits of structuration theory to rhetorical studies on this level. This theory has been widely influential in theories of genre and medium, where it has been used to describe the processes in which action is institutionalized as practice and how new media are integrated into established patterns of action. I argue that structuration theory's conceptual framework for describing the relation between action, structure and place is useful when analysing complex and changeable rhetorical practices. I also argue that Rob Stones' adjustments of this theory to better fit meso-level analyses, what he calls "strong structuration", is particularly relevant for rhetorical analysis of networked publics.

The Limits of Genre

Central voices in the modern revival of the rhetorical theory have laid the groundwork for contemporary rhetorical genre theory by turning the attention away from formal characteristics to the action the discourse is used to accomplish (Campbell & Hall Jamieson, 1978; Miller, 1984). According to Carolyn Miller (1984), rhetorical genres are typified responses to recurring situations. Situations are seen as social constructs that are the result of definition. At the centre of situations is a process of interpretation, and people are able to find common definitions by using their "stock of knowledge" that helps them arrange situations into different types. This stock of knowledge is constantly evolving as new types are understood in light of existing ones, but it remains stable enough for the actors to be able to make common sense of situations. What are recurring then, are not physical and material conditions, but the actors' construal of situation-types.

This means that exigency – the defining feature of rhetorical situations – must be situated in the social world. It is, according to Miller, "a form of social knowledge – a mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need" (Miller, 1984, p. 157). Because people share ways to read situations, they will also have similar expectations for what constitute as fitting responses to situations.

Miller's theory also offers a hierarchical organisation of meaning-as-action, stretching from single experiences to cultures and human nature. Each level of the hierarchy is a fusion of substance and form in context. It is through this fusion that symbolic structures take on "pragmatic force" and become interpretable as actions in context (Miller, 1984, p. 160). Perceived as form at one level, genre is a fusion of form and substances on lower levels; and it will serve as the substance of form at higher levels. More specific, genre appears at the level of complete discourse types, as members of genres are able to make complete shifts in rhetorical situations. They are provided context by form-of-life patterns, as Miller calls the level above it in the hierarchy, and are given substance by "intermediate forms of strategies, analogous to the dialogic episode" (Miller, 1984, p. 162). Miller's hierarchical model is thus a way to understand how meaning is interpreted at different levels of contextualisation. However, it is clear that she regards genre as the structuring force on situational level, where rhetoric is performed.

Many of the most productive descriptions of genres in social network sites are based on this rhetorical concept of genre, or on similar functional theories, like the genre theory of John Swales (1990). Much like Miller, Swales posits that genre comprises a class of communicative events that "share some set of communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990, p. 58). Swales' understanding of "purpose" presumes more directed action than Miller's description of "motive" as "an objectified social need" (Miller, 1984, p. 163). Beyond that, these two approaches to genres both regard genre as something people *do*.

To apply these understandings of genre on participatory media is to ask how these media constitute a particular type of social action. Scholars who promote this perspective often see social network sites as particularly convoluted cases, in which the concept of genre is believed to either balance tendencies of media determinism, or as a way to bridge perspectives on practice and technology.

In the first category are Scandinavian media scholars who argue that the complexity of the contemporary media society has created an increased need for genre understandings. Lüders et al. (2010) argue that genre is become ever more relevant in the myriad of online communication forms. Coming from the field of media theory,

they hope that more attention to genre can help us “account for the relationship between society and media in a non-deterministic fashion” (Lüders et al., 2010, p. 948). Lüders (2008) also draws clear a distinction between media technology, media forms, and media genre. According to her, the media forms that dominate in digital environments are characterised by being “personal media”. The conventions that separate these genres are less rigid and less institutionalised than in the mass media, as they are developed by individual media users. Still, users will be socialised into different genres that governs their expectations and conventions for how people construct and read messages. Similarly, Lomborg (2011) argues that conceptualising social media as communicative genres can clarify what kind of media and texts they are and what kind of actions people use them to do. Lomborg claims that social media “facilitate a particular way of being social, namely a sort of everyday togetherness and relationship maintenance among participants” (Lomborg, 2011, p. 56). As genres, they are particularly dynamic. They are “subject to continuous disruption and uncertainty, owing to their deinstitutionalized and participatory character, and the shifting roles of producers and recipients in the networks and conversations that make up social media content” (Lomborg, 2011, p. 55).

In the latter category are scholars who are predominantly interested in the connection between technological change and change in discursive practice. Yates and Orlikowski (1994) use genre to explain the balance between organisational communication and new technology as a process of structuration. Drawing on structuration theory and Anthony Giddens’ (1984) notion of social rules, they describe expectations connected to situational reoccurrence as “genre rules” (Giddens, 1984, p. 302). Yates and Orlikowski do not address the question of participatory media directly, but their suggestion of how genre can be used to describe the impact of technological change on institutions has been used in such directions (Lomborg, 2011).

These approaches to genre, media, and technology-change all say something valuable about how new media environments influence rhetorical practices. However, there are also some elements of rhetoric in social network sites that “genre” cannot fully capture.

First, the rhetorical understanding of genre suggests that we as observers are able to access or recreate the perceptions of situation that participants act on. This is fundamentally difficult in social network sites. Practices are continuously being formed and reformed in this new media environment, and they seem to weaken the processes of inter-subjective definitions of situations all together.

Some scholars have tried to apply a rhetorical understanding of genre to the media platform itself (Lomborg, 2011). Such genre-claims are uncertain, as we are not able to identify a common exigency or purpose that allow us to talk about recurring situations. Without identifying such an exigency, many of the benefits of rhetorical genre analysis is weakened, like its invitation to evaluate rhetorical success and assess the “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor.

Second, people tend to conceptualise social network sites as places, not practices. The case study in this dissertation shows how this particular segment of participatory media users sees these media as “place-based forums” or “third spaces” (Oldenburg, 1989; Wright, 2012; Wright et al., 2016). This is also confirmed by the vernacular that surrounds social network sites. In everyday talk, Facebook is not referred to as something people “do”, but as a place they meet or a community they socialize in. This is not to say they these sites cannot be locations for rhetorical genres. However, it encourages us to be open to the various ways in which people contextualise utterances and practices.

As these environments are dialogical and de-institutionalized, they invite comparison less to other media genres and more to encounter settings from everyday life. Assuming that there is a dual relationship between how people read situations and how they act, we should take serious this broader form of orientation. This also means that other social mechanisms might have a more prominent role in conversations in social network sites than they have in traditional media genres. The case in this dissertation can provide an example. This shows how expert citizens mark their distance to other users with a particular ironic attitude. “Ordinary” citizens might not be able to pick up on this irony, and consequently assume that they are engaged in the same kind of social action as the expert citizens.

Third, there are major methodological challenges to studies of rhetorical genres in social network sites. Commentators maintain that as a method of analysis, rhetorical genre analysis should still be primarily based on situated discourse. For instance, Lomborg states that “classic textual analysis remains central to genre analysis” (Lomborg, 2011, p. 68). It is notoriously difficult to establish stable categories for analysis of text in social network sites. Discourse might still be organised in ways that can best be described in terms of genre, but we non the less have difficulties approaching these organising principles through the tools of rhetorical genre analysis.

In sum, although it is clear that genre theory and genre analysis can and should continue to play an important role in mapping the new rhetorical practices of digital environments, there are limits to what sides of networked publics they can describe.

New Perspectives on Rhetorical Community

Increased interest in both rhetoric and the context of language has also drawn more attention to the importance of “community” as sociocultural context. In sociolinguistics, theorists talk about the “speech community” (Chomsky, 1965; Labov, 1972); in literary studies, central voices are referring to “interpretive communities” (Fish, 1980); in the field of practice theory, social theorists are talking about “communities of practice” (Lave, 1988; Wenger, 1998); and in composition studies, scholars refer to different “discourse communities” (Porter, 1992; Swales, 1988). Similarly, modern argumentation theory refers to “argumentative fields” (Toulmin, 2003) or different “spheres of argument” (Goodnight, 1982).

These different approaches to sociocultural context of meaning production each have relevance and applicability for different areas of rhetorical inquiry. Throughout this dissertation, I apply a variety of theoretical and analytical perspectives that are directly or indirectly based on these approaches, like Davis Zarefsky’s concept of “argument culture” (chapter 7), Linda Hutcheon’s description of the relation between irony and community (chapter 6), and James D. Hunter’s account of “culture wars” (chapter 9). Although they have very different theoretical interests, these approaches share an assumption that rhetorical and discursive differences and tensions are based in normative communities.

The nature and variations of “community” have also been a central theoretical interest for the “new” rhetoric. Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca offer the following thoughts on community and rhetoric:

“All language is the language of community, be this a community bound by biological ties, or by the practice of a common discipline or technique. The terms used, their meaning, their definition, can only be understood in the context of the habits, ways of thoughts, methods, external circumstances, and tradition known to the users of those terms” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991, p. 513).

For Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca the idea of community is thus fundamental for the possibility of practical argumentation.

Thomas Farrell argues that practical rhetorical studies should be directed at the “excluded middle” located between the macro and the micro levels of social interaction. This level consists of contemporary places, or “rhetorical forums”, that serve as “gathering places for discourse”. Farrell defines these forums in the following way:

“... a rhetorical forum is any encounter setting which serves as a gathering place for discourse. As such, it provides a space for multiple positions to encounter one another. And, in its most developed condition, it may also provide precedents and modalities for granting a hearing to positions, as well as sorting through their agendas and constituencies. This is a way of saying that a rhetorical forum provides a provisionally constrained context and an avenue of mediation among discourses that might otherwise be self-confirming, incommensurable, or perhaps not even heard at all” (Farrell, 1993, p. 282)

In these rhetorical forums there are active norms for who may speak and what may be spoken about. Much like other descriptions of “community”, the term “forum” should here be understood more as a social term than a spatial metaphor. The forum’s durability and consistency over time is believed to be more important than its occupation of a particular space. This is probably also the reason why Farrell does not pay much attention to the impact of physical or digital circumstances on rhetorical practice.

Bringing the concept into the digital age, Zappen et al. (1997) argue that the concept of rhetorical community is becoming increasingly relevant as new digital

media add to new forms of social organization and interaction. Dealing with the question of digital environments in the mid 90's, they suggest that these environments "have the potential to become contemporary rhetorical communities – public spaces or forums – within which limited or local communities and individuals can develop mutual respect and understanding via dialogue and discussion" (Zappen et al., 1997, p. 400).

The descriptions that Zappen et al. (1997) give of digital environments could also be used on today's social network sites. They focus on how these environments permit a multiplicity of people to meet "synchronously and immediately" and how this creates a room for exploring and confronting languages and perspectives that differ both cognitively and affectively (Zappen et al., 1997, p. 403). Both participants and observers conceptualize this clash of perspectives that is suddenly made possible by new media technology as new digital "public spaces" or "forums". These forums are generated by differences, but are also depending on mutual respect and understanding via dialogue and discussion.

Zappen et al. (Zappen et al., 1997) base their views on two perspectives that are found in most contemporary descriptions of rhetorical community. The first is the perspective that rhetorical communities are built around or in close relation to physical or virtual spaces or forums. Both participants and observers tend to describe such communities through spatial metaphors. A community can be described as a *rhetorical* community, then, by assessing how it maintains a forum for adversarial argument. The second perspective is the idea that rhetorical communities occur in the tension between stabilizing and destabilizing forces. The preferred metaphor here is Bakhtin's description of centrifugal and centripetal forces in discourse (Bakhtin, 1981). For Bakhtin, this is a central component of *heteroglossia* in language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). What makes a community *rhetorical*, according to this perspective, is that it balances disagreements of opinions with common references and shared discursive practices which enable it to deal with and resolve these disagreements. These two intersecting logics provide a tension, or balance, between strict adaption of routines and genuine invention from rhetorical agents.

In the following, I introduce two theoretical descriptions of rhetorical practice that can be seen to combine these perspectives on the meso-level: Carolyn Miller's description of rhetorical communities and Gerard Hauser's descriptions of discursive arenas as local publics for vernacular rhetorical practices. These theorists have different starting points and motivations. Miller seeks to describe the higher level of form above genre, while Hauser is concerned with how theories of the public sphere can benefit from descriptions of local rhetorical practices. Both provide descriptions of norm-based rhetorical communities at the meso-level, and both find the rhetorical potential of these communities in their maintenance of discursive forums and in how they balance stabilizing and de-stabilizing forces. Combined, they give a comprehensive description of the nature of local rhetorical arenas that is a useful starting point describing the rhetoric of networked publics.

As Miller explicitly relates her descriptions of communities to rhetorical genre theory, I find this to be the most applicable to practical rhetorical studies of networked publics. I then introduce Hauser's "rhetorical model of the public sphere" as a way to explain how local rhetorical arenas relate to the broader public sphere and to macro-level descriptions of political discourse. In the latter part of this chapter, I build on Miller's understanding of rhetorical community and further explore how the connection she establishes between rhetorical theory and structuration theory can be used to describe the rhetorical characteristics of networked publics.

Carolyn Miller's Descriptions of Rhetorical Community

Carolyn Miller explains how perceptions of community have always been central to the connection between rhetoric and society. She also suggests how the concept of community can be integrated in modern rhetorical theory and bridge the divide between rhetorical studies on the situational level and theories of the role of rhetoric in society.

In "The *Polis* as Rhetorical Community" (Miller, 1993), Miller argues that "the city-state as community" was a fundamental prerequisite for antique rhetoric. Philosophical disagreements about rhetoric among Plato, Aristotle, and the Sophist, which played a crucial part in the early theorisation of the field, were bound up in their different views and desires for this community (Miller, 1993, p. 213). How they

viewed the relationship between individual and community shaped their perception of rhetoric as a source of both political change and political stability. Miller also shows how the relationship between rhetoric and community in antique rhetoric was frequently understood in spatial and social terms: “In understanding the *polis* as a specifically *rhetorical* community, it is helpful to see it not as primarily an empirical social structure (however imperfect) but as the framework for an event: as the continuing opportunity – the forum – for debate, discussion, dialog, dispute” (Miller, 1993, p. 239).

Both the role of the citizens and the idea of a political community were inextricably linked to the public arenas where these rhetorical processes took place. Classical scholars have attributed the surprising success of the *polis* states, despite of their huge class differences and undeveloped state apparatus, to the successful maintaining of such discursive arenas (Ober, 1989; Vernant, 1984). However, using the views of the *polis* as a framework for rhetorical events to contemporary rhetorical theory is not without its difficulties. First of all, the *polis* was a fundamentally homogeneous community. Antique rhetoric focuses on the *polis* as *one* unity; as *one* forum for rhetorical participation. The logic of the polis was stability, not change, and it was oriented towards unity, not diversity. The polis did not experience technological or material change with any significant effect on the flow of communication in society. Antique rhetorical theory is thus terribly set for describing the varying relationship between communication technology and discursive practice that we experience today.

In “Rhetorical Community: The Cultural Basis of Genre” (Miller, 1994) Miller attempts to fuse her genre-theory and her perspectives on rhetorical community and describe in more detail how “genre serves as the substance of forms at higher levels” (Miller, 1984, p. 163). In order to describe the relationship between the particularity of rhetorical activity and the abstractness of macro-level forms, Miller turns to Anthony Giddens’s structuration theory. Where rhetorical theory has previously focused on recurrence as the basis for classification of action, structuration theory focuses on reproduction. This Miller understands as stronger than recurrence, since it also entails the action of participants. Through reproduction, “social actors *create* recurrence in their action by reproducing the structural aspects of institutions, by using available

structures as the medium of their action and thereby producing those structures again as virtual outcomes, available for further memory, interpretation, and use” (Miller, 1994, p. 60).

In light of structuration theory, Miller then proposes the following view of genre, varying slightly from the pragmatic definition given ten years earlier:

“Genre we can understand specifically as that aspect of situated communication that is *capable of reproduction*, that can be manifested in more than one situation, more than one concrete space-time. The rules and resources of a genre provide reproducible speaker and addressee roles, social typifications of recurrent social needs or exigences, topical structures (or 'moves' and 'steps'), and ways of indexing an event to material conditions, turning them into constraints or resources. In its representation of and intervention in space-time, genre becomes a determinant of rhetorical *kairos* - a means by which we define a situation in space-time and understand the opportunities it holds” (C. R. Miller, 1994, p. 71f)

This understanding of genre foregrounds the specific contribution rhetoric makes to the basic problem in social theory of connecting action and structure. In Miller’s view, it is “the practical need to marshal linguistic resources for the sake of social action” that connects micro and macro-levels of society (Miller, 1994, p. 60). This is what Miller refers to as the *addressivity* of rhetoric. Rhetorical actions are always relational, as they are necessarily dependent on other persons to be realised. In order to perform motivated actions, the individual must address these “others” in the rhetorical forum, and this way recreate the structures that holds the forum together as a social system:

“... this addressivity, or relational quality, provides a specific mechanism by which individual communicative action and social system structure each other and interact with each other. The individual must produce patterned notions of others, institutional or social others, and the institution or society or culture must provide structures by which individuals can do this” (C. R. Miller, 1994, p. 72)

The adaptation of the principles of structuration also allows Miller to better describe the nature of rhetorical community in modern societies, and what makes a community a specifically rhetorical one, distinct from a “speech community”, a “political community”, or a “discourse community” (Miller, 1994, p. 61). A rhetorical community should not be understood as an external entity. It only exists in the actors

and is realised in their rhetorical activity, similar to Giddens' "virtual" communities. What makes a community rhetorical is that it upholds a tension between a certain kind of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Rhetorical communities consist of contest between different opinions, but in order for these differences to be dealt with rhetorically, the community must also have common ground, a way to confront the differences. The basics of this duality are well articulated in Miller's own description of the *polis* as a rhetorical community: "Because there are many citizens, there are differences; because there is one *polis*, they must confront those differences" (Miller, 1993, p. 239).

That rhetorical communities are "virtual" means that they are maintained only by social structures and effective norms for rhetorical action. It also means that they can be approached and conceptualised in different ways, depending on what aspects of the social reality we focus on.

Local Discursive Arenas

Gerard Hauser's rhetorical model for the public sphere describes how rhetorical communities are not necessarily overlapping with societies, but are also formed around local discursive arenas in which ordinary people engage in everyday talk about political and civic issues.

According to Hauser, our contemporary public sphere is best understood as a multitude of spheres, or a superordinate Public Sphere composed of multiple self-regulative discursive arenas, each with its own defining characteristics.

Hauser's rhetorical model of the public sphere promises to "take discourse seriously" by being attentive to the "rhetorality" of all the practice that form and express public opinion, including everyday conversations and non-deliberative expressions. This also includes films, pictures, and non-verbal forms of communication (Hauser, 1999b, p. 85ff). This is in line with the understanding of political rhetoric that I promote in this dissertation, which suggests that the processes that political rhetoric inform can be present in all kinds of discursive activities. Hauser still sees collective judgement as central to public opinion, but he promotes a different rationality than what he understands as idealized models of rational discourse. This he describes as "the practical reasoning endemic in the use of symbols to coordinate

social action, or *rhetoric*” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 84). Hauser then gives the following description of the contemporary public sphere and the different “discursive arenas” it consists of:

”The contemporary Public Sphere has become a web of discursive arenas, spread across society and even in some cases across national boundaries. Each of these arenas is itself composed of those members of society who, at the very least, are attending to a discourse on issues they share and who are able to understand and respond to the vernacular exchanges that exist outside power and yet are normative of it. Our direct daily encounters with others who share our discursive spaces may be local, but our awareness of association with others who are part of its dialogue extends to locales and participants who are strangers and yet who’s participation we heed and consider. Collectively these web-like structures of a particular public sphere, such as a political party or a social movement, are joined to others in the reticulate Public Sphere, where their collective rhetorical practices produce society” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 71f).

The “discursive arenas” of the Public Sphere is a part of Hauser’s model that is particularly relevant for the agenda here. I propose that Twitter and Facebook have become such arenas, as they host local publics of politically engaged expert citizens. As people, issues, arguments and figures of speech moves from these arenas to other arenas of media, politics, or everyday life, they contribute to the “web-like structures” that shape the Norwegian public. Such local public spheres Hauser describes as “discursive sites where society deliberates about normative standards and even develops new frameworks for expressing and evaluating social reality” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 61). They are “sites of emergence of rhetorically salient meaning” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 61).

By “publics” Hauser refers to aggregates that are “actively engaged by a public problem” and that forms opinions through this engagement (Hauser, 1999b, p. 32). Publics can be formed around particular issues or by stable or temporary associations of citizens. A public is not necessarily a group in consensus, nor is it necessary that it reach consensus, but its participants have to have some sort of common knowledge, a shared reference world, which also encompasses their differences and disagreements. That is to say that the actors involved must be knowledgeable of the centripetal and centrifugal forces of the public.

These publics are actively creating themselves through rhetoric practice, and it is this process of production and reproduction that underlie their self-regulatory nature. To say that publics are self-regulating is therefore to focus on their rhetorical particularities: the norms of rhetorical practice which are formed as a result of how a particular group of people engage in particular issues in a particular encounter setting.

Whereas “common understandings” are the very ground of publics, “public opinion” Hauser describes as “the result of judgement” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 93). Here Hauser builds on Hannah Arendt’s conceptions of collective judgement. Forming an opinion requires the ability to see things from the perspective of others, and the realisation that the opinion held is one among other possible opinions. Rhetoric is the method of reaching political opinions, Hauser argues, since it is the art of collective judgement in practical issues, and we get a more comprehensive understanding of public opinion when we are attentive to the entire rhetorical process, including vernacular exchanges.

Public opinion, perceptions of salience, and the shared convictions that inform public decision-making, do not necessarily evolve through orderly discourse, but in all forms of interaction that “open a dialogue between competing factions” (Hauser, 1998, p. 90). Therefore, we will never get a real understanding of the judgements made by the members of the public if we are confined to formal discourse. Vernacular exchanges hold the narratives and cultural memory that contextualize opinions and give them meaning. It is in the vernacular we find how the members of the public read and react to the issues raised. This way the rhetorical model is more perceptive to the inter-subjectivity of public opinion.

Hauser’s rhetorical model resonates well with descriptions of a networked public. Here too, the social spaces and imagined collectives that emerge as a result of network technology are believed to be connected and grouped together in a reticulate public sphere. However, applying Hauser’s perspective on social network sites foregrounds their “rhetoricity” (Hauser, 1998): their potential to not only carry, but to form and alter public opinions. It also urges us to take seriously the contextual settings in which this is done: “... any evaluation of their actual state requires that we inspect the rhetorical environment as well as the rhetorical act out of which they

evolved, for these are the conditions that constitute their individual character” (Hauser, 1999b, p. 80f).

In sum, both Miller and Hauser set out to describe local spheres of discourse in which practices have continuity and form beyond particular situations. Whether these are conceptualised as “communities” or “publics”, they bring new perspectives to understandings of the increased complexity and variation in the public sphere. When I propose that these theories exemplify the potentials of rhetorical analysis at the meso-level, it is especially because they establish connections between utterances (micro) and societies (macro). Miller describes rhetorical community as a level of meaning-action between situated discourse and conceptions of society or democracy. Similarly, Hauser approaches rhetorical practices as products of local discursive arenas, which linked together form our impression of the public sphere.

Miller and Hauser also promote a clear understanding of how these local arenas should be understood as rhetorical. Miller finds the “adressivity” of rhetoric anchored in how the rhetorical community balances different interests and opinions and how they maintain ways to channel them rhetorically. Hauser’s description of local publics suggests that their “rhetoricality” is based on their potential to not only channel public opinion, but to shape it.

Moreover, these theories actively draw attention to social constructive nature of rhetorical practice and how it affects perceptions of society. This way they also suggest how the field of rhetoric, in order to offer relevant analyses of modern society, should be concerned with not only situated discourse, but also how social realities change over time.

Structuration Theory and Rhetoric

Rhetorical analysis of the meso-level of society should describe and critically assess how different areas of the public support local norms of rhetorical practice. In the rest of this chapter and the next, I suggest how we can approach the question of systemic form on the meso-level in terms of Anthony Giddens notion of “structuration”. Through the framework of structuration theory, *rhetorical arenas* can be approached as stable encounter settings for rhetoric organised around physical or virtual “locales”.

This way, we can account for how they are given systemic form through routinized practice, while still seeing action as motivated and potentially strategic.

The theoretical accounts of Miller and Hauser demonstrate how rhetoric for a very long time has been closely interwoven with different forms of systemness on the macro- and meso-level of society. However, rhetorical studies have primarily been occupied with clear-cut examples of institutionalised practices, with little regards to how practices overlap and change over time. In the modern media society, such clear-cut practices are increasingly difficult to locate. Structuration theory can be used to describe how social practices are given systemic form and how it is upheld and changed over time. It can thus prove a valuable starting point for analyses of rhetorical practice that are concerned with new patterns of social formation and public space.

Many of the theorists that have a prominent place in this dissertation explicitly build on the understandings of social action provided by structuration theory. Carolyn Miller uses structuration theory to explain the basic social mechanisms that affect change and create stability in rhetorical communities (Miller, 1994) and rhetorical genres (Miller & Shepard, 2004). Jens E. Kjeldsen suggests that structuration theory can be used to describe contextual orientation in our rapidly changing media reality (Kjeldsen, 2008). Robert Glenn Howard suggests that structuration theory can help us describe the relationship between vernacular and institutional authorities in participatory media (Howard, 2008b). Others use structuration theory to describe the relation between technological change and genre (Lüders et al., 2010; Orlikowski & Yates, 1994), or, as I will return to in the next chapter, between technology and discourse (Hutchby, 2001a).

Although they focus on different aspects of rhetorical practice, technology and social relations, these theorists share some basic understandings of what shapes social action. I present some of the similarities between structuration theory and rhetorical theory and what I believe to be the biggest advantages of combing the two traditions. Then I turn to Rob Stones' theory of "strong structuration". This is an attempt to adjust the elements of structuration theory to studies on the meso-level. Making this level explicit, means that situational variability is introduced in a systematic way, and that we draw attention to agents' contextual orientation as a hermeneutic process.

Elements of the Theory of Structuration

In the theory of structuration, Anthony Giddens describes how social relations are structured across time and space. To do so, he attempts to bridge the dualisms between agency and structure in social theory, by replacing them with a single concept: the duality of structure. According to Giddens, individual agency and social structures should not be regarded as opposing or even separate phenomena. Rather, “structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices” and it “exists” only in the generating moments of this constitution (Giddens, 1979). In acting, and in interpreting the acts of others, actors draw on their knowledge of social structures, reproducing them in the process. This reflexive reproduction gives form to “social systems”, defined as “the patterning of social relations across time-space, understood as reproduced practices” (Giddens, 1979, p. 5).

This process of reciprocity between agency and structure is what Giddens refers to as the process of structuration. As structures only “exist” in action, a theoretical possibility of change is inherent in all moments of social reproduction. Stability, a necessity for social systems, is therefore understood not as the absence of change but as the continuation of action in accordance with the structural properties of the social system. Structuration is the process governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and through this the reproduction of social systems.

Social structures, according to Giddens, can be seen as a “virtual order”. They are “both medium and outcome” of the social practices they organise, and they “exist” only in action. A central element of the theory is that it sees structures as both restraining and enabling for action (Giddens, 1984). Social structures are seen as the “rules and resources” of social practice. Within the theory of structuration, “rules” should be understood to have both constitutive and regulative dimensions. They are both defining for what people are doing and instructive for what they should be doing. However, structures should not be thought of only as something that limits the agents’ scope of action, outside of which they are “free” to do what they want. Agency concerns all events in which an individual could have acted differently, and agents always have the resources to act purposively. When they are left with no action-possibilities, actors have no agency. Giddens’ concept of resources is thus closely

connected to his understanding of power, as resources are the “vehicles” of power (Giddens, 1979).

Although structuration theory and rhetorical theory have different starting points and different objectives, they also share some basic similarities in how they approach the relationship between individual and society.

First, structuration theory and rhetorical theory have a similar understanding of people as the source of change in society. Giddens’ theory proposes that change, or the possibility of change, is inherent in all moments of social reproduction. Rhetorical theory has always been interested in how people can cause change in the world through the same communicative functions that maintains community and society.

Second, rhetorical studies have always approached social structures as not only constraining but also enabling for the individual. Rhetorical arguments and rhetorical form will always be rooted in the social reality of the audience. In order to act persuasively, a rhetor should have an idea of how things are usually done and what it means to act in accordance with the audience’s expectations. Knowledge of these “rules” can be exploited for persuasive purposes.

Third, structuration theory and rhetorical theory have similar conceptions of power. In Giddens’ theory, all agents have some control over their own situation and thus a certain level of power. Similarly, rhetorical theory assumes that both rhetor and audience have power over situations. Any power the rhetor might hold depends on the cooperation of his audience.

Beyond these theoretical similarities, there are also clear benefits of adapting some of the perspectives of structuration theory. First of all, the theory of structuration offers us a way to understand rhetorical practice as a continuous flow of conduct, without refraining from our conception of rhetoric as motivated action. The source of this is found in Giddens’ more elaborate action-theory. Giddens views action as a *durée*, a continuous flow of conduct (Giddens, 1984, p. 3). People are not only able to act in different ways, they also routinely monitor their own action and the actions of others and the physical and social aspects of the context in which they move. To explain how these processes affect human agency, Giddens introduces what he calls “the stratification model of action” (Giddens, 1979). This model describes three

dimensions of action: reflexive monitoring of action; knowledgeability and rationalization of action; and motivation of action. Through these dimensions Giddens is able to differentiate between intentionality, reason, and motivation for purposive action.

By the *reflexive monitoring of action* Giddens refers to “the intentional or purposive character of human behaviour” (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). This emphasises people’s ability to account for what they do and why they do it, or “intentionality as process”, as Giddens calls it (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). People are believed to act intentionally even if they are not conscious about their intentions for acting the way they do. The determining point is that people, when they observe and interpret events around them, draw on the same stocks of knowledge as they draw upon when acting.

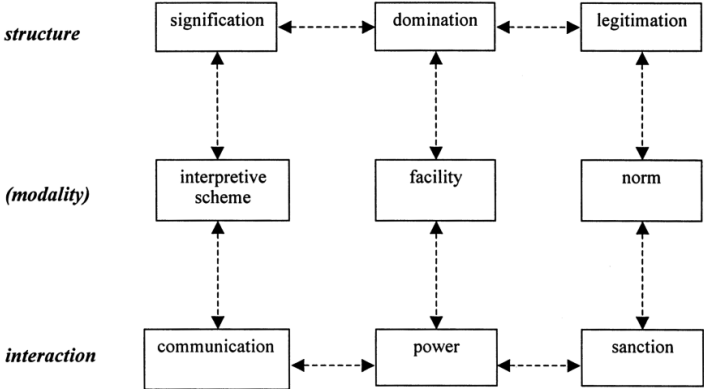
Reflexive monitoring operates against the backdrop of *rationalization of action*. Giddens describes this as “the capabilities of human agents to ‘explain’ why they act as they do by giving reasons for their conduct” (Giddens, 1979, p. 57). Agents rationalize or evaluate the success of actions, even if the reasons applied are not the same as the reasons for acting in the first place. The reasons given may or may not be different from the agents’ *motivation for acting* (Giddens, 1979, p. 58). Motivations refer to the potential for action rather than to the action itself (Giddens, 1984, p. 6). Actions are motivated when the agents have interests or wants that prompt their actions besides their knowledge of how things are usually done. Motivations pull actions out of the continuous stream of agency. They are effective in the situations that in some way break the routine.

The stratification model of action model offers us a way to approach routinized processes that take place in all forms of social life and include it in our understanding of agency. Perhaps the most tangible benefit for rhetorical studies is the more complex understanding of intentionality and motivation that this model offers. To view action as a *durée* is to accept that intentions and motives cannot always be arranged in neat situations. This is a major concern for studies of rhetoric in modern media environments and studies of vernacular rhetoric. Although rhetorical studies are primarily concerned with actions that are clearly motivated, actions that are predominantly the result of habits or routines can also have relevant rhetorical

dimensions. To give a speech is clearly a case of motivated action, but many activities in social network sites are less clear. Giddens’ theory can offer a framework to approach the complex nature of motivation of action, through an understanding of how people inscribe motives and intentions in their own actions and in the actions of others.

The second benefit of structuration theory I will emphasize, is that it provides us with a framework to separate different structural elements from each other while still considering them integral components of the same social system. According to Giddens, the structural sets of rules and resources can be analytically distinguished along three dimensions: structures of *signification*, structures of *legitimation*, and structures of *domination*.

To suggest how processes of structuration can be distinguished, Giddens proposes the following model:



Source: Adapted from Giddens (1984) p. 29

The top line of this model describes the abstraction of rules and resources of social systems, separated into structures of signification, domination, and legitimation. The *modalities of structuration*, placed in the model between structure and interaction, are what people draw upon when interacting. All forms of interaction will imply normative patterns, interpretative schemes and facilities of power. These modalities of structuration are also the media of reproduction of structures (Giddens, 1979, p. 81).

Interpretative schemes are the source and medium through which agents produce meaning. This modality represents the activation of context as an integrated part of interaction. As Giddens describes it, interpretive schemes are “the medium whereby the interweaving of locutionary and illocutionary elements of language is ordered” (Giddens, 1979, p. 84). *Norms of interaction* centre upon expectations of how people can and should act, and how these expectations contribute to the formation of different roles (Giddens, 1984, p. 30). This also includes how an individual can “calculate the risk” of a given action, by weighing the potential sanctions against the potential gains of achieving a particular end, and how sanctioning is subject to negotiation. *Facilities of power* describe the resources that enable people to act. Power is here seen as the transformative capacity of all action. It is not seen as a type of act or a resource, but as a necessary capacity in all action (Giddens, 1979, p. 91).

Together, these modalities of structuration cover all aspects of social practice on different levels of society. In this model, rhetoric could be understood as the utilization of structures of signification for persuasive purposes. Rhetoric predominantly draws its resources from the interpretive schemas that govern the meaning and signification of configurations of appearances. But, as Giddens’ theory clearly states, structures of signification cannot be seen as being isolated from other structural properties, like social and material power-resources and the social norms that govern the roles of the actors involved. In chapter 4, I suggest how these modalities can be adjusted to better cover the particular aspects of social systems we are interested in when we describe rhetorical arenas.

A third benefit of structuration theory is that it provides a way to describe the connection between place and practice, based on both material and non-material circumstance. The central motivation for structuration theory is to describe how social practice is organised in time and space. The idea of action as a *durée* describes how people are connected to both past and future events through conditions and memories (Giddens, 1993, p. 89; Stones, 2005, p. 27)). How interactions are organized in space, Giddens describes through the spatial categories *locale*, *regionalization* and *presence availability*.

A *locale* can be understood as the setting where routine behaviour of different people intersects (Giddens, 1984, p. 119). Such locales are not necessarily physical but are determined by how they are utilized in human activity. These are then typically *regionalized* into regions that are of critical importance in constituting contexts of interaction (Giddens, 1984, p. 118). Time-space regionalization shapes people's *presence-availability*, which determines their ability to interact with each other. This is typically what is affected by technological innovations. Today, new communication technology has radically expanded people's presence-availability by breaking down spatial and temporal distances. Digital media allow people from all over the world to gather in the same "locale" on the Internet.

Viewing digital sites as "locales" is to recognize them as social spaces that people associate with particular social routines. In chapter 4, I describe how the material and technological facilities of locales are structured as "rhetorical affordances". This describes the different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action the environment offers the rhetor.

Strong Structuration and Rhetoric

Rob Stones makes some important additions to the theory of structuration that makes it more adaptable to rhetorical practice. Stones argues that Giddens' theory of structuration serves its purpose as a catch-all social theory on the macro-level, but that it is not suited for empirical analysis of practices that the social sciences are usually confronted with. These practices do not take place on the overarching level of societal changes, but on the meso-level, which describes the communities and social settings that people relate to in their everyday life. In what Stones calls "strong structuration", he focuses on this level as the relevant level for analyses of structuration.

Adjusting structuration theory to studies of particular situations, Stones identifies four elements that form what he calls "the quadripartite nature of structuration". First, structuration involves *external structures* as conditions of action. These determine people's action-horizon. Second, structuration involves *internal structures* of the agents' knowledgeability. Here, Stones differentiates between general-dispositional and conjuncturally-specific knowledge. This separates agents' knowledge about institutions in general from knowledge about a particular institution,

or knowledge about how agents in general are likely to act from knowledge about how particular agents are likely to act. Third, structuration involves *active agency*. This includes the ways agents either routinely or strategically draw on internal structures. Fourth, structuration involves the *outcomes of action*, both as events and as recreated structures.

With the “quadripartite nature of structuration”, Stones introduces a much-needed temporal dimension to the process of structuration. Structures must exist prior to people acting in accordance with them, and actions must occur before their outcomes. Rhetorical studies are usually concerned with some kind of change to human apparition and development over time. Active agency, whether it implies acting strategically or routinely, will necessarily relate to pre-existing external and internal structures, and it will have a successful or unsuccessful outcome. This does not mean that we reject Giddens’ central insight that structures only “exist” in action – but in order to apply the theory of structuration to real-life situations, we must be able to describe what exist before and what is the outcome of action.

The distinction between conjuncturally-specific and general-dispositional focuses the explanatory potential of structuration theory away from general considerations about any acting agent, to concrete assessments of particular situations. Conjuncturally-specific structures describe the agent’s knowledge about particular external structures. This knowledge cannot necessarily be generalized. This is knowledge about *this* scene, *this* audience, or *this* institution, that is not applicable beyond this specificity of time and space. General-dispositional structures, on the other hand, refer to people’s general knowledge of the social system in which they operate. This is similar to the rhetorical notion of *doxa*. Stones applies this dichotomy to the three modalities of structuration. In relation to interpretive schemes, an individual will have more or less conjunctural-specific knowledge about how other individuals in his surroundings are likely to interpret what he does and says (Stones, 2005, p. 91); in relation to power, an individual will have more or less knowledge of how people see their own power capacities in the situation (Stones, 2005, p. 92); and in relation to social norms, an individual will have more or less knowledge of how other individuals

are likely to behave as they balance moral convictions and social pressure (Stones, 2005, p. 92).

The distinction between the conjuncture-specific and the generally-dispositional allows the researcher to describe how people act not only in accordance with their knowledge of social structures and the social system, but also based on their specific knowledge about other individuals and how they are likely to act and react in different contexts. What Stones understand as the “situational”, is a combination of these two kinds of internal structures. In other words, people’s perceptions of situations are formed in the balance between general and particular knowledge.

Another addition Stones makes to Giddens’ theory is that he introduces a way to account for variability in the relation between agency and structure. Different people have different abilities and opportunities to change, modify, or disregard social structures, and structures can be more or less constraining. Strong structuration differentiates between the different degrees of consideration and critical reflection people apply to structures.

Instead of just a duality of action and structure, Stones suggests that we see it as a continuum between “taken-for-granted-duality” and “critical duality”. When the duality is “taken for granted”, it is based primarily on practical knowledge that people apply without conscious reflection. “Critical duality”, on the other hand, refers to instances in which people have a degree of critical distance to the structures they draw on, so that they can monitor them strategically or reflect upon them theoretically (Stones, 2005, p. 55ff).

Giddens’ concept of “duality of structure” only gives us a satisfactory description of the “taken-for-granted” knowledge in relation to internal structures. This makes it inadequate in cases where rules and resources operate as topics or as strategic goals that people approach with theoretical, critical and monitoring intent. Giddens thus fails to account for the degrees of distancing which actors have to the structures that they draw upon. Sometimes theorising and strategic considerations are peripheral, and at other times they are central.

Rhetorical studies usually assume that rhetors are acting purposely and intentionally. However, any instance of rhetorical practice will also mobilize a vast

amount of hidden knowledge. Participants and observers can bring such hidden knowledge to the fore as they reflect on practice, but it is an insurmountable task for people to do so in particular situations. Also rhetorical practice will involve adaptation to situations that are done routinely and by habit. Even if we maintain that rhetorical action is primarily motivated action, it will still have various degrees of routine and strategizing.

To approach such variations we need a way to describe the variability of the subject-object relation in rhetorical practice. Sometimes rhetorical practice draws on structures in a routinely and “taken-for-granted” manner. Other times, and perhaps more often in rhetorical practice than in other forms of practice, people display a critical distance to the structural properties of the social system. The adjustments Stones makes to the theory of structuration help us account for how and in what way people are not only acting in relation to structures, but also how they manoeuvre structures in a strategic way.

By introducing variability in subject-object relations, strong structuration gives us a better understanding of how rhetorical situations are formed. It explains why some situations appear to have a fixed interpretation while others are clearly a result of more open-ended negotiation. Some processes of definition depend on very strong relations between subjective and objective forces. Rhetorical situations like these present themselves as the result of external structures; they have a clear set of exigencies and a clearly defined audience that is able and willing to respond to rhetorical action. The process of defining these situations becomes habitual or almost invisible, and actors who might want to challenge the collective understanding of the situation, must challenge what for other actors appears as a matter of fact. Other situations appear to us more clearly as a result of the initiative of one or more actors. In these processes, the participants’ conjuncturally-specific knowledge is crucial. It also emphasises people’s unequal ability to influence rhetorical situations.

Chapter Summary: Rhetorical Approaches to Meso-Level Analysis

In this chapter, I have asked how we can best approach the question of systemic form in networked publics. Drawing on basic insights from structuration theory, I have

suggested that social network sites should be seen as rhetorical arenas and analysed as practice on the meso-level, or what in sociology is known as middle range. On this level, rhetorical studies are concerned with formations of local communities and public spaces that connect micro- and macro-level patterns.

I have introduced Carolyn Miller's descriptions of rhetorical communities and Gerard Hauser's rhetorical model of the public sphere as two particular relevant examples of what kind of social action meso-level rhetorical analysis are directed at. Both Miller and Hauser describe local spheres of discourse in which practices have continuity and form beyond particular situations. Carolyn Miller explains how perceptions of community have always been central to the connection between rhetoric and society, and suggests how the concept of community can be integrated in modern rhetorical theory to bridge the divide between rhetorical studies on the situational level and theories of the role of rhetoric in society. Gerard Hauser describes how rhetorical publics are formed around local discursive arenas in which ordinary people engage in everyday talk about political and civic issues.

These theories should bring new perspectives to understandings of the increased complexity and variation in the public sphere. To give an account of the analytical potential these approaches have to new and emerging rhetorical arenas, I have revisited the social theory that Miller uses to organize her observations.

Through the framework of structuration theory, "rhetorical arenas" can be approached as stable encounter settings for rhetoric, organised around physical or virtual "locales". Structuration theory and rhetorical theory share some basic similarities in how they approach the relationship between individual and society, and between social structures and power, which make it both possible and natural to combine the two when they have overlapping interests.

Structuration theory also offers a framework to approach the complex nature of motivation of action, through an understanding of how people inscribe motives and intentions in their own actions and in the actions of others, as well as a framework to separate different structural elements from each other for analytical purposes. And it provides a way to describe the connection between different places and different practices. A "locale" can be understood as the setting where routine behaviour of

different people intersects. Viewing digital sites like Twitter or Facebook as “locales” is to recognize them as social spaces that people associate with particular social routines. It also suggests that they facilitate different rules and resources for rhetorical action, as they allow for different kinds of “presence-availability”.

Finally, I have suggested how rhetorical studies can benefit from Rob Stones’ adjustments to structuration theory in order to better fit meso-level analysis. Stones introduces a temporal dimension to the process of structuration, which makes it easier to talk about successful or unsuccessful outcomes of rhetorical events. He also introduces a distinction between specific and general knowledge that allows us to maintain interest both in the structuring of human behaviour and the rhetor’s ability to navigate particular situations. And he introduces a way to account for variability in the relation between agency and structure, which allows us to explain why some rhetorical situations appear to have a fixed interpretation while others are clearly a result of more open-ended negotiation and strategic actions.

The case study in this dissertation concentrates on describing how the different sides to these continuities create the characteristics of social network sites as rhetorical arenas in Norway. The interviews are used to get an impression of the external and internal structures that the participants draw on in this arena, the general and particular knowledge they believe it is important for insider-actors to possess, the “taken for granted” actions that shapes the arena, and the typical situations in which the “taken for granted” is broken and the attention is drawn to the participants strategic and critical actions.

Chapter 4: A Structuration Approach to Rhetorical Arenas

In this chapter I argue that the theory of structuration can form the basis for meso-level analyses of rhetorical practice in different media environments. In the previous chapters I suggested that such analyses should include a way to describe the multitude of arenas that make up our public sphere and maintain a diversity of rhetorical practices. To grasp the variety of rhetorical expressions in society, rhetoric must be approached on the meso-level. This is where the particularities of rhetorical practice play out.

One way of doing meso-level analysis is by investigating how rhetorical practices are formed and maintained in relation to the places they are associated with. Different places facilitate different forms of rhetorical practices. Also, we recognize different places, and we fill them with meaning and importance, based the practices and the social constellations that occupy them. In line with Giddens' terminology, different places form different *locales* for rhetorical practice.

Locales for rhetorical practice can be physical regions or they can be virtual spaces. They can be the local town hall, a court of law, a political party's meeting room, a bar, or an online discussion forum. The important thing is that people act in relation to structuring properties that are place-specific and thus maintain a connection between locale and rhetorical practice.

Our public sphere consists of a multitude of such locales in which people act in particular ways as audience and rhetors. These locales have their own rules for who can speech, for how long, and with what authority, and how the actors interpret each other's actions and reactions. Lack of applause means something very different in a court of law and at a political rally. In a court of law, people is not supposed to applaud. At a political rally, however, lack of applause will probably be interpreted as a sign of disapproval. People will often act in accordance with many of these rules and resources without paying them much attention. They simply act in accordance with their understanding of what people "usually do" and how they usually do it. But people can also challenge, oppose, misinterpret, or strategically exploit the

expectations created by recurring practice, and thus contribute to the continuous changing nature of rhetorical practice.

These locales I will refer to as “rhetorical arenas”. I suggest an understanding of a “rhetorical arenas” as *stable encounter settings for rhetorical practice organised as social systems surrounding particular locales*. Such arenas are rhetorical because they reside in a balance between the differences of opinions and beliefs that constitute the actors’ interests and the mutual knowledge shared by the actors that make these interests subject to rhetorical practice. To analyse rhetorical arenas is thus to study the tension between “centripetal and centrifugal forces” as the basis for systemic form on the meso-level of society.

The simultaneous presence of “centripetal and centrifugal forces” is, as discussion in chapter 3, a central feature of rhetorical community. My introduction of a new concept – rhetorical arenas – should be understood as supplementary, not oppositional, to these theories. Turning from “genre” and “community” to “arena”, I wish to draw more attention to how the technical features of the medium, or the material features of physical space, affect rhetorical practice.

I will spend a large part of this chapter to describe how different media spaces offer different rhetorical affordances to the actors. In the modern media society, different rhetorical arenas will present different ways in which people deal with contestation through discourse. By including a description of affordances in assessments of encounter settings, we can ask questions about how material structures impact rhetorical agency and recurring practice. At the same time, these external structures should not be seen in isolation from other structuring properties. Rhetorical arenas are characterised not only by the affordances it presents to the actors, but by the actors and their roles in the arena, the particular social norms that governs what actors should and should not do, the different issues that arise from the actors’ interests, and the way these issues are addressed. All these factors must be considered together if we are to get a comprehensive impression of rhetorical arenas.

The larger framework provided by structuration theory offers us a way to describe how such structuring properties – the “rules and resources” that the actors draw upon when interacting in a particular arena – are both preconditions and products

of rhetorical action. In line with structuration theory, we can describe these as modalities of structuration: the established features of the arena that gives it systemic form. This is not to say that the actors cannot act strategically or break with the “rules” that structure practices. This is, to a large extent, the very nature of rhetorical action. But to do so is also to act in relation to, if not in accordance with, the “rules” of the arena. Combining rhetorical theory with structuration theory, then, means that we maintain a distinct rhetorical approach to social action through the rich theoretical framework and descriptive vocabulary of the rhetorical tradition, while structuration theory provides the overall theoretical framework for understanding the mutually constitutive role of rhetorical interactions and the more or less stable encounter setting that is the rhetorical arena.

The Structuring Properties of Rhetorical Arenas

According to structuration theory, modalities of structuration will always be interrelated and overlapping, but can be analytically separated as interpretive schemas, social norms, and facilities of power. However, since we are not concerned with social action in general, but rhetorical practice in particular, these modalities should be specified and adjusted to capture the rules and resources of rhetorical practice. As these modalities are basic features of all social interaction, the phenomenon they describe are also central within the field of rhetoric. Rhetorical theory offers perspectives to these modalities that are focused on their structuring effect on persuasive discourse. I present a suggestion of how the structuring properties of social norms, interpretive schemas and relational facilities of power can be approached from the position of rhetorical theory. These will form the focal point of the analysis of the case study in this dissertation. The case study can thus serve as an example of how a rhetorical appropriation of the modalities of structuration can be applied in practical analysis. Since the research interest here is new rhetorical arenas in online environments, I will give most attention to how a concept of rhetorical affordances can give us a better understanding of the relation between material facilities and rhetorical action.

Drawing on the insights from Giddens’ stratification model of action and Stones’ quadripartite model of action, we should keep in mind that the rules and

resources that the actors draw upon are actualized in different “stages” of rhetorical action. First, they are actualized in the actors’ interpretation of rhetorical situations and their assessment of their own action-horizon in these situations. This includes the first two stages of Stones’ model: the actors’ perception of external structures as conditions of action and the internal structures of the actors’ general and specific knowledge. Second, they are actualized in active rhetorical agency. This includes the ways actors either routinely or strategically draw upon this knowledge when acting. Third, they are actualized in the rhetorical event. As rhetoric is symbolic action, it will always be relational. As an “event”, rhetorical action will always include the audience’s as well as the rhetor’s knowledgeability. This way, both the audience and the speaker contribute to the process of structuration by enforcing or modifying the structuring properties the rhetorical utterance actualizes.

In sum, the social norms, interpretive schemas and facilities of power that present themselves to the actors as the rules and resources of the social system are actualized in the actors’ interpretation of rhetorical situations, in the “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor, and in the audience reception. In line with Giddens’ action-theory we should understand these stages as a continuous “flow of action”. Rhetorical events form the external and internal structures for new rhetorical situations in a continuous process of defining situations and reacting to situations. When considering how rhetorical theory provides useful descriptions of the different modalities of structuration, then, we should include not only how they affect the “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor, but also how they are drawn upon in the actors interpretation of rhetorical situations and in their readings of the actions of others.

“Decorum” as a Rhetorical Approach to Social Norms

The influence of social norms on symbolic action is threatened in different way within rhetorical theory. A very tangible approach is the classical principle of *rhetorical decorum*. As a rhetorical concept, *decorum* was initially considered to be just one of several elements of style. More generally it describes how one’s words and subject matter should be fitted to each other, to the circumstances and occasion, the audience, and the speaker. In this regard, *rhetorical decorum* becomes an overarching principle

of moderation and aptness. It depicts the limits of appropriate social behaviour in a given situation. The idea is that the rhetor must have a sense of *rhetorical decorum* in order to attain the credibility necessary to persuade an audience, but also that there must be some sort of balance between the issue, the situation, and the composition and style of the message. A similar ideal is found in the Greek concept of *aptum*. This too depicts the speaker's situational understanding and ability to adjust to the context. When I use *rhetorical decorum* here, it is because this has been adjusted and adapted to contemporary rhetorical theory.¹⁰

Michael Leff (1987) has argued that the concept of decorum should have a more central role as an analytical concept in rhetorical theory. The way he presents it, *decorum* can merge some of the most fundamental aspects of rhetorical theory, like "contingency", "situational demands" and "quality". For Leff, *decorum* combines the flexible and audience-centred understanding of judgement that forms the basis for rhetorical argumentation theory with attention to stylistic expression that is fitting for the particular situation. This way, it embraces both cognitive and stylistic concerns and allows us to operationalize quality as the unity of thought and expression in balance with the totality of the situation. This is, after all, what characterizes great rhetoric. Leff describes the concept of decorum in the following way:

"Decorum is the term that best describes the process of mediation and balance connected with qualitative judgement. It is the principle of decorum that allows us to comprehend a situation as a whole, to locate its meaning within a context, and to translate this understanding into a discursive form that becomes an incentive to action. [...] it works to align the stylistic and argumentative features of the discourse within a unified structure while adjusting the whole structure to the context from which the discourse arises and to which it responds" (Leff, 1987, p. 62)

The way Leff describes it, *decorum* can be understood as a conceptualisation of rhetorical quality. Since normative evaluations of rhetorical action will always depend on the particularity of the situation, we cannot isolate particular topics or styles of expressions as "good". Any workable operationalization of rhetorical quality must

¹⁰ I use the term *rhetorical decorum* to differentiate it more clearly from an everyday understanding of social decorum. This should not be understood as a differentiation of the term from rhetorical theorists who refer to *decorum*.

point to the process of normative evaluation. In this process, people draw upon their knowledge of existing social norms and other structuring properties to assess what is deemed appropriate and fitting for different people in different situations.

I suggest that the concept of *rhetorical decorum* can serve as an analytical entry to the structuring impact of social norms on rhetorical practice. While social norms describe the normative aspects of social interaction across different situations, *rhetorical decorum* allows us to conceptualise normative evaluations in particular situations. *Rhetorical decorum* is here understood as the process of aligning the different elements of rhetorical action in a purposeful way. It represents what Leff calls “a constantly moving process of negotiation” (Leff, 1987, p. 62). Not only the content but also the style of expression has to suit the particular speaker, the audience and the situation. What *decorum* represents is thus not any particular kind of style or combination of style and content, but the adjustment of action to expectations.

In the theory of structuration, social norms describe the normative components of interaction in a social system. Beyond this, Giddens himself does not spend much time describing what he considers social norms to be. Other social theorists have given more easily accessible descriptions of the nature of social norms. According to Jon Elster, a social norm is an injunction to act or abstain from acting. Such injunctions operate through informal sanctions directed at norm violators (Elster, 2007, p. 354). What characterises social norms is that they are often not the subjects of formal litigation, but are maintained through a form of social control. The most important form of sanctioning, according to Elster, is that the community turn away from norm-violators, reducing their social standing and their access to material and social resources.

Furthermore, Elster points out that, although social norms can serve clearly identifiable social functions, they do not exist because of these functions. For instance, the social norm of not speaking ill of the dead can in many settings subdue valuable critique and points of views, effectively silencing some groups of actors. However, this is not to say that the social norm exists because of this function (Elster, 2007: 355).

One way to approach social norms from the position of rhetorical theory, then, is to see it as part of the socio-cultural context that is implied in all rhetorical situations. *Rhetorical decorum* will in this sense describe the speaker's ability to adapt to or strategically manoeuvre social codes. Such social codes can put limitations on what the actors feel that they can say and how they can say it. On the macro-level, democratic societies that have no formal limitations on the freedom of speech will still maintain strong social norms that dictate what is and what is not socially acceptable to say, for instance in relation to racial and sexual language and "inappropriate" words and phrases. Failure to adhere to these norms, either willingly or unwillingly, will probably weaken a speaker's *ethos* or draw attention away from her intended message.

On the meso-level too, we find social norms to act or not act in certain ways. Institutions can have very clear norms for what the actors involved should and should not say or do that will not have any effect outside of that particular institution. In political organisation, for instance, we find social norms governing how and when political issues and designations of political positions should be openly debated. These can serve strategic purposes, but are also to large extent just results of "how things are usually done". Violations of such norms can lead social sanctioning. In order to skilfully navigate within these institutions – and, we can assume, in order to have persuasive force within this institutional context – actors must be familiar with these social norms.

Another way to approach social norms from the position of rhetorical theory is as a source of exigencies in rhetorical situations. Social norms suggest not only what people should not do, but also what they should do in given situations. The expectations created by such norms can, to borrow a formulation of Lloyd Bitzer, present themselves as "a potential or actual exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so construct human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 3). The kind of rhetorical situations Bitzer describes are situations in which the actors involved have some common expectations of what should be done, or at least what the situation is. This necessitates a common framework, a set of shared knowledge and beliefs, that allows the actors to interpret their surroundings in similar

ways. Much of the structuring properties that the actors draw upon in the inter-subjective process of defining situations are best described through the concept of social norms.

From Elster's position, we could say that it is a social norm that dictates that a family member says some words at a funeral. A funeral speech clearly fills important social functions, but the particular, ritualistic ways in which it is performed is rather arbitrary and not only maintained by its functions. From a rhetorical position, however, we are concerned with how these structuring properties influence the actors' identification of "exigencies" that can be met by effective and functioning rhetoric. A rhetorical position is thus more focused on the potential functions made possible, or what kind of response is expected, by social norms as they are actualized in particular situations. The understanding of a "fitting response" to rhetorical situations as described by Bitzer is very close to Leff's description of *decorum*.

The interrelation between social norms and rhetorical situations also draws attention to the formation of different roles. A rhetorical situation points not only to what should be done, but also to who should act. Similarly, *decorum* dictates that the speaker must be suitable for the message and the situation. Social norms are also structuring for the action-horizon of the individual rhetor and for their ability to respond to situational exigencies. Again the funeral speech can serve as an illustrative example. A total stranger can possess the rhetorical abilities to "bring forth a significant modification of the exigence" (Bitzer, 1968, p. 3). He could offer words of consolation, praise the deceased, describe his achievements, and so forth. However, nobody would invite a total stranger to speak at a funeral.

The case study in this dissertation offers many examples of what the actors perceive as good and decent behaviour in social network sites. The informants describe how the ability to "block" and "un-follow" people is practiced as a form of sanctioning of what they consider to be violation of etiquette or a breach of what is acceptable to say. This clearly fits Elster's description of avoidance as sanctioning. It also shows how the sanctioning itself can be a form of symbolic action. Although sanctioning is mostly done silently and without fuss, by "blocking" a person, and often

clearly stating to others their reasons for doing so, people also communicate something about their own positions and can also strengthen their own *ethos*.

The case study also offers some more complex and realistic examples of the relation between social norms and role-formation within and across different rhetorical arenas. Although there is a clear expectation that people participate primarily as individuals, and not as representatives for their employer or a political organisation, there are active norms governing what would be inappropriate for different people to say or do based on their organisational affiliation. This holds particularly true for politicians and academics. The normative expectations attached to these organisational affiliations are transferred to new media environments and new social and communicative networks.

In sum, I suggest that the concept of *rhetorical decorum* can serve as an analytical entry to the structuring properties of social norms on rhetorical practice. By asking what is considered as decorous in particular settings, we can access the underlying social norms that give stability and systemic form to the rhetorical arena.

Topical Structures as the Rhetorical Approach to Interpretive Schemas

A rhetorical conceptualisation of interpretive schemas is available in the classical rhetorical understanding of *topics*. This describes the cognitive and discursive structures available to the rhetor in a given encounter setting. The topics include “common places” the rhetor can mentally seek out to find content and arrangement of his arguments. It is also understood as the “places” where the rhetor and the audience can mentally meet. According to rhetorical scholar Jonas Gabrielsen, a selection of topics is “a collection of “places” that hold content, arguments, and cognitive patterns” (Gabrielsen, 2009, pp. 11, my translation).

Contemporary rhetorical theory usually differentiates between three different kinds of *topoi* based on a combination of classical sources. This includes the structural *topoi* that describe mental categories to which the rhetor can direct his attention when producing arguments (Kjeldsen, 2004). In *De Oratore* Cicero describes the relevance of such *topoi* to the creative process of the rhetor: “whenever we have some case to argue, our right course is not to fall back upon proofs laid away for that particular types of cases, but to have in readiness sundry commonplaces which will instantly

present themselves for setting forth the case” (*De Oratore* II: 130). This includes a set of general argumentative strategies that in principle can be applied to all kinds of questions that are likely to occur in a situation. Similarly, Quintilian presents a list of different ways to attack every issue. In addition to Cicero’s structural *topoi*, Quintilian offers categories for systematic inquiry of all elements of an issue or a particular action, such as time, place, person, means, and method (*Institutio Oratoria* V:x: 32-94). Aristotle too describe this type of *topoi*, which he calls *specific topoi*, and lists them as the different topics dealt with by different speech genres. The political speech, for instance, will deal with questions of finance, war and peace, defence, export and import, and legislation (*The Art of Rhetoric* I: vii).

The second category of *topoi* is what is usually referred to as *locus communis*. It refers to the stock of views and beliefs, sayings and expressions, formulation and generalities, that is shared by the members of a community (Andersen, 2012, p. 160). Here we find the kind of common sense knowledge and clichés that are ingrained in the vernacular of a particular society, but also the more deeply rooted themes and values that are recurring in a society’s myths and discourse. Furthermore, it includes the standards formulations and phrases that are imbedded in different genres and social practices. The communality between these different kinds of commonplaces is that they provide content to rhetorical utterances. They describe recurring formulations, arguments and historical and cultural references that the rhetor can apply to different settings. From an analytical perspective, *locus communis* are thus not only a set of clichés and standard formulations, but can also give us insights into the formal aspects of different genres and to the historical and cultural knowledge that is formative for a particular community.

The third category of *topoi* is usually described as formal *topoi* or general *topoi*. While *locus communis* describes recurring content, formal *topoi* describe general cognitive structures that can be applied to practically all questions. Descriptions of these kinds of *topoi* are often based on what Aristotle in relation to the different kinds of enthymemes describes as structures of “general truths” (*The Art of Rhetoric* I:ii: 22): possible/impossible; have happened/have not happened; will happen/will not happen; and bigger/smaller. In addition to these general categories, Aristotle offers a

list of forms on which particular arguments can be built. This includes arguments through differences, consequences, good and bad outcomes, analogies, cause and effect, and so forth. Combined they offer a structural basis for rhetoric as a theory of practical argumentation.

This three-part categorisation of different types of *topoi* is suggested by Jens Kjeldsen (Kjeldsen, 2004). It is based on descriptions of *topoi* scattered throughout the history of rhetorical theory. Therefore, this categorisation is not meant as a comprehensive theory or a complete analytical framework of different cognitive structures or argumentative content. It does, however, offer us a way to describe interpretive schemes both as cognitive structures and cultural content in combination with how the individual actor appropriates them. The rhetorical concept of *topics* can be a way to conceptualise how interpretive schemes are actualized in situated action, and how different arenas produce and reproduce different cognitive and discursive patterns. To retrieve a *topoi* catalogue of a rhetorical arena is to investigate what kind of interpretive schemes are easily available to the speakers in the encounter setting it represent. This includes both the *loci communes* of the arena, which gives us a sense of what is typically talked about in the arena; the formal *topoi* of the arena, which gives us a sense of how things are talked about and how arguments are formed; and the structural *topoi* of the arena, which allows us to better describe how the interpretive schemes of the rhetorical arena are drawn upon by the individual. By reconstructing such *topoi* catalogues we can thus get an impression of how different rhetorical arenas display different structures of signification.

In the theory of structuration, interpretive schemes are the source and medium through which agents produce meaning in situated contexts. Interpretive schemes articulate particular constellations of symbols that shape how people assign meaning and take action within their communities or organisations. These are the ways of thinking and talking that are particular to a society or an organisation and that the actors are socialized into.

The term “interpretive schemes” is similar to several other concepts that have gained popularity within the social sciences. It has similarities with Bourdieu’s concept of *doxa* that describes the fundamental beliefs, knowledge and values that

inform an actor's thoughts and actions within a particular field (Bourdieu, 1990). Bartunek (Bartunek, 1984) also suggests that "interpretive schemes" in different ways have similarities with concepts describing paradigms (Benson, 1983; Brown, 1978; Kuhn, 1970; Pfeffer, 1981; Sheldon, 1980), beliefs and "master scripts" (Sproull, 1981), ideologies (Beyer, 1981; Starbuck, 1982) and myths (Boje, Fedor, & Rowland, 1982).

The rhetorical concept of *topics* is clearly not apt to grasp all the different aspects of cognitive and discursive structures that these theories seek to explain. However, it allows us to see how meaning is mediated in particular contexts as a result of both strategic consideration and socialized behaviour. One way to approach interpretive schemes from the position of rhetorical theory, then, is to see them as the different forms of arguments, formulations, and viewpoints that are more or less standardised within a social system. The concept of *topics* can thus provide an analytical framework to distinguish between different cognitive and cultural structures and message strategies.

Established *topoi* will influence not only how people express meaning but also how they interpret the world around them and arrange events into rhetorical situations. On the macro-level, different spheres of society display different types of arguments or formal *topoi*. The political sphere is characterised by an orientation towards collective decision-making, and related questions, like "who are we?" and "what is the issue?" (see chapter 2). Political discourse will typically revolve around question like on what grounds should the people engage in this issue? What is the issue really about? Is it a financial issue or a principal issue? When circumstance presents itself as a political issue, it is because the structuring properties of interpretive schemes allow the members of society to interpret them in this way. In order to bring an issue forth as a political issue, actors will "frame" them as political issues in line with established interpretive schemes, as an issue of injustice, of inefficiency, of unsustainability or similar.

On the meso-level as well, we find interpretive schemas particular for different organisations and institutions that can be approached as different *topoi*. A clear case in point is the communicative structures through which media institutions convey events

as “news”. The criteria that determine whether something is a news story can be presented as a list of journalistic *topoi*: timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict and sensation (Kjeldsen, 2006: 155ff). The power of this particular institution’s interpretive schemes is also evident in the way it influences other institutions. The whole theory of “mediatization” describes how political and commercial actors adapt their messages and their actions to the interpretive schemes of the media.

Organisational scholars based on structuration theory have also noted that organization members are drawn together and given a shared sense of belonging through shared interpretive schemes (Pfeffer, 1981). The shared interpretive schemes can engender commitment among member (Sproull, 1981), shape their understandings of problems and priorities (Benson, 1983) and be a source of social control (Bartunek, 1984; Brown, 1978; Gergen, 1982). Again, media institutions can serve as an example. Media *topoi* are not only structuring for how people interpret the world around them. It is also absolutely central to the understanding of “journalism” as an institution. This institution contains different roles – journalists, editors, sources etc. – different social norms – describing objectivity, relation to sources etc. – and different material resources – advertisement, subscriptions etc. None of these structuring properties, however, can be fully comprehended without understanding their relation to the particular way of observing, interpreting and communicating societal events that we understand as “journalism”.

The case study in this dissertation offers a description of the arena-specific interpretive schemes of the Norwegian “Tweeocracy”. A metaphor the respondents frequently use to describe the encounter setting of Twitter is “pub-talk” or “a discussion at a party”. The description of the interaction-form tells us something important about what sort of public the informants perceive themselves as part of. The interpretive schemas of Twitter provide the opportunity for the respondents to act in public and discuss serious issues in a more casual and somewhat informal way. The discussion at a party is seemingly open and egalitarian. It differs from a political debate not because people are more likely to change their minds, but because the conversation is carried out as if they were. In the same way the egalitarianism is not a

result of people being ascribed the same weight, but that the conversation is carried out as if they were. It is, in this sense, a regular *topos* of the arena.

This social network is also defined by what the participants talk about. If the form of interaction separates the arena from mainstream politics, the topics of interest separate it from other areas of Twitter that revolve around topics like soccer, music or teen culture. The informants describe some political issues as particularly “Twitter-friendly”. These sorts of issues involve immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech. The informants describe them as “hot button issues”, articulating “principles”, “moral aspects”, and “an element of something private”, to involving “personal and collective identity”, and being “controversial”, “touchy” or “flammable”. By approaching this thematic orientation through the rhetorical vocabulary of *topoi* we can also describe how the actors internalize it as structural *topoi* that they draw upon when acting in this particular arena of the public. This way, the interpretive schemes of the “tweetocracy” are not only formative for the particular kinds of discussions they engage in, but also for their understanding of themselves as members of this “tweetocracy”.

In sum, I suggest that a three-part categorisation of *topoi* can offer an analytical approach to how interpretive schemes are actualised in situated rhetorical practice. Structural *topoi* describe how actors draw upon interpretive schemes when interpreting and communicating the world around them. *Locis communis* describe the cultural specific content of social systems, expressed in recurring formulations, expressions, narratives and so forth. Formal *topoi* describe the cognitive structures easily available to the actors in a particular social system.

“The Role of the Rhetor” as Relational Facilities of Power

To better grasp how facilities of power have been approached by rhetorical theorists, we should separate them into relational and material facilities. The first describes the social resources available for the different actors due to their position, either as active speakers or as audience. The second describes the material facilities of the physical or technological surroundings of rhetorical practice. This is key to answer the research questions in this dissertation and to understand the relations between the media platform and the kind of rhetorical action that are easily available within this platform.

Although rhetorical theory has always been attentive to the surroundings of rhetorical practice, it does not offer much theoretical insights into how these surroundings impacts the form and scope of rhetorical action. The structuring properties of material facilities are probably the aspect of structuration that is least explored from the position of rhetorical theory. It is also the most critical if we are to understand the new rhetorical arenas in the digitalised media landscape. Therefore I will give a lengthy description of how this can be conceptualised as *rhetorical affordances*.

In the theory of structuration, relational facilities of power describe resources available to individuals based on their designated roles in social systems. Rhetorical theory offers a particular understanding of individuals' roles as rhetor and rhetorical audience in different situations. The relations between the individuals are thus approached as different kinds of rhetor-audience relations. What I suggest here, then, is that the structuring properties of the relational facilities of power are actualised in situated rhetorical action as the roles of rhetor and audience and rhetor-audience relations.

To conceptualise roles and relations as rhetor and audience, implies a particular kind of power-relation. The kind of power that a rhetorical position is interested in is always dependent upon the compliance of others. It is the audience that has the power to accept the claims and arguments put forth and ultimately to decide whether to effectuate the change that makes rhetorical action successful. However, rhetorical theory also recognizes that different people have different abilities to create and respond to rhetorical situations. Drawing on the framework provided by structuration theory, it becomes clear that such designation of different roles is better described through the other modalities of structuration. People assume particular roles in rhetorical situations because of social norms and conventions, the actors' different knowledgeableability about the interpretive schemes, and because the environment affords different action possibilities to different people. From a rhetorical position, such roles will always be conceptualised as rhetor or audience or both. The structuring properties of social roles become relevant as elements of the rhetor's ethos or as the predispositions of the audience.

The importance of different roles is evident in both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory. In Aristotelian rhetoric, it is the role of the audience that makes up the difference between deliberative, forensic and epideictic rhetoric. Here, the nature of rhetorical events is defined not by the action of the rhetor but by the immanent action of the audience. Aristotle also offers a descriptive account of the inclinations and preferences of different kinds of audience members based on their age and social status. These are factors that the rhetor must take into account when composing his message. However, the different social roles that members of an audience have, first become relevant when they are structuring properties of the rhetorical situation. A similar approach can be found in Bitzer's theory of rhetorical situations (Bitzer, 1968). According to Bitzer, what defines a rhetorical audience is that it has the means and motivation to resolve the problem or exigence of the rhetorical situation. The "role" of the audience, in this regard, is to effectuate the change in the world that the rhetor pursues through means of persuasion.

Aristotelian rhetoric also offers us a way to conceptualise how the social roles of the rhetor is actualised in particular situations through the concept of *ethos*. In Aristotelian rhetoric, *ethos* designates the moral competence, expertise and knowledge that the rhetor displays through what he says. This can be described through the speaker's *phronesis* (practical wisdom), *arête* (virtue) and *eunoia* (goodwill towards the audience). Other traditions include in the concept of *ethos* the audience's preconceptions of the speaker. This makes the rhetor's social roles and social standing an ever-present factor in rhetorical interactions. This has led contemporary theorists to separate between the *initial ethos*, that describes the audience's impression of the speaker before they have heard his message, and the *final ethos*, that describes the impression that the audience is left with (McCroskey, 2001). In the vocabulary of strong structuration theory, we could say that the speaker's *ethos* always will include the audience's specific knowledge of the particular actor-as-rhetor. The "role of the rhetor" thus describes the speaker's part in the interaction, but will always be seen in light of the social roles of the individual. The speaker's responsibilities and social standing in the community are thus a central structuring factor for rhetorical action. In

particular situations, these structuring properties present themselves as elements of the speaker's *ethos*.

For roman rhetorical theorists, the very field of rhetoric was prescriptive to the role of the ideal orator as a virtuous man defined by his public responsibilities. The roman tradition maintains Aristotle's focus on the speaker's credibility as a precondition for successful rhetorical action. It also expands the role of rhetor to include all aspects of public life. In *De Oratore* Cicero offers a description of rhetoric as "the ordinary practice of public life in communities" (*De Oratore* I: 260). Quintilian sees rhetorical education as an essential part of the training for civic life. In his *Institutio Oratoria* he states that: "I should like the orator I'm training to be a sort of Roman Wise Man" (*Institutio Oratoria* XII:ii:7). This way, the roman tradition draws our attention to the role of the rhetor on the macro-level. In the Roman republic, the relational facilities of power were controlled by the elite group of people that played the role of the ideal citizen as "vir bonus decendi peritus", the good man, speaking well (*Institutio Oratoria* XII.i.1).

On the macro-level, rhetorical theory offers an understanding of citizenship as a fundamentally rhetorical activity. In Scandinavian rhetorical research, these perspectives have inspired studies on "rhetorical citizenship" (Kock & Villadsen, 2012, 2014). This is a cross-disciplinary effort that focuses on debate and collective action as the foundation of citizenship and the public sphere. The claim is that such an approach could make theories of deliberative democracy and the public sphere better suited to deal with the different forms of political communication in modern democracies by drawing attention to how public opinions are formed and how variations in discourse surrounding political and civic issues. The central interest for theories of rhetorical citizenship, then, is the citizens' ability to assert agency as speakers and audience in different areas of society.

On the meso-level, the structuring properties of rhetor and audience roles describe expectations and opportunities attached to speakers and audience in different encounter settings. These are based on both general and specific knowledge and present itself to the actors-as-audience as the *ethos* of the rhetor and to the actors-as-rhetors as the situational constraints and possibilities of the particular audience.

In the case study in this dissertation, the informants display a very conscious attitude towards the different roles and the kind of rhetor-audience relations that characterize the social networks of Twitter and Facebook. The informants are people with high access to the public and traditional media, often described as “the chattering classes”, “talking heads” or “the punditocracy”. Their offline roles – e.g. as journalists, academics, and politicians – are brought into these networks, but the nature of the activity in these rhetorical arenas builds particular kinds of rhetor-audience-relations. According to the informants, interactions in Twitter and Facebook are seemingly more open, casual and egalitarian than debates in traditional media. This form of interaction also helps separate “inside-actors” from the outsiders who, although they may hold similar roles in offline public life, are not able or willing to participate in the same rhetorical activity.

In sum, I suggest that the conceptualisation of “rhetor” and “audience” and the rhetor-audience relation can offer an analytical approach to how relational facilities of power are actualised in situated rhetorical practice. The structuring properties of relational facilities of power are analytically available to us as the *ethos* of the speaker and the situational possibilities and constraints that the particular audience represents.

The Key to Explorations of New Rhetorical Arenas: Rhetorical Affordances

In the adaption of structuration theory to rhetorical practice, facilities of power should be specified as *rhetorical affordances*. By rhetorical affordances I refer to how the physical or technological environment provides different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action. Here we ask: What kind of rhetorical situations do material conditions of different environments and different technologies make possible? And how do different locations or media make different “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor?

I derive the concept of rhetorical affordances from other appropriations of affordance theory to studies of media and discourse. There are two specific approaches to affordances that are particularly relevant to rhetorical studies. The first concerns itself with *media affordances* or *communicative affordances* to explain the relation between communication technology and its use. This approach combines the theory of affordances with insights from medium theory (Meyrowitz, 1985). The communicative

affordance-approach gives us the means to describe how communication technologies work in dynamic interaction with situational exigencies to form understandings of situations and shape practices that supersede particular situations.

The second is concerned with *modal affordances* as a way to describe the particular semiotic resources available through the “modes” offered by different media and in face-to-face interactions. This approach combines affordance theory with insights from social-semiotics and multimodality. The modal affordance-approach provides a detailed understanding of how different modes or combinations of modes afford different potentials for expression and thus different “means of persuasion”.

The two approaches offer different but closely connected uses of the concept of affordances to rhetorical studies. Combined they can describe how different environments and different media offer different opportunities for people to act persuasively in different situations.

Affordance Theory and the Psychology of Perception

The concept of affordances was originally developed by psychologist James Gibson as a way to describe how actors perceive their environments (Gibson, 1966, 1979). Through this theory Gibson explores the psychological aspects of how people and animals orient in their environments and adapt to the latent action possibilities they offer or provide. According to Gibson, affordances of the environment are “what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or evil” (Gibson, 1979, p. 127). The central question the concept of affordances allows us to ask is what the environment affords the actors to do. For Gibson, affordances are relational properties that emerge from the interaction between the actor and the environment. Affordances are not objective features of the environment. Neither are they strictly phenomenal or subjective. Affordances are real, but they are not a property of either the environment or the actor.

This makes Gibson’s concept of affordances very compatible with theories of structuration. According to Gibson: “An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer” (Gibson,

1979, p. 129). Given the similarities in how the two theories approach the relation between the subjective and the objective, the concept of affordances can be a useful way to better understand the relation between agents and material structures within a larger framework of structuration.

Applying the concept of affordances on communication technology, Ian Hutchby (Hutchby, 2001b) suggests that Gibson's concept can represent "a third way" between constructivist and relativist approach to the sociology of technology. In this regard Hutchby presents the following understanding of affordances and technologies: "[...] affordances are functional and relational aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object. In this way, technologies can be understood as artefacts which may be both shaped by and shaping of the practices humans use in interaction with, around and through them" (Hutchby, 2001b, p. 444)

To better adjust the concept of affordances to sociology of technology, Hutchby makes four emphasises to the original theory. First, Hitchby emphasises that affordances come in many different types. There are affordances of the natural environment; affordances of manufactured artefacts; affordances of other species or actors; and so on (Hutchby, 2001b, p. 448). Secondly, affordances must be understood as both functional and relational aspects of an object. The functional aspects relate to the objects' enabling and constraining factors. The relational aspects draw our attention to how the affordances of an object might be different to different species or actors (Hutchby, 2001b, p. 448). Third, Hitchby emphasises that some affordances must be learned to be perceived and have influence for actors. In other words, some affordances of technologies depend on skilled and knowledgeable actors to be realized. Finally, Hitchby emphasises that affordances can be designed into the artefact (Hutchby, 2001b, p. 449). This again draws attention to how technological design can influence human behaviour.

The latter point has had major impact on studies of human-computer-interaction, making affordances a central concept in digital design work. However, Hitchby's adjustments also make the concept of affordances more applicable in rhetorical studies. First of all, talking about different types of affordances gives us the

framework to describe how different environments provide different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action through one overarching concept. The material constraints and possibilities of both non-mediated and mediated situations can then be approached as affordances. “Material” should here be thought of not only in physical terms. Communication technology can create a space of interaction that has particular properties even if this space is not physical. The relevant question is what the environments – be it a physical location, a telephone conversation or a virtual space – allow the actors to do.

Secondly, by drawing attention to the relational aspect of affordances, Hutchby’s approach makes us able to see the connection between rhetorical agency and affordances. The possibility of communication depends not only on the functional affordances of the environment, but also on the actors’ ability to detect and utilize these affordances. This leads to Hitchby’s third emphasis, that some affordances must be learned in order for it to present an action possibility for the actor. New media include many new affordances, many of which require a high level of technological and semiotic competence. Today social network sites afford the users to respond with “laughter” or “shock” to different posts, but these affordances depends on the actors’ knowledge of the interface and the vernacular meaning of “emoticons”.

Anthony Chemero has given a more detailed account of the relation between abilities, dispositions and perception in the theory of affordances (Chemero, 2003). Chemero argues that affordances are “relations between particular aspects of animals and particular aspects of situations” (Chemero, 2003, p. 184). The particular aspects Chemero points to are features of the environment and the animals’ abilities to perceive these features. That affordances depend on the animals’ or peoples’ “abilities” is a very conscious choice of words. It suggests that people must be able to realise the features of their environments for them to represent affordances. It also suggests something learned or appropriated by the individual actor. “Abilities” should be understood as delimitation from natural “dispositions”. There is something inherently normative about abilities. Focusing on individuals abilities we assume that they are supposed to behave in particular ways, and that they may fail to do so (Chemero, 2003, p. 189).

Chemero also makes a relevant distinction to the structure of how affordances are perceived. Chemero specifies that to perceive affordances is “placing features, seeing that the situation allows a certain activity” (Chemero, 2003, p. 187). What people perceive is not a property in the environment but the relation between themselves and the environment as it appears in the particular situation. When facing a set of stairs, the individual does not make a conscious assessment of its own climbing abilities, or the general material characteristics of the stairs, but of whether or not he can climb this step (Chemero, 2003, p. 191). However, as humans we also have the potential to critically assess and actively improve our own abilities, by consciously reflecting on the relation between our environments and our abilities, and thus potentially increase our action possibilities in different situations.

In conclusion, based on Gibson, Hutchby, and Chemeron, we should understand affordances as the functional and relational aspects of what an object or an environment affords the actors to do. This includes both possibilities and constraints. Affordances will depend on the social context of interaction and demand different levels of abilities. However, this does not mean that affordances are limited by what the actors consider to be ordinary or proper use and behaviour. What I understand as “abilities” here, are the actor’s physical and mental capabilities, detached from motivations and practice.

Furthermore, material circumstances can post absolute constraints on an actor, but as affordances these constraints are relative to the actor’s perception. A wall is just a wall. The features of the wall represent possibilities and constraints first when it is put in relation to the actor’s lack of abilities to walk through it or her abilities to paint on it, hang posters on it, climb over it and so forth.

In relation to theories of structuration, the concept of affordances thus provides a way to describe the relation between individual actors and material structures in particular situations. It allows us to describe the dual relationship between action and external structures without giving priority to one over the other. This has led scholars to make the explicit connection between affordance theory and structuration theory (Have & Pedersen, 2016, p. 65; Vyas, Chisalita, & Dix, 2016). In these approaches, the combination of affordances and structuration is often seen as an alternative to

realist and constructivist explanations of technology's role in institutions and society. Here, technological artefacts are considered to be social as well as technical. They do not merely determine agency; they constitute it.

In recent year the concept of affordances has also received increased attention within media and communication studies to explain the relationship between technologies and media use. In particular it has become an important concept in the field of human-computer interaction (Vyas et al., 2016; Vyas, Chisalita, & van der Veer, 2006) and as a way to describe new media logics (boyd, 2010; Crawford, 2009; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013a; Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010; van Dijck & Poell, 2013; Wellman et al., 2003).

Here, I concentrate on two adaptations of the concept of affordances that are particularly relevant for the combination of rhetorical theory and structuration theory that I advocate here: a media-sociological description of *communicative affordances* and a social-semiotic description of *modal affordances*.

Communicative Affordances

Through the term *communicative affordances*, Ian Hutchby wishes to investigate how the relationship between forms of technology enable, constrain and structure interaction between actors (Hutchby, 2001a, p. 2). Hutchby's argument centres upon the interplay between the normative structures of conversational interaction and the communicative affordances offered by different technologies in everyday use. Communicative affordances then becomes a concept that helps us account for the social use of communication technology.

Hutchby rejects what he calls the rhetorical stance that "objective realities" and "social constructions" are the same thing. This question becomes irrelevant, Hutchby argues, if we change empirical footing and turn our analytical attention to what people do with technology (2001: 30). What becomes relevant then, is not how people interpret technology, but how they manage the constraints put on their possibilities of action by the affordances of technology. This also emphasises the communicative affordance-approach's relevance for rhetorical analysis. In his re-evaluation of the classical example of the telephone as communication technology, Hutchby describes how the telephone allowed for intimate conversations across vast physical distance. He

asks the very relevant question of what kind of intimacy the telephone affords. Such a question is absolutely necessary if we want to account for the kind of rhetorical situations the telephone makes possible. This can only be revealed by looking beyond the cultural meaning of the telephone as “a cultural artefact” and start looking at actual use. This approach lets Hutchby investigate the relationship between affordances, social identities and topical patterns. For instance the telephone call will, due to the affordances of the medium, establish the actors’ social roles as “caller” or “called”, which entail certain social obligations, and invite different topical patterns that the actors will usually have to act in accordance with. These structures will be a result of how the telephone promotes certain forms of interaction and constrain the possibilities for other forms of interaction.

Hutchby’s communicative affordance-approach allows us to study the subjective aspects of experience and use of communication technologies. Other, similar approaches point to the explanatory potential of the concept of affordances on organizational- or macro-level of society. Stig Hjarvard argues that an understanding of different media’s affordances can help us “consider media technologies as both shaped by humans and society and shaping human interaction and society” (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 133). Hjarvard draws on Hutchby’s description of affordances and makes a direct connection to Giddens’ theory of structuration to argue its relevance for mediatization theory. To understand the relation between media and media use we must also account for the institutionalization of new media into practices, Hjarvard argues. To account for this process, he combines the affordance-approach with institutional analysis and Goffman’s concept of “territory” (Goffman, 1956, 1972). The latter gives him the tools to explain how new media can change interaction forms and relations between individuals and between individuals and publics, affecting the tension between the private and the public (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 134ff).

Hjarvard also emphasises how the relation between technology and human interaction changes over the technology’s lifespan. Institutionalisation of new media is a result of continuous processes of trying and failing. However, the media’s affordances put limitations on this process, as they offer certain possibilities and not others. For Hjarvard, then, the concept of affordances can help us better understand the

co-constitutive relationship between human factors and technological factors in the shaping of communicative practices. The concept of media affordances or communicative affordances thus offers a way to operationalize the general insights from structuration theory on the relationship between communication technology and communicative practices.

The main interest of Hutchby and Hjarvard is how a theory of affordances can be applied within media studies. Miller and Shepherd (Miller & Shepard, 2009) have applied a very similar understanding of affordances in rhetorical studies of genre.

Communicative Affordances and Rhetorical Analysis

Miller and Shepherd (Miller & Shepard, 2009) see the application of the concept of affordances on studies of the emergence and changeability of rhetorical genres. More precisely, they are interested in how new communication technology impact the more or less stable rhetorical practices that we recognise as genres: “the way the suatory aspects of affordances “fit” rhetorical form to recurrent exigency” (Miller & Shepard, 2009, p. 282). Miller and Shepherd assert that affordances and situational exigence are established in dynamic interaction with each other and with previously existing genres. On one hand, people perceive exigence in light of what their surroundings afford them to do. On the other hand, people’s perceptions of what they can do are also influenced by their motives, their understanding of the situation and their knowledge of established practices. It is this dynamic interaction that allows Miller and Shepherd to talk about a “kairotic coupling of exigence and affordances” (Miller & Shepard, 2009, p. 280).

The introduction of the blog as a new online genre was a good example of this “kairotic coupling”. As Miller and Shepherd point out: “The affordances of blog hosting sites led many people to believe that they really did want to create public online diaries, a conclusion that few might have reached in the absence of the technology” (Miller & Shepard, 2009, p. 281). As the blog-genre developed, new versions of the genre emerged. These new genres were not simply a result of the latent affordances of the Internet, but rather of exigencies that were crystallized by the possibilities afforded by new communication technology.

Another important point from Miller and Shepherd is that the “suite of affordances” associated with different media, is not immediately perceived and adopted. Rather, they are discovered through a long process of experimentation and variation by multiple users. This process includes trying and failing and often a wide variety of media use. Through exploration and evolution of affordances, different exigencies crystalize. This way multiple genres can arise within a suite of affordances that we call a medium.

The general point that Miller and Shepherd make is not that the medium creates the exigence, or that exigence develops in direct response to the medium (Miller & Shepard, 2009, p. 283). Social needs will also exist prior to the introduction of new communicative affordances. Although the affordances of blog hosting sites led many people to discover that they wanted to create online diaries, their “need” to share their interests and opinions was obviously not something that first arose with the blog sites. What their case study reveals is how new affordances can create new expressions of social needs by offering new possibilities for fitting rhetorical responses.

From the perspective of rhetorical theory, Miller and Shepherd’s application of the concept of affordances offers a fruitful way to study the impact of material and technological circumstances on rhetorical practice. Rhetorical theory has long been interested in the relation between the environment and the actors’ scope of action. However, few have given a comprehensive description of how external structures impact rhetorical action or of the interdependency of external structures and rhetorical action. As new communication technologies are constantly introduced, and the dominating media logics are perpetually changing, we need the vocabulary and the theoretical framework to describe how this enables, limits, and structure rhetorical practice. Miller and Shepherd show how the concept of affordances can be a fruitful supplement in this regard, by describing how communication technologies work in dynamic interaction with situational exigencies to form actors’ understanding of situations and shape practices that supersede particular situations.

However, Miller and Shepard’s appropriation of affordance theory to rhetorical studies of genre does not give a very detailed explanation of what affordances are relevant for rhetoric and how they influence the “available means of persuasion”. We

are still left with the question of how different environment offer different ways for people to persuade each other. That is: what determines the “suasory aspects of affordances”? A complete description of rhetorical affordances should also include a concept of affordances as the different resources of representation that is offered to the individual speaker. This is offered in the concept of *modal affordances*.

Modal Affordances

The specialization of communicative affordances into *modal affordances* has its origin in M. A. K. Halliday’s theory social semiotics and Gunther Kress’ theory of multimodality. According to Kress and Jewitt, modal affordances describe what is possible to express and represent easily in a mode (Kress & Jewitt, 2003, p. 14). The premise is that different semiotic modes have different potentials for human expression (see for instance Kress, 2004, p. 157ff). Speech has a temporal component that makes it suitable for narrative structures and sequential outlines of arguments. Images, on the other hand, have a material basis that is spatially organised and all its components are simultaneously presented to the reader. Although these examples are both understandable and well investigated, the question of what constitute a “mode” and how we should approach the combination of modes in the same semiotic construct is not always clear. Before giving a further account of the nature of modal affordances, we should thus have a clearer definition and understanding of what is meant by “mode” in this context.

The context in question is Gunther Kress’ social-semiotic approach to multimodality. Kress defines a mode as a “socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (Kress, 2010, p. 79). On another occasion Kress and Van Leeuwen describe mode as a “channel” of representation or communication (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). These two definitions point to a dual understanding of modes within multimodal theory. On the one hand modes are determined socially; on the other they are determined formally, or semiotically.

A mode is determined *socially* in the sense that what a community regard and use as a mode, is a mode (Kress, 2010, p. 87). In Kress’ own example, colour can be a mode if a community has attached sufficient meaning to different colours and combinations of colours to use it as a channel for communication. *Formally*, Kress

suggests that a theory of modes could be built on the three meaning-functions of social semiotics. Something constitutes as a mode if it can represent meanings about actions, states, or events in the world (the ideational function); represent meanings of the social relations of the actors engaged (the interpersonal function); and have the capacity to form complex semiotic entities with internal and external coherence (the textual function) (Kress, 2010, p. 87). It follows from these formal criteria that different modes are made up of different semiotic entities. For instance speech is made up of a series of entities, like lexis, syntax, intonation, rhythm and so on. The relevance of these different entities to the production of meaning also show the misconceptions of treating both spoken and written “language” as one mode. Functions like speed, intonation, and volume in speech can “channel” meaning in a way that writing cannot, as it offers different semiotic entities.

According to Kress, what bundles of semiotic entities make up a mode is one of the elements that are socially determined. This is a question of “what has been essential, important, salient in a society and in its values” (Kress, 2010, p. 87). The social semiotic approach thus underlines how modes are the result of social processes that constitute a shared meaning attached to the mode, and also their potential to change and evolve over time. However, for semiotic entities to form one mode, they must also have some material or sensory similarities that allow them to be perceived as one mode by the actors. “Gestures” and “speech” are made up of entirely different materiality, and represent different affordances, and can thus not be bundled together as one mode. Rather, the combined meaning making of gestures and speech displays the different modal combination offered by face-to-face interactions than for instance telephone conversations. When investigating modal affordances and the potentials and limitations they offer, we should thus include both the semiotic resources available in particular modes and through the combination of available modes.

As modes are determined both formally and socially, a modal-affordance approach assumes a duality between the affordances of the mode and the social shaping and reshaping of these affordances in everyday social life (Kress, 2010, p. 80). Semiotic resources afforded by the material circumstances must meet social practices and requirements in order to become the affordances of a mode.

This emphasis on the social dimension of material structures makes Kress' social semiotic approach particular apt for a theoretical approach built on the premises of structuration. The social-semiotic approach sees the process of meaning-making as both social and external and social and "internal" (Kress, 2010, p. 94). As the communicative-affordance approach allows us to describe the interrelation between technological resources and human practice through their readings of situations and action possibilities, the modal-affordance approach gives us more precise tools for understanding the interrelation between resources of representation and the individual's knowledge. In this regard, the different modes should not just be understood as external resources but an integrated part how people interpret and make sense of the world.

This also suggests that there is a clear rhetorical dimension to modes. Kress regards the rhetorical process as a political one, in which the object is to "provoke and produce the rearrangement of social relations by semiotic means" (Kress, 2010, p. 121). The rhetorical process is always followed by an aesthetic process, or a "design process", in which the rhetor's intention is given semiotic form (Kress, 2010, p. 121). This understanding of rhetoric – as a process that precedes the aesthetic process of transforming intent into semiotic form – differs from the understanding of rhetoric that I have applied thus far in this dissertation. However, it emphasises how different modes present different "means of persuasion" available for a rhetor. This is how modal affordances present themselves as rhetorical affordances. Different semiotic modes have different ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. The resources a speaker has to appeal to an audience will vary a great deal with what is possible to express easily in the modes available in the particular environment.

Relating modal affordances to rhetorical analysis, Alexander, Powell and Green (2011) also point out that: "in addition to potentials and limitations, modal affordances also impact the level of success the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos, and logos have on readers" (Alexander, Powell, & Green, 2011). The rich tradition of visual rhetoric offers a comprehensive description of how this particular mode differs from other modes in terms of rhetorical appeal. Some have argued that images represent an immediate and special kind of appeal to *pathos* (Birdsell & Groarke, 2007). Others

have argued that images represent a particularly strong form of *evidentia*, as they invite the viewer to observe the reality “first hand”, and thus have a particular kind of credibility (Kjeldsen, 2002). Some have also suggested that texts and images have fundamentally different ways of communicating an argument and appeal through *logos* (Messaris, 1997; Olson, Finnegan, & Hope, 2008). This way, images offers different means of persuasion than written or spoken language. In other words, they have different rhetorical affordances.

Not only different modalities but also different combinations of modalities will hold different rhetorical affordances. Alexander, Powell and Green (Alexander et al., 2011) show how writing students perceive that “layering”, the use of multiple semiotic modes, in itself can be more persuasive, as it affords additional evidence for claims. Others have explored the rhetorical potential of new modes afforded by digital media. For instance has Jeff White shown how the use of hypertext and links in websites affect ethos formation (White, 2010).

Another important reason to include modal affordances when assessing rhetorical affordances is that it involves the individual’s knowledge and abilities. As previously stated, modal affordances are an integral part of how the individual interpret and make sense of the world. Modal affordances are thus a way to conceptualise how affordances are internalized. This is in line with Chamero’s point, that what the actors perceive is not a property in the environment but the relation between themselves and the environment as it appears in the particular situation. Furthermore, it gives us a better understanding of how influence from antecedent genres and practices happen in the processes that Miller and Shepherd seek to describe. People write in similar ways, speak in similar ways, and read images in similar ways, in environments that afford the same kind of interaction. The socially determined aspects of a mode suggest that peoples’ ability to read images, text, intonation, colour schemes, and so forth, are applied in different environments and to different practices, as people move between different environments and engage in different practices.

Summary: Rhetorical Affordances as Facilities of Power

Here I have described “rhetorical affordances” as the different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action the physical or technological environment offers the rhetor. I have presented two established theories of affordances that combined form a comprehensive description of rhetorical affordances. The first is the communicative affordance-approach that combines affordance-theory and medium-theory. This accounts for the social use of communication technology. The other is the modal affordance-approach that combines affordance-theory with social semiotics and theories of multimodality. This accounts for what is possible to express and represent easily in different semiotic modes and combinations of modes. Combined these two approaches give us a framework to describe how different environments provide different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action through one overarching concept.

I have also suggested how these understandings of affordances can be appropriated in rhetorical analysis. By mapping the relationship between the patterns of actual communicative practice and the affordances of the communication technology, Hutchby suggests how we can study the relationship between affordances, social identities and topical patterns. In their study of emerging rhetorical genres, Miller and Shepherd show how new communicative affordances can create new expressions of social needs by offering new possibilities for fitting rhetorical responses.

Although rhetorical scholars have not adopted the concept of modal affordances, can the phenomenon it seeks to describe also be seen as central in rhetorical studies. This is evident in the field of visual rhetoric, that study how visual modes of communication offer particular persuasive resources. Not to mention the extensive work done on the rhetorical resources of written or spoken language or body language. Such studies are parallel to what could be described as inquiries of the persuasive aspects of modal affordances.

The theories I have presented here, also suggest how a concept of rhetorical affordances fits in with the general understanding of social practice promoted by structuration theory. Viewing the action-opportunities facilitated by the physical or

technological environment as affordances is to take human perception and social use seriously. Rhetorical affordances should not be seen purely as external resources, but as both social and “external” and social and “internal”. It allows us to describe the dual relationship between action and external structures without giving priority to one over the other, in accordance with the principles of structuration.

In Giddens’ theory, the modalities of structuration are seen both as what the actors draw upon when acting and the media of reproduction of structure (Giddens, 1979, p. 81). As a modality of structuration, facilities of power include the social use of material resources. Since we here are not interested in social practice in general, but rhetorical practice in particular, I suggest that these resources should be analytically approached as rhetorical affordances. This means that for the actors as rhetorical agents, the material resources of the environment present themselves as rhetorical affordances. A Twitter-feed or a Facebook-page offer a complex set of affordances that allow the rhetor to address a large or small crowd of followers through a very particular combination of semiotic modes. In the most concrete sense, the resources that people draw upon when acting rhetorically is the semiotic modes. It is the social determination of a set of semiotic entities as a mode that allows the actors to act symbolically. The kind of power that is the subject matter of rhetorical studies, then, is the one that is exercised through semiotic modes.

The Benefits of Strong Structuration to Rhetorical Arenas

Thus far in this chapter, I have suggested that rhetorical arenas should be understood as stable encounter settings for rhetorical practice surrounding different network locations, and that they can be analysed as particular kinds of social systems. When dealing with rhetorical arenas, the modalities of structuration can be altered to 1) the actors sense of *rhetorical decorum*; 2) the *topics* that is easily available in the arena; 3) the rhetor and audience roles and the rhetor-audience relation of the arena; and 4) the rhetorical affordances of the arena.

In analysing rhetorical arenas, these concepts should form the focus of analysis. While a rhetorical perspective always will be oriented towards situated action, structuration theory offers a framework to describe how practice and social constellations are given systemic form beyond situations.

Beyond the general benefits of using the insights of structuration theory to rhetoric, there are also some particular benefits of applying insights from strong structuration when we are dealing with rhetorical action on the meso-level.

One benefit is that it gives us a theoretical framework to describe synchronic and diachronic variation in rhetorical arenas. It allows us to describe how different arenas are structurally different and how the structuring properties of arenas change over time. Giddens' theorizing of social systems is essentially a description of how human practice is arranged across time and space. Whether we focus on the temporal or the spatial dimension will determine the focus of analysis.

To study rhetorical arenas synchronically is to study structures of signification, domination and legitimation across different rhetorical arenas. The case study in this dissertation demonstrates how a combination of strong structuration theory and rhetorical theory can be used to give a systematic and comprehensive description of new emerging arenas. This is essential if we want to get a better understanding of how these new arenas are different from other established and familiar arenas.

The combination of strong structuration and rhetorical theory also opens new possibilities for diachronic analyses. Countless rhetorical studies have been done on historical material, but there have been done few systematic studies of how rhetorical circumstance change over time that includes all or a combination of the modalities described above. The theoretical approach to rhetorical arenas I propose here provides the analytical concepts to describe more long-term changes in the relation between power structures, material circumstance, social norms and rhetorical practice. To focus on rhetorical arenas instead of singular events is to focus on stability and change in the totality of rhetorical circumstance over time rather than particular, albeit central, situations.

Furthermore, structuration theory helps us explain how rhetorical arenas are overlapped and intertwined in ways that give systemic form to higher-level practices. According to Giddens, society as a whole can be approached as a social system, which again consists of lower-level social systems. As rhetorical arenas are attached to a physical or mediated locale, it makes little sense to describe the society as a whole as a rhetorical arena. Rather, rhetorical arenas can be said to give form to higher levels of

social systems, described as rhetorical communities or the public sphere (see chapter 3). Such higher-level social systems will incorporate different rhetorical arenas. What is conventional rhetorical practice in one arena is not necessarily so in another, even if both lend form to practice on a higher level. That does not mean, however, that rhetorical arenas are closed entities. As actors travel between different encounter settings their sense of *rhetorical decorum*, structuring *topoi*, expectations of rhetor-audience relations, and their perception of rhetorical affordances are transferred between different arenas.

From strong structuration theory we also learn how rhetorical arenas have varying degrees of systemness depending on the stability of the modalities of structuration. In line with strong structuration theory, the relationship between structure and action can be understood as a continuum, from a complete duality to a dualism of oppositions. Sometimes agency and structure are inseparable, and sometimes they are not. Within rhetorical arenas, the nature of rules and resources will vary. Some rules are perceived as more important than others, and some rules are more clearly defined than others. Therefore we need a way to differentiate between the degrees of consideration and critical reflection people apply to different situations.

To account for this variability, William H. Sewell Jr. has suggested that structures should be understood along dimensions of depth and power. Some social structures are very deeply rooted. These deep structures are often present in a wide range of institutions, practices and discourses, and they tend to be characterized by “taken for granted”-knowledge. Language can serve as a clear case in point. The structural components of the English language are present in all institutions and across all arenas of English-speaking society. The English language will change over time, but a single actor does not hold the power to change it. Other structures are not particularly deep, but mobilize clear interests of power. Sewell exemplifies this with the structures governing the state and the political public. Radical changes in political system – and not the least the very conscious and critical discussions and debates about such changes – indicate that these structures are not particularly deep, but they generate and utilize high concentrations of power.

In addition to these dimensions, I propose that we should also consider the formality of structures: to what extent the rules and resources of the arena are established as formal and binding rules or laws. This will seriously affect the individual's ability to act strategically, and to change or challenge rules.

An example can help to clarify what I mean by varying degrees of systemness of rhetorical arenas. As a rhetorical arena the British Parliament's House of Commons is characterized by a high degree of systemness in the reconstruction of rules and resources. The roles of the Speaker of the House, the Lord Speaker and the Members of Parliament are clearly defined and strictly enforced by parliamentary procedure. The social norms of the arena are deeply ingrained as the "do's and don'ts" of parliamentary practice developed over centuries. The affordances of the parliamentary floor create possibilities and limitations for the speakers who operate in this arena. In debates, they are to speak without visual aids or teleprompters. In addition the Members of Parliament can voice their opinions by shouts of support or discontent, waiving of papers or banging on the counters. This way the rhetorical affordances that are presented to the actors through the surroundings are closely connected to the different roles inhabited by different actors. In addition, the parliamentary debates follows strictly formalized rules. For instances, speeches in the House of Commons are always addressed to the Speaker. Failure to adhere to this rule will lead to sanctioning by the Speaker. Also, the audience's reactions are formalized in the "voice vote", in which the Speaker decides the ruling on an issue based on the members shouting of "Aye" and "No". The discursive schemes of the rhetorical arena are additionally more loosely defined in what is known as British Parliamentary Style of debating. This genre of debate is taught and practiced within the debating societies of the British education system, and the *formal topoi* and *locis communis* of the arena thus reflect and reconstruct aspects of the social structures of the British society as a whole.

Such structuring elements are not necessarily very deep, as can be seen in debates about the procedures themselves, but they do mobilize and enforce strong power relations within the arena. Also, they are explicitly formalized as parliamentary procedure, either formally written down in documents like the Acts of Parliament, in the documents of the Procedure Committee, or handed down as general understandings

established over the centuries. Such formalization means that the individual actor has very little opportunity to induce change in the structural properties of the arena.

All in all, the British Parliament as a rhetorical arena has a very high degree of systemness, which is reflected in the very formal rhetorical practice and the remarkable stability of the arena over time. In order to be perceived as a competent speaker within this arena, a politician would have to be knowledgeable about not only the formalized rules of parliamentary procedure, but also the informal rules developed over decades and which dictate the participants' sense of *rhetorical decorum* within this particular arena. This way they also present themselves as resources for the skilled rhetor.

The Explanatory Potential of Structuration Theory to Rhetorical Situations

The application of strong structuration theory to rhetorical arenas also gives us a more complex understanding of the processes in which rhetorical situations are formed. The debate about the nature of rhetorical situations displays the actuality of the structure-agency debate within the field of rhetoric. The theoretical approach of Lloyd Bitzer has typically been identified as predominantly concerned with structural explanations, while Richard E. Vatz's critique has typically been seen as a defence of rhetorical agency. Without rejecting any of these approaches, I argue that we can incorporate both within a continuum between duality of structure and agency on one side and a dualism between the two on the other, similar to that described in Stones' theory of strong structuration.

Some processes of defining situations are best understood as habitual reproductions of structuring properties, which make exigencies appear primarily as external factors. Other situations are clearly the result of conscious and strategic initiative from one person or a group. Most rhetorical situations, however, are placed somewhere in between these two. It is not the nature of external events, but the meaning and consequences given to those events that determine the exigency of a situation. A situation's placement on the scale from "weak potential" to "strong exigency" is a matter of social confinement rooted in the structures of social systems. Not all situations are perceived as equally urgent or controlling.

The central point here is that by approaching the process of defining rhetorical situations as a process of structuration we can account for the variability in the relation between agency and structure as sources of rhetorical situations. Some rhetorical situations seem to just arise, as the people involved have an intuitive and immediate understanding of the situation and its exigencies, or they draw on rules and resources that are clearly defined and institutionalised. This results in routinized definitions of rhetorical situations. Other situations are harder to define, and the actors involved display different and competing understandings of both the situation and its exigencies. In these cases it is more suitable to talk about strategic definition of rhetorical situations.

Processes of defining rhetorical situations are thus closely connected to the *systemness* of the rhetorical arena. The specificity and stability of the modalities of the arena are linked to the people's reading of situations and their various abilities to define situations. What we gain by introducing a concept of rhetorical arenas to theories of rhetorical situations, then, is not a more precise placement of where rhetorical situations "happen" on a continuum between structure and agency, but a way to approach the variability of this placement as it plays out in different arenas.

Again the Parliament can serve as an example. Within a parliamentary system, a Minister called to answer to the Members of Parliament has little choice but to do so, if he wants to remain a Minister. The situation clearly has an "imperfection marked by urgency", to borrow Bitzer's terminology. In order to resolve this imperfection, the Minister must ensure the Members of Parliament of their trust in him. He may do this in different ways, depending on the different "means of persuasion" available, but the Minister has little ability to redefine the situation he is in.

The limited action-scope of the Minister in this situation is not the result of a general feature of rhetorical situations per se. Rather, it is the result of the precision and stability of the structural properties of this particular rhetorical arena. In the process of defining the situation, people draw upon the structural properties of the parliamentary system. Here, the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, not the least the Minister, are clearly defined and formally articulated. This means that the

process of attaching interest to circumstance, and through this defining the exigency of the situation, is done routinely and with little dispute.

This is not to say that a speaker does not have ways to act strategically within the situation, or even change the audience's perception of the nature of the situation. It does, however, suggest that the particularities of the rules and resources of Parliament as a rhetorical arena place clear constraints on how he can do so.

Furthermore, to draw attention to rhetorical arenas as the settings for rhetorical situations does not mean that a rhetorical situation will be confined to a single arena. Definitions of situational exigencies and fitting responses include the identification of a target audience. Therefore, people's perception and definition of rhetorical situations must not be understood as confined to a single arena, but will play out between multiple arenas. The same events that precede a particular rhetorical situation within one arena will probably cause people to define the emergence of a rhetorical situation in other arenas. A Minister confronted by Parliament, will most likely find himself in rhetorical situations in the media, within the bureaucracy, and in the political party. Within each of these institutions, he will find himself engaged in different arenas with different action possibilities. How he chooses to act, then, will depend on his hierarchy of motives.

Chapter Summary

The contemporary public sphere consists of a multitude of arenas in which people act in particular ways as speakers and audience. I have labelled these *rhetorical* arenas. These arenas have their own rule-resource-sets for how to act and how to interpret the acts of others. In this chapter, I have argued how we can understand these rhetorical arenas as stable encounter settings for rhetorical practice organised as social systems surrounding particular locales. I have argued that by combining structuration theory with rhetorical theory we can maintain a distinct rhetorical approach to social action. Rhetorical theory provides a vocabulary to understand situated rhetorical interaction, while structuration theory provides the overall theoretical framework for understanding the mutually constitutive role of rhetorical interactions and the more or less stable encounter setting that is the rhetorical arena.

Structuration theory also allows us to describe how the rules and resources that people draw upon are actualized in different “stages” of rhetorical action. First, they are actualized in the actors’ interpretation of rhetorical situations and their assessment of their own action-horizon in these situations. Second, they are actualized in active rhetorical agency. Third, they are actualized in the rhetorical event, that include both the audience’s and the speaker’s knowledgeability. This way, the rules and resources of the social system are actualized in the actors’ interpretation of rhetorical situations, in the “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor, and in the audience’s reception.

Furthermore, I have suggested that the modalities of should be given a distinct rhetorical expression when our focus is placed on rhetorical interaction. First, the concept of *rhetorical decorum* can serve as an analytical entry to the structuring properties of social norms on rhetorical practice. By asking what is considered as decorous in particular settings we can access the underlying social norms that give stability and systemic form to the rhetorical arena. Second, a three-part categorisation of *topoi* can offer an analytical approach to how interpretive schemes are actualised in situated rhetorical practice. *Structural topoi* describe how actors draw upon interpretive schemes when interpreting and communicating the world around them; *locis communis* describe the cultural specific content of social systems; and *formal topoi* describe the cognitive structures easily available in a particular social system. Third, the conceptualisation of “rhetor” and “audience” and the rhetor-audience relation can offer an analytical approach to how relational facilities of power are actualised in situated rhetorical practice. The structuring properties of relational facilities of power then become analytically available to us as the ethos of the rhetor and the situational possibilities and constraints that the particular audience represents.

Forth, I have argued that a concept of *rhetorical affordances* can help us better understand how the physical or technological environment provides different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action. The concept of rhetorical affordances I have suggested here combines a communicative affordance-approach and a modal affordance-approach. Combined these give us the means to describe how different physical and technological environments afford different possibilities for the actors to

define and act in accordance with rhetorical situations and different “means of persuasion” when acting.

The benefits of combining strong structuration theory and rhetorical theory, then, is that it gives us the framework to describe how rhetorical arenas are upheld in a dual relationship between agency and structure; it allows us to describe how different arenas are structurally different and how the structuring properties of arenas change over time; and it helps us explain how rhetorical arenas are overlapped and intertwined in ways that give systemic form to higher-level practices. It also gives us a framework to describe the varying degrees of systemness in rhetorical arenas. Some rules are perceived as more important than others, and some rules are more clearly defined than others. Strong structuration theory allows us to describe the variability of the structuring properties of arenas along dimensions of depth, power, and formality. This way, the application of strong structuration theory to rhetorical arenas also gives us a more complex understanding of the processes in which rhetorical situations are formed and play out. By approaching the process of defining rhetorical situations as a process of structuration, we can account for the variability in the relation between agency and structure as sources of rhetorical situations.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Research Design

The study is constructed as a combined case study of two related phenomena: The discourse among and about the Norwegian “Tweetocracy” and the discourse among and about the Norwegian “Facebook-debaters”. Although they are still largely unexplored by researchers, these groups of “expert citizens” get a lot of attention from other sources in Norway. At the time of the interviews, they were frequently referred to in Norwegian media, and apparently they had strong connections to traditional news outlets. In public descriptions of these groups, there are clear expectations that they are able to set the agenda and influence political processes through their activities on Twitter and Facebook. These assumptions are supported by studies of so-called elite participation in social network sites in other countries.

Also, prior to the main study I conducted a pre-study to explore the field and potential research questions. The informants that described themselves as politically engaged and frequent users of social network sites, often referred to the “Tweetocracy” and the “Facebook-debaters”, describing them as the most relevant and most interesting element of the Norwegian social media sphere.

The study is not based on the expectation that these phenomena have particularly high impact on political processes or political opinion. Rather, they are selected on the basis of being new phenomena that are made possible by the introduction of participatory media. Reactions in the news media, as well as the response I got in the pre-study, suggest that these kinds of mediated and semi-public conversations and debates between expert citizens are a distinct new presence in the Norwegian public. Therefore, it is interesting to study how these phenomena are made possible by a convergence of new media and a particular social and political culture.

The first and most central stage of the study is in-depth interviews. This stage includes mapping of the field through identification of key informants, structured conversations with the informants, and a three cycle process of coding and analysing the interview data. The analysis of the interviews, and the central concepts and themes that it identifies, constitutes the framework for the case study.

In addition to the interviews, I have observed the informants' activities on Twitter or Facebook for an extended period of time (approximately six months after the interviews). These observations have served to adjust the impressions from the interviews to actual practice and identify particular cases for further analysis. "Particular cases" are here understood as situations and events that are relevant examples of the practice we want to describe. These are equivalent to what in rhetorical studies have been described as "key texts" that are "provocative and worthwhile" for the overarching purpose of the research (Hoff-Clausen, 2008, p. 21; Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland, 1994, p. 7).

Based on insights from the interviews and my own observations of the informants' practice, I have selected one such particular case for further analysis. This is the viral Twitter-campaign built around the hashtag #ihaveexperienced in the spring of 2015. Through this analysis, I will display some rhetorical features that are characteristic for this arena, and that are not easily described through interview data.

The method in chapter 10, "#ihaveexperienced", is best described as a form of concept oriented criticism (Jasinski, 2001). Here, some of the key concepts that appear in the interviews are explored through analysis of situated action. The analysis is conducted in a dialectical movement between close reading and conceptual reflections, and is motivated by insights and questions produced in the through the interviews and the following observations. By breaking the over three thousand tweets into different functional categories, and then subjecting a smaller sample of tweets to textual analysis, I demonstrate how this particular case supports the theme of individualisation of political discourse that is found in the interviews (for a further description of the sampling, categorisation, and text analysis of this particular case, see chapter 10).

Throughout the study, I use a social semiotic framework when describing features and functions of particular utterances. Different segments of text are described using a framework of practical text analysis based on systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 2009) This provides a coherent framework for analysing different modes of expression and combinations of different modes of expression. Also, the "social" aspect of social semiotic assumes interdisciplinarity with social theory in analysis.

This interdisciplinarity is here provided by the theoretical framework of rhetorical arenas and political rhetoric that is described in earlier chapters of this dissertation.

Throughout the study I discuss both Facebook and Twitter in combination and as examples of the same phenomena. I present the two together to emphasise their structural resemblance, but it is also an attempt to keep a continuous focus on the comparative aspects of the study. The characteristics of Twitter-behaviour can be more easily understood when contrasted with different behaviour in Facebook, and vice versa. Often the informants compare the two, or they do not distinguish clearly between the two social network sites. By treating the two network sites together, I suggest that they can be understood as expressions of the same general phenomenon.

What kind of knowledge is produced?

Individual interviews are a rare research method in rhetorical studies. Therefore, what kind of knowledge I draw from the interviews and their relation to rhetorical criticism should be clarified.

Steinar Kvale defines the qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1983, p. 174). In this study, the interviews are used to access the social knowledge that constitutes encounter settings and maintains the structuring properties of the rhetorical arenas. I seek out experiences and memories that the informants associate with particular practices and particular network locations. Interviews can provide access to how people experience and make sense of rhetorical situations, but they do not give us access to the actual situations as they unfold. The data interviews produce, should thus not be seen as secondary or indirect sources to events, but represent its own text with its own research story that I proceed to interpret and make sense of.

I place myself in a rhetorical tradition that maintains that the exploration of a phenomenon is in itself a form of scientific knowledge production, without necessarily elevating such insight into generalizable knowledge (Gentikow, 2005, p. 41; Hoff-Clausen, 2008, p. 22). The role of the researcher here is thus as an anthropologist in the culture of internet-debate, combining interviews, participant observations, and a text analysis in order to give a comprehensive description of this social world. To the

extent that these different types of inquiry overlap in the study, they should not be seen as attempts of triangulation. Rather, I assume an eclectic attitude, and support different types of inquiries that can contribute to what Clifford Geertz refers to as “thick description” (Geertz, 1973).

Based on these considerations, I assume two premises for how the interview data should be understood and interpreted. The first premise is that people who are experienced participants in a given practice can also give knowledgeable accounts of the structuring properties of set practice. As described in previous chapters, I assume that social structures only “exist” in people’s memory traces. Because people are generally knowledgeable about their surroundings and the practices they engage in, the way they describe and evaluate these surroundings and practices can give us a good idea of the underlying structuring properties. These narrations of the informants’ experiences do not have the same epistemological status as analyses of situated rhetorical action. However, given the difficulties associated with analyzing discourse in digital environment, which I have described in chapters 1 and 3, interviews based on key-informants experiences might be the best way to get a better understanding of this particular form of rhetorical practice. Interviews can give us insights into the actors’ motivations, their interpretations of situations, and, not least, what they see as essential elements of different situations. Hopefully, future studies can build on the insights from this study and explore them further using more traditional text-analytical methods.

The second is that people’s descriptions of surroundings and practices are also performed and narrated, and should always be interpreted and analysed (Atkinson et.al, 2004). Experiences and memories are rhetorically constructed through the interviews. This means that when interpreting the interviews, I am concerned with how the informants perform and narrate events or classes of events; how they constitute and act their own roles; how memories and experiences are constituted; and what kind of performative actions are attached to the utterances. In this chapter, I offer a thorough description of how I proceed to analyze the data generated in the interviews.

Insights Gathered From the Pre-Study

Prior to the formulation of research questions and choice of method I conducted a pre-study consisting of eight focus group interviews with a total of thirty interviewees (different numbers of participants were tried out) and six individual interviews. The pre-study thus had a total of 36 interviewees and approximately 15 hours of interview material. This pre-study turned out to be an important stage in the development of the research questions and the design of the study, particularly in designing the interview-schema and selecting interviewees. One of the key insights of the pre-study is that people who do not express any particular interest in politics – and do not see political talk as a central part of their social media use – still have an impression of “where” and how such talk take place. This also gave me an impression of what kind of actors would typically be identified as key-informants. Based on the experiences from the pre-study, the key-informants would typically be political pundits, journalists, politicians, academics, and bloggers from different sides of the political spectre.

In the pre-study I also tried out different ways of introducing participatory media in the interview situation to get as close to the natural situations as possible. The interviewees were placed in front of a computer with their own Twitter- or Facebook-account and were encouraged to elaborate on their answers with examples from their social media-feed. This method was very similar to a “think-aloud” method, which has successfully been used in rhetorical studies (Bengtsson, 2017). This was done with varying levels of success. It proved particularly difficult to recreate an interview situation that resembled the informants’ ordinary interactions with the media. Based on these experiences, I decided not to try to recreate any “natural” media-use in the interviews.

The pre-study was also useful for clarifying the appropriate size and question-form for the interviews. Combining different forms of interviews, target groups, questionnaires and length of the interviews, the pre-study turned out to give valuable insights into what was the most suitable form for this particular study.

Identifying Participants Using Snowball Sampling

Key-informant interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who are thought to have specialized and inside knowledge of the field. The purpose is usually

to collect first-hand information from a representative range of well-connected and up-to-date participants. In this study, I wanted to know what key-informants know about the rhetorical arena and get an impression of their motivations and judgements, which reflect and maintain the governing structures of the arena.

Successful selection of informants is thus vital for key-informant interviews. In this case the informants should have thorough knowledge of the medium and its rhetorical affordances. They should be experienced Twitter- or Facebook-users with an indigenous understanding of the social conventions and vocabulary of the particular arena. Also, the informants should at least partially use Twitter or Facebook as a political medium, by participating in political talk, expressing their own opinion, shearing links to political articles and so forth. People who mainly use Facebook as a medium to keep in touch with friends and family were thought to be less relevant at this stage. Moreover, the informants should adhere to the Norwegian political sphere when they tweet. Basically this means that they should meet the requirements above and interact with people in Norwegian.

In general, identifying key-informants will inevitably involve a process of interpretation and selection, which will affect the further analysis. Given the many difficulties of studying participatory media, I consider the insider members of the Norwegian “Tweetocracy” and the “Facebook-debaters” to be a “hard-to-reach population” (Handcock & Gile, 2011). To reduce the risk of the analysis being too heavily influenced by my own idea of what makes a key informant in these networked publics, the informants were selected using snowball sampling.

The type of snowball sampling used in this case can be described as a combination of the two standard types of snowball sampling described in Thompson (2002). In one type “a few identified members of a rare population are asked to identify others members of the population, those so identified are asked to identified other, and so, for the purpose of obtaining a nonprobability sample or for constructing a frame from which to sample”. In the other type “individuals in the sample are asked to identify other individuals, for a fixed number of stages, for the purpose of estimating the number of “mutual relationships” or “social circles” in the population” (Thompson, 2002, p. 183).

In this case, the process started with three informants from respectively Twitter and Facebook that I held to be central in the networks based on media commentary. These were in turn asked to name other people they recognise as possible key informants.

An object of the sampling method was to get an impression of the social circles and the mutual relationships of the networked publics. All the individuals identified are thus interesting, although not all were contacted. I did, however, not decide on a fixed number of stages, but continued the process as long as it produced new valuable insights.

Continuing this sampling procedure throughout the interviewing period left me with 121 names of individuals that were identified by each other as engaged in the same kind of rhetorical activity and in the same debates (61 for Twitter and 60 for Facebook). Already at this stage, there were some clear patterns that suggested what kind of social group these networks are formed of. Among the names connected to Twitter were many media professionals (21), people connected to political institutions (12), bloggers (7), and academics (5). Among the names connected to Facebook were media professionals (17), people connected to political institutions (4), academics (12), writers (3), and people from different NGOs (4).

The most frequently mentioned names were contacted and asked to participate in the study. I took some precautions in order to avoid too similar interview-situations. I decided not to interview people that were working together. For instance, I would not interview two journalists working in the same newsroom. Then I would rather give priority to include a different newspaper. Also, to avoid any blind spots caused by gender bias, I decided that at least 30 percent of the interviewees should be women. This proved to be a necessary precaution. Out of 32 participants, only 11 were women (see table 5.1). Besides this, no measures were made to secure diversification among the participants.

This process of identifying and recruiting participants was continued until the interviewees did no longer seem to contribute with new perspectives to the topics. This gave a total of 32 interviews (18 for Twitter and 14 for Facebook) lasting between 1

and 1,5 hour, giving a total of 37 hour and 20 minutes interview-material (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1: List of informants

Interview	Interviewee	Business	Time
Twitter 1	Man, early thirties	Blog, Politics	1h 10min
Twitter 2	Woman, early thirties	Blog	1h 10min
Twitter 3	Man, late twenties	Academia, Media	1h
Twitter 4	Man, early thirties	Blog	1h 50min
Twitter 5	Woman, early thirties	Media	40min
Twitter 6	Woman, early fifties	Media	1h
Twitter 7	Woman, mid twenties	Blog	1h
Twitter 8	Man, mid thirties	Academia, Media	1h
Twitter 9	Man, mid fifties	Publishing	50min
Twitter 10	Man, mid forties	Lawyer	1h
Twitter 11	Woman, mid fifties	Politics	1h
Twitter 12	Man, early thirties	Media, Politics	1h
Twitter 13	Woman, late forties	Blog, Media	1h 10min
Twitter 14	Man, late twenties	Politics	1h
Twitter 15	Man, late twenties	Politics	1h 10min
Twitter 16	Man, late thirties	Blog, Politics	1h 30min
Twitter 17	Woman, mid twenties	Media	1h
Twitter 18	Man, early fifties	Blog	1h 10min
Facebook 1	Man, mid fifties	Academia	1h 10min
Facebook 2	Woman, mid fifties	Media	1h 15min
Facebook 3	Man, early fifties	Academia	1h
Facebook 4	Man, early sixties	Media	50min
Facebook 5	Man, early forties	Media	40min
Facebook 6	Woman, mid forties	Blog, Publishing	1h 30min
Facebook 7	Woman, early forties	Teacher	1h 30min
Facebook 8	Man, late forties	Academia	1h 10min
Facebook 9	Man, early fifties	Teacher	1h 15min
Facebook 10	Woman, early forties	Academia, Lawyer	50min
Facebook 11	Man, mid fifties	Writer, Publishing	1h 50min
Facebook 12	Man, early fifties	Blog, Media	1h 30min
Facebook 13	Man, early fifties	Blog, Politics	1h 50min
Facebook 14	Man, mid sixties	Politics, Organisational	1h 20min
			37h 20min

This is a medium size sampling pool for qualitative research (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Expert voices suggest that a sampling pool of loosely around 30 “offers the advantage of penetrating beyond a very small number of people without imposing the hardship of endless data gathering” (Baker & Edwards, 2012, p. 9). It is also suggested that this is the maximum amount of interviews that can be appropriately combined with ethnographic observations. In this particular case, a total of 32 participants was thought to be an ample sample of the social environment that I wanted to study.

Most of the individuals contacted responded positively to the request. I was not able to get in contact with two of the central actors. Three persons that were successfully contacted did not want to participate. Since many of the participants that were interviewed should be considered expert sources, with all the practical challenges it implies (e.g. difficulties in making appointments), this response rate should be considered a success.

Interview guide and practical implementation

All the interviews were based on a standard interview guide with some variations between the Twitter-interviews and the Facebook-interviews (see appendix 2 and appendix 3). The interview guides were structured around different analytical categories drawn from the understandings of political rhetoric and rhetorical arenas I present in this dissertation: The nature of the relations between rhetor and audiences; the recurring topics of the arena; the rhetorical affordances; and the sense of *rhetorical decorum*. This theoretical framework was then adjusted in accordance with the practical experiences that were made in the pre-study interviews.

The first challenge in the interviews was to establish to what extent the actors consider themselves to be a participating member of a particular networked public and an active participant in a rhetorical arena. As “virtual communities” rhetorical arenas depend on recognition as a particular encounter setting by the actors involved as well as by actors observing. The actors should preferably identify the “virtual community” on their own, without being directed by too leading questions. Therefore, the interview sessions started with very open questions (“How would you describe Twitter/Facebook?”), and then gradually closing in on their description of the arena through follow-up questions.

Another goal at this stage of the interviews was to have the informants reflect on what they consider to be political or of political relevance on Twitter or Facebook. The undelaying research interest on this stage was: “What are the interviewees talking about when they are talking about politics in social media?” The informants were encouraged to reflect on what types of issues the discussions usually revolve around and what they consider to be the object or the “point” of such discussions. This should hopefully give an impression of the informants’ understandings of themselves as speakers and audience and of the topical structures of the arena.

The pre-study indicated that people with a certain interest in political and civic issues possess much “hidden” knowledge about how participatory media influence political communication and political identities. Certain issues, like gender issues and refugee-politics, are more suited for debates in these arenas. These topics are in some way understood to be dependent on more than party-politics and are therefore easier to get involved in for individuals who identify themselves as non-political. A practical insight from the pre-study interviews, then, was that the political potential of social network sites is much wider than what informants tend to suggest at the start of the interviews. Therefore, the question of typical and recurring issues was usually reintroduced at other appropriate moments in the interviews.

Another goal for this stage of the interviews was to have the respondents reflect on different expressions of political identity in social network sites. On what grounds do they ascribe political identity to other actors? Do they reflect on their own political identity and how others perceive it? Here, I chose an indirect form of questioning, using questions like “If I were to ask your followers, how do you think they would describe you as a Twitter-user/Facebook-user?” and “Can you usually guess what the people you are talking with are voting?”

The second task of the interviews was to have the informants talk about rhetorical affordances of the arena. The value of using interviews in the affordance analysis is not so much in locating the affordances, as describing their pragmatic function and social meaning. The interviews were encouraged to discuss questions such as: “What is the social meaning of a “re-tweet”/a “hashtag”/a “like”?” “What additional meaning is given to an utterance when it is being shared?” “Why do people

share content in social media?” A particularly interesting question was how the character limitations of micro-blogging affect the innovation and relation to the content: what they can and cannot do within 140 characters?

The third task was to map the informants’ sense of *rhetorical decorum* in the arena, and through this, the different social norms in the rhetorical arena and how violations of such norms are sanctioned. This kind of knowledge can be particularly hard to access through text-analysis, as acts like ignoring, refusing to answer, or blocking can be difficult to detect and read. Again, an in-direct method was used, asking questions like: “what is most destructive for the conversation?” or simply “what annoys you the most?” The informants were also encouraged to reflect upon the amount of norm-breaking behaviour that they experience and how that relates to their impression of the arena in general. The interview-strategy was then to have the informants give narrated accounts of their experiences that could be used as a source to actual events and practices. Both the meaning and the strength of the social norms are visible through the way violation of the norms is sanctioned by the actors, either active – by refuting, arguing or ironizing – or passive – by ignoring, overlooking or banning. A central research interest at this point in the interviews was what the actors perceive as valuable political statements and utterances in social network sites, and what the informants consider to be appropriate and non-appropriate ways of asserting one’s political opinions.

The style of interviewing that was used throughout the interviews can best be described as a topic-centered semi-structured form of interviewing (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The interview guide contained a series of topics that every interview should cover, but as interviewer I maintained flexibility in how and when the questions were asked and how the informants could respond.

Coding the Interviews

After being transcribed in full, the interviews have been coded and analysed in three stages: 1) a three-cycle process of coding; 2) a process of identifying patterns and clusters that are formulated as central concepts; 3) an analysis of how these concepts are connected to form three overarching themes.

Here “codes” are understood in line with Miles and Huberman (1994) as “(t)ags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). The codes that are developed here, are meant to capture something prominent, meaningful, typical or salient that the units of meaning point to. The codes describe the elements that contain the commonalities and differences in the informants’ experiences. They are what Saldana (2013) calls “essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story” (Saldana, 2013, p. 8).

The interviews have not been coded line by line or by paragraph, but by the level of meaning. This means that the texts have been “split up” in very different sizes of meaning. Codes have been assigned to single sentences, paragraphs and longer sequences. The decisive factor has been whether it can convey a meaningful claim about the code (this understanding of unit of meaning is further described in DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011).

The codes that have been developed in the coding process are not mutually exclusive. A sentence or paragraph has been assigned multiple codes, as long as it has been thought to say something meaningful about the phenomenon that the code is meant to capture. While some units of meaning have been assigned multiple codes, others have been assigned very few or no codes at all. Although the codebook in this case is developed inductively from the interview material, I considered some passages and some topics to be of little relevance for the research questions. In the semi-structured interviews, the informants sometimes stray from the topic and talk about things that are not addressed by other informants.

The coding process was done in three stages. In the first cycle coding I assumed a data-driven inductive method. Here, a wide range of in-vivo codes, descriptive codes and versus-codes (Saldana, 2013) were uncritically developed in an attempt to describe and make sense of the informants’ stories. As a first stage of analysis this involved reading and re-reading segments of transcribed material and listening to extracts of the tapes to start to make sense of the raw data. Reviewing over 37 hours of interview material this way left me with a total of 286 preliminary codes suggesting what the unit of the interview is “about” and how it fits into the research story.

Table 5.2: Codes and frequency (number of interviews and number of inputs):

CATEGORY	CODE	INTERVIEWS/INPUTS
1	Social media vs traditional media	26 95
2	Twitter vs Facebook	25 61
3	Elite networks vs. “ordinary” media users	9 17
4	Networked publics vs. offline publics	17 35
5	Private vs. public	27 104
Technical features		
6	Interface functions	29 123
7	Interactive functions/Relational properties	21 57
8	Archive/storing functions	11 16
9	Quantifiable elements	21 56
Issues		
10	Types of issues	30 161
11	Issue focus	22 51
12	Issue value	29 97
Personal involvement		
13	Motivation of participation	28 130
14	Introduction to participatory media	25 50
15	Own media use	25 61
16	Personal consequences	24 54
Inter-media effects		
17	Inter-media effects from social network sites	26 80
18	Inter-media effects to social network sites	25 62
19	Inter-media development	10 18
20	Comment and opinion pieces	13 24
21	Blog-Twitter interdependency (Twitter)	3 8
Roles and identities		
22	Opinion makers	24 38
23	Opinion makers network	30 151
24	Professional roles	29 166
25	The role of journalists	20 94
26	Credibility	22 53
27	Ideological identity	25 63
28	New political dimensions	7 19
29	Types of Twitter-users (Twitter only)	16 48

Norms and violations		
30	Social norms	16 56
31	Norm violations	15 36
32	Reasons for norm violations (Facebook)	3 3
33	Sanctioning of norm violations	21 35
Insider activities		
34	Civic and political engagement	10 16
35	Commenting on media content	19 42
36	Curating as activity	10 21
37	Debating as activity	25 123
38	Moderating as activity	7 13
Groups and relations		
39	Rhetor-audience relations	29 125
40	Audiences	24 73
41	Basis for networks	24 97
42	Personal conflicts	13 26
43	Echo chambers	18 26
Information flow		
44	Information access	28 114
45	Information spread	25 66
46	Source access	23 37
Context		
47	The cultural context	9 21
48	The political context	12 23
49	State of the press (Facebook)	5 9
50	State of the public sphere	8 12
Perceptions of quality		
51	Qualities of “the social media-debate”	28 79
52	Qualities of interaction	19 55
53	Qualities of the speaker	24 94
54	Qualities of texts	15 25
Interaction		
55	Interactions/situations	26 94
56	Motivation of argument	13 43
57	Characteristics of the debate	28 106
58	Argumentation norms	15 40

Prior to the second cycle coding, the initial codes were reduced to 53 descriptive codes and five versus-codes (see table 5.1). The interviews were then re-coded into these codes. Simultaneously, new patterns of meaning were identified and consensus and conflict within the codes noted.

Table 5.2 shows a complete list of the codes by thematic category and the number of interviews and entries that have been made to each code. For instance, code 27 “ideological identity” has been thematically categorized under “roles and identities”. 63 different entries have been made to this code from 25 different interviews. This quantification should not be understood as a form of validation. It is simply meant to give the reader an idea of the frequency and on what basis the codes are described. (For a complete list of codes with descriptions and examples, see appendix 4).

The coding here is separated from the prior theorising and the design of the interview guide. This means that codes that thematically relate to questions in the interview guide do not necessarily have entries from all of the informants, as not all answers to the thematically relevant questions provided relevant information to this element of the research story.

The third cycle coding focused on identifying central concepts and clusters of meaning through careful reading and re-reading of the data. At this stage, emerging themes was the category of analysis, as similarities and differences between different groups of data formed new constellations of meaning. Through the third cycle coding I defined seven concepts that capture different aspects of the informants’ experiences. Here, a concept is understood similar to how Boyatzis (1998) defines a “theme”, as “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 161). Concluding this stage, three overarching or core themes were identified that were felt to capture the phenomenon of rhetorical conditions and practices in the networked publics.

Identifying the Central Concepts of the Informants' Stories

The concepts identified through the coding process are central to the construction of a research story and thus to the analysis of the interviews. The identification of these concepts should be considered among the main findings in the interviews.

The concepts describe central motives in the informants' accounts of their own experiences and stories. They should be understood as the sum of all of the informants' descriptions and cannot be reduced to singular accounts. The concepts are also meant to describe and organize a complex social reality. The informants should preferably be able to recognize and endorse the descriptions these concepts give of their social reality. There are differences and contradictions in their statements, but such discrepancies are primarily thought to shed light on these concepts and the social reality they describe, not weaken their explanatory potential.

Table 5.3 describes the seven concepts and the codes that are most relevant for each concept.

Table 5.3: Central concepts extracted from the interviews

Concept	Describes	Central Codes
Expert citizens	Persons whose opinions are thought to have more influence on public opinion than other citizens, typically journalists, politicians and academics	Opinion makers Opinion makers network Qualities of the speaker Ideological identity Professional roles Motivation of participation Inter-media effects from SNS
“Chatter”	Comments and arguments about news, pop-culture and civic and political issues thought to be both influential and entertaining	Interactions/situations Characteristics of the debate Commenting on media content Issue focus Inter-media effects to SNS Comment and op ed Qualities of text
Argument culture	Norms and expectations for how differences of opinions and beliefs	Argumentation norms Motivation of argument

	are handled within the networked public	Debating as activity Qualities of the “social media debate” Motivation of participation Personal consequences Moderating as activity
Social media-friendly issues	Issues that are thought to be particularly suitable for discussions within the social network sites	Types of issues Issue focus Issue value The political context Inter-media effects to SNS Interface functions Characteristics of the debate
Social media credibility	Standards for how a person is perceived as authentic, knowledgeable and good within the networked public	Interactive functions Motivation of argument Professional roles Credibility Social norms Curating as activity Qualities of the speaker
Social media wit	A special form of humor and quick-wittedness that characterizes public interactions in social network sites	Characteristics of the debate Interactions/situations Qualities of the speaker Interface functions Credibility Rhetor-audience relations Qualities of text
Opinion flow	How social network sites are thought to impact the flow of information that forms the basis for public life	Inter-media effects from SNS Inter-media development Interactive functions Information spread Information access Source access State of the press State of the public sphere

These concepts, and the story they tell of the informants' experiences and understandings of own networked public, are among the central findings of the interviews. They will be presented and discussed at length in chapters 6-9. The way they are presented here is meant to also provide an insight into how they are derived from the informants' stories.

Some of the concepts have clear parallels to established theoretical concepts, like *expert citizens* (see chapters 1 and 6). This is not meant to describe a general characteristic of media use, but a concrete motif through which the informants sort and make sense of their experiences. The concept of expert citizens is sometimes discussed directly. Some of the interview-questions are intended to make the informants describe who they recognize as expert citizens, "opinion makers", in these arenas and what characterizes these opinion makers. Other times, a concept of expert citizens is implied, but still necessary in order to make sense of the research story.

The concept of *chatter* alludes to the "chattering classes", a derogatory term that has been used to describe (idle) conversationalists among the intellectual and artistic classes, particularly in the UK. Many of the informants explicitly use the term "chattering classes" to describe the social environment they identify with. The associations to "chattering classes", as the term has been used in both academic and popular writings, are thus intentional, both from me and from the informants. The concept points to some characteristics of the discursive practice that would not be easily observed without this conceptual parallel, and it establishes a link to other rhetorical practices and rhetorical arenas. The wording connotes, among other things, class differences, cultural self-awareness, and a socially conditioned distance to the subject matter. All these connotations can shed light on the informants' conceptual understanding of own practice.

The concept of *argument culture* refers to the norms and expectations for how differences of opinions and beliefs are handled within the networked public. Previously, the term argument culture has been used descriptively (Zarefsky, 2014) and normatively (Tannen, 1999). Here it is both, as it is meant to capture the informants' understanding of a social reality that is maintained by norms of rhetorical practice. The concept of argument culture ties together very different parts of the

interviews. A central code in the development of this concept is “argumentation norms” (code 58), but also evaluations of the quality of “the social media debate” (code 51) and how people are “moderating” the debates that take place on their Facebook-pages (code 38). Throughout the interviews, it becomes clear that not only do these rhetorical arenas support particular argument cultures, but also that these argument cultures are key components of the social networks. The concept is key to understand many aspects of the informants’ experiences.

Social media-friendly issues, *social media credibility* and *social media wit* refer to phenomena that are typical for these rhetorical arenas. Here I use the term “social media” as it is more in line with the vocabulary of the informants. The concept of *social media-friendly issues* describes issues and topics that are believed to be particularly well suited for the kind of political talk that dominates in these arenas. These issues are seen as typical for the arenas, as they are always recurring and are much more prominent here than in other arenas. The concept of social media-friendly issues is gathered from the informants’ descriptions of what they typically talk about, how often they talk about it, and with what intensity they talk, or argue, about it.

The concept of *social media credibility* describes what the informants recognize as the typical qualities of a trustworthy speaker within these arenas. This is closely related to the rhetorical concept of *ethos*. This is drawn from very different parts of the interviews. A central code for this concept is “credibility” (code 26), which contains explicit references to what is believed to characterize credible behavior and actors. A richer understanding of this concept includes codes like “motivations of argument” (code 30) and “social norms” (code 30).

The concept of *social media wit* is gathered from the ways the informants talk about the conversational style of the networked publics and what they see as characteristic for skillful and successful speakers. It describes a particular kind of irony and quick-wittedness that follows from a combination of strict limitations of the encounter setting and a network of well-informed and status-oriented people.

Finally, the concept of *opinion flow* captures a theme that is implied in large parts of the interviews. Social network sites are believed to have a significant impact on the flow of information that forms the basis for public life. This includes new

intermediate effects between participatory media and news media, but also the more subtle ways in which the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook are believed to influence perceptions of salience and collective identities. For the informants, social network sites have come to represent new invaluable sources of news as well as arenas to spread their own messages.

These concepts play a central role in the following chapters. Some form the starting points for whole chapters, like the concepts of *argument culture* and *social media-friendly issues*, while others are treated as underlying, but always present, themes, like the concept of *opinion flow*. In the final discussion-chapter, I return to these seven concepts to suggest how they form a coherent impression of the characteristics of these rhetorical arenas.

Ethical and Practical Considerations

Although studies of participatory media represent some particular challenges for research-designs, these are not fundamentally different from what are actualised in other studies of human interaction and people's participation. The basic questions are recurrent in all participatory studies: To what extent is the subject private or sensitive for the actors involved? And in what position are the actors to assert their own interests in the research-situation?

McKee and Porter (2009) suggest four factors that should determine whether or not researchers need explicit consent when approaching a practice: public vs. private, topic sensitivity, degree of interaction, and subject vulnerability. If the practice in question is "low" on all these factors – that is, if it is considered "public" and not particularly sensitivity, and it has high degree of interaction and low subject vulnerability – then we can probably proceed without explicit consent. In this case, that would mean that the informants perceived their activity to be predominantly public, and that the descriptions they make about their own activities, their understanding of the rhetorical arena, and their knowledge and assessments of other actors, were considered by the actors themselves as non-sensitive and non-vulnerable.

It is particularly the first of these factors (public vs. private) that complicates the need for consent in studies of participatory media. What is "public" and what is "private" in online environments is not necessarily easy to determine, and people's

understanding may vary. It is not given that it is the researcher's interpretation that should be the deciding factor.

However, obtaining consent from all actors involved can be a troublesome thing in participatory media research, as we have no way to predetermine who will participate in a conversation. Also, to get consent can have negative impact on the object of study in itself. It can make people self-conscious or insecure, or it can make them avoid the practice all together.

Furthermore, the use of quotations in analysis can in itself be problematic. Although the opinions uttered were not considered sensitive in their original situation, identification of the same utterances in a published study can make the actors-in-question far more vulnerable. When we are dealing with political and civic opinions of individual citizens, we should always assume that we are dealing with potentially sensitive information. Exposure of individual beliefs and opinions has a potential risk of discomfort or even danger for the people involved. As a general rule, then, we should not identify individuals more than necessary when they represent their own interests and opinions.

On the other hand, the ethical challenges of participatory media research should not be exaggerated. Within participatory media it is easy to identify practices that reasonably can be studied without getting explicit consent from the actors. The Norwegian National Committees for Research Ethics (NESH, 2014) state in their "Guidelines on Internet Research" that as a general rule, a researcher is free to use any material gathered from open forums without obtaining consent from the actors involved (NESH, 2014, p. 4ff). Dag Elgesem has argued that political discourse on Twitter could fall in this category (Elgesem, 2015), as the reasonable expectations of privacy here are very low.

Dag Elgesem also proposes that, as a general rule, information should not be used without consent if the people being studied do not have an expectation that the information will be used in research (Elgesem, 2015, p. 23). However, there are very few settings in which people have an active expectation that others might conduct research on them. A more useful rule would be that we should always get consent if the actors being studied have reasonable expectations that their information will not be

used outside of its original context. Often they will have made active choices that limit public access. This is very often the case on Facebook.

Others are more sceptical to what they perceive as effectively banning research on the rhetorical practices that make participatory media an interesting research object. If we are too cautious in our approach to these new rhetorical arenas, we might fail to do much-needed critical studies that in turn can strengthen the discourse ethics of the arenas. Rhetorical studies can for instance produce more complex understandings of the dynamic relationship between the public and the private in these arenas, which in turn should inform the ethical considerations of research designs.

Based on the many uncertainties and debates about the research-ethics of studies of social network sites, the following ethical considerations apply in this study. All the informants are anonymized in the sense that names, age, employer, and city of residence is not mentioned. The descriptions of the informants, their arena of work or political engagement, are correct. By participating in the study, all the informants have given their consent to this practice, and been made aware that this may lead to them being identified, since Norway is a relatively small country and there are a limited number of people that fit the descriptions. Furthermore, I have anonymized individuals that are mentioned in the interviews, preferably by omitting quotes that include names or other personal information. I have not taken this consideration for national politicians and other public figures.

All observations of activity on the informants' Facebook-pages are done by active consent and for a limited time period (three to six months after the interviews). All direct quotes from social network sites are anonymized and translated from Norwegian to English, which should make them very difficult to trace. All Twitter-data that is gathered and used in the analysis in chapter 10 has been treated in accordance with what has become established practice in the social media-research. In addition, all names of individual, user-names of private accounts, and time of publication, have been removed, as this information is not considered necessary for the claims made in the analysis.

Chapter Summary: Interview Data and Rhetorical Analysis

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology for the following study. The main part of the study is the analysis of 34 in-depth interviews with key-informants from the networked public of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook in Norway. The analysis is done through an elaborate three-cycle process of coding designed to identify and analyze patterns in the informants' stories that, when combined, form joint experiences of practice.

I have also presented insights drawn from a pre-study and from the snowball sampling process. These preliminary steps have primarily been used in the design of the interview study. The pre-study includes a total of 36 informants. These informants have a consistent awareness of a network of expert citizens that engage in political talk inaccessible to "ordinary" citizens. The sampling process generated 121 names that key-informants associate with the same networked public. The profession, educational level and social profile of these people confirm the impression of these networks given in both the pre-study and the interview study.

I have also briefly presented the main themes that are identified in the analysis of the interviews. These themes are: 1) The informants' understanding of themselves and their networked public as *expert citizens*; 2) the kind of "chatter" that characterizes these networks; 3) the local *argument culture* that the informants associate with social network sites; 4) *social media-friendly issues*; 5) *social media-credibility*; 6) *social media-wit*; and 7) the way social network sites are believed to influence *opinion flow* in the public. In the following chapters, these themes will be further explored as the analysis of the interviews is presented.

Chapters 6-9 demonstrate how analyses of interview data can give us a richer understanding of rhetorical practices that are difficult to access using traditional text analytical methods. In chapter 10, I turn to a concept oriented criticism to describe aspects of discourse that are suggested in the interviews, but that interview data is not particularly suited to describe. This chapter is thus meant to supplement the main case study of the networked publics of expert citizens. However, it should also be seen as an example of how interviews and text analysis can be combined to provide more comprehensive analyses of complex and fragmented situations. A more detailed

description of the research methodology used in this text analysis is given in chapter 10.

Chapter 6: The Chattering Classes of Social Media

In this chapter, I give an account of what the informants say in the different codes that make up some of the central concepts detected through the analysis. Focusing first on the informants' descriptions of Twitter and then on Facebook, I explore how the informants see themselves as *expert citizens* and how they understand this position in relation to the arena and to the public at large. I structure the account in line with Henrik Paul Bang's characteristics of expert citizens (Bang, 2004). The interviews demonstrate how the informants interviewed about Twitter see themselves as part of an open but socially exclusive networked public that somewhat ironically is referred to as "the tweetocracy". Similarly, the informants interviewed about Facebook see themselves as part of a "Facebook-public" that is distinguished from other networks on Facebook based on both social and political identity and type of interaction.

I also explore what kind of practice the informants associate with these networked publics. The expert citizens see political communication on Twitter as a continuing flow of comments and discussion, or "chatter", about political issues and current events. Similarly, the informants describe how the political debate on Facebook combines elements of face-to-face conversations and the debate and commentary sections in the newspaper. Both arenas are compared to other everyday settings where political talk might occur, like "discussions around the lunch-table", "among friends at a dinner-party" or "at the pub".

Focusing on descriptions of the encounter setting on Twitter, I introduce two theoretical perspectives connected to how the informants make sense of this networked public. The first is theoretical accounts of the arenas of the emerging public sphere in 18th and 19th century Europe. The other is contemporary theories on the rhetorical function of irony and how it is related to formations of community and elitism.

This chapter forms the basis for the analyses presented in chapters 7, 8 and 9. In chapter 7, I explore how the informants associate particular argument cultures with the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook. In chapters 8 and 9, I describe how certain issues are seen as particularly Twitter-friendly. These are issues with high inclination towards personalisation of opinions and beliefs, described as "value

politics”, “culture wars” and “hot button issues”. This way, the political discussion on both Twitter and Facebook insists on a strong link between person and belief, challenging the borders between the public and private domain. These analyses rest on the notion of expert citizens and networked publics established in this chapter.

The analysis presented in this chapter places particular emphasis on the *role of the rhetor* and *topical structures* (cf. page 111) and the interview questions these analytical categories have inspired.

The analysis is primarily built on statements that fit the following codes:

Central codes:	Interviews	Entries
Opinion makers	24	38
Opinion makers network	30	151
Motivation of participation	28	130
Interactions/situations	26	94
Characteristics of the debate	28	106
Commenting on media content	19	42
Qualities of the speaker	24	94
Rhetor-audience relations	29	125

Table 6.1. A selection of the most central codes behind the analysis in chapter 6

The Networked Public of Twitter

The key-informants from Twitter see themselves as part of a networked public of politically engaged expert citizens that use social network sites as an arena to discuss politics and current affairs in close relation to the news agenda. This is the same social phenomenon as the press refer to as “the tweetocracy”. The insiders in this network are people with high access to the arenas of traditional media, like the debate-pages in the newspapers or talk-radio. They see themselves as “the chattering classes”, “talking heads” or “the punditocracy”. Their discussions on Twitter are seemingly more open, casual and egalitarian than debates on other arenas.

The networked public follows the news agenda closely, and especially the part that can be described as political, academic and cultural debate. The Norwegian

electorate is presumed to be divided in two: The ones that are interested in political debates and the ones that are not. This categorisation makes a strong implication regarding social class and cultural capital based on assumed interest in political, academic and cultural debate, placing the informants at the high end of this intellectual class.

The informants attach multiple meanings to this networked public, one being that it represents a form of community that supersedes political differences and professional identities. An informant describes how the expert citizens on Twitter “have gotten to know each other”:

[...] that’s the thing in Norway, it’s such a small country and a lot of those who use Twitter in a certain way, let’s call them journalists, politicians, pundits and an occasional academic, they interact on a regular basis. At least they’ve got the same points of reference. And on Twitter they’ve gotten to know each other.

Twitter informant no. 8

Several of the informants express similar experiences. The social bonds formed within this networked public are believed to improve the quality of the interactions and ultimately strengthen the political debate and the political processes.

A political activist describes how the frequent contact made possible by Twitter affects the offline debate and the public at large:

[...] I don’t think that people would hang out at the same bars, socialise friendly and have lengthy discussions in this way in any other period in Norwegian political history. I would have gone to a party arranged by the left wing periodicals and hung out with my friends, and others would have hung out with their political peers, and then we would occasionally clinch in the newspapers. But now we interact on a daily basis.

It is a chattering class, and it’s a politically involved class, but it’s also ... It’s so consistent and peaceful – and everybody are so sober most of the time – that it creates common understanding and mutual respect. It allows you to test ideas. I feel it’s hard to separate offline from online because I don’t see any meaningful division. I feel that very little politic debate actually takes place offline. Or it does, but it doesn’t seem essential.

Twitter informant no. 1

A clear majority of the informants share the perception of online interaction as means of forming social bonds across traditional political boundaries. It does not, however, replace political engagement offline. The professional and public roles listed by the informants often imply a clear political profile. Several of the informants have even joined political parties as a result of their political engagement online. These informants tend to regard involvement in political organisations and discussions on Twitter as overlapping and integral activities. Especially the younger informants, including the political activist quoted above, feel that the lines between online and offline activity are blurry and unimportant. They still participate in traditional offline activities, like party meetings or rallies, but political discussions – the exchange of meanings and ideas – are not in any way confined to these arenas.

“The Tweetocracy”: Expert Citizens on Twitter

Expert citizens on Twitter are people with high access to traditional public arenas. They are journalists, editors, pundits, politicians, political advisors, academics and the occasional student and blogger. All the respondents fall into these categories and recognize themselves as a part of a particular division of public figures. Their identities correspond with Henrik Paul Bang’s description of *expert citizens*. As described in chapter 1, Bang proposes four typical qualities of expert citizens.

First, expert citizens have “a wide conception of the political as a discursive construct; a full-time, overlapping, project identity reflecting their overall life style” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). Expert citizens are people who typically have a professional role or competences that give them a natural entry point into the political debate. Their role also gives them reasons to believe that they can make a substantial contribution to the debate.

The informants’ descriptions of insider-actors fit this description. With the exception of some journalists, all the informants use terms like “chattering classes”, “talking heads” or “punditocracy” to describe this networked public. Originally used in the UK and America, these concepts prove to be relevant in Norway as well. The “punditocracy” and “talking heads” refer to political commentators with high access to the news media. The concept of “chattering classes” refers to the political active and urban intellectual elites that are highly visible in the public. The terms are generally

used derogatorily. The “punditocracy” have been criticised for disrupting democratic deliberation. The “chattering classes” are normally thought to be elitist and engaged in idle, useless “chatter”.

Several of the participants also use the term “cultural elite”, which in Norway has been frequently used by the right wing to describe the intellectual class of urban and cultural conversant people, often with a negative pretence as left-leaning and out of touch with the common man. Most of the informants hold degrees in journalism, law, economics or social sciences and should be well acquainted with these concepts and what they imply. Still, the informants tend to use them neutrally and descriptive, like this blogger:

It's centred on people of the cultural elite who interact with each other more then they interact with others. A lot of journalists. The so-called punditocracy interacts more with each other than with people on the outside. That's kind of funny. But it's partially because you share interests and can talk about the same topics. So I wouldn't say it's an intended exclusion. Birds of a feather flock together.

Twitter informant no. 2

This blogger's description is typical. The informants recognize that there are some implicit rules for who is included among the expert citizens on Twitter, and who is not, without describing it as something inherently negative. The clearest exception to this social demarcation is the journalists. Even though they recognize their membership in the punditocracy, they are usually quick to emphasise that they also interact with actors outside of this category, particularly their readers. However, they tend to describe themselves as an exception, indicating that they still both recognize and uphold the category. An editor in a major publishing house emphasises the actors' access to other public arenas:

I think it's surprisingly much the same talking heads that already have a media platform. In that way, Twitter is dramatically different from both Facebook and the debate pages in the online newspapers. These have opened up a democratic space, or at least a public space, that didn't exist before, where ordinary people can speak in public. But Twitter consists – to a surprisingly high degree – of people who otherwise would be in, or at least near, the writing public. That doesn't mean that the others aren't present. But the ones leading the conversation are pretty much the same people who have always inhabited the public. *Twitter informant no. 9*

Again, the impression is that “the tweetocracy” consists of people that have some kind of position in the general public. This leads to the second typical quality of expert citizen. According to Bang, expert citizens have access to and influence within “elite networks” (Bang, 2004). These are formal and informal networks of people with close connection to political processes and mass media.

Access to the rhetorical arenas of traditional media and familiarity with media gatekeepers clearly indicate that the informants are integrated in such networks. The informants possess the *vocabulary* – indicated by familiarity with news frames and the advocacy frames of political institutions – the *expert knowledge* – the necessary conjuncturally-specific knowledge to manoeuvre strategically – and the particular *social skills* – indicated by their personal relations to specific gatekeepers – that are required to maintain credibility in these expert networks.

Third, Bang notes that typical expert citizens usually have a style of negotiation and dialogue rather than antagonism and opposition (Bang, 2004, p. 28). This is, as I will return to in chapter 7, a key feature of the particular *argument culture* that characterizes this networked public. The informants often describe debates within these networks as a way to test and explore arguments, and they emphasize how they prefer to interact with people with different social and political backgrounds.

The fourth and last quality Bang mentions is that expert citizens have “a view of themselves as an autonomous part of the system, rather than as identical with it or external and oppositional to it” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). Expert citizens are able to promote their own opinions and beliefs, as well as refute opposing views. How this affects rhetorical practice, I will return to at length in chapter 8 and 9. For now, it should be noted that the frequent references to these actors as “opinion-makers”, or “professional opinionators”, fit into the pattern Bang finds characteristic of expert citizens.

“Chatter” as Political Communication

The other frequent description of the networked public of Twitter is based on the sort of communication they are engaged in. This is described as “chatter”: a continuous flow of comments and discussion on current events that runs parallel to the processes of collective decision-making in political institutions and the media.

A political activist describes this form of running political commentary as the hallmark of the “chattering classes”:

Q: How would you describe this segment?

It’s sort of the chattering classes. People who write chronicles, comment each other’s things, have an opinion about what’s in the newspapers, and listens to Political Quarter and write about what they think about the guests. It’s in the political class in Oslo, and in NGOs and those sorts of things. And they use it a lot. But that’s one segment, and it’s not exactly the masses.

Twitter informant no. 1

Some Twitter-users, especially academics or others who are considered experts in their fields, can tweet only occasionally and still be recognised as insiders and relevant contributors in the network. But the norm is that the members of “the tweetocracy” are highly active. Almost everybody whose names are mentioned in the sampling process have posted thousands or tens of thousands of tweets.

The informants also attach multiple meanings to what sort of communicative practice they participate in. The “continuous conversation” that is carried on about the political situation and the media agenda has a certain tone and style that is unique for this network. An editor, who is widely recognized as a central actor in the network, describes this conversation:

Easiness is a good word for it. Regarding your question of whether there are actual good debates on Twitter. That’s one thing that attracts me, the easiness. It’s a feeling that Twitter is the people on the backbench on a political meeting. We’re definitely present and got our own opinions, but we crack jokes about what’s going on at the podium. That doesn’t mean we’re not there, or that we don’t take the discussion seriously. On the contrary! It’s like the guy on Saturday Night Live, Jon Stewart, said: “We’re the ones throwing paper balls on the speakers”. Twitter is like that.

Q: You’re present, but still ...

Present, but always a little “tongue in cheec”

Q: You keep an ironic distance?

Yes. Yes.

Twitter informant no. 9

This informant’s description of “the people on the backbench talking and cracking jokes” is a reframing of the elitist “chatter”. While the “punditocracy” and “chattering classes” are often believed to take themselves too seriously, the “tweetocracy” claim

that they do not. This is perhaps the reason why the respondents identify themselves as part of an elitist “chattering” class without feeling the need to reply to the critical perceptions the term implies. Political debates on Twitter are serious, but not *that* serious.

The metaphor the respondents most frequently use to describe the communicative situation of Twitter is “pub-talk” or “a discussion at a party”. This does not exclude strong discursive norms or serious debate (see chapter 7), but it tells us something important about what sort of public the informants see themselves as part of. A former journalist and political commentator makes this analogy very clear:

If I may use a metaphor that I often use when I hold lectures on social media use, it’s that Twitter is like a good party. You start with some differences in opinions, references to articles, and stuff like that. Then you start fighting. And then you make friends again. Often out on the kitchen, on direct tweet. And then you go to bed with the one you really disliked the most, to stretch the analogy a little too far.

Twitter informant no. 13

This informant extends the analogy between Twitter and “a good party” to the different stages of debate. This way, she implies that there are similarities in motivation and composition between Twitter-debates and the type of friendly, but heated, discussions people usually engage in at a party. A young Member of Parliament makes a similar analogy:

Q: You called it a “chatter tool”. What do you mean by “chatter”?

The tone is more like when you’re talking at social gathering or at a party. It’s a lot more casual, because it’s got such strong limitations on length and text.

Twitter informant no. 14

This informant makes it very clear that he regards Twitter as a public domain. “Casual” does not imply that something is unofficial or “off the record”. Rather, Twitter provides the opportunity for the informants to act publically and discuss serious issues in an apparently effortless and informal way.

Twitter as the Coffeehouse of the 21st Century

When the informants use phrases like “the chattering classes” and compare Twitter-debates and “pub-talk”, associations can be made between their descriptions of Twitter

and descriptions of British coffeehouses, French *salons* and German *Tischgesellschaften* of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Public sphere theorists Jürgen Habermas (Habermas, 2015) and Richard Sennett (Sennett, 1992) have described these as the foremost discursive arenas of the developing bourgeois public sphere. Based on their educations and occupations, the informants can be assumed to be at least remotely familiar with this historical phenomenon. Thus, when they repeatedly make this analogy, they suggest something about how they perceive their own roles in the public sphere.

According to Habermas, these discursive arenas “may have differed in the size and composition of their publics, the style of their proceedings, the climate of their debates, and their topical orientations”, but “they all organized discussion among people that tended to be ongoing; hence they had a number of institutional criteria in common” (Habermas, 2015, p. 36).

Habermas identifies three such institutional criteria: First, these arenas should preserve a kind of interaction setting that “disregarded status altogether” (Habermas, 2015, p. 36). These arenas did not presuppose equality of status, but they represented the institutionalization of the idea that differences in social status should not have any significance for the interaction setting. Second, the attention of the crowd should be directed at issues of common concern: “... discussion within such a public presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned” (Habermas, 2015, p. 36). Third, these arenas should have a level of inclusivity, suggesting that ordinary people could access them as readers, listeners or spectators. This is not say that these arenas actually included all, or even were practically available to all, but rather that it could take up the perspectives of ordinary citizens. “Wherever the public established itself institutionally as a stable group of discussants”, Habermas notes, “it did not equate itself with the public but at most claimed to act as its mouthpiece, in its name, perhaps even as its educator – the new form of bourgeois representation” (Habermas, 2015, p. 36).

According to Sennett, the coffeehouses were a form of fiction that allowed men to gain information and knowledge through talk, regardless of the social ranks of the streets (Sennett, 1992, p. 80ff). The situation produced its own speech patterns,

systemized as the “art of conversation”, that defied the symbols of rank, origins and taste. The “art of conversation” that was allowed to flourish in these arenas functioned as a suspension of rank, insofar as everybody could participate – at least in theory. In the coffeehouse, the gentleman who had decided to sit down would be a subject of “the free, unbidden talk of his social inferior” (Sennett, 1992, p. 82). The social roles of the street did still exist in the coffeehouse, but the conversation went on as if they did not.

The same social fiction can be said to exist at the pub and at a dinner party, which is what the informants draw attention to when using this metaphor. The discussion at a party is seemingly open and egalitarian. It differs from a political debate, not because the participants are more likely to change their initial perspectives, but because the conversation is carried out *as if they were*. In the same way, egalitarianism is not a result of people being ascribed the same importance, but that the conversation is carried out as if they were. An actor must grasp this social fiction to be recognized as a competent participant.

In chapter 8, I describe in detail how unwillingness to embrace this social fiction creates tensions between this networked public and most politicians. While some politicians obviously understand the *rhetorical decorum* (cf. page 106) of the interaction setting, most politicians do not. This is not so much a question of the politicians’ public roles, whether they are in office or not, or on a national or local level, as their rhetorical and social practice. Twitter-users who do not engage in seemingly open agenda-less discussions, or “chatter”, or who do not tweet frequently enough, may have a hard time being recognized as a competent and relevant actor in the arena.

Twitter-wit: Humour and Irony as Social Boundary Work

All the informants, except one blogger, mention ironic humour as a characteristic of the networked public of Twitter. The belief is that Twitter is particularly prone to ironic humour and ironic utterances. The informants also tend to display a certain emotional distance to political and civic issues that can best be described as an ironic attitude.

From a rhetorical perspective, irony is usually approached as a *trope*. A common definition is gathered from Quintilian: to be ironic is to say what is contrary to what is meant (*Institutio Oratoria* IX:ii: 44). However, this definition does not reveal much about the rhetorical effect of irony and how it is generated in situations. Modern theorists have therefore tried to provide a more firm definition of irony and get a better grasp of the effects it generates between the ironic speaker and the audience.

Here I draw on some of the most central aspect of these theories in order to explain the perceptions of irony expressed in the interviews. There are two types of irony that are characteristic of networked publics: *ironic statements* and *ironic attitude*. Both these types of irony influence the expert citizens' sense of *community* and *elitist* attitudes.

The first type is the use of irony as a rhetorical trope in speech or writing. This can be observed as *ironic statements*, often in the form of caustic remarks or sarcastic comments through a rhetorical trope. It is implied that not everybody is able to identify this type of irony, and thus it can function as a way to identify, strengthen or build community between the rhetor and the intended audience.

This type of irony is here understood in line with Wayne C. Booth's description of *stable irony* (Booth, 1975). The stable irony is the intended and often easily detectable irony that once it is discovered, it is set in a "stable" reading. In order to reach such a stable reading, readers or audience members rely on their understanding of genre and their picture of the author (Booth, 1975, p. 175).

Describing stable irony, Booth also identifies different rhetorical functions of irony. Irony brings the ironist and the reader closer together through a dialectic process of reconstruction of meaning. It establishes a "secret communion" between author and reader (Booth, 1961, p. 300ff), which necessarily assumes that there are only some people who "get" the irony. This way, it also implies a claim to superiority. The more ironies we discover in a work, the cleverer we consider the author and ourselves for detecting them (Booth, 1975, p. 42).

Booth's analytical position identifies with the reader. However, as networked publics invite us to approach the speaker-audience relation more in terms of

conversation partners than as “authors” and “readers”, we might also add to this list of advantages the sense of superiority and cleverness the ironic speaker feels when he spreads his attitude for the “right” people to detect.

The second type of irony that is characteristic of networked publics is an attitude that allows the speaker to be distant and different. This is observable as *ironic attitude*. As a rhetorical figure, ironic attitude too has the potential to form community, through bonding over a shared attitude towards politics and the political community. This type of irony I understand in line with what is often described as “Socratic irony”. Claire Colebrook posits that a modern conception of Socratic irony is tied to the distinction between (eternal) truths and contingent definitions (Colebrook, 2004). It suggests that there are more fundamental and important truths behind the ideas and concepts we discuss in everyday life, and thus it allows the ironist to distance himself from rhetorical confrontations, as he “knows” that the issue and the situation are not really that serious. The ironic subject does not partake in the debate as much as observe and comment on it, always from a privileged position of knowing that it is all just a battle for temporary truths and hegemony. The ironic subject does not just take part in practices and norms of the rhetorical arena, but will also point to them, reflect on them and ask whether they are valid. As Coolebrook points out: “Irony is provocative, disruptive, but also hierarchical – setting itself above everyday life and opinion” (Colebrook, 2004, p. 91).

The informants’ descriptions of ironic statements are most often associated with the particular style of humour and wit found on Twitter. A blogger describes how she sees this as characteristic of the expert citizens:

It’s a very ironic and sarcastic community. Because there are so many literary people, then it ... There’s a lot of people with “a good pen” and they’ve got a lot of great one-liners. That should do it. I like following people who are funny and who’s got some “edge”. And there are a lot of them here.

Twitter informant no. 2

This informant’s impression of the networked public of Twitter as an “ironic and sarcastic community”, and that actors should preferably be “edgy”, fits into a recurring narrative in which both the people and the topics of this networked public are more

daring and more controversial than what they understand as mainstream humour. Particularly the younger informants describe this as an arena facilitating humour that is not mainstream or politically correct. Some describe the humour of the networked public as “raw”, “sarcastic” and even “inappropriate”, all with a positive pretext.

An example of the type of “raw” and “daring” humour the informants refer to can be gathered from descriptions of jokes about race. Three informants use the term “negro-humour”, referring to jokes based on racial stereotypes. They are quick to point out that they do not agree with the stereotypes in these jokes, and that they only find them funny as a kind of “guilty pleasure”. Their reasoning might suggest that they believe themselves to be so far from intolerant that it is OK for them to laugh at stereotypes, or simply that they find these jokes forbidden and taboo. In both cases the humorous potential is created by a form of irony.

A young political activist describes how humour on Twitter is used to push the limits for “political correctness”:

Q: Are there things you can communicate through humour that you can't say in any other way?

You can sort of imply things outside of what is socially accepted. It's a bit *carte blanche* in humour. If you're funny, you can say things that would never be accepted if it was said serious, because everybody see what's funny about it. Even if it sometimes collides with our own wishes for how the world should be, or how the debate should be, we laugh when something's funny. We laugh at negro-jokes – even if we're ashamed of it – and of dirty words and stuff like that. If it's funny, it's funny. Even if it is not political correct. And obviously, you can say thing with humour, or imply things, that would kill your career if you said and meant it seriously.

Twitter informant no. 16

Informants that have been in central political positions are more concerned with how irony might lead to misunderstandings and exclude certain audience groups. This concern is expressed by a former national politician:

... and there are some pitfalls with these discussions. I can get a bit eager, perhaps. And it can be difficult to pick up on irony, and to understand jokes. So you have to be careful. I've had a couple of incidents that ended badly, because people misunderstood what I was saying.

Twitter informant no. 11

Informants that express concerns about misunderstandings also believe that people might deliberately misinterpret and spread false version of their messages. The informants who embrace the ironic potential of Twitter, on the other hand, seem unaffected by this risk. For them, the “secret communion” that irony facilitates – which also implies excluding people who do not “get” their ironic tone – seems to be a benefit.

Among the many words the informants use to describe the encounter setting of Twitter, they also describe it as “easy”, “unpretentious”, “relaxed” and “quick-witted”. In relation to the concept of “chatter”, I suggested that political debates on Twitter are seen as serious, but not too serious. A reason for this might be that many of the expert citizens insist on general ironic attitude towards political and civic debates. This attitude is expressed in many different ways and it is difficult to estimate how many informants show such an ironic attitude. Approximately half the informants recognize it, while three or four of the informants seem to believe this an absolute characteristic of the networked public.

The editor who previously described the expert citizens on Twitter as “always a little tongue in cheek” and as “the ones throwing paper balls on the speakers”, is the informant who most directly identify the “easiness” of this networked public as a form of irony. He is clearly familiar with literary theory and interprets this network in light of literary concepts. Here he discusses the relation between Twitter, irony and the aphorism:

[...] My favourite aphorism is Anatole France’s “The law forbids both poor and rich to sleep under the bridges in Paris”.¹¹ It’s really a tweet from 150 years ago. It’s the perfect tweet. Obviously, in a serious discussion about the problem with poverty in Paris, it’s totally unimportant. Yet, it discloses the whole debate. And that kind of messages is constantly spread on Twitter. Of course not as subtle and elegant, but still

...

Twitter informant no. 9

¹¹ The informant quotes this passage from memory. The original quote is: “The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread”

In a “serious discussion about the problem”, the informant notes, the witty, insightful comments that are typical for Twitter are “totally unimportant”. That is to say, the expert citizens of Twitter are not believed to have – neither do they wish to have – any kind of direct influence on processes of collective decision-making. This is in line with the theory suggesting that the ironic subject does not partake in the debate as much as observe and comment on it. The potential this informant sees in the ironist’s statements is that it “discloses the whole debate”.

A non-fictional writer and former political advisor describes the attitude of the political debate on Twitter:

It is not directed at political parties. Not in any way. Rather, it ridicules the political routines and the political system, or “we have heard this before”. It’s way more general than party politics.
Twitter informant no. 13

According to this informant, the expert citizens distance themselves from the political routines and the political system by ridiculing it. They assume that they “have heard this before”. Therefore, they can rise above it and make fun of how predictable and disingenuous it is. This informant’s understanding of his own practice is in line with what Hutcheon calls the “height metaphor” of irony (Hutcheon, 1994). The ironical attitude is based on a firm belief that they both rise above the political debate and go deeper in the issues.

Community and Elitism through Irony

The reoccurring ironic discourse the informants describe function as a structural *topos* in this arena (cf. page 111). Approaching them as *topical structures* of the rhetorical arena draws attention to how ironic statements and ironic attitudes influence discursive communities beyond particular situations. Particularly relevant for this networked public is the influence of ironic speech on *community* and *elitism*.

Most theories of irony recognize that ironic statements have an extraordinary ability to create a sense of community and intimacy between the ironist and those who “get” the irony of the message. Booth emphasizes the building of “amiable communities” as an important aspect of stable ironies. “Often the predominant

emotion when reading stable ironies”, Booth posits, “is that of joining, of finding and communing with kindred spirits” (Booth, 1975, p. 28). Booth’s primary concern is reading, but other theorists describe the same functions in relation to more long-term ideological, social, or even political communities. Colebrook posits that irony “foregrounds the social, conventional and political aspects of language: that language is not just a logical system but relies on assumed norms and values” (Colebrook, 2004, p. 12). Ross Chambers suggests that irony is a matter of “ideological complicity – an agreement based on shared understandings of “how the world is”” (Chambers, 1990, p. 19). In her discussion of discursive communities and irony, Hutcheon comments on Chambers and suggest that in today’s world, such “shared understandings of how the world is” are perhaps more likely to align themselves along axes of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual choice, class, or religion, than follow national or cultural divides (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 96). It these theories, it is suggested that the community shaped by ironic discourse includes some, but not all, of the people that make up an audience, making irony an effective social mechanism of constructions of in-groups and out-groups. Hutcheon also reminds us that ironic discourse will not only shape and alter people’s different senses of community, but that it is made possible by the “different worlds” to which each of us belongs.

Hutcheon’s clarification is in line with both structuration theory and rhetorical theory, which assume that rhetorical messages in some way must resonate with the audience’s prior knowledge and beliefs. In *The new rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca point out that that irony is more easily understood in well-defined or closed groups whose members share a “social environment” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991, p. 208). Booth also points out that “(e)very reader will have greatest difficulty detecting irony that mocks his own beliefs or characteristics” (Booth, 1975, p. 81). This also leads Hutcheon to the conclusion that “*it is discursive communities that are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive – not ironies*” (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 92, italics in original). It is communities that share knowledge and experiences that make them able to read the message in the same way and to decide on the existence, interpretation and appropriateness of irony.

The interviews suggest that both ironic humour and an ironic attitude towards the political debate are important components of this networked public on Twitter. Although they have not reflected on it, ironic attitude is a way for the expert citizens on Twitter to differentiate themselves from both the political system and the media elites on one hand and ordinary citizens on the other.

In addition to recognizing that irony has the ability to shape and strengthen a sense of community between the ironist and audience members, theories of irony suggest how these communities often will be characterized by a form of elitism. Colebrook describes how, in classic rhetoric, irony was defined as an art in keeping with an urbane and elevated personality and associated with the classes of political power. About the history of irony's elitism Colebrook writes: "As a figure or extended mode of thought irony allows the speaker to remain "above" what he says, allowing those members of his audience who share his urbanity to perceive the true sense of what it really means" (Colebrook, 2004, p. 14f).

This intrinsic elitism is also present in modern understandings of irony. Northrop Frye describes irony as an elitist act of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion (Frye, 1970, p. 61ff). Booth maintains that irony always implies victims. These are the ones who are not included in the "amiable communities" that irony creates (Booth, 1975, p. 28). Hutcheon too recognizes that irony, to the extent it creates its community, also implies a hierarchy between those who "get" the irony and those who do not (Hutcheon, 1994, p. 90). For the first group, ironic statements and ironic attitudes confirm their position as the urban, elevated elite in contrast to the latter group.

For the informants, irony and ironic humour is seen be a central part of what differentiates expert citizens from both political- and media-professionals and ordinary citizens on Twitter. Even though many "ordinary citizens" might perfectly well understand and accept the irony, the ironic attitude still assumes that the rhetor and the "amiable community" share some knowledge and an approach to politics that elevates them above the rest. As the quotes above suggest, the informants who are keen to describe this networked public as ironic also tend to describe the insiders in this network as people who reveal the insincerity of the political system.

The Networked Public of Facebook

In the rest of the chapter, I turn to descriptions of the networked publics, the expert citizens and the encounter settings of Facebook. In general, the key-informants from Facebook are less unified in their descriptions of the networked public. Some of the informants use terms like “the Facebook-public” or “the Facebook-debate” to describe the network they identify with. Most of the informants also describe smaller networks formed around political issues or interests. The most prominent of these networks is what the informants know as “Facebook-right”. This is described as a kind of loosely structured “discussion group” consisting of primarily right wing academics, journalists, economists and lawyers in Norway.

The informants’ descriptions of “Facebook-right” demonstrate how blurred and unstable these networks tend to be. On one hand, all the informants are clearly familiar with the phenomenon. They have a clear sense of who the central actors are, what kind of issues they are interested in and how long they have maintained the connections and “friendships” that make up the network. Some informants state that they are, or have been, “members” of the network, and they have even been to parties thrown for “Facebook right” members. On the other hand, none of the informants will fully endorse the media’s description of a well-organized and influential political network. Some of the informants talk about this network as something that once was real, but has gradually faded away. Others see it as a result of the newspaper pundits’ need to exaggerate and add motives to all relationships that are likely to have an impact on political processes.

A newspaper columnist describes this network as a social reality, but also implies that the staging of this network is exaggerated:

Q: You laughed when you mentioned “Facebook-right” earlier. Is that a label you think makes sense?

It’s both a good term and a very silly term. It depends ... It’s a lot of strange things surrounding it. Many of those who are supposed to be members of this group are among the most eager critics of the term. They are the first to tell you that it doesn’t exist. But that’s just nonsense. For of course it makes sense, of course it has existed. But it has become less prominent than it used to be. When I became very active on Facebook, I thought it was very prominent.

Facebook informant no. 12

The informants' descriptions of different particular networks on Facebook reflect the fact that these are “non-existing” beyond the actors' need to rationalize and categorize their observations. However, the informants also describe a larger networked public that is similar to “the tweetocracy”. The insider-actors are described as “the opinion-elite”, “the punditocracy”, “opinion-makers” and “the Facebook prominence”. Like “the tweetocracy”, this segment of Facebook-users is believed to have access to traditional media. They are journalists, editors, lawyers, and academics, and very often they are familiar names for people who read the debate-sections in the newspaper or listen to news-centred talk-radio shows.

This “opinion-elite” uses Facebook primarily as an arena for political debate and discussion. The informants describe these discussions as conversational and exploratory, but with a sense of urgency and seriousness. Like “the tweetocracy”, this networked public is oriented towards the political and civic issues that dominate the news agenda. However, the Facebook-interviewees also frequently distance themselves from the “tweetocracy”. They describe Twitter as “elitist”, “superficial” and “ironic”. When comparing the two networks, they emphasize how Facebook can facilitate more genuinely exploratory and challenging debates. A writer and political commentator presents this latter point:

I'm on Twitter as well, but I rarely use it. And the “tweetocracy” is something else. It's more journalists and political figures gaining followers and strengthening their brand. In my experience, it is a somewhat dumbfounded genre. Twitter is for the elites and their followers. It's full of harassment and ridicule. So I'm no fan of Twitter as a forum. You don't get any ... it's not an arena for the deeper arguments, or even for a continuous and coherent debate.

Facebook informant no. 13

By describing Twitter as an arena for strategic communication – an arena for personalities in media and politics to “gain followers” and “strengthening their brand” – this informant accentuates what he thinks characterizes the networked public of Facebook. Compared to Twitter, Facebook is a network that engages in deeper and more consistent reasoning and debate.

The “Facebook-public” as Expert Citizens

The informants interviewed about Facebook are not as consistent when describing their own roles and the roles of expert citizens. This might be because “the tweetocracy” has gotten more attention in the news media, which has helped create a common identity and a common narrative. Beyond that, the key-informants from Facebook clearly see themselves as an autonomous segment of expert citizens in a way that is very similar to “the tweetocracy”. They use terms like “opinion-makers”, “opinion-elites”, “talking heads” and “chattering classes” to describe the crowd they usually interact with. Most of these informants hold university degrees and they often have experience either from the media or from political organisations. However, there are some differences between descriptions of “the tweetocracy” and “the Facebook-public” in terms of what Bang calls “their overall life style” (Bang, 2004, p. 28). While “the tweetocracy” is often described as a cultural elite, the informants’ impressions of the “Facebook-public” are less class-sensitive and more oriented towards motivations. Tweeting is often described as an elite activity. Facebook is considered an activity that everyone is engaged in, but to different degrees and with different motivations.

On one hand, the informants have a very clear idea of where to place each other in the ideological landscape, and they assume that the “project identity” they read into these ideological positions are central motivations. On the other hand, many of the actors that informants mention, are approached not in terms of what Bang calls “a full-time, overlapping, project identity”, but rather their “wide conception of the political as a discursive construct” (Bang, 2004, p. 28).

A researcher gives the following description of what she believes characterises expert citizens on Facebook:

My impression is that it’s a limited circle. But it’s less limited than if I were to only interact with people I know personally. I guess it is dominated by some very strong opinion-makers, who have more or less sound arguments. Often their case is not so strong, but they still have a lot of opinions, whether it’s on immigration policy, tax cuts, or whatever.

[...] But, all in all, it’s an opinion-elite. It’s like the punditocracy, who knows a lot about the world, but doesn’t necessarily produce a lot of new insights. Still, they always offer their analysis.

Facebook informant no. 10

This researcher emphasizes the expert citizens' willingness to share their opinions on issues that are seen as salient as a defining feature of this "opinion-elite".

It is also clear that the informants see Facebook-usage as a form of political engagement. This is confirmed by their descriptions of own practice. An informant with long term experience from numerous political organizations gives a slightly exaggerated, but honest, description of his own project identity:

[...] Actually, I use big words when I describe the purpose of Facebook-debates. It's to pierce through political dilemmas, so that the foundation for political decisions can be as good as possible. So I believe the Facebook-debate is very important, for a lot of people. That's where you can try arguments on for size, and that's where you learn about other arguments. So the purpose of Facebook-debates is ... to put it bluntly, it is to save the world. There's a lot of silliness on Facebook as well. But in its essence, it is a lot of truth searching. That's why I spend so much time on Facebook. It's to save the world. Save Norway. Save Israel. Save reason.

Facebook informant no. 13

Clearly, this informant sees discussions on Facebook as a form of political engagement and makes a strong connection between Facebook and his own project identity. His motivation – "to save the world", "save reason" – gives us an idea of what kind of political significance he ascribes to this networked public. The motivation is not to influence particular processes of collective decision-making, but to make a lasting impression on the value base of the political community. "The political" is clearly seen as a discursive construct, and, as a consequence, exploring and testing arguments is seen as a form of political engagement.

Second, the informants may have both access to, and influence in, "elite networks" (Bang, 2004). All the informants master the *vocabulary* of the elite networks, both in terms of political language and news frames. They also display *expert knowledge* about the different issues being discussed and the different roles and relations that form different networked publics. Although it is difficult to make any direct comparisons, the key-informants from Facebook seem to have even more specific knowledge about different gatekeepers and political figures than those of Twitter. As the informants frequently interact with these gatekeepers, they clearly also possess the necessary *social skills* to gain respect and recognition in elite networks.

A researcher reflects on the elitist network on Facebook and describes how she feels that this rhetorical arena emphasizes existing differences in vocabulary and social skills:

Q: Is it the domain of the elites?

Yes. It's a paradox, but I believe it is. It makes clear to the elites how difficult it is for them to interact with the non-elites and vica versa. Everybody promotes that big mutual conversation, from both sides. But then we only get our prejudices confirmed. Prejudices we would like to be without. "They are completely without ability to think principally. They just can't. They just want to argue". That's what I often think about the non-elites.

Facebook informant no. 10

All the informants agree that this rhetorical arena has a tendency to confirm and reinforce existing social structures by strengthening elite networks. The researcher sees this as a direct consequence of Facebook's ability to draw attention to differences in vocabulary, expert knowledge and social skills between expert citizens and non-expert citizens. In her experience, the more people interact across social divides, the more apparent the differences become.

A university professor expresses how he sees Facebook as an arena that strengthens the relevance of elite networks:

I think that a main characteristic of Facebook is that it strengthens the elites that already are hugely influential in the broader public.

Facebook informant no. 1

It is a common belief among the informants that Facebook enforces already existing elitist structures by strengthening expert citizens' access to public input and attention. Some informants, however, resist this idea. An informant with years of experience from different political organisations claims that "the real elite in Norway" is not on Facebook. Although he expresses great faith in the rhetorical potential of this arena, he also sees it as an arena of "the powerless":

[...] It shows that social media today is somehow the medium of the powerless. It's not where the party leaders, the chief editors, or the leaders of NRK discuss things. So the real elite, including the university crowd and the researchers, they're not on Facebook. That's not where they get input and form consensus. Today, Facebook is

not a powerful arena. It's where the powerless and the intellectuals discuss freely. And the quality of discussion is high on many of the threads, and there are intellectually strong conclusions. But there's a long way to real impact in society. Because that's dominated by elites who have invested in positions and attitudes, budgets, and ...
Facebook informant no. 13

This informant gives an account of what kind of elite networks Facebook makes available for expert citizens, and what kind of networks are still unavailable. The networks that have “real impact in society” are separated from ordinary citizens in more ways than vocabulary, knowledge and social skills. The elites this informant refers to have designated decision-making power and positions that they will not give up. Still, this description of Facebook as the arena “where the powerless and the intellectuals discuss freely” is compatible with Bang's definition of expert citizens. Their potential power and influence is rhetorical – not judicial or financial. This corresponds to the understanding of expert citizens as having a wide conception of the political as a discursive construct. The elite networks that they have access to are not the top elites, but networks that have the power to inform and influence public opinion. These are made up of media-gatekeepers, outspoken politicians and influential academics.

The networked publics of Facebook and Twitter also have much in common when it comes to the “style” of debate. The informants describe this as a network that is devoted to exploring and testing different sides of an issue. Facebook is believed to support more differentiated understandings of the audience in argumentative settings, of what kind of risk the participants are willing to take and of the norms that govern their behaviour. I will return to this at length in the next chapter (chapter 7).

Finally, the key-informants from Facebook see themselves as an autonomous part of the system that shapes political opinions and influences processes of collective decision-making. One way they do this is by viewing themselves as a source of “counter voices” and “alternative opinions”. The arenas and the actors of traditional media are believed to be predictable, limited and mutually reinforcing. On Facebook, on the other hand, opinions are quickly exposed and refuted, as a result of the particular kind of personalised and explorative debate that this encounter setting encourages (also see chapter 8).

The expert citizens' view of themselves as an autonomous part of the political system is supported by the belief that they support a rhetorical arena that can produce a lot of new, and previously undetected, positions. Contradictory to many of the descriptions of Facebook as an encounter setting that supports debates among expert citizens, an editor in a major national newspaper explains how he uses Facebook as a source of actors and opinions that "are far from the salons and academia and those spheres":

At least in terms of access – to different voices, different perspectives, different political things, and different forms of disagreements – then this new tool is extremely valuable. There's a danger that it becomes closed off, that you'll only find the people who are active there. But I have found a lot of things there – found a lot of strange things there – popular and down-to-earth things that are far from the salons and academia and those spheres, all through social media.

Facebook informant no. 5

For this editor, Facebook represents a new way to identify vernacular voices and opinions. These are not necessarily from expert citizens, but the informants' sense of autonomy in the system is drawn from the same ability to form and express opinions outside of the established channels of political communication.

The differences between the "elitist" opinions of expert citizens and the vernacular expressions of ordinary citizens, and how Twitter and Facebook realize and draw attention to these differences, is a recurring topic in the informants' comparisons between the two networks. A former politician and well-known public figure makes a comparison between Twitter and Facebook:

It's a bit more elitist on Twitter than on Facebook.

Q: What do you mean by "elitist"?

It's more decision-makers on Twitter. And it's more ordinary people on Facebook than on Twitter, because Facebook gives you a whole other way to involve your everyday life in social media, which I don't do at all – pictures of your aunt and your kids, and those sorts of things. Twitter doesn't really have those options at all. On Facebook, you can create your own personal universe and show your personal photos, and things like that. And that probably suits a lot of ordinary people. But that's not how Twitter is used. At least not among the people I follow.

Twitter informant no. 11

On Facebook, you can “involve your everyday life” and “create your own personal universe and show photos and things like that”. This is why “ordinary people” are believed to prefer Facebook. This informant thus sees a connection between the differences between expert citizens and ordinary citizens and the differences between Twitter and Facebook that are evident for most of the informants.

The Encounter Setting of Facebook

The informants’ descriptions of the interaction forms of Facebook are more varied and less coherent than those of Twitter. Still, it is possible to identify some characteristic features of the practices that this network is formed around. First of all, the informants tend to describe the encounter setting of Facebook as a type of conversation or “talk”. The informants experience it as “conversational”, or as “dynamic” and “immediate”, and that it has a very “high tempo”. Some informants also describe how Facebook as a medium has “oral” qualities.

Facebook-debates are also compared to everyday face-to-face encounters, like “discussions around the lunch-table”, “among friends at a dinner-party” or “at the pub”. This is very similar to how the informants talk about the informal encounter setting of Twitter. A researcher gives an example:

Facebook is an expansion of a public that otherwise exists in the lunch-room, or at ... I almost said at the pub, but that’s not too often ... But out on the town somewhere, or in the newspapers.

Facebook informant no. 10

The networked public is compared to local and everyday arenas of public life, like the lunch table at a workplace or the pub. These types of encounter settings “disregard status” and have the same type of inclusive and interest-free attitude that has previously been described as an ideal of the discursive arenas of the early bourgeois public (Habermas, 2015). Later in the interview, this informant also describes how Facebook facilitates conversations between ordinary citizens and elite networks, while subtly displaying, and thus enforcing, social differences between the two groups. This way, the egalitarian interaction form of Facebook is only apparent.

Three of the informants also suggest that adversarial argumentation on Facebook can be compared to “schoolyard fights”. This is, naturally, a very different social setting, but it makes similar assumptions about how this networked public maintains a display of urgency and political relevance, while also being a way for the actors to test and reaffirm social relations and social hierarchies.

More commonly, the informants use references and comparisons to both face-to-face conversations and newspaper debates. As a consequence, Facebook represents a new unique combination of the informality of face-to-face settings and the impact of expert citizens as it is made possible in the debate and commentary sections in the newspapers. An example is given by a columnist and writer:

The incitement for me – and I suppose for most others – is the debate. That’s what triggers responses – that’s obvious – at least now that I have so many followers. And it’s what generates followers, the strictly debate-related things.

Facebook informant no. 12

This informant is clearly comfortable with the vocabulary and the norms of the debate and commentary sections in the newspapers and news websites. Approximately half of the Facebook-interviewees have, or have previously had, a connection to these genres as editors, journalists, staff writers or columnists. These informants are more likely to draw attention to the similarities and differences between the Facebook-debate and the newspaper-debate. They talk about a debate “cycle” or “rhythm”, they describe utterances as “comments”, “pieces” and “replies”, and they display a conscious attitude towards how people “edit” and “moderate” their pages.

The same informant describes agenda-setting effects between Facebook and traditional news media. It is clear that he sees the two arenas as related:

[...] That’s one of the most interesting aspects of this whole thing, I think. It’s the interplay between Facebook and these other arenas. Very little of what is written on Facebook is truly original, like “now I feel like commenting on this”. Most of the time it’s a comment on something that has been published somewhere else – you react positively or negatively to something you have read in an op-ed, for instance. Maybe that comment can stand on its own opinions. It can be clearer, and have more force than what was the case in the original op-ed piece. But initially it’s drawn from somewhere else. *Facebook informant no. 12*

Comparisons of encounter settings are also used to mark distance to other rhetorical arenas. An editor in a national newspaper is keen to describe how Facebook cannot fill the same functions as the arenas of traditional media. The comparison also suggests how he perceives the encounter setting of Facebook:

[...] And it's serious people too, you know. Serious debaters, writers, and God knows who. And they get worked up, and then the next day *snaps his fingers* the issue's gone. Nobody talks about it anymore. It's amazing to observe. It's a kind of human ... it's gossip. Isn't it strange how engaged they get? They spend a great amount of time writing these texts. So ... Yeah, it's a strange thing.

Facebook informant no. 4

This editor is one of the informants who frequently applies the vocabulary and logic of the newspaper debate to the networked public of Facebook. He is obviously perplexed by the fact that “serious debaters” and “writers” choose to invest the amount of time and effort that they do in this arena. He assumes that this networked public of Facebook tries to fill the same role as the debate and comment sections in the newspapers, but without their ability to dominate the public agenda.

Chapter Summary: The Chattering Classes of Twitter and Facebook

In this chapter, I have described how the networked publics of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook are organized in relations to structures of power and signification, here interpreted in line with the rhetorical understanding of *topics* and rhetor-audience-relations. I have shown how the key-informants from Twitter describe a networked public consisting of people with high access to the public. These are journalists, editors, pundits, politicians, academics, students and bloggers, who use Twitter to discuss politics and comment on current affairs. This networked public is maintained both as a social identity and as a style of political communication.

In the first part of the chapter, I have shown how the informants' descriptions of this networked public corresponds with Henrik Paul Bang's theory of *expert citizens*. According to Bang, expert citizens are people who have a natural entry point into the political debate. The informants describe themselves as “the chattering classes”, “talking heads” and “the punditocracy”, but without the derogatory meaning these

terms usually have. They possess the vocabulary, the expert knowledge and the particular social skills to access and influence “elite networks”, and they refer to themselves and their equals as “opinion-makers”, or even “professional opinionators”.

I have argued that this networked public of Twitter is based around a particular sort of political communication that can be described as “chatter”: a continuing flow of comments and discussion on current events. This combines the easiness of everyday talk with the expert citizen’s high expectations for own political participation. The metaphor the respondents most frequently use to describe the encounter setting of Twitter is “pub-talk” or “a discussion at a party”. These discussions are seemingly open and egalitarian, and they are carried out as if social backgrounds or personal interests do not matter.

The informants’ descriptions give associations to historical accounts of the rhetorical arenas of the emerging bourgeois public. These arenas were believed to take up the perspectives of the public through egalitarian, interest-free discussions. The fact that the “tweetocracy” identify themselves as part of an elitist “chattering class”, without feeling the need to reply to the critique it usually implies, might suggest that they see themselves as a modern version of this dynamic public.

The informants also talk about a particular kind of ironic humour as a characteristic of the networked public of Twitter. The networked public of Twitter is both described as an “ironic and sarcastic community”, with a “raw” and “sarcastic” humour, and as an “easy”, “unpretentious” community that is “relaxed” and “always a little tongue in cheek”. The ironical attitude of the expert citizens is based on a firm belief in that they both rise above the political debate and go deeper into the issues.

Irony is a way for the expert citizens on Twitter to differentiate themselves from both the political system and the media elites on one hand and ordinary citizens on the other. Drawing on contemporary theories of ironic discourse, I have suggested how ironic discourse can contribute to both a sense of community and an elitist attitude among the expert citizens. The ironic subject does not partake in the debate as much as observe and comment on it, always from a privileged position of “knowing” that it is all just a battle for temporary truths and hegemony.

The key-informants from Facebook are not as consistent when describing the roles of expert citizens as the informants from Twitter. The network of politically engaged Facebook-users is described as “the opinion-elite”, “the punditocracy”, “opinion-makers” and “the Facebook prominence”. However, there are certain differences between descriptions of “the tweetocracy” and “the Facebook-public” in terms of what Bang calls “their overall life style”. The informants’ impressions of the Facebook-public are less class-sensitive and more oriented towards motivation of participation.

The networked publics of Facebook and Twitter also have much in common when it comes to the “style” of debating. Both are compared to everyday face-to-face encounters, like “discussions around the lunch-table”, “among friends at a dinner-party” or “at the pub”. Facebook represents a new unique combination of the informality of face-to-face conversations and the impact of expert citizens as it is made possible in the debate and commentary sections in the newspaper. The informants suggest that this network is devoted to exploring and testing different sides of an issue. “The political” is clearly seen as a discursive construct, and, as a consequence, exploring and testing arguments is seen as a form of political engagement.

Finally, some remarks should be made about the type of *systemness* the structuring properties explored in this chapter impose. According to the theory of rhetorical arenas presented in chapter 4, *systemness* describes how stable the structuring properties of arenas are. Clearly, for these informants, Twitter and Facebook are characterized by flexibility and variability in practice. There are few formal or institutionalized rules that define situations and instruct who can act in what ways. In this regard, the type of rhetorical situations the informants describe as typical for these arenas have “weak potential”, suggesting that they are usually not seen as particularly urgent or controlling (cf. page 138). This chapter demonstrates how this “weak potential” in rhetorical situations makes the informants place more emphasis on social distinctions, like the one between expert citizens and ordinary citizens, and discursive mechanisms, like irony, in their perceptions of what lends systemic form to these arenas.

Chapter 7: The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics

In this chapter, I explore what kind of argument culture the networked publics of Twitter and Facebook maintain. The accounts given here are drawn from the informants' descriptions of how arguments are designed, practiced, understood and evaluated within this rhetorical arena. In the interviews, the informants are encouraged to reflect on their motivation for participating in debates and discussions, what they hope to gain from these kinds of interactions, and what they think about the quality of political debates in these arenas. The informants' reflections provide insights into the particular argument cultures that exist among expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook.

The analysis in this chapter place emphasis on *topical structures*, as it describes the formal and structural *topoi* that characterise these local argument cultures. Doing so, it also draws on many of the interview questions designed to disclose the informants' understanding of the *role of the rhetor* and sense of *rhetorical decorum* (cf. chapter 4).

The analysis is primarily built on statements that match the following codes:

Central codes:	Interviews	Entries
Argumentation norms	15	40
Motivation of argument	13	43
Debating as activity	25	123
Quality of “the social media debate”	28	79
Motivation of participation	28	130
Personal consequences	24	54
Moderating as activity	7	13
Audiences	24	73
Echo Chambers	18	26

Table 7.1: A selection of the most central codes referenced in chapter 7

The concept of “argument culture” is drawn from David Zarefsky’s article “What does an argument culture look like?” (Zarefsky, 2009). Here, Zarefsky presents six features

that are characteristic of an argument culture: (1) it assumes the presence of an audience, (2) it acknowledges and embraces uncertainty, (3) it values conviction, (4) it embraces the process of justifying rather than proving one's claims, (5) it balances adversarialism and cooperation, (6) it assumes that individuals are willing to take risks.

By examining how these features are expressed in the informants' descriptions of Twitter and Facebook, I provide an outline of which kind of argument culture these rhetorical arenas are perceived to constitute by the informants. This way, I turn Zarefsky's descriptive features into elements of inquiry. I assume that local argument cultures can be described by asking what kind of audience is associated with a particular rhetorical arena, what kind of uncertainty it supports, how it promotes convictions through argumentation and how it encourages individuals to take risks.

The chapter is mainly devoted to descriptions of, first, the argument culture of Twitter, then the argument culture of Facebook. Third, I briefly discuss what these argument cultures can say about social network sites as arenas for political discourse.

The Twitter-Audience

Most of the key-informants from Twitter have a unison understanding of who constitutes the audience on Twitter. The informants do not perceive these to be voters in general or ordinary citizens, but a particular segment of politically knowledgeable and up-to-date citizens believed to influence public opinion. The informants refer to this segment by using the general, but culturally specific label "P2-listeners". This label refers to the radio channel NRK P2, the Norwegian public broadcast channel primarily focusing on political and cultural issues. Except perhaps for the newspaper columns, NRK P2's debate shows "Political Quarter" ("Politisk kvarter") and "Six O'clock News" ("Dagsnytt Atten") are the arenas that are most frequently mentioned in relation to inter-media agenda-setting in the interviews.

A young academic and well-known writer uses this label when he describes who he usually interacts with on Twitter:

I interact mainly with the extended political pundit segment. It's politicians, academics, some students, researchers, journalists, youth politicians and some others that belong among the P2-listeners, or whatever you'd like to call them. That's by far the majority of whom I communicate with.

Twitter informant no. 8

The informants suggest that the difference between expert citizens and less active and less visible actors is equivalent to the difference between those who are likely to participate in the radio debate shows and those who are regular listeners. The informants thus have a very clear idea of what kind of people constitutes their audience. A Member of Parliament gives a similar account, but chooses to describe the Twitter-audience by comparing it to Facebook:

[...] On Facebook, the audience is potentially ... well, if not my grandmother, then at least my mother, and my family, and other people who only have a remote interest in politics. A lot of ordinary people. But on Twitter, people are a bit more ... There's a bit more understanding for common political positions, perhaps. There are more people who are into the political debate and who get the nuances and understand the point you're trying to make.

Twitter informant no. 15

Almost all the informants make this observation. The audience on Twitter is thought to be politically engaged and knowledgeable, at least compared to the crowd on Facebook. This politician clearly displays a willingness to adjust his rhetorical strategies to meet the expectations of this audience. Although the informants are often reluctant to talk about Twitter-users or -followers in terms of "audiences", they clearly draw on a notion of an audience when manoeuvring through the boundaries of acceptable and constructive argumentative practice.

Other informants describe how vernacular expressions create the impression of an audience. A former politician explains how exchanges on Twitter can seemingly take the form of staged debates:

Q: When you're on Twitter, how conscious are you of the fact that 30 000 people might see what you do?

Yes, I guess I'm a little conscious about it – because people comment on it. "Now she's at it again!" Sometimes you hear stuff like "You have got to see this! This is going to be fun!" A couple of times I've been in a discussion – not so much lately, as I've probably grown a little tired of it – when somebody announces that "People, you've got to see this!" Some people like to follow these discussions.

Twitter informant no. 11

In this informant's description, people gather around to form an audience when they believe that the situation will result in a confrontational argument. In this context, it is implied that arguments are directed at the people gathered as audience rather than at the individuals taking part in the argument. Most of the informants do not report that people gather around like an audience this way. Still, the informants are very conscious of relating arguments to audiences and of how arguments are received by others.

The interviews also draw attention to certain elements of rhetor-audience-relations that are specific to social network sites. One is that informants have a clear idea of their own particular audience. For instance, the politicians in the sample express how they use Twitter as a medium to connect with party-members and voters in their electoral district. These politicians also recognize that it is their ability to differentiate between audience groups – usually the ordinary citizens and the expert citizens or the “P2-segment” – that secures their recognition as insiders in the arena.

Another element of rhetor-audience-relations that is specific to social network sites is that an actor's audience, in terms of “followers” or respondents, are used to evaluate that actor's position and ethos. A person who has many and the “right kind” of followers is more likely to gain the attention of the network.

Another Member of Parliament, who is very conscious and outspoken about the social conditions for rhetor-audience relations on Twitter, describes how followers are associated with a form of social hierarchy:

[...] Twitter is way more useful if you have a lot of followers. And in order to get a lot of followers, you need, or at least it's preferred, to get public exposure in other contexts. That's why I feel that Twitter is so hierarchical. There's no doubt that even if a lot of people follow each other on Twitter, there's a very small portion of Norwegian Twitter-users that are seen by a large number of people
Twitter informant no. 14

What this informant observes is that, within the boundaries of this rhetorical arena, both the size and the attention of the audience depend on the social standing of the rhetor. When doing rhetorical analyses of Twitter, then, we should be attentive

towards the fact that people who participate in the same opinion-exchanges can have very different audiences.

Embracing Uncertainty

Zarefsky places great emphasis on how people in an argument culture acknowledge and embrace uncertainty. People have respect for each other regardless of differences in values and beliefs, and disagreements take place over opinions, not individuals (Zarefsky, 2014). It is the realization that there will always be elements of uncertainty in all issues the community deals with that underlie people's devotion to argumentation and maintenance of argumentation norms. This way, Zarefsky's concept of uncertainty bears strong resemblance with descriptions of contingency as a precondition for all rhetorical practice.

Throughout the interviews, the informants give explicit and implicit descriptions of what kinds of uncertainty Twitter promotes and how the argumentation norms of this arena vary from other arenas they are familiar with. Perhaps the clearest indication that the informants embrace uncertainty is their explicit aversion against "spin", "strategy" and "propaganda". All the informants express some kind of dissatisfaction with people who use Twitter for unilateral criticism or to spread a political message without regard to objections or counter-arguments (see chapter 8). The former politician expresses her frustration with this kind of monomania:

Q: What kind of behaviour irritates you the most?

It's those grumpy and rude spin doctors. Those are definitely the most irritating. And then there are those who are never able to limit themselves and who are on all of the time with their uninteresting stuff. Of course you can stop following these people, and often I do.

Twitter informant no. 11

Monomania and interruptions violate the premise that there may be uncertainty related to the issue and the facts, and that people therefore will benefit from discussing these things. Many of the informants suggest that they are active on Twitter precisely because it allows them to explore different arguments towards an issue in a more open and honest way, as discussions on Twitter are not believed to be as binding and official as discussions in traditional media. Also, Twitter's strict limitations on characters and

high tempo make it easy to differentiate between “spin” and more genuine forms of participation.

Drawing on what the informants describe as the aims and benefits of political debates and discussions on Twitter, we also get an impression of which kinds of disagreement motivate participation. The informants see these debates as a way to “test” and “explore” arguments in a confined and constructive environment.

A Member of Parliament reflects on what he thinks are the benefits of the types of interaction Twitter facilitates:

Precisely because one has to have a concentrated message, concentrated argumentation, one can also find new sides to the issues. I think that happens just as often when I follow people on Twitter as when I follow the debates in the newspapers. I don't share the aversions against Twitter that say that it locks people in a conflict that they don't ... That's not my experience. On the contrary, I think people hear each other out on Twitter. A good debate on Twitter is one where people actually learn something about each other's positions.

Twitter informant no. 14

Almost all the informants refer to the opportunities to learn about different statements and positions as a benefit of participating in political debates on Twitter. Although most isolated events can be seen as polarizing and unproductive, the informants' stories indicate that they over time have acquired more knowledge of opposing positions and beliefs. A political activist describes how he believes that he has been exposed to new political actors and opinions on Twitter:

I have gotten in contact with groups and individuals that I never would have had the opportunity to get in direct contact with if it weren't for Twitter. So, it has been a tremendous enrichment, and I think it's been healthy for the Norwegian thinking and writing community.

Twitter informant no. 16

The informant does not suggest that participation in this networked public has changed his personal opinions on particular issues. Still, he considers it a good thing that Twitter has exposed him to opposing beliefs and opinions. A Member of Parliament explains how impressions gathered on Twitter played a major role for him in the Norwegian debate about male circumcision:

[...] In that case I changed my stance. I changed my mind. And that was because of discussions, not just on Twitter, but the overview of the debate it gave me. You encounter opposition on Twitter, and you can tune in on what other people are discussing. The argumentation is very concentrated. That's productive when you're trying to think things through for yourself. So I have an open attitude, I think, on Twitter.

Twitter informant no. 14

Some of the informants suggest that tweeting functions as a way to explore aspects and consequences of their own arguments. Within this networked public, arguments are evaluated and criticized by people of different professional and ideological backgrounds. This seems to be an important motivational factor among the younger users. A young blogger and activist describes how he turns to Twitter to “put his thoughts to the test” before he proceeds to address the public in other arenas:

Before I do other stuff, I almost always test opinions, thoughts, and reflections in social media. And when write longer texts, it is the result of a social process. I have put my thoughts to the test in front of a lot of people and gotten feedback from people who say things like “Here you are way off!” or “You cannot say that!” So then I have to figure out whether I should say it anyway or reconsidered.

Twitter informant no. 1

Later in the interview, the same informant says that it is “amazing to have the opportunity to test the subject matter and the ideas on a multitude of different people”.

When informants repeatedly refer to tweeting as a way to test and explore their own and others' arguments and convictions, it suggests that they see this arena as more explorative, more cooperative and less adversarial than other rhetorical arenas. Tweeting gives the informants an overview of alternative arguments and counter-arguments before they engage in debates in arenas where the performative aspects of debating are more prevalent.

A young political activist describes how participation in this networked public has helped him “develop a political empathy and understanding for other positions”:

For me, whether I have changed my positions or not, I have kind of developed a political empathy and understanding for other positions. And that's what all debate is

about. That might be just as valuable as people changing their minds, I think. Now we're touching upon the aim of public debate. And that's what social media is for me.
Twitter informant no. 1

When this informant claims that developing understanding for other positions “is what all debate is about”, it is primarily an indication of what he believes to be the ideal motivation for participation in public debate. Developing “understanding for other positions” is considered “just as valuable as people changing their opinions”. This does not mean that these expert citizens have no political interests or that their primary motivation actually is the prospect of learning about other positions. It does, however, give us an indication of what kinds of normative ideals they turn to when interpreting and evaluating behaviour.

These kinds of normative evaluations give us an impression of the balance between uncertainty and convictions, justification and proofs, and adversarialism and cooperation, that give an argument culture its distinct character. One way to further explore this character is through the informants' descriptions of active argumentation norms.

Argumentation Norms of Twitter

Most of the informants believe that Twitter supports stronger and more rigorous argumentation norms than traditional media or political institutions. Investigating argumentation norms can give us an impression of which factors the informants are motivated by when discussing issues. It can also give us an impression of how they separate this networked public from other activities on Twitter. Most of the norms that can be identified in the interviews are general norms of argumentation that are likely to be found in all argument cultures. However, the informants tend to describe these norms in ways that resemble academic discourse. This way, the argumentation norms also function as a type of boundary work that separates insider- and outsider-actors.

One argumentation norm that can be drawn from the informants' descriptions states that arguments should not be repetitive and performance of arguments should not be tenacious. All the informants agree that this networked public is particularly impatient with overly assertive claims and one-sided argumentation. Although the informants have strong convictions attached to the issues they discuss, they are also

devoted to the argumentation process, and they see the monomania of “spin” and “propaganda” as a threat to this process.

A lawyer describes obsessive behaviour as the most typical and common violation to argumentation norms on Twitter:

[...] I get annoyed on behalf of others. When I see people obsessing over the same topic. I'm sure I can do it myself as well, but when I see it, it's just “arghh”!

Q: Like a fad?

Yes, like a fad. Or when it's just off-topic. Often you know which debates they will join without contributing with anything. They just share their condescending characteristics of individuals or groups. It has no value.

Twitter informant no. 10

Another argumentation norm states that people should refrain from personal attacks and straw-man-arguments. This is the kind of argumentation norm the informants list when they talk about debates in more general terms, yet mentioned by only a few when describing the particular argument culture of Twitter. One exception is an experienced political journalist. Here she describes how she feels that the lack of generosity in the face of opponents is the biggest threat to the quality of the debate:

Q: You say that debates should be factual. How would you define that?

A factual debate is one in which people attack arguments and not each other's character, obviously. That's kind of the basic definition. But I also think people should have some “zing”. Twitter is supposed to be fun – and a little rough. But, of course, I don't think people should always read each other in the worst possible way. It's exhausting when people always create straw men, and they read strange motives into each other's actions. The debate goes off tracks, and it's ruined.

Twitter informant no. 6

This informant draws attention to a tension that several informants recognize. On one hand, the argumentation norms of the arena dictate that people should stick to the issue and not build their arguments on attacks on opponents' *ethos*. On the other hand, people are expected to “have some zing”. Debates on Twitter are expected to be serious, but not too serious (see chapter 6). People are expected to have a high tolerance for jokes and personal attacks. What we can read from this journalist's account is that the biggest threat to constructive debating is not *ad hominem*

argumentation, but a lack of willingness among the participants to interpret each other in the best sense.

The argumentation norm that most clearly marks a difference between this argument culture and the general public states that people, when arguing on Twitter, should be prepared to offer links to articles defending their claims. The technical circumstances of Twitter make it very easy to seek out and share other texts. The informants describe this as a requirement connected to perceptions of integrity. They also frequently mention this requirement when they describe tweeting as means to explore different opinions and beliefs. The same lawyer explains how people on Twitter demand that claims are supported by external sources:

And I actually feel that when you have these kinds of sound conversations – whether it’s a professional or a societal discussion – people expect, they demand, that you cite your sources. If you make a claim, then people will immediately ask “From where have you taken that?” or “Have you got any sources on that?”

Twitter informant no. 10

If we take into account the typical characteristics of expert citizens as described by the informants (see chapter 6), we can assume that this expectation of reason giving is at least in part drawn from an academic tradition. Like this lawyer, many of the informants use an academic vocabulary when describing the argumentation norms of the arena. The informants talk about how people “test arguments”, “state their sources”, “refute claims” and “draw on evidence”. Whether these norms are actually maintained in practice or not, the fact that the informants keep bringing them up suggests that they are central to how they make sense of this networked public.

What Kind of Risk Does this Argument Culture Promote?

Zarefsky presents two principal risks that any arguer takes. One is the risk of being proven wrong, with the change in beliefs, attitudes and values that will entail. The other is the risk of loss of face, as a result of unsuccessful argumentative performance. Zarefsky points out that there will always be things that individuals are not willing to discuss or argue. What characterizes an argument culture is that these zones of exclusion are relatively small (Zarefsky, 2009). In most issues, individuals are willing

to defend their opinions and convictions, even if it means that they risk being proven wrong or deemed irrelevant.

When the networked public of expert citizens on Twitter can be described as its own local argument culture, it is because the practices it supports are organized around the logic of arguing. These expert citizens do not primarily use Twitter to organize or mobilize political participation, but to discuss and argue political issues. This also means that the participants must accept that their positions and arguments can be shown to be wrong in the eyes of others.

In the interviews, the element of risk is drawn from the informants' experiences of having been proven wrong or having suffered loss of face. The informants do not give many examples of how their own opinions have changed as a result of debates and discussions on Twitter. However, most informants are convinced that their prior attitudes and assumptions have been modified as they have been confronted and challenged. An online news site journalist gives a typical description of how these kinds of minor change in opinions are usually seen as routine:

Q: Do you think these kinds of discussions have caused you to change your political opinions?

Yes, I believe so. Definitely. And that's one of the things I like best about Twitter. First of all, I have influenced others, and I have slowly made them change their minds and see things from my point of view. I believe that's been the case. [...] But the other way around as well. I feel that ... When I have just thrown out a simple claim, then I have gotten a lot of objections, and good arguments have forced me to change my stance [...]

Twitter informant no. 12

This informant spends some time contemplating on how a change in opinion usually happens. His impression is that in many instances, people are forced to change their minds or alter their argumentation when they are faced with contradictory facts. He also emphasizes how people will not admit such defeat in the midst of the situation in order to save face. Reluctance to admit defeat in the midst of it is in no way unique or particular for this rhetorical arena. However, it can demonstrate how the informants perceive the balance between contingency and commitment within this arena. The

informants thus display a sense of self-awareness and commitment to own convictions that are characteristic of public debates.

The same understanding of arguing as a public performance can be found in the accounts of a very experienced newspaper journalist:

Q: Can you recall an issue where you have changed your mind?

No *laughs*

Q: Or perhaps one where you have modified your opinion a little bit?

I can't recall. I might have sometimes. But I'm like a politician. I only discuss issues that I have thought through and written a lot about during the years, so I have sort of reached a standpoint. But of course I have been too quick on the draw sometimes. I'm afraid I can't recall any particular instances, but there have been times when I have thought "Oh my god, I should not have done this". And the next morning I feel like deleting all my tweets

Twitter informant no. 6

What this journalist describes is the feeling of losing face. Again, this is not unique for this rhetorical arena. Neither is there anything indicating that the informants believe that this arena poses a particularly strong risk of losing face. On the contrary, the informants seem almost unaffected by the social risk associated with argumentative defeat. When confronted with situations in which they changed their initial position or were proven wrong, the informants rarely talk about the social cost of having their opinions refuted or changed, unless this is introduced by the interviewer.

The online journalist quoted earlier describes how Twitter-users over time risk normalization and adjustment to opposing belief systems:

[...] I think the value is that you get a sense of why people believe what they believe. It's very easy to have a black-and-white image of why people believe what they believe. An antagonistic image. But when you get to discuss the same people over a period of time, they become human. You get a better understanding of where they come from and why they believe the things they do, what their knowledge basis is and what their values are. You may still disagree, but at least you have to recognize it ...

Twitter informant no. 12

This kind of "risk" is usually described as a positive thing. This is the same mechanism that the informants refer to when they describe how this networked public allows them to "explore" and "learn about" opposing beliefs and opinions. However,

by not only accepting and interacting with, but also by giving recognition and attention to opposing opinions, they run the risk of having to adjust their own convictions, or to make them less relevant or less important in the broader public.

Summary: The argument culture of Twitter

In sum, the interviews give a description of a particular argument culture that is central to how the informants see this networked public as different from other forms of political debate. All the informants assume the presence of an audience and share some basic assumptions of its social and political profile. This audience consists of a particular segment of politically knowledgeable and up-to-date citizens. The informants are also very aware of how Twitter allows them to draw on specific knowledge of their “own” audience when they engage in arguments.

The informants state that a central motivation for them is the prospect of testing and exploring arguments in a context that is likely to contribute with constructive feedback. They repeatedly emphasize the value of counter-arguments and the benefits of interacting with people of different social and political backgrounds. Furthermore, the informants express a belief in Twitter’s ability to support stronger and more rigorous argumentation norms than other rhetorical arenas. The way the informants describe these norms suggests that they are heavily influenced by academic standards of discourse. In line with the theoretical framework I have proposed, the informants can be said to reproduce the formal and structural *topoi* of the academic sphere (cf. page 111). This reaffirms the impression of how this networked public distance itself from the general public.

The Facebook-Audience

While the key-informants from Twitter have a clear perception of who constitutes the audience for political debate on Twitter, the informants from Facebook have a strong sense of the networked public as their own, personal network, organized around their profile and their group of friends. These informants have different ways of conceptualizing audiences.

Accounts vary from describing Facebook as a way to reach the mass public to talking about the networked public as a small group engaged in deliberation.

Variations in understandings of audience are also closely linked to understandings of what is public and what is private on Facebook. Most informants accept that arguments on Facebook are public, unless they take measures to reduce access. However, several of the most well-known and outspoken informants are reluctant to see this arena as public, with the normative standards of argumentation that tend to follow with this description. The informants' apparently inconsistent understanding of the role of the audience should also be seen as attempts to balance the different normative standards imposed by different audiences. Thus, the characteristics of the argument culture of Facebook are drawn from various understandings of audiences within the same encounter setting.

A university professor explains how he sees his Facebook-friends as a potential audience:

At least in my case, I have a lot of friends who are not part of any elite, and I know there are many who read and pay attention, even if they don't "like" or draw attention to themselves in any way. Some would get rid of these passive friends. But I don't. I think of them as my audience, in case I have anything I'd like to say.

Facebook informant no. 1

This informant sees both his "active" and his "passive" friends as audience. Presumably, this means that how he understands the boundaries of acceptable argumentative practice, and what he believes to be good arguments, is based on the sum of his Facebook-friends rather than the person he is debating at any given time. A disagreement is then seen as an opportunity to promote one's view to a broader audience, much like the descriptions given of Twitter.

Another researcher describes how the awareness of an audience of friends has a decisive impact on how she approaches an issue. She explains how the presence of an audience makes apparently private reflections public:

[...] And I see that 90 % of my Facebook-friends don't participate in anything. But they're there and they're paying attention. And it's a way to stay in touch with people. [...] But I'm not very private on Facebook. I can offer private opinions – how I find it annoying when people's candy wrappers make noise during a concert or something. But it's really just a private take on phenomena that many people are interested in. It's not just to tell people what annoys me. *Facebook informant no. 10*

This informant emphasizes how her non-participating Facebook-friends “are there and they’re paying attention”. These are very often not associated with the same networked public as the informants. Rather, they are “ordinary citizens” from different parts of this informant’s social sphere. Still, the knowledge of their presence has an impact on how this informant argues. As a contrast to these informants, a former journalist explains how she sees no apparent reason to have Facebook-friends who do not take active part in discussions:

[...] I’m considering getting rid of them, you know. When people aren’t active they don’t ... It’s not like they don’t bother me, but I see no prestige in having four thousand friends or something. I think it’s non-sense.

Facebook informant no. 2

This informant does not see her own arguments as addressed to a general audience. The only reason she can think of to have many Facebook-friends is that it strengthens an individual’s ethos. The audience this informant adjusts to is the selected few she converses with.

The informants also manage their different expectations of audiences through privacy settings and profile-management. Some have strict limitations on how many friends they have and see this as a way to manage the interaction-form by managing the audience. Others explain how they continuously shift privacy settings between public updates and updates limited to close acquaintances. Some of the informants also describe violations of what they see as the rhetor-audience agreement on Facebook. In particular, they describe how some Facebook-friends violate implicit agreements of confidentiality by passing on content to other contexts. All these practices can be seen as examples of how the informants continuously balance the tension between a potential, general audience and a specific audience.

Only a couple of the informants work actively to build as wide an audience as possible. In these cases, the principal difference is made between individuals they have some specific knowledge about (friends) and the anonymous crowd (followers). A newspaper columnist explains how he sees his followers as a mass-audience:

It's amazing to be able to reach that many. They subscribe ... I have twelve thousand followers, and at least fifteen hundred get what I write straight in their feed. You reach a lot of people very easily. And that's only the registered ones. God knows how many actually reads it [...] *Facebook informant no. 12*

The difference between “friends” and “followers” leads to another conception of audience that influences this argument culture. The informants “moderate” the debates taking place on their pages in line with what they believe their profile pages communicate to the general public. Although they often promote a confined understanding of audience when describing their own practices, the informants internalize the normative standard of “the public” when drawing the line for what is acceptable behavior in their feeds. One example of this is found in the same columnist's explanation of why he does not allow “followers” to comment on his posts:

[...] One thing is that followers can read what I and others write on my profile, and they can “like”. But they cannot comment. I made this adjustment, because I had to take control. Some stuff was a bit over the top. Personal harassment and stuff, which is exhausting to deal with. And you realize that people hold you accountable for things that people you don't even know write on your wall. So I just dropped it. [...] *Facebook informant no. 12*

This writer has a lot of followers in addition to a relatively large number of friends, and it is clear that he believes that his Facebook-updates and the debates that follow communicate to a mass audience. Although most other informants are more likely to see their primary audience as a network of people they have a minimum of familiarity with, they display a similar attitude about their pages and profiles. They frequently talk about their “policy” for their page, how they “moderate”, “follow up” and “control” discussions, so that they feel comfortable being associated with the discourse found on their pages. This way, the informants' awareness of, and adjustments to, what they perceive as the audience, informs not only their own comments, but also how they manage their profile page and the actions of others on this page.

In sum, the interviews give us an impression of how this networked public constantly balances different audiences and perceptions of audiences. The challenge associated with studying rhetorical events on Facebook, then, is not to give a

satisfactory description of the “Facebook-audience”, but to account for the various perceptions of audiences at play in a given situation.

Embracing Uncertainty on Facebook

Throughout the interviews, the informants also give different descriptions of what kinds of uncertainty and disagreements Facebook promotes, and how the argumentation norms of this arena differ from Twitter and other arenas. The informants express aversion against individuals who use Facebook purely for strategic reasons. When asked what kind of behavior they believe to be destructive for the argument culture, about half of the informants mention “nagging”, “insisting” or “monomania”. Uncompromising and unilateral behavior is believed to prevent genuine exchanges of opinions by breaking the implicit understanding that there are uncertain elements motivating the discussion.

While the key-informants from Twitter convey a clear and consistent ideal that their network is dedicated to exploring and testing different arguments and aspects of political issues, the descriptions given by the key-informants from Facebook are less unison. About half of the informants state that the opportunity to test and explore different sides to arguments is a central motivation for participation. Among these informants, the common claim is that Facebook, due to the people it attracts and its technical functions, is more suited to explore different aspects of issues and positions than other public arenas.

The university professor explains what he considers to be Facebook’s unique advantages for exploring political issues:

I think there are many cases in which this crowd is more explorative. People are curious. Can this and that be elaborated? How is this and that? Sometimes, these conversations are initiated by journalists, who are researching an issue and are looking for information. Then people offer useful links, usually in English, but sometimes in German or French. But the fact that there is so much knowledge circulating here means that even very combative situations between fixed positions can still be enlightening for the participants. You are forced to reflect, and you read the articles ... usually a couple of days later. I find it extremely fruitful.

Facebook informant no. 1

A central point in this informant's experience is that one is "forced to reflect on things". The form of interaction that this network supports forces each participant to continuously rethink and reassess his own opinions and positions. The fact that this professor describes this as "extremely fruitful", suggests that this network also maintains an ideal of continuous exploration and testing of opinions. This ideal is approached in a similar pattern as on Twitter. Isolated situations and events are usually described as polarizing and characterized by personal disagreements and fixed positions. However, over time, the majority of the informants find it educational and rewarding. In particular, the informants feel that they have acquired more knowledge of opposing positions and beliefs. A school teacher explains how the by-partisan nature of this networked public has given him a much better understanding of the uncertainty of issues and opposing positions:

I have to say that ... take the refugee debate, for instance. If I didn't have friends like *names removed*, then I wouldn't have had a good grasp of how these people think. Luckily, I have that kind of friends, and they share how they think about these issues. For me, their position is so absurd, that I don't think I would have understood it if it wasn't for these discussions. I learn a lot about how other people think by debating them on Facebook. For me, their position is just so absurd.

Facebook informant no. 9

This informant claims that interacting with individuals of totally different convictions over time has given him a more complex understanding of their reasons and motivations. Although he is still firm in his own beliefs – characterizing opposing convictions as "absurd" – he recognizes that the uncertainty of the issue is substantial enough for him to debate it and accept that other positions are possible. He then clarifies that these opposing convictions are absurd "for him".

Argumentation Norms of Facebook

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the networked public of Twitter is believed to support stronger and more rigorous argumentation norms than other public arenas. This description reflects an ideal of interest-free and factual disagreements that resemble norms of academic discourse. There are, at times, major differences between Twitter and Facebook when it comes to the potential of identifying and maintaining

argumentation norms and argumentation standards. One reason might be that Twitter's technical and social composition favours strict standards of interaction and argumentation, while Facebook facilitates more varied use. Another possibility is that the networked public of Twitter has been subjected to more publicity and more self-reflection, which has left the informants with a more coherent interpretation of one's own practice.

The interviews support both these explanations. The informants' descriptions of the argument norms of Facebook are more diverse than those associated with Twitter, both in terms of *what* they describe and *how* they describe it. It is difficult to produce a list of the dominant argumentation norms based on these interviews. However, the informants often provide elaborate descriptions and evaluations of Facebook as an argument culture, which also gives us an idea of the basis for evaluating practice.

A writer and political commentator describes how he sees Facebook as an arena with few formal, but many informal requirements for participation:

In a barren political landscape, Facebook is a bright spot. There's a lot of good, constructive political debate going on there. It's tolerant. No bindings, not very prestigious. The entrance fee is low. There are no formal requirements, but there is a ruthless requirement to stick to the issue and to have something to contribute with.

Facebook informant no. 13

A requirement to "have something to contribute with" is not necessarily an argumentation norm. However, it is descriptive of what the informants expect from argumentation in this arena. People are expected to be knowledgeable and original. The informants see their own practice as a knowledge-producing activity. A consequence of this is that they are very reflected about what they believe characterises a skilled and resourceful participant in this argument culture, and also how skilled and resourceful they believe other individuals to be.

When they reflect on the active argument norms of this arena, the informants do not spend a lot of time contemplating what kind of norm violations can lead to sanctioning from other actors. However, they frequently discuss what characteristics an actor should exhibit in order to avoid being dismissed and ignored by this "ruthless" networked public. When reflecting on what typically make a good debate, the most

common things the informants mention, are that the participants should be “knowledgeable”, “insightful”, “up to date” and willing to share their specialist knowledge.

Much like Twitter, people on Facebook are expected to provide reasons for their claims. However, while the Twitter-interviewees repeatedly emphasize the value of naming and providing insight into one’s sources, the Facebook-interviewees are more concerned with the Facebook-network’s ability to detect and reveal argumentative fallacies. A retired economist explains how the argument culture of Facebook imposes a particular argumentative thoroughness and rigour on the individual:

You get busted so easily. You get busted in no time. And that’s happened to me – I have been revealed on the spot – because my reasoning was built on a fallacy.

Facebook informant no. 14

Almost all the informants describe how this argument culture swiftly and effectively detects and sanctions argumentative fallacies and misinformation. They often see this in conjunction with Facebook’s dialogical structure and low threshold for response. The informants’ account of what constitutes as a good argument in this arena is not very original. In their account, an argument should be “logically concise”, provide “new information” and be in line with the rhetor’s previous statements. The uniqueness of Facebook as a rhetorical arena, in the informants’ view, is that faults to these criteria can be sanctioned immediately.

Some informants, like the retired economist quoted above, see this as a good thing. Other informants are keener to describe what they experience as a particularly unappeasable and aggressive argument culture. According to the informants, Facebook is seen as a rhetorical arena characterized by its lack of argumentation norms. For them, Facebook is characterised by “strategic suspicion”, “hair-splitting”, “repetitions and accusations” and “polarization”.

An editor in a national newspaper explains how he believes the distance created by technology to be the reason behind this aggressive tone:

[...] And I see an incredible dedication! It's an at times aggressive argument culture that does not exist face to face, like we are sitting now. The screen puts distance between people, and they push the limit.

Facebook informant no. 5

A researcher, who apparently has given a lot of thought to the relation between argument culture and technology, gives a similar explanation:

[...] I guess that's a thing with web-communication as opposed to face-to-face communication or writing. It's a kind of mix between the two, which people have very different experience with. It can seem like people have very different abilities to assess how expressions are perceived online. The possibilities for misunderstandings are so much greater in social media than face-to-face, like we are sitting now.

Facebook informant no. 10

This informant raises a common claim about technological appropriation in order to explain what she sees as a pattern of misunderstandings and miscommunication on Facebook. This can also provide insights into the type of boundary work described earlier. When this informant says that “people have very different abilities to assess how expressions are perceived”, it suggests a divide between those who are able to adjust their message to the situational conditions and those who are unable to do this kind of rhetorical adjustment. The first group includes the expert citizens the informants see themselves as part of. The latter group is clearly not held to the same standard of argumentation as the first, and is thus excluded from the networked public.

This subtle categorization in in-groups and out-groups can also explain the different evaluations the informants give of the quality of the debate in this arena. This arena is believed to host a lot of very different forms of vernacular expressions, including “suspicious” and “polarizing” arguments. These are often associated with the immigration issues, which is also by far the most prominent issue among the expert citizens (see chapter 9). A professional writer, who by and large gives very positive descriptions of this argument culture, say the following about how the immigration issue is debated on Facebook:

[...] My aversion is so strong that I cannot participate in these discussions. I think the atmosphere is f*** up. It's just back and forth. Repetitions and accusations. [...]

Facebook informant no. 11

While the argument culture of Twitter is discussed and evaluated in ways similar to academic discourse, the argument culture of Facebook is referred to in similar ways as online comments or other arenas of vernacular discourse that are not amendable to formal argumentation norms. Despite this, the informants repeatedly refer to Facebook as one of the most important and influential spheres of argumentation in Norway. A non-fictional writer gives a typical description of what role he believes Facebook to have in the larger public sphere:

All in all, considered as a medium, I think Facebook is an unprecedented arena for debate, all things considered. When I look through my feed, I get a strong impression that this is a kind of Norwegian debating community, even if there are a lot of different limitations on who can participate in different feed and threads. But all in all, I think it's the most open debating arena we've got, at least compared to the commentary sections in the newspapers, which neither I, nor nobody I know, ever seek out.

Facebook informant no. 13

What Kind of Risk Does this Argument Culture Promote?

As the interviews have made clear so far, expert citizens do not use Facebook to organize political participation, or exert influence over processes of collective decision making, but to discuss, debate and argue about political and civic issues. As for all argument cultures, this involves an element of risk for the participants. They risk criticism, refutation, or even ridicule, of their own systems of beliefs, attitudes and values. The argument culture of Facebook is made possible by the expert citizens' willingness to take these risks, and discuss aspects of their own opinions and convictions with sincerity and commitment.

Almost all of the informants state that this networked public has made an impact on their political opinions and beliefs. First of all, they say that Facebook has changed their media habits. Most informants state that they have become familiar with new news sources, often in the form of weekly news magazines. Furthermore, they state that they have been made aware of new intellectual and political figures and organisations, which in turn have changed their impressions of which issues are important and how they should be understood. Second, the informants frequently

claim that interacting with people of different political convictions over a longer period of time has given them a better understanding of their reasoning.

An academic describes how the immigration debate on Facebook has given him more knowledge of, and respect for, different political positions. Still, he remains committed to his convictions, something he sees as a result of the polarizing tendencies of Facebook:

Of course I see that there's a financial side of immigration, and that especially the Nordic welfare states can face problems, as their basic foundation of solidarity is challenged [...] But still I have become more pro-immigration on Facebook. And I get terribly annoyed when people are anti-Muslims, even though I'm definitely no cultural relativist. *Facebook informant no. 3*

This informant's confessions illustrate how the balance between contingency and commitment shapes the individuals' understanding of the rhetorical arena. As described above, this arena is believed to both enhance common knowledge and increase political polarization. The informant has admittedly gotten a better understanding of the opposition's opinions and arguments by debating the issues in question. Still, his commitments to own convictions are strengthened.

This is a common theme in the informants' evaluations of the strengths of the arena. On one hand, the arena is believed to value commitment to convictions. The arena is believed to be "fierce" and "ruthless", and participants are expected to defend their opinions and beliefs despite objections and arguments. On the other hand, the arena draws attention to the contingency of issues. All the informants suggest that Facebook is a great way for them to learn more about topical political issues. When embracing this ideal, the informants also risk being confronted with facts or arguments that contradict their own beliefs.

A columnist describes what he sees as a tension between Facebook as "the fiercest, the fastest, and the funniest" debating arena and the potential to "actually learn a lot":

It has almost become the place to be. It's where the debate is the fiercest, the fastest, and the funniest. And, occasionally, the quality of argument is great. There are competent opinionated people contributing, and you actually learn a lot ... either they

share links to interesting articles that you wouldn't have found on your own, or it is the topic and form of discussion that makes sure that you are constantly challenged.
Facebook informant no. 12

This informant's praise of Facebook as "*the place to be*" implies an ideal vision of public debate as something confrontational and personally challenging. It suggests that people should subject their opinions to public scrutiny, both in the form of "fierce" attacks and new knowledge. During the interview, this informant repeatedly states that he "wants to be contradicted". Whether this statement is sincere or not, it gives us an idea of what ideal of public debate the informants want to be associated with.

Another informant, also a political writer and commentator, comments on the circulation of new information and knowledge in this arena:

[...] There are many people on Facebook who wish to make their opinions known. So it's knowledge-seeking. My Facebook is knowledge-seeking in the sense that people share opinions and positions. But it is not knowledge-forming in the sense – which should actually be a part of the intellectual process – that you get new knowledge or that one bases new opinions on new insights.

Facebook informant no. 8

This informant differentiates between "knowledge-seeking" and "knowledge-forming". The first is characterized by sharing opinions and positions; the latter is characterized by the production of new knowledge. The informant makes this division spontaneously, but it may still say something relevant about the argument culture and what kind of risk the informants believe it entails. "Knowledge-forming", as this informant describes it, is an intellectual and open-ended process. Here, "one bases new opinions on new insights". "Knowledge-seeking", on the other hand, is still based on contention and disagreement; it is a political, more than an intellectual, process.

This is apparently contradictory to what other informants are saying about the potential of acquiring new knowledge and new perspectives on Facebook. However, if we accept this distinction, it can also be telling for what kind of knowledge the informants feel they get from participating in this argument culture. The arena is perfect for acquiring knowledge about opinions, but not necessarily suited for acquiring knowledge about the issue in itself. This, in turn, rests on the basic premise

of any argument culture, that one's opinions are just opinions, and not knowledge, and thus that one risks being proven wrong when confronted.

Another kind of risk the informants believe to be characteristic of this arena is the risk of exposing one's lack of knowledge or insufficient argument skills. The informants usually talk about this in relation to political actors. An informant who himself has held different positions in politics and media, is keen to emphasize this feature of the arena:

A strong side of Facebook is that it reveals "emperors without clothes". Traditional media protect inept and less gifted politicians and media figures. But Facebook is a bit more ruthless and does not let people off so easily. You can get away with a lot of things in a three-minute interview. You read some phrases you've written down and it's fine. A lot of politicians have gotten away easy in the news media.

It's the same thing with the big editorials. They pass as wise commentators by copying some lines from The Economist here and there. And it's in print, a format with authority, with a by-line, and it all seems solid and serious. But they are not confronted or challenged on the spot.

Then Facebook demands a lot more. You have to be persuasive on the spot. It's like being in a live television or radio debate with competent people over a long period of time.

Facebook informant no. 13

This informant sees it as a major benefit that Facebook imposes a particular risk on people who usually have a lot of influence over public opinion. Unlike expert citizens, these people hold central positions in political parties or major newspapers. The informant describes how traditional media shield these people and thus minimize the risks that stimulate a genuine argument culture.

On Facebook, on the other hand, everybody must be willing to take risks, both risks of having to change one's system of beliefs, attitudes and values, and risks of losing face. As these risks are a central premise of the argument culture, they effectively exclude individuals who are not willing to accept them. Most politicians are excluded from this networked public precisely because they are unable or unwilling to participate in the seemingly open-ended form of debate these expert citizens embrace (see chapter 8). Also, it has the effect in which the informants see this

particular argument culture as more genuine than other, more established arenas of political communication.

Summary: The Argument Culture of Facebook

Much like the key-informants from Twitter, the key-informants from Facebook describe an argument culture that is characteristic of their networked public. This is central for how they understand their role as expert citizens and how they differentiate their practices from other types of political discourse.

The expert citizens of Facebook constantly balance different audiences and perceptions of audiences. On one hand, they adjust their actions to what they see as the normative expectations of the “general public”. On the other hand, they most often describe their intended audience as their network of Facebook-friends. However, these informants have a stronger sense of the networked public as their own personal network, organized around their profile and their group of friends, than the informants interviewed about Twitter.

The key-informants from Facebook are also less unison when it comes to motivations of participation. Some state that the opportunity to test and explore different sides of arguments and issues is a central motivation for participation. Others are less concerned with this exploratory side of the argument culture. Over time, the majority of the informants clearly find it educational and rewarding. In particular, the informants feel that they get more knowledge of opposing positions and beliefs.

Furthermore, the argument culture of Facebook supports different perceptions of commitment to convictions, contingencies and risks. Some informants see Facebook as an arena that can effectively draw attention to argumentative fallacies and “hot air”. These informants see Facebook as an arena in which everybody must be prepared to defend their positions “on the spot”. Others describe an aggressive argument culture. These informants see Facebook as a rhetorical arena characterized by its lack of argumentation norms. Instead they describe a culture of “strategic suspicion”, “hair-splitting”, “repetitions and accusations” and “polarization”. In both cases, it is clear that the informants see this argument culture as distinctly different from the general public and the forms of political discourse that dominate in the arenas of traditional media.

Fields of Reasoning and Boundary Work

The central question, then, is what these local argument cultures can tell us about the characteristics of Facebook and Twitter as rhetorical arenas and what kind of political rhetoric they facilitate. I will return to these questions in the discussion chapter, as attempts to answer them should also include a description of the rhetor-audience relations (see chapter 8) and the topical structures of the arena (see chapter 9). Here I will briefly introduce some theoretical perspectives that can fuel discussions of how these local argument cultures relate to other “fields of reasoning” and of the role of networked publics in the broader public sphere.

First, the interviews give us an impression of what “field of reasoning” (Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1984) the participants draw on when they describe arguments. In line with structuration theory, people will act in accordance with what they believe to be normal and routine behaviour in the setting. In new environments and new technologies, routines and practices are less stable than in other arenas. Actors are then likely to draw on the rules and resources that they are familiar with from other associated social systems.

The interviews suggest that the expert citizens on Twitter are informed by academic discourse, while the expert citizens on Facebook have strong connections to the debate- and commentary tradition in the press. These connections are based on resemblances in vocabulary, motivation of participation and normative standards and ideals. These insights are gathered from interviews, not from studies of actual argumentative practice. Still, it gives us a clear idea of how the informants interpret arguments in these arenas, and what they deem natural to compare them with. This way, we also get an impression of what role the informants believe these arenas can and should play in the political public.

One way to explain these differences is to see them as results of what Stephen Toulmin calls “field specific” aspects of arguments (Toulmin, 2003). Different fields can activate different warrants, different truths and probability claims. Actors turn to the recourses they have in other arenas, and they act as if this network supports the same set of rules they are comfortable with in other settings. In the case of Twitter, the majority of informants have some kind of academic background. They apply the same

kind of credibility to fact checking and source critique as people in academic settings, thus maintaining the same types of “warrants” in their style of argumentation. Also, they reduce the risk of loss of face by maintaining that they, much like in an academic field of reasoning, are primarily interested in “exploring the issue” and “testing” arguments and convictions on Twitter.

Second, the argument cultures the informants describe can also fit into contemporary critiques of the state of the public conversation. Deborah Tannen (Tannen, 1999) and other commentators (Constanza, 2013) apply the term “argument culture” in a more critical way than Zarefsky. In their view, the characteristic of an “argument culture” is that even the most complex problems are reduced to adversarial argumentation between polar opposites. Institutions like the news media, law, politics, and particularly academia, are all dominated by a competitive and destructive logic, which makes people more concerned with marking their position in relation to others and to define and protect personal and disciplinary territories than to actually solve problems collectively.

Commentators see this understanding of argument culture in relation to Jürgen Habermas’ description of the “culture of technical control” (Habermas, 1979, 1996). According to Habermas, the knowledge and information circulating in our modern public is compartmentalized and controlled by various technical elites who do not interact and communicate. The result is that these experts dominate their various fields of knowledge and enforce what are often contradictory opinions, making it hard for the public to resolve issues that assume this knowledge base.

This can be a useful background for discussing the role of local argument cultures in the broader public sphere. The informants describe networked publics that are sustained between the elite networks of academia, politics and media, and “ordinary citizens”. They balance the discourse of elite networks and the vernacular of everyday talk, and they are constantly engaged in “boundary work” between the two.

On one hand, the interviews suggest how these networked publics are believed to reduce the type of compartmentalization Habermas describes. The informants maintain that these local argument cultures support debates and discussions across political and social divides. The informants believe that these arenas have the potential

to make elite networks more accessible for ordinary citizens, and that they can promote interaction between and across different elite networks.

On the other hand, the interviews suggest how these networked publics maintain social hierarchies and differences in new areas of the public. Interactions across such boundaries can reduce their importance, but they can also confirm and strengthen them. By drawing on argumentation norms of academia and relating conceptions of audience to pre-existing social hierarchies, the networked public of Twitter subtly mark their distance from “ordinary citizens”.

Although the networked public of Facebook balance different perceptions of audiences, different perceptions of argumentation norms, contingency and risk, the key-informants from Facebook are all aware of who can reasonably be described as expert citizens and why. Most informants promote an ideal of Facebook as an egalitarian argument culture, but as the informants themselves explain: Interaction across social divides does little more than emphasize the divides.

For the actors who are included among the different elites, the “chattering classes”, these local argument cultures become a way to enforce their social status. For other actors, whose entry into the “chattering classes” are based heavily on their presence in these networked publics, these local argument cultures represent a way to differentiate themselves from the ordinary citizens. It should also be noted that it is the youngest participants, those with the least experience from the institutionalised “fields of reasoning”, who express the firmest belief in the potential and the norms of these arenas.

Echo Chambers

Many commentators and critics of networked publics have also been concerned with the possibility that people will avoid the risks of argument culture if given the chance. In social network sites, people can consciously or unconsciously organize in homogenous groups instead of challenging each other’s views and assumptions confirm and strengthen them. These are functions of online “echo chambers” (Stroud, 2010; Sunstein, 2009).

The basic mechanism behind echo chambers is that, as choices increase, people tend to choose news sources and stories that support and confirm their own world-

view. The echo chamber-thesis posits a situation where people avoid information that challenges their convictions. This will lead to increased polarization and political hostility. From a rhetorical perspective, echo chambers will weaken the basis of shared knowledge that makes rhetorical practice effective.

Empirical studies of the echo chambers-thesis have produced various results about its validity. Many studies have focused on the functions of selective exposure and their effects on echo chambers. These studies have shown that people tend to choose news articles from outlets that agree with their political opinions (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Munson & Resnick, 2010). In online environments, this effect is reinforced by algorithms that create increasingly personalized content and contribute to the formation of “filter bubbles” (Pariser, 2011). Similarly, studies have suggested that blogs can function as echo chambers, as they tend to attract readers that agree with the content (Gilbert, Bergstrom, & Karahalios, 2009).

Other studies have shown that the increase of choice and social networking functions generated by the Internet leads to greater exposure to different ideas and opinions (Goel, Mason, & Watts, 2010; Messing & Westwood, 2014). Focusing on online news consumption among American citizens, Flaxman, Goel and Rao (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016) have found evidence that both support and disclaim assumptions of echo chambers and ideological segregation online. Their findings suggest that news consumption is more divided along the lines of ideological preference in participatory media than direct traffic to online news sites. The effect is more substantial for opinion pieces than for news articles (Flaxman et al., 2016). Focusing on how news, opinions and civic information are shared on Facebook, Bakshy, Messing and Adamic (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015) have also found that it is primarily individual choices and compositions of friends that determine what people access through participatory media. People are exposed to cross-cutting content, but they still prefer content confirming their ideological convictions.

Most major studies on selective exposure and echo chamber effects are done on American data. There are reasons to believe that the results would be different in a Norwegian context. Norway has a multiparty parliamentary system, with strong

traditions for consensus-oriented political debate, high trust in news organisations and political institutions, and an egalitarian, non-partisan press.

Karlsen et.al (2017) have used a combination of survey data and experiments to study echo chamber effects in online spheres in Norway. This study suggests that the dynamics of online debates could more aptly be described by the logic of “trench warfare” than echo chambers. Opinions are reinforced through contradictions as well as confirmation.

The question here is to which degree the informants are exposed to, and seek out, disagreement or confirmation of opinions. Interviews are not suited to provide any satisfactory answer to what kind of content people share or the balance of opinions they encounter. They can, however, give us insights into how people experience this balance, what they perceive as confirmation and disagreement, and the norms that govern their behaviour.

Around half of the eighteen informants from Twitter talk about echo chamber effects on Twitter. Among them, there are two different experiences. Some informants believe that the echo chamber effect is significant in the Norwegian Twitter-sphere, but that they themselves do not operate within an echo chamber. Others state that they do not believe this to be a relevant feature of this networked public at all.

A blogger and schoolteacher describes the basic motivations and priorities that support the echo chamber-effect:

[...] Sometimes, I feel that people don't want to get challenged. Some people are a bit – what do you say? – they're “preaching for the choir”. It annoys me. I still follow them, but I really think they should challenge themselves more. Because I challenge myself, and people I agree with as well [...]

Twitter informant no. 4

This informant is a bit reluctant to use the term “echo chamber” when discussing people and practices associated with the same networked public as him. He usually reserves this term to processes of radicalization or polarization. Still, his impression of people on Twitter as having a propensity to “preach for the choir” describes the same effect.

In contrast to this informant's experience, an editor is very clear that he does not see the formation of echo chambers as a descriptive feature of this networked public:

People talk about echo chambers, both on Facebook and Twitter, but I don't experience Twitter as an echo chamber at all. Because it's open. That means that if you tweet something, and someone sees it and disagrees, then you risk hearing what they think. It happens all the time! There's a lot of arguing on Twitter! And how does arguing relate to echo chambers? Obviously, people get support from their own, so pretty quick it turns into an argument between two groups. But it's not the case that you can just avoid the fact that other people have different opinions. At least not in the kind of network I'm a part of on Twitter. [...]

Twitter informant no. 8

This informant's experience confirms the findings of Karlsen et.al (2017). Among people who actively use social network sites as arenas for political debates and discussions, processes of exchanging and reinforcing opinions take the form of "trench warfare" rather than echo chambers. All the informants, regardless of their impression of echo chambers on Twitter, are quick to emphasize that they prefer to interact with people with different backgrounds and of different political perceptions. This suggests that the individuals occupying this arena are willing to risk being challenged and contradicted, or at least that they see this as an unavoidable consequence of participation.

All the key-informants from Facebook are either explicitly or implicitly concerned with the formation of echo chambers. Some consider it to be a problem of the arena, others argue that this arena counteracts and limits the formation of echo chambers. The absolute majority could be described as moderately sceptical. They recognize the potential of echo chambers as a problem, but do not see it as a particularly relevant problem in the networked public they themselves deal with.

An editor in a major newspaper describes how he feels that the tendencies to form "echo chambers", "groups" and "subcultures", have increased over time:

Over time, I feel that Facebook has become more aggressive and developed more echo chamber-tendencies. People interact with their own, and groups are formed. I think

that in the beginning, people were a lot more independent. And also, different sub-cultures have popped up.

Facebook informant no. 5

As an editor, this informant tends to use a broader definition of this networked public than some of the other informants. The fact that he includes “subcultures” in a discussion of group formations within networked publics might suggest that he is talking about Facebook in general, and not the networked public of expert citizens in particular. Still, his description is typical of many of the informants’ experiences. Many believe that there is a growing tendency to form echo chambers on Facebook, and that it might ultimately threaten the argument culture of this networked public.

In contrast to this view, a political writer and commentator offers a firm rejection of the notion that Facebook supports political echo chambers. This informant believes that, although there might be a lot of agreement in this networked public, this argument culture does not display the inclination towards confirmation bias and myth-formation he associates with echo chambers:

Q: Do you feel that people have a tendency to form echo chambers?

No. I feel that there are very few echo chambers in these contexts, although there may be a lot of people who agree with each other on a thread. I associate “echo chambers” with something inherently negative – that prejudices and myths are recreated and enforced in some kind of excited intoxication. For me, echo chambers are something entirely negative. Even if almost everybody on a thread are in agreement, but the premises are crystal clear, the reasoning is sensible, the arguments are good, and people support sane reasoning, than it’s not an echo chamber. It’s reasonable. Then we define echo chambers as something inherently negative, as something that lowers the debate, and creates a hallelujah-mode around false premises, prejudices, or myths.

Facebook informant no. 13

For this informant, the best aspects of the political debate on Facebook represent the opposite of the forces that influence echo chambers. The argument culture that the informants see as a defining feature of the political potential of Facebook, with which they themselves clearly want to be associated, promotes an ideal of risk-taking and uncertainty in the face of political and civic issues they expect to prevent the formation of echo chambers.

Chapter Summary: Networked Publics as Local Argument Cultures

In this chapter, I have shown how the informants perceive and describe the local argument cultures that are maintained among expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook in Norway. I have based my analysis on the informants' descriptions of how arguments are typically designed, practiced, understood and evaluated within these networked publics. This should also give us a better impression of the structuring properties of the rule-resource sets that the informants build their knowledge of the rhetorical arenas on. This chapter has paid particular attention to how the *topical structures* of these arenas are observable through the structural and formal *topoi* of these local argument cultures.

On Twitter, the informants assume the presence of an audience consisting of a particular segment of politically knowledgeable and up-to-date citizens. The informants describe how they participate in debates to test and explore arguments in a constructive context. They also express a belief in that this networked public supports stronger and more rigorous argumentation norms than traditional media and political institutions. I have argued that these norms are influenced by academic discourse. On Twitter, expert citizens are expected to “test arguments”, “state their sources”, “refute claims” and “draw on evidence”.

On Facebook, expert citizens constantly balance different audiences and perceptions of audiences. Here, the expert citizens have a stronger sense of the networked public as their own, personal network, organized around their profile and their group of friends, than on Twitter. The argument culture of Facebook supports different motivations for participation. Some informants state that their central motivation for participation is the opportunity to explore different sides to an argument; others are more concerned with the opportunity to influence public opinion.

I have also suggested how these local argument cultures are sustained between the elite networks of academia, politics and media, and “ordinary citizens”. The informants believe that the arenas of Twitter and Facebook have the potential to make elite networks more accessible for ordinary citizens and propel interaction between and across different elite networks. However, the informants also reaffirm impressions of how these networked publics of expert citizens mark their distance to the general

public. By drawing on argumentation norms of academia and relating conceptions of audience to pre-existing social hierarchies, the networked public of Twitter subtly mark their distance from ordinary citizens. Similarly, the informants discussing Facebook have a very clear idea of who the roles of expert citizens and who the roles of ordinary citizens are assigned to.

Chapter 8: Individualization of Political Debate

This chapter explores the relation between social network sites and processes known as personalization of politics, individualization of politics, or, as I refer to them here, individualization of political debate. This is a recurring theme in the interviews and key to understand much rhetorical activity on both Twitter and Facebook.

Here I understand the theme individualization of political debate as involving the following conditions:

- i) A strong connection between person and beliefs. A person's identity is closely connected to what people believe to be his or her beliefs, values and opinions. Individually held opinions and personalized expressions are thought to be more genuine and more interesting than collectively held opinions and collective expressions.
- ii) An individualistic approach to public and professional roles. Personal opinions and beliefs are increasingly seen as relevant information to interpret and evaluate how politicians, journalists and academics perform their roles. Actors who possess these roles have to balance professional credibility and an ethos of individuality.
- iii) An argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreements. Actors are motivated by opportunities to develop and defend their own personal beliefs, and they tend to see arguments less as strife over collective decisions than as expressions of different political identities.

At the core of this theme is the understanding of social network sites like Twitter and Facebook as promoters of a strong connection between a person's identity and political opinions. Individually held opinions are seen as more authentic and genuine than collectively held opinions and as the driving force of political debates among expert citizens. As arenas for political participation and debate, social network

sites are believed to reveal a more truthful impression of a person's opinions and beliefs than what can be gathered from other social interactions or mass media.

Throughout this chapter, frequent references are made to face-to-face interactions, the printing press and radio and television. Usually these comparisons are based on the informants' own reflections. The informants tend to compare social network sites to other arenas of political or social participation to better describe what they consider to be characteristic of these arenas. Also, the theories I will use to inform and explain the findings usually imply a comparison with either traditional media or other forms of political participation. These theories recognize that technology plays an important role in processes of individualization and personalization of politics; moreover, they are concerned with the technological and medial preconditions for political participation (Bang, 2004; Beck, 1997; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Calenda & Meijer, 2011; Giddens, 2001).

In recent years, scholars of this tradition have been particularly concerned with the capacities of participatory media to inform new political structures (L. W. Bennett, 2012; L. W. Bennett & Segerberg, 2011). One of the clearest observations thus far is that while radio and television draw attention to individual politicians and support a notion of authenticity based on mass personalization, social network sites facilitate individual participation and personalized expressions from each citizen. This way, social network sites promote social and political relations that are structurally different from those based on face-to-face encounters and one-to-many media. Castells (2001), for instance, has argued that these new media facilitate new forms of tertiary relationships "embodied in me-centered networks". These are substantially different from primary relationships (embodied in families and communities) and secondary relationships (embodied in associations) (Castells, 2001, p. 28). As the understanding of individualization of political debate in this chapter is informed by these theories, it also adopts this division of social relationships. When social network sites are assumed to have the potential to affect and alter political structures, it is against this backdrop that change is understood.

Throughout the chapter I will refer to both "individualization" and "personalization", as the concepts describe different social processes.

“Individualization” usually describes the altering nature of political participation in a fragmented public sphere. Calenda and Meijer (Calenda & Meijer, 2011) define “political individualization” as “the process of developing political identities away from traditional structures – primary or secondary – to the individual and his or her self-selected context” (Calenda & Meijer, 2011, p. 661). The concept of “personalization”, on the other hand, describes aspects of the expression of political participation in a public characterized by intimization and interactivity. Bennett (2012) defines “personalized politics” as a combination of an ethos of diversity of opinions, inclusive “personal action-frames” and persuasive use of social technology that activates the actors’ own social interactions (Bennett, 2012, p. 21ff). Although the concepts should be understood differently, they both imply the other. “Personalized politics” imply diversity and individualization of opinions and practices, and “political individualization” implies a style of political communication characterized by personalized expressions.

In this chapter and the next, I explore the rhetorical aspects of these structural changes as they are expressed in the self-experienced reality of expert citizens in Norway. The individualization of politics is observable through all the central concepts identified in the interviews. In particular, the theme is connected to the concepts of social media-credibility and social media-friendly issues. Therefore, these concepts will have a central role in this and the following chapters. Here, I concentrate on how processes of individualization of political debate are evident in the actors’ understanding of social media-credibility. Particular attention is paid to the informants’ descriptions of rhetorical affordances and rhetor-audience relations, as it is through these structuring properties the informants’ perceptions of credibility and individualization are most clearly overlapping. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of how the interviews inform and supplement existing understandings of political individualization (Calenda & Meijer, 2011) and personalized politics (Bennett, 2012).

The analysis gives a more detailed description of *rhetorical affordances* and suggests how they influence people’s perception of these arenas. Exploring the possibilities and constraints these arenas place on *ethos*-formation, and their influence

on the role of journalists and politicians, the chapter also contributes to the understanding of the *role of the rhetor* on social network sites.

The analysis is primarily built on statements that match the following codes:

Central codes:	Interviews	Entries
Interface functions	29	123
Interactive functions	21	57
Quantifiable elements	21	56
Professional roles	29	166
The role of journalists	20	94
Qualities of the speaker	24	94
Credibility	22	53
Intermedia effects from social network sites	26	80
Intermedia effects to social network sites	25	62

Table 8.1: A selection of the most central codes referenced in chapter 8

Social Media-credibility and Individualization of Political Debate

The theme of individualization of political debate is closely related to the concept of social media-credibility gathered from the interviews. This concept describes how a person is seen as authentic and believable within the boundaries of these arenas and draws attention to the particular conditions that Twitter and Facebook place on ethos-formation.

While ethos describes the sum of the character and trustworthiness attributed to a person, social media-credibility describes general changes in the public’s understanding of ethos as a result of the media environment. As different media have different rhetorical affordances, they offer different ways to determine credibility. In order to describe both the concept of social media-credibility and its influence on the individualization of political debate, we must understand how it relates to the rhetorical affordances of social network sites.

The concept of social media-credibility gathered from these interviews captures how the informants interpret credibility in a situation where the affordances are very different from both face-to-face interactions and mass media. The affordances that

shape rhetorical practice in these arenas, promote an interaction setting similar to that of an egalitarian conversation, but without the modalities of body language or voice. A credible and authentic actor has to adapt to this particular kind of written conversation, while also form a consistent and interesting presence over time. In this setting, individually held opinions and personalized expressions are thought to be more genuine and more interesting than collectively held opinions and collective expressions. This way, the setting implies a strong connection between identity and opinions.

Beyond the possibilities and constraints that Twitter and Facebook afford the actors, perceptions of credibility are also connected to the particular group of participatory media users interviewed here. As established in previous chapters, the expert citizens do not primarily use Facebook and Twitter to get information about political issues, but to get an overview of the different stances and arguments an issue might entail. For this segment of users, participatory media is seen more as a source of public opinion than as a source of political information. In this context, a rhetor's credibility depends on her ability to present an original and coherent set of political opinions.

Rhetorical Affordances That Favor Individualization

According to danah boyd, "networked publics" are characterized by four structural affordances: persistence (expressions are automatically recorded and archived), replicability (content can be duplicated), scalability (content is potentially very visible) and searchability (content can be accessed through search functions) (boyd, 2010, p. 7ff). These affordances lead to invisible audiences, collapsed contexts and the blurring of public and private that is characteristic of the flow of communication in tertiary relations. These are the same dynamics that have been associated with the fragmented media reality and the dissolution of the rhetorical situation (see chapter 1).

Similarly, van Dijck and Poell (van Dijck & Poell, 2013) have described what they call "social media logic", based on four "grounding principles": Programmability (changes to the flow of communication), popularity (changes to the popularity of issues and the influence of people), connectivity (new ways to connect people and people and organizations) and datafication (turning aspects of the world that have

never been quantified before into data). Although these elements are not media affordances in the strict sense of the word, they are descriptive of the ways in which the technological functions of social network sites affect practice, and how this in turn will influence how the actors behave outside of these environments.

Both boyd and van Dijck and Poell are concerned with the impact of digitalization and the logic of networked publics on a structural level. They do not, however, offer much insight into how these structural affordances create different opportunities and restraints for Twitter- and Facebook-users to act persuasively in particular situations. Recalling the definition of *rhetorical affordances* given in chapter 4 (cf. page 120), an analysis of the rhetorical affordances of social network sites means asking what kind of rhetorical situations, and responses to situations, the material conditions of these sites make possible, and how they affect the “means of persuasion” available to the rhetor.

Facebook and Twitter both have unique affordances that in turn can lead to very different forms of rhetorical practice, but they also have some fundamental similarities that allow us to discuss rhetorical conditions across media boundaries. Both are structured around individual profiles and facilitate conversation-like interactions between actors. These interactions will often have the tempo, the brevity and the personal involvement of face-to-face conversations. However, the interactions on both Facebook and Twitter differ from face-to-face conversations in that they lack the modes of voice and body language. At the same time, they offer new modes and affordances, like “emoticons”, images, permalinks and the ability to search in content, which in turn offers new means of persuasion. Through these modal affordances, social network sites offer new ways to establish logically compelling connections, new ways to arouse emotions and new conditions for ethos-formation.

By comparing the technological functions of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, O’Riordan, Feller, and Nagle (2012) offer a useful categorization of the different affordances of social network sites into three functional groups: Social interactivity, profile management and social connectivity. This categorization is based on technological properties, but it can also be used to sort and analyze the informants’ perceptions of rhetorical affordances across social network sites. By sorting the

informants' experiences and perceptions of affordances along these categories, I identify three ways in which the affordances of Twitter and Facebook facilitate individualization of politics by the particular possibilities and constraints it places on ethos-formation: 1) The affordances that shape social interactivity promote an interaction setting similar to that of an egalitarian conversation. This setting implies a strong connection between identity and opinions. 2) The affordances that surround the management of online profiles contribute to the formation of individual social and political identities. 3) The affordances of social connectivity promote ethos-formation based on social networks and a practice of evaluating other actors based on who they are friends with and who they interact with.

Affordances of Social Interactivity

The affordances of social interactivity on social network sites are established through asynchronous and synchronous communication, “liking” and external interactions. For Twitter, this includes tweet/retweet, @-mention/@-reply, share/link and direct messages. For Facebook, it includes posts/comments, “tagging”, “likes”, groups/pages, share/link and direct messages.

In the informants' experience, most forms of social interaction on Twitter and Facebook are closer to a conversational setting than a one-to-many speech setting. This is recognized by the vocabulary that the informants use when they describe social interactivity in these arenas. Actors “talk” or “discuss” with each other, they “interrupt”, they are “being loud” and so forth.

A short but typical example is given by a Member of Parliament, who describes the kind of discussion and running commentary he associates with Twitter. This is what has been described as “chatter” in previous chapters:

The tone is much more like when you sit and talk at a social gathering or a party. Naturally, it's much less formal, because there are so strict limitations on length and text.

Twitter informant no. 14

Although interactions on Twitter and Facebook are usually written, the direct address, the tempo, the short format, and so forth, create a certain resemblance with face-to-

face conversations, or, as one informant describes Facebook, “an extended phone call with a lot of people at once”. What the informants draw from this, is that interactions in these arenas can, like face-to-face conversations, be informal, direct and personal; yet, they may be stored for future reference, and all claims and arguments can be substantiated or challenged using permalinks.

Furthermore, both Facebook and Twitter offer new linguistic entities that can compensate for the loss of meaning participants experience as the modes of face-to-face interactions become unavailable. Facebook-users cannot read each other’s body language, but the site offers “likes”, “shares” and emoticons they use to communicate their attitudes towards people and topics. Based on the informants’ descriptions of how they use and interpret these interactive functions, it is clear that they oftentimes can be seen as replacements of minimal responses in face-to-face interactions. These interactive features add to the impression that social network sites create conversational settings rather than speech settings. This also suggests that actors oftentimes are perceived as conversational partners rather than audience members. It is in this setting that individually held opinions and personalized expressions are thought to be more genuine and more interesting than collectively held opinions and collective expressions.

Rhetorical decorum of a conversational setting promotes a strong connection between identity and opinions. However, unlike both face-to-face conversations and different mass media settings, Twitter or Facebook do not give actors the opportunity to judge each other’s credibility based on *actio*: the performance of the message in voice and body language. Many of the modes that are usually described under *actio*, such as body language, pitch and tempo, are not available on Facebook and Twitter. These modes are crucial when evaluating a speaker’s confidence and sincerity, on which we form an impression of his/her likeability and trustworthiness. This understanding of *actio* has fueled the analyses of authenticity as the key feature of rhetoric in the age of television (Hall Jamieson, 1988; Johansen, 2002; Kjeldsen & Johansen, 2012). As these modes of communication are not available in social network sites, we can reasonably assume that other impressions of a person’s character, like consistency of opinions, become more important when determining credibility.

A professional writer thinks out loud about the connection between the conversational setting and the actors' individual ways of acting and behaving:

[...] Facebook put tremendous emphasis on individual expression. That's for sure. That goes for the spontaneous debate as well, you know ... the orality of it. It's right in between the spoken and the written. The threads are like text-messages. That leaves a lot of room for ... Some people are more responsive, and others not so much. This too depends on how they are individually equipped.

Facebook informant no. 11

In this informant's experience, the conversation setting gives room for the individual actors to act in line with their individual inclinations and particularities. In this setting, the kind of consistency the actors consciously or unconsciously look for when they determine whether they find a person credible is drawn from how they compose and combine arguments, positions and ideas. While perceptions of credibility and authenticity in mass media settings are at least partially drawn from assessments of how voice and body language are consistent with the message, the affordances of interactivity in social network sites creates a setting in which credibility and authenticity is drawn from consistency of written expressions and style of argumentation.

Affordances of Profile Management

The affordances of profile management on social network sites are established through the ability to manage and edit profiles, profile updates and connections to other social media profiles. For Twitter, this revolves around the composition of an avatar, with a @-name, a bio and a picture. For Facebook, it revolves around the composition and maintenance of a profile/page, through profile photo, pictures, "likes", résumé, "places", etc.

The affordances of profile management draw attention to the individuality of the actors. They afford the actors the ability to shape an online "persona" and express their individuality in interaction with other actors. As social network sites are based on personal profiles, they allow users to form specific knowledge about each other over time and across different social settings. On both Twitter and Facebook, people form personal bonds and acquire specific knowledge about each other's beliefs and

opinions. This supports formation of political and social identities on an individual level.

In general, the informants in this study want to convey an image of themselves as independent political beings, and their assessments of others follow the same logic. People are expected to discuss issues on the basis of their own personal opinions, and not based on primary or secondary relations. In this regard, the interviews confirm Castells' description of social network sites as "me-centered networks" (Castells, 2001). This has, as we shall see, major consequences for the actors whose activities are associated with their professional and public roles, like politicians, journalists and academics, but also for other expert citizens, who are clearly interested in conveying an image of themselves as independent political subjects.

Through the affordances of profile management, Twitter and Facebook offer users ways to form an impression of each other beyond the immediacy of conversational settings. Due to the continuous presence of the "profile", actors have specific knowledge about each other and form personal bonds they draw upon when defining and reacting to rhetorical situations.

The informants describe how they, when they encounter someone they do not know, "check out" their profile to form an impression of their character, their knowledge-level and their political beliefs. A university professor thinks out loud about this process:

Nah... I think perhaps ... for instance, people who I really disagree with politically may still appear sympathetic by not just ... through the pictures they share. Do they have a sense of humor, for instance? Have they actually made an effort to see the world outside of Europe? They reveal many details that can form a bigger picture. A person's ethos might just as well be weakened as strengthened by such components.
Facebook informant no. 1

This informant points to how certain rhetorical affordances of Facebook can direct the process of ethos-formation and to what type of qualities people look for when they form impressions of other actors. Humor and worldliness are distinctly personal qualities that refer primarily to how participants approach issues. The critical point is not so much *what* they think, but *how* they form arguments, comments and viewpoints.

This participant explicitly states that “people who I really disagree with politically may still appear sympathetic”. This attitude is expressed by most of the informants at some point. Also, the participants state that when they make inquiries into other people’s pages and history, it is not to check if they have the “right” set of opinions, but to get an impression of how they approach public issues and whether they are an “interesting” actor or not.

Affordances of Social Connectivity

The affordances of social connectivity on social network sites are established through the actors’ ways of connecting with each other, search- and suggestion-functions and different forms of groups and lists. For Twitter, this includes “following”, browsing, searches, lists and recommendations. For Facebook, it includes friends/followers, “like pages”, “people you may know”, groups and friends-lists.

The interviews give us an idea of how these affordances affect ethos formation in these arenas. Facebook in particular allows people to evaluate each other’s social networks. The informants describe how they “curate” their friends-lists in accordance with how they think it influences their feed and what they think it communicates about themselves, and they expect other people to do the same. This suggests that the informants base their impressions of other participants on who they in turn interact with.

A non-fictional writer and well-known political commentator describes how he has started to screen potential Facebook-friends by studying their profile.

[...] I must admit, when I get a friends request I look at their profile to see who their other friends are.

Q: What do you look for then?

[Sighs] I see where they stand politically, and who they are friends with. I see if I’ve ever heard of this person before. What kind of education they’ve got and those kinds of things. I always get a bunch of ... well, nobodies, to put it bluntly [...]

Facebook informant no. 8

This participant describes how he studies people’s profiles to get an impression of their political beliefs and whether they have friends in central positions. This way, he also gives us an impression of the social hierarchy of the arena. If people do not have

other Facebook-friends that are considered relevant expert citizens within the rhetorical arena, they are in this setting seen as “nobodies”. This is the same form of social exclusion that in previous chapters has been described in relation to how Twitter and Facebook facilitate a particular social environment of “chattering classes”.

The number of Facebook-friends varies a great deal between the informants, ranging from only a couple of hundreds to several thousands. They are not particularly concerned with how many friends they have, and they express little interest in maximizing their number of friends. The ideal for these expert citizens seems to be to surround themselves with knowledgeable and interesting people, not to build an audience of random Facebook-users. For the informants who did not have a strong position in the public before participatory media, the transitioning moment were when they got connected to certain actors and got access to their networks. A writer and columnist describes the first period when he connected to the opinion makers of the arena as “magical”:

[...] It is a strange phenomenon. And it was really quite magical the first months in particular. That ... what an effect it could have if you wrote something that was just a little bit different from what everybody else was writing. What a response! Ten minutes later five or ten very interesting people participated. There's nothing like it ...
Facebook informant no. 11

For this informant, Facebook represents a turning point in his public and political life, as it was here that he was introduced to the network of expert citizens.

Diversity of opinions is an essential part of this informant's understanding of this network. Different opinions and positions are associated with named individuals, and political interests are always associated with individuals, not political organizations or institutions. As networks are maintained by interactions between different profiles, people who interact in this arena can be expected to have a minimum of specific knowledge about each other. This contributes to the individualization of political debate by allowing the actors to relate to each other as individuals.

A high-school teacher is more directly concerned with the networking functions of Facebook:

[...] Facebook is all about – at least the way that I use it – it is important to be friends with influential people, those whose voice matters, the active opinion makers. [...] I think I realized that if you become friends with certain people, you can become friends with him and him and him. It's all connected somehow. Or else you won't get accepted as a friend.

Facebook informant no. 9

Being friends with the “right” people gives the informants access to what expert citizens read and share. Not the least, it signals to other people that serious people take them seriously. This way, being associated with the “right” people – with expert citizens, politicians, academics and well-known journalists – strengthens a person's initial ethos.

In sum, the ways in which the informants perceive the different affordances of social network sites describe a rhetorical setting that resembles an egalitarian and informal written conversation, where assessments of ethos and individual relations are formed over time and in line with internal social hierarchies. The affordances that shape social interactivity promote an interaction setting similar to that of a conversation, but without the non-verbal modes that influence *actio*. Actors in social network sites thus place more weight on other aspects of the interaction when they assess an actor's credibility and authenticity, like consistency of style and opinions.

In the conversational settings of social network sites, individually held opinions and personalized expressions are perceived as more genuine and more interesting than collectively held opinions. What people say in social network sites is presumed to be expressions of their own personal opinions and beliefs, and not collective opinions drawn from secondary relations, like a political party or a news organization. The affordances of profile management allow actors to form personal bonds and acquire specific knowledge about each other's beliefs and opinions over time and across different social settings, which support formation of political and social identities on an individual level.

The informants are also aware of how the affordances of social network sites influence ethos formation. The affordances of profile management and social

connectivity draw attention to social hierarchies and people's ability to form an impression of each other based on their connections in the network.

The Marks of Interesting Actors

The concept of social media-credibility is also closely associated with what the actors describe as the qualities of an interesting actor on Facebook and Twitter. An interesting actor successfully balances consistency and originality. A stance on one issue should preferably result from the same set of beliefs that premises a totally different issue, while also contributing with original and unexpected opinions and statements.

Originality and unpredictability testify that a person has done an honest assessment of a particular issue. This is in no way unique for participatory media. Credibility is a complex concept in other arenas as well. However, the interviews suggest that the informants perceive the connection between originality and consistency as different in participatory media than in traditional mass media and face-to-face situations.

The informants suggest that it is important for them that other people think that their opinions are original and occur as a result of an independent process of reasoning. Particularly the informants who do not have any other public roles express that it is more important for them that their arguments are perceived as "good arguments" and "good reasoning" than their ability to persuade.

An independent consultant describes how it has been a central goal for her to attain a certain "position" and be one of the opinion makers on Facebook:

I think it's fascinating to see how much effort it takes to get to such a position. I remember thinking that if I just work hard on this, then I can be like them. I can be one of those people who get a lot of "likes" and have a lot of interesting discussions on their page. But it doesn't come easily.

Q: What does it take?

I think it takes systematic work, to build yourself up, get credibility, stick with it, write, and spend time on writing those short updates, really put effort into them, and, not the least, follow up on what is happening in the threads.

Facebook informant no. 6

The prospect of getting recognition and status by other expert citizens is clearly a central motivation for this informant's intensive activity on Facebook. The particular characteristics she mentions here, are the amount of feedback actors get, the amount of attention and traffic they generate, and the quality and thoroughness of their texts.

A writer and columnist refers to himself as an example of an "interesting actor":

Just to be a bit self-involved: I guess some people find me interesting. So let me use myself as an example of a particular way of being interesting. It's one who doesn't say the same things as everyone else, and who people don't know what is going to say before he says it. Someone who discovers something that hasn't been said in the debate yet, something unexpected. I think I've got some credibility there as well. "At least it was a decent reasoning, even though I disagree". That's one version of it.

Facebook informant no. 11

To be an interesting actor entails a sense of novelty and originality of opinion. For this informant, the most central quality is the ability to say something original and unexpected.

An informant who has held many different public positions, both political and non-political, discusses and problematizes this claim of originality in social network sites:

[...] I believe that the real meaning of a requirement to surprise is that it is a requirement to be precise and to choose the right words [...] Because, in practice, that would mean that people wake up every day and think "what are my opinions today?" – like all these things are optional. But people don't work that way! We wake up with pretty much the same opinions as we had the day before, and slowly we evolve and try out new opinions. We don't surprise ourselves with a completely new set of opinions. People who do that are usually very ill! *laughs*

Facebook informant no. 13

Overall, the participants do not pay much attention to the abstract notion of a public opinion. When they discuss opinions, it is primarily on an individual level. It is the individual actor who "slowly evolves and tries out new opinions".

The requirement of contributing with new and original content does not mean that people are expected to display an entirely new set of opinions in every issue. On the contrary, the credibility of a rhetor requires that his/her argument is consistent with attitudes and beliefs that he/she has defended on previous occasions. As they interact

with each other over time, the expert citizens get specific knowledge about each other's arguments and opinions. Drawing on the consistencies of these arguments and opinions, they form impressions of different ideological identities. People are thought to have certain core beliefs and values that motivate them and inform their opinions on particular issues. This is in no way unique for ideas uttered in social network sites, but the interviews suggest that an active review of this ideological identity is more important for the establishment of credibility in social network sites than in other arenas.

From Public Roles to Individual Engagement

One of the clearest manifestations of the individualization of political debate on social network sites is found in the ways the participants describe the roles of politicians and journalists. The structuring properties of Twitter and Facebook draw attention to politicians or journalists as individuals. These tendencies are here described as processes of "individualization". This is not the same as processes of "intimization", that is often seen as a central feature of mass mediated political communication. The kind of "back-stage" Twitter and Facebook reveal is not one where the politicians drop their guards and give us a glimpse of their personal sphere and their private lives, but one where they display their genuine opinions, free from the strategic considerations that characterize political discourse in other arenas.

While traditional news media are usually dedicated to confronting politicians with party policies, or give a glimpse of their personal "back stage", these networked publics draw attention to politicians as opinionated individuals and their personal attitudes towards policies. Similarly, both journalists and other participants describe how social network sites have changed how they perceive the role of journalists. Twitter and Facebook are considered appropriate arenas for "branding" individual journalists, and impressions of journalists' individual character and personal opinions are increasingly seen as relevant information for evaluating the content they produce and share.

The Role of Politicians on Twitter

Discussing the role of politicians on Twitter, the participants make a very clear distinction between politicians in general and the minority of politicians who are integrated in the Twitter-sphere. Most politicians are thought to only share content about themselves and their party. If they debate other users, it is so that they can spread their political agenda. These politicians are described as “boring” and “uninteresting”. They interrupt the conversation with strategic actions. A former politician gives a typical description of how most politicians are thought to appear on Twitter:

They're only concerned with strategic communication, you know. So it's dishonest and false.

Q: Are they not interesting?

Yes. Because it's dishonest and false. It's all strategy. They don't really let loose. It happens occasionally – and I'm sure some are better than others. And of course they're better when they're in opposition than when they're in office. But ...

Twitter informant no. 11

Politicians who are seen as insiders in this networked public are perceived to participate on the same grounds as other insider-actors. This includes sharing their personal opinions and beliefs, even when these opinions differ from party policy.

The informants maintain that tweeting requires a personal commitment and endorsement of the viewpoints shared, and suggest that Twitter in some way can reveal a more nuanced picture of the political landscape. Several of the informants, including active politicians and journalists, claim that Twitter has given them a better overview of the various members of political groups. A Member of Parliament discusses this effect in the context of “individualization of politics”:

I think it contributes to an individualization of politics, in a good way. You get a better understanding of what the individual representatives think. Because of Twitter, I've got a clear impression of which politicians and which advisors are talented and not. I get a sense of who they are, provided that they tweet honestly. Most talented people do.

Twitter informant no. 15

“Individualization of politics” is here used to describe what this informant understands as a shift in attention from collective opinions to individual opinions. This implies that there is a difference between politicians’ individual opinions and the party line, and that this difference is relevant information for the public. Impressions of other politicians’ competence and character are thus heavily depended on them being perceived as genuine, or “honest”, as this informant describes it.

A political journalist gives a similar description. She describes how Twitter has given her a better overview of different political representatives:

If it weren’t for Twitter, it would have been very difficult to keep track of what every back-bencher for the Labour party is currently concerned with. I don’t necessarily follow that very closely on Twitter either. But we do have some examples of MPs, who don’t have a very prominent position, but who are very active on Twitter. They’ve got the opportunity to prove themselves there, and it is an important arena for Norwegian civic debate. It can have a democratic effect. It’s no longer only the parties who decide who gets the spotlight.

Twitter informant no. 17

The impression of a personalization of politicians’ opinions on Twitter is further emphasized by how the informants discuss inter-media effects between Twitter and traditional media. When Twitter is described as a way to influence the media agenda, it is usually on behalf of individual politicians. The politicians describe how they put a personal spin on issues in order to get an interview in a newspaper or a spot on the radio. Another Member of Parliament emphasizes how Twitter gives individual politicians the opportunity to reinterpret or redefine situations:

It gives us an opportunity to spread information on our own terms, which is important. I think that it’s got some democratic value. It might even build ... Perhaps it contributes to an individualization of politics. It’s not only the party organizations that have political opinions anymore. Individual politicians can also provide valuable opinions and nuances, perhaps even in opposition to their party’s official policies.

Twitter informant no. 15

The primary audience for such information is the expert citizens on Twitter. In this segment, the political opinions of the party organizations are both well-known and seen as rather uninteresting. The Member of Parliament emphasizes that individual

politicians can “provide valuable opinions and nuances”. This way, the individualization of politics can make political discourse more engaging. At another point in the interview, he compares Twitter and Facebook in this regard. Here, he describes how Twitter makes him “freer”:

On Twitter I’m a bit freer. I represent myself to a greater extent. It is regarded as a forum where one can be a bit more pointed and a bit more honest perhaps – and less of a “party rabbit”

Twitter informant no. 15

Throughout the interview, this politician describes this “individualization of politics” as a positive thing. It is believed to be democratizing, and its result is thought to be more “honest”. Other informants who directly or indirectly discuss this phenomenon, describe how they have gotten a “better overview” of the public, implying that individually held opinions are somehow more truthful than opinions gathered from political parties or other political organizations.

The Role of Politicians on Facebook

Discussing the role of politicians on Facebook, the informants express no interest in following or interacting with national politicians, as they are thought to use Facebook mainly for one-way communication. The informants seem to be of the opinion that Facebook is even less suited for traditional political discourse than Twitter. The affordances of Facebook – the semi-private environment, the personal nature of the relations, the speed and the length of the conversations, etc. – amount to a setting in which it is difficult to maintain a strategic form of communication. The politicians are present, but not in the role that the expert citizens are interested in.

A non-fictional writer offers his impression of the role of politicians on Facebook:

Q: What about politicians? Do you often interact with politicians?

Politicians are – except for a very few – politicians are very reticent, in my opinion. There are some freethinkers, but there’s very few of them. So politicians really play a minor role.

Facebook informant no. 8

Although the informants are very clear that Facebook-use for them is a form of political engagement, they rarely talk about politicians or party-politics. The most notable exception is when they describe how they exploit their social connections with local politicians to get them involved in particular issues.

Since the informants do not interact with many politicians on Facebook, they do not see Facebook as an important source of information about different politicians. An editor in a national newspaper describes why he believes that participation on Facebook can involve a risk for established politicians:

I think it can be harmful for them [politicians], because these kinds of debates can last long into the night, and not all that is said bear scrutiny. If a tabloid were to pick it up the next day and say “Look at this! He said this!” ... It’s dangerous to engage in discourse that doesn’t cut to the chase. I think it is incredibly complicated for a politician to participate in an engaging way. And I see no examples of it.

Facebook informant no. 4

The way informants talk about the “insider” politicians is descriptive of how the individualization of political debate impacts ethos-formation. A writer and columnist describes a young Member of Parliament as an exception to how politicians usually behave on Facebook:

[...] He speaks his mind, but he’s not stubborn in a way that he doesn’t listen to other arguments. That’s my impression. The way he talks is very different from other politicians. You know, most politicians just want to be slippery and rather not say anything at all. They’re hopeless in this context. But he’s not. He recently got a higher position. But he doesn’t bother with a communication advisor at this level. He’s in charge. The others wouldn’t dare that.

Facebook informant no. 11

What is thought to separate this politician from politicians in general, is that he “speaks his mind” and that he is “not stubborn in a way that he doesn’t listen to other arguments”. The speech situation implied here, is not one where public officials debate, but of individuals discussing their personal opinions and disagreements. To be included among the expert citizens on Facebook, politicians must be thought to participate in this form of discussion.

The Role of Journalists on Twitter

All the journalists identified in the sampling process work with op-eds, either in printed newspapers or on online news sites. As opinionated journalists, political opinions and political debates are their main areas of interest. The sample in itself emphasizes the individualistic nature of opinionated journalism in online environments. An interesting question is thus to what extent Twitter has influenced how these journalists express opinions and how they administer the newspaper as a platform for political opinions.

The relation between the role of journalists and the individualization of political debate in social network sites is two-sided. On one hand, the introduction of social network sites has expanded the role of the journalist to areas outside of their professional domain. Discussions about journalistic content have been made available everywhere and at all times.

One of the informants is an experienced journalist who claims that her Twitter-profile is “one hundred percent associated with [her] job as a journalist”. Still, it is clear that she associates tweeting with far more than her work-routine. The majority of journalists interviewed share this experience. It suggests that journalism – and particularly opinionated journalism – is not a job one does, but a role one has:

Yeah, you're always online, you know. You've probably checked out my Twitter-feed and gotten embarrassed. It's pretty much happening at night. So it's really something I do outside of work.

Twitter informant no. 6

On the other hand, the introduction of participatory media has blurred the line between the journalists' professional role and their private opinions. The journalists interviewed suggest that their professional identities are closely related to their online persona, at the same time as the credibility and distribution of journalistic content are increasingly dependent on the public's attention to the journalist as “brand” and “profile”.

The journalists admit that they tweet to enhance their own career in one way or another. They are either encouraged by their employer to build their participatory media “brand”, or they believe that presence on Twitter can generate more attention and traffic to their articles.

The “buzz” on Twitter also affects which topics they consider to be relevant, what they recognize as the dominating opinions surrounding these topics, and what would be an original or supplementary comment. After they have published an article, they follow the reactions and participate in discussions on Twitter.

The same journalist describes how important Twitter and other participatory media have become for opinionated journalism:

I don't understand how they in the past dared to stay in the office, only talking to their colleague, hammering away. But perhaps they got away with it. They didn't get that much feedback. So they thought it was OK. But now we are constantly corrected. And you catch up on what people think. You see what's moving out there. What concerns people. What they think about the big issues. Of course it's important that you don't just go with the flow. You have to have independent opinions as well.

Twitter informant no. 6

The journalists explain that loyalty to their employer and the norms of journalism influence how they act in participatory media, even if the issue they discuss is not associated with their news organization. However, Twitter and tweeting is still considered primarily an outlet for their personal opinions. It is beyond the direct influence of editors, and although most news organizations have both formal and informal guidelines for journalists' use of participatory media, the journalists tend to describe their Twitter-profile as more personal than professional. Particularly for the younger journalists, participatory media blurs the line between their professional role as journalists and the more personal role as politically engaged citizen. Some of these young journalists even experience that they got their job in part because of their participatory media persona.

Political opinions constitute one arena in which the dynamic between the professional and the personal surface for the journalists. A young journalist in a major national newspaper explains how she feels the need to disclose her political opinions to her readers:

Q: Do you think your followers would be able to guess what you vote in elections?

They don't have to guess. I told them. I saw no reason not to. Or, I saw many reasons not to reveal that, but even more reasons to do so. So they don't need go guess.

Q: You revealed that before the last election?

I was undecided for so long, weighing pros and cons, and when I finally made up my mind I told people what I decided. Since my job in this newspaper is to facilitate public debate, the least thing I can do is to be tough enough to debate things myself and stand by the decisions I make.

Twitter informant no. 5

This journalist bases her credibility on what she recognizes as a gatekeeper-role, though not on neutrality and distance to the topic, but on disclosing her personal political stances. This position implies that journalistic and editorial decisions are a product of the journalists' personal opinions and beliefs. It suggests that the readers should be informed about of the journalist's values and opinions, as this in a way would give them a more honest impression of the debate section of the newspaper.

All the journalists say they assume that their own political beliefs are apparent to their followers. As they all work with opinionated journalism in some way, this is not necessarily contradictory to their professional role. However, their way of reasoning on the topic of this (journalistic) juxtaposition reveals an understanding of their role in this arena as far more subjective, personal and potentially agitating than the newspaper genres allow them to be.

A journalist in an online news and debate site suggests that political advocacy is an element in the construction of a public profile:

And after a while – especially after I started in [national newspaper] in 2007 or 2008 and became more of a public profile – than suddenly I got more followers. Then I realized that it's a great way to get in contact with people that are higher up in the media hierarchy. And then it became a way to get attention, which is great for an aspiring journalist. But it's especially a way to influence and impact important people.

Twitter informant no. 12

The attitude expressed here is typical for the journalists interviewed. Twitter is seen as a way to enhance one's career by getting attention and respect for one's opinions. It also points to a tension most journalists have to deal with in this arena. Twitter is believed to be a public space, which suggests that journalists are bound by their public roles, while the default interaction setting is understood as personal. The non-journalistic informants also recognize this tension. A common claim among them is that participatory media have given them a better overview of the various journalists in

different news media. While they previously would have an impression of the newspapers' editorial profiles, they now have an impression of what they believe to be the personal values and opinions of individual journalists.

The Role of Journalists on Facebook

Facebook is also believed to have made opinionated journalism more confrontational, more network-based and more reliant on the “branding” of individual journalist. The journalist interviewed describes how Facebook has changed the way articles are marketed and distributed. The individual journalist has been given more responsibility for the uptake of articles.

An editor in a major national newspaper places great emphasis on these changes when he talks about the role of journalists in social network sites:

Now, everything can be measured. You can measure how many people read the piece, how far they have read, where the readers come from, how many have followed the links and those kinds of things. Before, if you got feedback, it was in form of an actual letter sent to the editor that was complimenting your work or something. Now you get that response right away. That might have the effect that some people think that the publication doesn't matter that much anymore – that it's you that is the message. That way it might have led to a form of individualization. But I'm a bit concerned for the effects of that kind of instant gratification [...]

Facebook informant no. 5

Other informants share these experiences of higher tempo and more focus on the individual journalist. They claim that participatory media have made them more attentive to individual journalists as participants in the public debate, and that they have gotten a better idea of the opinions and beliefs of various journalists. Some journalists are also described as “profiles” that are bigger than the newspapers they represent, at least within the parameters of this arena.

A non-fictional writer describes his impression of journalists on Facebook:

[...] What they communicate to the public is not necessarily what they mean. They wrap it in cotton, most of the time. Unless they work for Klassekampen [national newspaper] or they're writing very polemic. But when they're on social media [...] you can sort of see what they really mean. It's very revealing. You'll start reading them in a different light, and they'll be disputed in very different ways than when it was a one-way form of communication. *Facebook informant no. 8*

Regular contact over a certain period of time lets the informants form impressions of the individual journalists. They now increasingly possess specific knowledge about different journalists' interests, values and knowledge. This is thought to give them a more truthful impression of the preferences that guides the news agenda.

Facebook is also frequently referred to as a journalistic resource. It is believed that the journalists get a better overview of the public, and that it helps them acquire a broader social network. Facebook is seen as a tool to identify and access new "voices" and new opinions and arguments.

The formerly mentioned editor is often referred to as one of the media gatekeepers who most actively support inter-media effects between news media and Facebook. He describes how he has "found a lot of new stuff" through participatory media:

I have found a lot of new stuff. I have found a lot of strange, common things that are far from the lounges and academia and those channels – all through social media.

Facebook informant no. 5

This editor describes how Facebook for him has become an invaluable tool for keeping track of variations and changes in public opinion, and to identify new potential opinion-makers. This informant, and others with a similar background, is very concerned with the opinions and expressions of "ordinary" people. Facebook is believed to have given journalists and editors access to vernacular expressions that have previously been inaccessible and unknown to them. This way, it has given media gatekeepers access to political opinions that are believed to represent a truer and more genuine expression of public opinion.

Summary: Personalized Opinions and Credibility in Participatory Media

More than the traditional arenas of mass media, Twitter and Facebook are believed to facilitate political debate based on the actors' personal opinions and personal engagement with the issue. The structuring properties of Twitter and Facebook draw attention to actors as individuals and to opinions as individual opinions.

This is due in part to the particular conditions the affordances of social network sites place on *ethos*-formation. On Twitter and Facebook, people tend to see each other as conversation-partners rather than audience members; they perceive peoples' opinions as their own personal opinions, not the expressions of political organizations or collective ideologies, and they acquire specific knowledge about each other over time, what they think, how they argue and who they interact with.

Although social network sites facilitate conversational situations, they do not give people the opportunity to judge each other as more or less credible based on voice and body language, which would be natural to do in face-to-face interactions. This makes actors place more emphasis on other features, like originality and consistency of opinions, when they evaluate credibility. These qualities are not unique to social network sites, but the interviews suggest that they play a more important role here than in the rhetorical arenas of traditional mass media.

In order to be seen as an interesting actor within the networked public that the informants are a part of, one must combine novelty of expression and originality of argumentation with consistency of opinions. In specific situations, this is reflected in actors' ability to give original and individual contributions to the debate. This way, the rhetorical affordances of Twitter and Facebook naturally facilitate individualized debates and personalized expressions.

The strong connection between social media-credibility and individualization of political debate is particularly visible in the way the participants talk about the changing roles of politicians and journalists. In general, politicians are seen as boring and uninteresting in these arenas. They interrupt the conversation with strategic arguments and are usually unwilling to have a genuine discussion. But Twitter is also believed to reveal a truer image of politicians' opinions. Either they embrace the kind of opinion-exchange the rhetorical arena affords, or their values and beliefs will become apparent over time. This way, Twitter contributes to what one participant describes as "the individualization of politics". While traditional news media are usually dedicated to confronting politicians with party policies, social network sites draw attention to politicians as opinionated individuals that have personal attitudes towards different policies.

The introduction of social network sites has also blurred the line between journalists' professional role and personal opinions. Twitter and Facebook are believed to have made opinionated journalism more confrontational, more network-based and more reliant on the "branding" of the individual journalist. As a consequence, the character and personal opinions of individual journalists are increasingly seen as relevant information for evaluating the content they produce and share. Furthermore, social network sites are seen as new and important ways for editors and journalist to access new "voices", which usually means to keep up to date on the vernacular expressions of "ordinary" citizens. Journalists and editors see social network sites as a way to read political opinion as it is expressed in the personal opinions of individual citizens.

The previous chapter described how the rhetor-audience relations are typically perceived from the perspective of the rhetor, focusing on the impressions and expectations the rhetor has to the audience in these encounter settings. In this chapter, I have focused on the particular opportunities and limitations these encounter settings place on *ethos*-formation as it is described from the position of the audience.

Adding New Dimensions to Political Individualization and Personalized Politics

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the relation between social network sites and processes of individualization of political debate. I have suggested three conditions that are central to these processes: 1) a strong connection between person and beliefs; 2) an individualistic approach to public and professional roles, and 3) an argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreement. So far, I have described how the first two of these conditions are met by the rhetorical affordances and the rhetor-audience relations of Twitter and Facebook. In the next chapter, I describe how an argument culture of personal disagreement is established by the topical structures of these rhetorical arenas.

Seeing the results of the interviews in a broader theoretical perspective, a relevant question is how the informants' experiences relate to existing understandings of processes of political individualization in social network sites.

When they describe how social network sites contribute to processes of political individualization, Calenda and Meijer (Calenda & Meijer, 2011) draw attention to how

these media create opportunities for individuals to maintain social connections outside of existing communities. The interviews demonstrate how this is clearly a central motivation for the Norwegian expert citizens. Furthermore, the interviews provide detail descriptions of how these expert citizens experience these new social connections. The affordances of social network sites allow them to form personal bonds over time and across different social settings. This way, they offer new conditions for ethos formation. Central to these new conditions for ethos formation is that they favor individually held political and social identities.

Calenda and Meijer (Calenda & Meijer, 2011) also suggest that the use of new media and political individualization are both manifestations of a broader process of societal change that results in increasing autonomy and technology use. By seeing processes of political individualization as a central trait of modernization, they imply that reservations should be made when we make claims about the role of social network sites in these processes.

The way the informants talk about the fragmentation of public roles in participatory media does not necessarily suggest that they see the introduction of Twitter and Facebook as the leading reasons behind the fragmentation of the public and the individualization of politics. Rather, they tend to see these arenas as particularly suitable for, or as clear expressions of, developments that take place across different arenas and institutions, like the digitalization of the news media and the declining support for political parties.

Another relevant question is how the informants' experiences relate to theoretical descriptions of how personalized politics are expressed in social network sites.

Lance Bennett (2012) presents three conditions that in varying degrees and combinations are involved in personalized politics. Again, the interviews can both confirm and supplement this description. Bennett's first condition is "an ethos of diversity and inclusiveness defined by tolerance for different viewpoints and even different issues linked across loosely bounded political networks" (Bennett, 2012, p. 22). Based on the interviews, it is clear that the informants support this ethos of diversity and inclusiveness, and that they interpret and describe their own actions in

accordance with it. All of the informants state that they are interested in interacting with people of different beliefs and opinions than themselves, and they actively oppose the notion that social network sites support political echo chambers.

In addition to confirming Bennett's observations, the interviews also suggest how this condition can influence the role of politicians and journalists both within and beyond these arenas. Twitter and Facebook are described as arenas where politicians display their genuine opinions, free from the strategic considerations that characterize political discourse in other arenas. The informants also recognize that these arenas have changed how they perceive the role of journalists. Twitter and Facebook are considered appropriate arenas for "branding" individual journalists, and impressions of journalists' individual character and personal opinions are increasingly seen as relevant information for evaluating the content they produce and share.

Bennett's second condition is "the rise of crowd-sourced inclusive personal action frames [...] that lower the barriers of identification" (Bennett, 2012, p. 22). Again, the interviews can serve as a concrete example of how this general condition affects situated rhetorical action. The interviews suggest how individually held opinions and personalized expressions are thought to be more genuine and more interesting than collectively held opinions and collective expressions. Clearly, it is important for the informants that their ideas and opinions are perceived as original and as the result of an independent process of reasoning. It can even seem as if it is more important for them that their arguments are perceived as individual and original examples of "good reasoning" than that they actually work persuasively.

This also affects the conditions for rhetorical action. Personal action frames change the nature of identification as a premise for persuasion. They invite the audience to make the issue their own by relating it to their own personal experiences and priorities, instead of simply identifying with the speakers' situation. As these frames have become integral structuring elements in the arena, a rhetor must adjust to the premise that the audience is likely to invoke personal action frames when they interpret and assess utterances. This chapter has suggested how actors who balance professional roles and personal identities are affected by the rhetorical arenas' preference for personalized expressions. On Twitter and Facebook, a journalist or a

politician must assume that people are likely to read their opinions as individual and personal.

Bennett's third condition is that political participation is "importantly channeled through often dense social networks over which people can share their own stories and concerns" (Bennett, 2012, p. 22). This condition is more clearly present in cases of social movements – which is the focus of Bennett's own research – than in the more stable, and often very elitist, practice that characterizes political discussion among expert citizens. While Bennett's concern is placed on how people activate already existing social networks as catalysts for collective action, this case demonstrates how the formation and maintenance of a networked public in itself is considered a relevant part of political rhetorical practice within these arenas. Social network sites afford actors the ability to shape an online "persona" and express their individuality in interaction with other actors. These relations are in turn seen as relevant elements when determining an actors' role and credibility. The interviews suggest how being associated with the "right" people – with expert citizens, politicians, academics and well-known journalists – strengthens a person's initial ethos.

Chapter 9: Topical Structures and Individualization

This chapter explores how individualization of political debate is interrelated with the topical structures of social network sites. As described in chapter 8, I here understand the theme *individualization of political debate* as involving three conditions: 1) a strong connection between person and beliefs; 2) an individualistic approach to public and professional roles; and 3) an argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreement. In chapter 8, I have described how the rhetorical affordances and the rhetor-audience relations of Twitter and Facebook create both a strong connection between person and beliefs and an individualization of professional and public roles within these arenas. In this chapter, I describe how an argument culture of personal disagreement is established by the topical structures of Twitter and Facebook.

A recurring theme in the interviews is how political debates on Twitter and Facebook are concentrated around easily personalized political issues, what is here referred to as *social media-friendly issues*. These issues involve immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech. They are thought to encourage people's personal opinions and evaluations more than issues that concern for instance local government or economy. This way, these issues also allow people to easily read and express political and social identities. In combination with the conversational interaction settings of Twitter and Facebook, this blurs the line between political discussions and personal disagreement.

When the informants discuss social media-friendly issues, they pay much attention to a phenomenon that social scientists and comments have described as "culture wars". Some of the informants refer to this term explicitly. Others are clearly keen to describe the phenomenon, but without the terminology of the social sciences.

"Culture wars" is here meant to describe a deeply rooted and long lasting disagreement over a complex of particularly polarizing, and often morally conflicting, issues. Originally introduced by James Davison Hunter (Hunter, 1992), the term has been used to describe the cultural divide between conservative and liberal values in America. When some of the informants use this term and its adjacent social theory to

describe and rationalize own behaviour, it is because they think it descriptive of how some recurring themes and debates primarily serve as symbolic expressions of more deeply rooted political identities.

In the latter part of the chapter, I discuss how these topical structures can be seen in relation to the understanding of political rhetoric promoted in this dissertation (see chapter 2). Here I try to answer two questions: Why are some issues perceived as more suitable for discussion in social network sites than others? And in what ways does the predominance of certain issues affect expert citizens’ perceptions of political talk on Twitter and Facebook?

I have previously argued that social network sites facilitate encounter settings that favour individual participation and personalized expressions. Here, I argue that these encounter settings in turn promote contention about issues that the actors see as “principle” and “value based”. This way, the encounter settings of social network sites affect not only how people talk, but also what they talk about.

The analysis in this chapter in this chapter is devoted to further exploration of the *topical structures* of these arenas and draw primarily on the informants’ replies to the interview questions that concern this.

The analysis is then based primarily on quotes that match the following codes:

Central codes:	Interviews	Entries
Types of issues	30	161
Issue focus	22	51
Issue value	29	97
Motivation of participation	28	130
Personal consequences	24	54
Ideological identity	25	63
New political dimensions	7	19
The cultural context	9	21
The political context	12	23

Table 9.1: A selection of the most central codes referenced in this chapter:

The Twitter- and Facebook-Friendly Issues

Previous chapters have shown how the informants understand themselves as part of a particular segment of expert citizens, or “chattering classes”, based on how they use social network sites as an arena for political discussion and socialization. A central element in their description of this social environment is the kind of issues they typically discuss.

When discussing the topical structures of Twitter as a rhetorical arena, the informants describe some political issues as particularly “Twitter-friendly”: The arena generates more attention to what they call “value politics” or “culture wars”. These issues involve immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech. The informants describe these issues as “hot button issues”, articulating “principles”, “moral aspects”, and “an element of something private”, to involving “personal and collective identity”, and being “controversial”, “touchy” or “flammable”.

Similarly, there are some issues that are considered to be particularly important among expert citizens on Facebook. The informants state that they are interested in discussing “principal issues” and more fundamental political questions. The political debates on Facebook clearly revolve around issues related to immigration, Islam, and cultural integration, but the informants also express interests in questions related to gender roles, national culture, the role of religion in society, and the tensions between rural and urban Norway. These issues are described as “emotionally guided” and “polarizing”, characterized by “high temperature” and dealt with in an “existential tone”.

An indication of the importance of these issues is their central role in the informants’ account of own participation. The process of socialization into the network was for many of the informants not simply a question of acquiring new ways of communicating their opinions. It involved establishing opinions on issues that they previously had not paid much attention to. The social network sites introduced them to new processes of creating salience and new processes of collectivization, and through this, new ways of acting politically. Therefore, the informants often experience the

forming of political opinions and the construction of a social media-identity as integrated processes.

For the informants discussing Facebook, this is most often associated with the immigration debate. Many of the participants state that they have become more aware of the nuances of this debate and the different positions that people hold. A university professor describes how Facebook has introduced him to new sources of information about this policy area:

There have been several discussions that have opened my eyes. I think it was through Facebook that I was made aware of that Brockman-report [public report on the financial consequences of immigration to Norway], and I had to read it – not just hear about it, but actually see what’s in there.

Facebook informant no. 1

This professor also states that Facebook has “changed the way he thinks politically”. His experience is that the actors and practices he has been introduced to through Facebook, have exposed him to new news sources, new political opinions, and new arguments, that in turn have affected his impression of what issues a citizen should be expected to have an informed opinion about.

Similarly, a non-fictional writer admits that his very active involvement on Facebook has had an impact on his political opinions:

[...] I must admit that that group has influenced me. In terms of ... Not that they have made me right wing! It’s more like they have shared so many interesting links and made such compelling arguments for their case that I have realized that it actually make sense.

Facebook informant no. 12

The way this informant states that he has been influenced, is similar to how the professor describe that Facebook has “changed the way he thinks politically”. Exposure to new sources of information is thought to have made a lasting impression on what these actors perceive as important political issues and how they look at themselves as active members of society.

In general, when the informants describe how their opinions and beliefs have changed as a result of their activities on Twitter or Facebook, it is almost always in

relations to issues that fit the description of social media-friendly issues. Typically, the informants state that they have become more concerned with issues of immigration and cultural integration, or they have become more aware of issues related to national security and freedom of speech.

These issues are usually very present on the news agenda. The majority of the informants recognize that when issues like immigration, religion, and cultural integration dominate the debate in social network sites, it is because they get a lot of attention in the news. Still, many of the informants state that it is activity on Twitter or Facebook that have altered their perception of how important these issues are, or how central they should be, in the public debate. Some of the informants feel that the news media either do not give these issues high enough priority or they feel that the news coverage is one-sided. Others feel that social network sites give them a better overview of the issues and the surrounding positions and opinions.

The previously mentioned non-fictional writer offers an explanation for why he thinks expert citizens on Facebook are so preoccupied with immigration debate. His explanation also provides insights into how the informants think that participatory media can provide new ways of dealing with issues that traditional news media cannot:

It is because something serious has happened in Europe, and now it is knocking on our door. But there are lots of interesting things going on here, which relate to more long-term debates. Like that whole debate about kindness and morale. That's been going on for a long time. They are *de facto* very similar. And they also relate to the left and the right wing. There are those who believe that the left has failed to see the seriousness of this issue. And then there are those who say the opposite, that many opinion makers, who should have known better, have slipped over to the right and are "compromising with evil forces".

So it's both. And many people have a strong emotional attachment to this: Their identity as good people, their humanitarian spirit, but also their feeling of where they stand on the right-left axis. And that can be confusing, because this axis is not so clear anymore.

Facebook informant no. 12

This account incorporates most of the reasons why some issues are believed to be more social media-friendly than others. Based on this and other quotes, we can identify three characteristics of this type of issues.

First, social media-friendly are seen as important and urgent beyond the interest-scope of social network sites. Particularly immigration issues are repeatedly described as the defining issue of our time. The news agenda in the general time period when the interviews were conducted supports this impression. Immigration issues received a lot of attention in this period, as a result of record numbers of refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern countries. When the informants repeatedly refer to immigration and issues relating to immigration as *the* dominant issue in social network sites, it should be seen in relation to the issue's presence on the news agenda. Nothing suggests that the informants believe the social media-friendly issues to be generated by, or confined to, the political debate on Twitter and Facebook. However, these arenas are seen as particularly well suited for discussing these issues.

Second, social media-friendly issues are thought to have the potential to incorporate and re-frame *topical structures* from other arenas and to renew and reinforce existing political dimensions. The informants often describe these issues as “polarizing” or as new expressions of underlying polarization. The informant quoted above describes how current immigration issues “relate to more long-term debates” and also “relate to the left and the right wing”. Like many other informants, this writer believes that political debates in social network sites can clarify how new political issues fit into established categories. Other informants suggest that Twitter and Facebook have the potential to bring to the fore political dimensions that traditional media ignore or marginalize. Social media-friendly issues are difficult to define along the financial left-right axis that has traditionally dominated Scandinavian politics. The left-right axis is still the most important dimension when describing different political and social identities within these arenas, but, as this informant claims, it is “not so clear anymore”.

Third, social media-friendly issues are believed to be particularly important for how people identify themselves politically and socially. The interviews suggest that people feel a strong emotional attachment to these issues, as they are intertwined with their personal sense of morale. The informants also recognize that the public debates surrounding these issues are often framed as moral controversies, rather than issues of collective decision-making. This emphasizes how the actors' stances on these issues

quickly are considered personal, moral judgements. The informants either support these moral frames, or they explicitly oppose them. Either way, they recognize that how they relate to these issues have a bearing on how others perceive them and place them in the political landscape beyond that particular issue.

These three characteristics of social media-friendly issues give us an idea of in what way the informants understand these arenas as political. Close connections to the news agenda suggests that these arenas primarily deal with current issues of collective concern. Although they do not facilitate collective decision-making in any proper sense of the term, they can impact deliberative processes as they move between particular situations and particular media. Furthermore, as social media-friendly issues are believed to incorporate and re-frame existing topical structures, and renew and reinforce existing political dimensions, they also draw attention to how social network sites can influence processes of agenda-setting and framing. And finally, as these issues are believed to emphasize people's need to define political identities through moral categories, they also suggest how Twitter and Facebook can contribute to the formation and re-formation of collective identities.

The informants also describe Twitter- and Facebook-friendly issues in different ways. Some describe Twitter-friendly issues as issues that draw attention to values and belief systems that are markedly at odds with each other, resembling what commentators have described as "culture wars". Others are more concerned with the issues' potential for personal involvement and how they are suited for exploring and expressing political identities.

The informants' descriptions of Facebook-friendly issues focus on three characteristics: 1) they are emotive issues that are typically dominated by pathos-based argumentation; 2) they display moral and ethical dilemmas that invite moral positioning and highlight both the speaker and the audience's political and social identity; and 3) they require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion. Similar to the descriptions given of Twitter-friendly issues, the issue that are thought to dominate on Facebook draw attention to the users' social and political identity and the divisions and positioning that are done on the basis of such identities.

“Culture wars”: Political Debate as Personal Disagreement on Twitter

An editor gives an account of what kinds of issues, in his opinion, dominate on Twitter. The way he describes these issues suggest that he has reflected on this question before:

Q: Are some issues better suited than others?

I would say that the dominating issues are ... “hot button issues” are probably more often present on Twitter, while for instance macroeconomics are rarely present. It reflects what Norwegian pundits know anything about. And that’s not much. [laughs] There are economical discussions on Twitter, but not many. There are a lot of cultural struggles. Immigration, racism, gender, those kinds of things. The debate about physicians’ privilege not to perform certain procedures. Abortion. Circumcision. A lot of those things. But of course there are also tax-debates. I’ve tweeted about that.

Q: The issues you list, would it be correct to call them “value issues”?

Yes, you can say that. But I call them “hot button issues”. Of course you can call them value issues, but I wouldn’t use that term. I’d rather use the English term “culture wars”. It contains a lot of that, but is not reduced to that. It can also include climate change. You can put anything into culture wars now. When feelings get intensified, that kind of polarization happens. Climate change has definitely been a part of my Twitter-feed.

Twitter informant no. 8

This informant – who himself holds a degree in the social sciences – clearly interprets his own actions and the actions of others in light of social theories. He describes the dominating issues of the Twitter-sphere as “hot button issues” and disagreements over these issues as a kind of “culture war”. These terms give us an impression of how the informants conceptualize political issues within the arena. Also, they suggest that disagreements about political issues are largely motivated by differences in identities and the moral authorities that inform these identities.

Both the term “hot button issues” and “culture wars” offer some connotations about particular kinds of political activity. “Hot button issues” are emotional and usually controversial issues that are urgent and dividing. Oftentimes “hot button issues” involve disagreement about how they should be understood and how they reflect on the political society. This way, they typically involve disagreements relating to all three of the processes of political rhetoric: processes of decision-making, processes of creating salience, and processes of collective identity formation. The

dividing lines are therefore far deeper than what we can assume is the case in issues where the disagreements are concentrated around decision-making.

The term “culture wars” usually refers to a specific set of such hot button issues that form continuous antagonism between people with different political and social identities. “Culture wars” or “cultural conflicts” imply that the relation between antagonism and identity is mutually reinforcing. On one hand, the antagonism is the result of deeply rooted identities. On the other hand, people define own and others’ identity based on their positions on these issues. The term “culture wars” was introduced by James Davison Hunter (Hunter, 1992) to describe the growing divide between conservative and progressive values in American politics. Hunter observed a polarization in the American public along the issues of abortion, gun laws, global warming, immigration, separation of church and state, homosexuality, recreational drug use, privacy, and censorship (Hunter, 1992). The way that the public were divided along these issues, suggested that there was a “war” going on over the moral ethos of the American people. Since then, “culture wars” has become a familiar *topos*, particularly in American politics (Chaman & Ciment, 2015; D'Antonio, Tuch, & Baker, 2013; Hartman, 2015; Thomson, 2010).

Hunter defines cultural conflicts as “political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding” (Hunter, 1992, p. 42). The systemness of these moral understandings is highly variable. Ordinary citizens will usually not give their full support to one such system, but find themselves somewhere in between on various issues. The principles that mark these moral understandings, are not trifling opinions or attitudes, but “basic commitments and beliefs that provide a source of identity, purpose, and togetherness for the people who live by them” (Hunter, 1992, p. 42). These values and beliefs are internalized as political and social identities. Again, individual citizens will usually not fully acquire such an identity. Rather, they form their own social and political identity in relation to these ideals.

While Hunter focuses on the American political landscape, others have used the concept of “culture wars” to describe polarization between different values in Canada, Australia, and Europe (Flanagan & Lee, 2003; Kaiser & Clark, 2003; Kidd, 1992; Peppard, 2008). In Norway, political scientists have for decades emphasized political

dimensions that have some resemblance to these “culture wars”, like the relation between church and state, the status of religion in schools, urban versus rural Norway, and conservative versus liberal values (Rokkan, 1987; Rokkan & Valen, 1964). In recent years, new forms of cultural integration have led to new kinds of political dimensions, like freedom of expression versus respect for religious beliefs, and women’s rights versus minority rights.

If we recognize that the concept of “culture wars” has some explanatory potential for the rhetorical practices of networked publics, it can give us a better understanding of how we should understand these practices as political rhetoric. It gives us an idea of how people perceive these networks in relation to the larger public sphere. The culture war is believed to be fuelled by deep personal disagreements that leave their mark on all areas of public life: in art, education, law, politics, religion, and, not the least, the mass media. This way, the concept of “culture wars” offers us a way to describe vernacular, aesthetic and strategic expressions as parts of the same processes.

Also, it shifts the area of antagonism from processes of collective decision-making to processes of collectivisation and processes of creating salience. Processes of decision-making are seen as manifestations of more fundamental differences in interests or as temporary settlements in a continuous state of disagreement over what should be the moral authority of society. Hunter understands moral authority as “the basis by which people determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, and so on” (Hunter, 1992, p. 42). This is very similar to the political functions of epideictic rhetoric: the construction of collective identities through shared values, knowledge and beliefs. In other words, the understanding of own beliefs as part of a “culture war” suggest that the informants are not primarily motivated by the potential of influencing political decisions. They are also motivated by a desire to influence the public agenda and the moral authorities of the political society.

This informant explicitly uses the concepts of “hot button issues” and “culture wars” to describe what he perceives to be the dominating issues and central motivation of participation. Most other informants do not use these or similar concepts. Still they

display a similar understanding of what characterize typical issues in these arenas. When reflecting on what they believe to be the qualities that make some issues “Twitter-friendly”, several of the informants draw attention to the issues’ potential for personal involvement.

Personal Involvement in Twitter-Friendly Issues

A common claim among the informants is that for an issue to be engaging on Twitter, people should be able to relate to it on a personal level. A journalist working with online debate forums suggests that the commonality between the issues that are recognized as “Twitter-friendly” is that they allow the actors to reflect on their own identity:

Well, I think they’re about identity and the relation to the collective. Who am I as a person? Who am I as a body? What is my identity, and how do I relate to the collective identity? For instance, the Islam-debate is about how I as a person collide with a society that’s rapidly changing. It’s the same thing with the questions about health and sexuality. Who am I? And how do others perceive me? How do I get recognition?

Twitter informant no. 12

This journalist suggests that the key motivation for participation in this rhetorical arena is the question, “What is my identity, and how do I relate to the collective identity?” Underlying this question is the premise that people are actively evaluating their own identity against the collective identity of society.

The motivation that this journalist identifies is not connected to collective decisions or to a desire to influence public opinion. Neither is it very fitting to the former description of a culture war. It is drawn from the potential for self-reflection and personal opinion-formation. The Islam-debate, which is here used as an example, is not approached as a set of alternative solutions to pending collective decisions, but as an opportunity for the individual to clarify his/her attitudes towards social change. This is what makes this issue particularly engaging and “Twitter-friendly”.

An editor in a publisher house presents a similar explanation, but focuses on what he calls “an element of something private”:

I'm wondering if there is an element of something private. But that would exclude the Roma-debate, which was discussed a lot, and also general immigration issues ... But they too have an element of something private, in that there is a moral aspect that you can either accept or reject.

Twitter informant no. 9

This informant does not offer a very clear definition of what characterizes “Twitter-friendly” issues. However, by reflecting on the question, he reveals an attitude that is recognizable among several of the informants. The typical Twitter-interaction circles around political opinions that depend on personal judgement. The “element of something private” that this editor ponders, implies personal judgment, not personal interests. The debates over typical “twitter-friendly” issues are not believed to actualize particular interests or draw attention to particular political ideas. Rather, they are seen as public expressions of personal disagreements.

Later in the interview, the same informant emphasizes the debate about criminalization of prostitution in Norway as a debate that “turned out to work really well on Twitter”, because it implied some complex moral dilemmas on which the actors had to decide where they stand:

Take that prostitution-debate for instance. That's interesting, because it turned out to work really well on Twitter. It's one of those issues that it is very difficult for people to know what to think. No matter what's your basic view – either you're for freedom and it gets difficult if you look at it too closely, or your for civic responsibility and it also becomes a bit difficult – you're trapped in a bunch of classic dilemmas, where both positions can be right and both can be wrong.

Twitter informant no. 9

Criminalization of prostitution can certainly be characterised as a “hot button issue” in Norway. It involves controversial positions and ethical and moral considerations, and disagreements about how to understand central concepts like coercion and choice. This informant's assessment of this debate also suggests how this issue fits into a larger frame of “culture wars”: You are either “for freedom” or you are “for civil responsibility”. The issue is believed to “work really well on Twitter”, not because this networked public is thought to impact political decisions or because the expert citizens on Twitter have personal interests in this issue, but because it contains “a bunch of

classic dilemmas” that are suitable for personalized political debate. This is characteristic of all the informants that mention the prostitution debate. The informants describe in what way they find the debate interesting or provocative or how it has influenced their own opinions. They do not reflect much on how the debate has had an impact on the outcome of the issue.

It is noteworthy that this informant, when discussing this issue, consistently talks about it in terms of individual opinions. The frame of understanding that he turns to when describing the problem, is that “it is one of those issues that it is very difficult for people to know what to think”, not that it is one of those issues that it is hard for us to decide what to do. In other words, the process he describes is not the process of collective decision-making, but the individual process of exploring and deciding one’s own opinion on the issue. Other informants also use this frame when describing this particular issue. A young political journalist can serve as an example:

Some of the toughest debates I’ve been in on Twitter have been about that prostitution ban. Initially, I wished to be critical or prove someone wrong. There aren’t many cases in which I set out to do that – just that particular case. And I have ended up moderating my own opinions. That can be a positive thing. [...]

Twitter informant no. 17

For this journalist, engagement in this issue is clearly a personal interest. She does not see this engagement in connection to any form of institutional or organizational commitment. The elements she chooses to emphasize when discussing the debate about the prostitution ban, is how it affected her personally.

It should be noted that the interview situation potentially makes the informants more self-conscious and causes them to be more attentive to their personal relations to the issues than they otherwise would be. During the interviews, the informants were asked to reflect on whether participation in social network sites has affected the way they think about political issues that are important to them. Still, the informants display a clear tendency to talk more about how debates surrounding Twitter-friendly issues have affected them and their own opinions and values, than how they affected public opinion or processes of collective decision-making.

This points to a major consequence of the affordances of social network sites. In the “Twitter-feed”, salience is indirectly determined by personal interests. This means that what constitutes as the “agenda” is potentially changing. Clearly, the informants also have an idea of the spread of issues outside of their own social network, and they frequently refer to issues that they recognize as prevalent, although they personally have no interest in them. Still, the issues the different informants refer to as typical for the arena are the same issues that they usually define their own political opinions and identity in relation to. In this regard, the social media-friendly issues can be described as the issues that are suited to explore and express individual beliefs and opinions.

In sum, the informants display two related but somewhat different understanding of what characterizes the issues that dominate the political debate on Twitter. The first is an understanding that these issues originate from fixed values and belief systems that ordinary citizens recognize and understand to be at odds with each other. Using a phrase from one of the informants, I have here described this as a Norwegian version of “culture wars”. The second suggests that people who are active in the political debate on Twitter are not very attentive to how public opinion and collective identities lead up to collective decisions. The informants who are of this understanding are more concerned with how Twitter-friendly issues allow people to explore and promote their own personal opinions in relation to the political community.

The Characteristics of Facebook-Friendly Issues

According to the informants, Facebook facilitate debates around issues that people can be expected to have an opinion about and be emotionally invested in. This includes both expert citizens, who have an expressed interest in the political debate, and ordinary citizens, who are presumably moderately interested and easily disengaged by political processes. Facebook-friendly issues are thought to engage both expert citizens and ordinary citizens who usually pay fleeting attention to politics.

The interviews draw attention to three characteristics of Facebook-friendly issues: 1) they are emotive issues that are typically dominated by pathos-based argumentation; 2) they display moral and ethical dilemmas that invite moral positioning and highlight both the rhetor and the audience’s political and social

identity; and 3) they require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion.

As these characteristics suggest, there are clear similarities between Twitter-friendly issues and Facebook-friendly issues. They are all believed to play a major role in how people interpret their own political engagement and in how they see themselves and their relation to the society and their time.

The first characteristic, then, is that *Facebook-friendly issues are emotive issues*. The informants describe how political debates on Facebook tend to be focused on issues that on one hand have a big potential for pathos-based argumentation, and on the other hand have an impact story that indicates that many people have an emotional connection to them.

A researcher describes the issues that are typical for Facebook as “value issues” with a strong emotive potential:

Q: Do you think there is something about these issues that make them particularly suitable for social media?

Yes, I think so. Well, they are both particularly suitable and particularly un-suitable. They are particularly suitable because they have some kind of universal appeal. In some way they trigger some emotions, some memories or reflections. I think everybody’s got an emotional connection to these value issues. That makes a lot of people get involved. But it also means that the involvement is bigger than the will to follow through – to bring the issue further than just expressing one’s own opinion. [...] *Facebook informant no. 10*

The factor that this informant chooses to emphasize with the Facebook-friendly issues, is that they “have some kind of universal appeal” since “everybody” is thought to have an “emotional connection” to them. The emotive potential is based on these issues’ abilities to trigger emotions, memories, or, we can assume, moral or ethical reflections. This way, they also draw attention to the speaker and the audience’s political and social identity. When “everybody” is thought to have an emotional connection to the topic, they can also be expected to have made up their own mind about its outcome. Furthermore, it is implied in the description of the issues as “universal” that they require little prior knowledge. While some political issues can be disengaging for people who do not have the necessary understanding of the financial, judicial,

scientific pretext, these issues are considered more low-threshold. “Everybody” is qualified to form an opinion. However, as I will return to shortly, this is not necessarily believed to be true about for instance climate issues.

The second characteristic is that *Facebook-friendly issues invite moral positioning* that highlight both the rhetor and the audience’s political and social identity. This also gives us an idea of the particular kind of disagreement these issues spark and how it affects the argument culture of Facebook. When they talk about the characteristics of Facebook-issues, the informants are less concerned with differences in political interests than disagreements over moral authority. Political issues and ethical dilemmas are quickly interpreted as debates about moral integrity.

A non-fictional writer and newspaper columnist describes the antagonism in the Facebook-sphere as a “tension” that is rooted in a form of moral positioning and struggle for moral authority:

To understand what the tension consists of ... It’s very attached to the question of moral *laughs*

If you’ve supported the right side, if you’re doing the right thing. There’s a lot of sorting people in moral categories these days – a lot more than I’m comfortable with. I can be quite indignant as well. But I try to be so in a rational way, and get at people because they’ve misunderstood something, or because their argument is bad. That’s what it’s all about, not my need to tell people that they have the wrong values, that they’re morally deprived.

Facebook informant no. 12

What this informant is describing is not simply people’s tendency to base their impression of a message on the moral authority of the sender. He explains how people are actively “sorting people in moral categories”. This informant believes that many people do this to strengthen their own moral authority. Other informants express similar attitudes. It is also suggested that this form of moral positioning extends beyond Facebook to the political community in general. The informants express a clear perception that personal feelings play both a major role in social network sites and a more dominant role in the general public sphere. People are thought to be more sensitive, and more often personally affronted and offended by the political debate, than before.

The informants often emphasize how they find it problematic that these kinds of struggles for moral authority are focused on particular individuals. For instance, they repeatedly describe how the supporters of a restrictive immigration policy are labelled racists and the supporters of liberal immigration policies are labelled naïve or “political correct”.

This also suggests how the individualization of the political debate is reflected in the argument culture of Facebook. The informant quoted above admits that he can be indignant, but claims that he is so in “a rational way”. Other informants express similar attitudes, particularly those who base their public participation on social network sites. This might suggest that these kinds of personal attacks and personal reactions are seen as particularly serious forms of norm violations. However, the way the informants discuss these norm violations, suggests that they are very common. Rather than being the exception, this kind of compound of rational reasoning and personal involvement is an integrated part of the argument culture. This speaks of an argument culture where the personal – in the form of insults, indignation, and *ad hominem* arguments – is constantly present. Within this argument culture, political issues and ethical dilemmas are quickly interpreted as debates about moral integrity and moral authority.

A newspaper editor describes how he experiences the topical interests of the expert citizens on Facebook as different from the general political debate, as he understands it from the position of the press. He describes the political debate on Facebook as extremely focused on culture and values:

Q: Is it the same political dimensions that are important on Facebook that are important in the Norwegian political debate in general?

But with an extreme focus on culture and values. For instance, the most important axis in Norwegian politics is equality versus un-equality, with tax as its most central issue. [...] But that issue is rarely present in these debates. Of course, a tax reform will get some attention, but still ... [...]

The same goes for equality, and economy, and EU, for that matter. These kinds of questions ... Rural politics, you know, when has that ever gone viral? Norwegian agricultural politics? It's a giant thing. Centralization? Tremendously important decisions are being made now. But it has no sex appeal on Facebook or Twitter. There, it's the value based questions that get all the attention.

Facebook interview no. 4

This editor is concerned with how issues on the political agenda and the news agenda, like equality and centralization, get little or no attention in participatory media. In order to have “sex appeal” on Facebook and Twitter, as he puts it, issues must be value-based and preferably have a potential for moral positioning.

The editor’s experience is not entirely supported by other informants. While this editor assumes that agricultural policies, centralization and economic equality are too technical for Facebook, others describe these issues as well suited and as examples of issues that can generate a lot of debate. In these cases, the informants are usually associated with political organizations that are involved particularly in these issues. They then experience debates about these issues as controversial and heavily based on personal values and disagreements.

Even if they are seemingly contradictory, both these experiences point to the same topical structures. The issues that are seen as typically Facebook-friendly are issues that are *easy to personalize*. They allow people to participate on the basis of their own personal experiences and their own personal ideas and disagreements.

This leads to the third characteristic of Facebook-friendly issues, that *they require little subject-specific knowledge* for people to formulate an opinion. Although they have clear political implications, these issues are often approached as matters of personal opinions drawn from self-experienced or self-evident insights. This is enforced by the affordance of social network sites as being the users’ *own* account. In general, political debates in this arena concern issues that the average citizen can be assumed to have an opinion about, without depending on field-specific or expert knowledge.

The same newspaper editor that described how the attention of the Facebook-crowd is drawn towards the emotional suggests that the “low threshold” for participation is what makes typical “value issues” so popular on Facebook:

Q: Are there some issues that keep coming up?

Oh yes, definitely. It’s immigration. Everything relating to immigration is hot shit these days. There’s also a tendency for gender role-things. But that’s definitely on second place. I don’t think I have anything more original to say than that it’s those two issues.

Q: Have you given any thought to why these issues have become so central on Facebook?

It has a lot of potential for emotions, I think. The threshold to participate and have an opinion is very low. Everybody's got their own experiences and opinions. If you're discussing trade-agreements, or agricultural politics, or municipality reform, then it's more complicated and it demands more of you in a way – you have to pay an entrance fee. On these issues – and probably others – you can flaunt your opinion as much as you like without it requiring too much effort

Facebook informant no. 4

Here, the potential for an emotionally driven debate is thought to lower the threshold for participation. Everybody is believed to have “their own experiences and opinions” about immigration and gender roles. An actor cannot be “wrong” when discussing these issues, as the arguments appeal primarily through *pathos* and *ethos*, rather than *logos*.

Another informant, whose participation in the public debate is primarily a result of social media-activity, makes the same observation and admits that it applies to her too:

Q: Have you thought about why Islam is so much more ...

Well, it's because these mechanisms for how we can act and what we can do, they act out so differently. To reduce the greenhouse gas emissions ... it doesn't help much. I don't even have a car. But that debate takes place on big conferences and on the global level. It takes a lot of detailed knowledge to comment on this. So I don't know what to ... I barely know how to spell CO2. I'm not sure about anything. But that whole package of Islam and immigration, you can relate to that. You can just step out on the streets and make up your mind about what you see with your own eyes.

Facebook informant no. 6

“The whole package of Islam and immigration” is here described as the kind of issue in which ordinary citizens can form opinions and contribute to the debate on the basis of their own experiences. As this participant puts it, you can “make up your mind about what you see with your own eyes”. In other words, people can form a personal opinion about these issues, without relying on expert opinions or giving their support to a political movement or organization.

The contrasts to how issues relating to climate change are met in social network sites can shed some light on what it is about these issues that gives them such a

prominent position in social network sites. Climate change has gotten a lot of attention in the media agenda and the political agenda. Still, a majority of the informants think that it receives little attention in these networked publics. None of the informants mention climate change as a central issue. The issue does come up numerous times throughout the interviews, but few informants seem to be genuinely interested in the issue. This is not to say that they do not find the issue to be an important part of the media- and political agenda. When asked why they think climate change does not get the same attention as these value issues in social network sites, the informants suggest that it is simply not suited for the arena. Climate change and political issues related to climate change require knowledge about scientific and technical details that most people are not comfortable discussing in public.

Immigration, the Typical Facebook-Friendly Issue

An overview of the different issues that the informants mention when talking about the topical structures of Facebook, reveals two patterns: First, political debate on Facebook can potentially have a very broad thematic focus. Occasional references are made to economic issues, tax debates, and welfare-state issues. Some informants also mention agriculture, climate, and infrastructure. However, these issues are usually mentioned by one or two informants, while others mention the same issues as examples of non-popular topics.

Second, there are some issue-complexes that clearly stand out. Based on the interviews, it is clear that a lot of the debates that these informants participate in, are centred on either gender issues (gender equality issues, feminism, gender roles), international affairs or “state of the world” (terrorism, the future of Europe, conflicts in the Middle East), and everything that has got to do with immigration.

All the informants emphasize immigration, and issues related to immigration, like refugee-policies, financial consequences, cultural integration, and Islam, as the dominant discussion topic on Facebook. These issues meet all three characteristics of Facebook-friendly issues: 1) they are clearly emotive issues; 2) they are important to how people place themselves and others in the political landscape; and 3) they require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion.

However, the informants have different experiences of how these issues are framed. Some describe that the debate is usually focused on cultural and religious differences, others that it is focused on financial consequences. Most of the informants also recognize that other popular issues, like gender and freedom of speech, get attention because they are easily combined with issues related to immigration.

In this sense, a Facebook-friendly issue is one that can be related to different elements of the immigration-debate. For some of the informants, this complex of issues informs their understanding of almost all other areas of public life. For these informants, the immigration-issue, and surrounding issues, like Islam, cultural integration, and the refugee-crisis, is the centre of dispute between the opposing belief systems that dominates the political debate on Facebook. All arguments that can be seen as relating to immigration are drawn attention to, and all descriptions of actors are likely to focus on their opinions on this issue.

Other informants have a more generalist outlook on the topical structures of Facebook. This includes the journalists and editors. They all recognize that the immigration-issue has a particularly central position in the arena, but they tend not to see it as a central motivation for their own participation.

Both those who refer to the issue as a defining matter of the arena, and those who more moderately describe it as an important and recurring topic, recognize the immigration issue as typical of what they associate with the political debate on Facebook. When asked to reflect on what they believe are the characteristics of Facebook-friendly issues, they all turn to immigration as the prime example. In the informants' view, this issue highlights the potential for emotive and identity-based conflict that characterises political discourse in this arena.

An editor from a national newspaper explains that many of his readers are engaged in debates about immigration and cultural integration both on social network sites and in the newspapers' online comment sections. When asked what he thinks is the reason for its dominant position, he explains that it "appeals to the heart, it appeals to identity, and it's defining":

Q: Have you any thoughts about why that particular issue is so dominant in digital platforms?

It's easy to form an opinion about it, without any special knowledge or facts or things like that. It appeals to the heart, it appeals to identity, and it's defining. It's an existential tone, you know. And there's a lot of heart, and belonging, and identity, things like that. And it's important. It's an important topic that's getting more important. So I don't find it strange, really.

Facebook informant no. 5

This editor understands the main characteristic of the immigration debate to be its potential for appeals to *pathos*, the audience's emotional response. The issue is believed to be both accessible and "existential". Thus, it should facilitate argumentation based on deeply rooted ideas and convictions. Furthermore, this informant points to how this issue does not require any formal knowledge or professional expertise. It is accessible in the sense that everybody, including "ordinary" citizens with seemingly little field-specific knowledge, can make up their own personal opinion about it.

This informant also suggests how the immigration issue is framed as a moral controversy. It is framed as an issue which outcome depends on the emotional process of individual actors. Appeals to "the heart", identity, and belonging, are described as something inherent in the issue. The way this informant describes the inherent logic of the immigration issue, suggests a very dominant frame of perception. It is the issue itself that "appeals to the heart" and is seen as "defining" for people.

At another stage in the interview, the same informant gives a critical description of the general criteria for Facebook-friendly issues:

We know very well what attracts readers in social media. Simple frames. Personal attacks. Some meta-stuff. Things that label people.

Facebook informant no. 5

These criteria are similar to established news frames. The element that stands out is that these are described as "things that label people". Throughout the conversation, it becomes clear that this editor believes that much political debate on Facebook is motivated by people's need to sort each other into different social and political categories. The issues that are seen as Facebook-friendly can advance this process by drawing attention to ideas and conflict-lines different from those that dominate the news agenda and the political agenda. Facebook is not thought to have the potential to

generate new political dimensions, but by facilitating individual engagement in issues that are particularly descriptive for the actors' identity, it is believed to have the potential to uncover existing dimensions and conflict-lines that are ignored or hidden by the news agenda and the political organisations.

Summary: The Topical Structures of Social Network Sites

In this chapter, I have presented the informants' descriptions of topical structures of social network sites and how they feed into the theme of personalization of political debate. In chapter 4, I described how the rhetorical concept of *topics* can structure theory's concept of interpretive schemes when dealing with rhetorical practice. This describes the cognitive and discursive structures available to the rhetor in a given encounter setting (cf. page 111). Here, I have focused on the structural *topoi* of Twitter and Facebook and they influence perceptions of political talk in these arenas.

The way that the informants talk about the recurring issues on Twitter, suggest that disagreements about these issues are largely motivated by differences in identities and moral authorities. The informants describe the dominating issues of the Twitter-sphere as "hot button issues" and disagreements over these issues as a kind of "culture war". These issues typically relate to all aspects of political rhetoric: their presence calls for some kind of collective decisions; their controversy is rooted in different perceptions of salience; and they demonstrate differences in social and political identities.

Similar, the informants describe Facebook-friendly issues as emotive issues. They are thought to have a particular potential for *pathos*-based argumentation, and ordinary citizens are believed to have an emotional connection to them. People are expected to have made up their own minds about these issues, regardless of political interests or social affiliations. This way, Facebook-friendly issues can be described as issues that are easy to personalize. They allow people to participate on the basis of their own personal experiences and their own personal ideas and disagreements. Also, they require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion. Although they have clear political implications, these issues are often approached as matters of personal opinions drawn from self-experienced or self-evident insights.

Social Media-Friendly Issues as Political Rhetoric

In the rest of the chapter, I will discuss what these descriptions of social media-friendly issues can tell us about social network sites as arenas for political rhetoric. There are two questions that particularly need to be answered: The first question is why some issues are perceived as more suitable for discussion in social network sites than others? The second is in what ways the predominance of certain issues affect people's perceptions of political debate in social network sites?

One way to answer these questions is by turning to related theories of agenda-setting. The ways the informants talk about the emotive potential and the individual accessibility of these issues have clear connotations to agenda-setting theorists' conception of *issue-obtrusiveness* (Demers, Craff, & Pessin, 1989; Winter, 1981; Zucker, 1978). In order to explain variations in the agenda-setting-effects of mass media, agenda-setting studies have differentiated between obtrusive and unobtrusive issues. Obtrusive, or "low threshold", issues are issues that affect everyone and that everyone can be assumed to have a personal experience or some kind of opinion about. Unobtrusive, or "high threshold", issues are issues that most people have very little personal experience with and are therefore less likely to have made up an "own" opinion about (Lang & Lang, 1981; Rogers & Dearing, 1988; Zucker, 1978).

The basic assumption in theories of issue-obtrusiveness is that the agenda-setting-effects of mass media increase as the obtrusiveness of an issue decreases (Demers et al., 1989). When people have personal experience with an issue, they rely less on impressions from television to form an opinion.

Modifying this assumption, some studies suggest that the effects of issue-obtrusiveness will depend not only on the nature of the issue, but also on the form of social interaction that surrounds it. Demers et.al (1989) suggest that interpersonal communications (e.g. how much people engage in discussions about a topic in their everyday lives) might be a better measure of social integration than personal experience (e.g. how much people are personally affected by aspects of the issue). They also suggest that the effects of issue-obtrusiveness should be considered against the *cognitive priming hypothesis*, which holds that "personal experience with an issue enhances rather than assuages media effects" (Demers et al., 1989, p. 794).

Empirical explorations of these theories suggest that there are more contingencies involved in processes of creating salience than any single theory can account for. Still they can provide a framework to discuss how the nature of issues affects issue-salience. This should include asking questions about whether people perceive an issue as “high threshold” or “low threshold”, what kind of personal experiences they attach to the issue, if they discuss it with others, and what kind of pre-existing sensitivities the issue evokes in them. This way, these theories are concerned with many of the same cognitive processes as rhetorical theory. From the perspective of political rhetoric that is developed in chapter 2, theories of issue-obtrusiveness and the cognitive priming hypothesis can describe some of the factors that affect processes of creating salience.

Insights from the interviews can both confirm and supplement the basic assumption of these theories and how they relate to rhetorical practice. First, it is clear that the informants consider social media-friendly issues to be “low threshold”-issues. The informants describe how Twitter-friendly issues allow ordinary citizens to explore and promote their own personal opinions in relation to the political community, and how Facebook-friendly issues require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion. Second, the informants describe how the social-friendly issues are issues that most ordinary citizens can relate to their own everyday experiences, although it is clear that most of the informants interact with the issue through conversations and discussions rather than through practical implications in their everyday lives. Third, the force of social media-friendly issues is based on their ability to evoke pre-existing sensitivities. When Twitter-friendly issues are related to a “culture war”, or they are recognized as “hot button issues”, it suggests that they trigger emotions and sensitivities that are likely to affect what people perceive as salient. When Facebook-friendly issues are repeatedly described as emotive issues, it is because of their ability to disclose the values that people form their social and political identities in relation to.

The interviews also suggest how the apparently incommensurable effects that these theories describe can be seen in relation to each other. The informants recognize that salience in these arenas is largely determined by the news agenda, but also that

such agenda-setting effects are structured in a very particular way. There is a clear connection between the salience of these issues and their potential to evoke “pre-existing sensitivities”. However, this potential is not believed to be in conflict with the obtrusiveness of the issues. On the contrary, the social media-friendly issues are picked up from the news agenda to be spun further in the social network sites because of their potential for conversations and disagreements. This does indeed suggest that interpersonal communication is a better measure of social integration than personal experience, but not with the effect that it is weakening any potential agenda-setting effect. The most general observation that can be drawn from the interviews is that in these arenas, expert citizens discuss issues they are socially invested in with direct relation to the news agenda.

The interviews can also give us a more complex understanding of how actors perceive issue-obtrusiveness and what it means to have personal experience with an issue. There are at least two relevant observations that can be drawn from the interviews in relation to this.

The first observation that can be drawn from the interviews is that, in an encounter setting where uptake of content is directly influenced by how much people talk about it, issue-obtrusiveness can also have the opposite effect of what has been assumed in studies of mass mediated settings. The second observation is that “pre-existing sensitivities” are not only made apparent in concrete situations, but are also given form and substance by situations, and people’s more or less articulated knowledge of this duality shape how they make sense of their own and others actions in different arenas.

Again the immigration issue can serve as example. A central part of the informants’ descriptions, is that they assume that “everybody” has some kind of personal experience with this issue. They describe how the issue is “about” identity, belonging, and values. Understood as such, everybody will have personal experience of the issue, simply by virtue of being a citizen. Furthermore, it is the informants’ firm belief that their personal experiences are relevant contributions to the debate that encourages them to talk about these issues.

Instead of focusing on how the media coverage determines agenda-setting, the informants' perspective draws attention to how the structuring properties of the rhetorical arenas shape agenda-setting-effects. The encounter settings of these arenas facilitate a particular form of conversation. This encourages talk about obtrusive issues, and the users' attention is drawn to this type of news content. In other words, not only is the immigration issue salient in the news agenda, it is also very fitting for the particular encounter settings that Twitter and Facebook facilitate.

Several of the informants also describe how social network sites have fuelled their interest in issues related to immigration. The networked public on Facebook in particular tends to change people's perception of how defining this issue is for society at large. The issue does not simply "trigger" pre-existing sensitivities; it also gives them concrete expressions and forms that make it possible to deal with them as motivations and arguments. The general impression among the informants is that this and similar issues disclose and articulate latent differences in values and motivations in ways that other issues do not. This way, people's "pre-existing sensitivities" – the knowledge, values, and beliefs they access as components of social and political identities – are not only "activated as perceptions of issue salience" by issue coverage in the media, but will both shape and be shaped by this process.

This latter point also draws attention to how debates about social media-friendly issues fill the role of epideictic rhetoric. These debates can be seen as on-going negotiations about which values and beliefs should shape the political community. This is what in chapter 2 is described as processes of collectivisation. Based on the interviews, it is clear that several of the informants believe that political debates on Twitter and Facebook should clarify and potentially alter the values and beliefs on which political positions are built. This is a central part of the emotive potential of social media-friendly issues.

"Emotive" and "emotions" should here be understood in line with Erik Shouse as social displays of feelings (Shouse, 2005). Emotions are not spontaneous expressions of affections, but the display of a feeling in accordance with social expectation. Emotions are thus social phenomena, and successful evocations of emotions can strengthen the forces that make rhetorical community possible.

In this regard, the emotive potential of social media-friendly issues shows in what way they are important for the formation and preservation of community. When informants describe recurring debates as expressions of a “culture war”, it suggests that they recognize their epideictic functions as more than an always-present element of political discourse. The particular cases are seen as expressions of more profound differences in values and worldviews, and the emotive issues that dominate in social network sites are particularly suited to bring such differences to the surface. As noted in the introduction to this chapter: When some of the informants use this term and its adjacent social theory to describe and rationalize own behaviour, it is because they think it descriptive of how some recurring themes and debates primarily serve as symbolic expressions of more deeply rooted political identities.

Finally, this chapter has demonstrated how the topical structures of Twitter and Facebook support an argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreement. To the degree that these networked publics can be described as local argument cultures (Zarefsky, 2009), they are characterized by the participant approach to argument as publicly performed *personal* disagreement. The arenas the informants describe, fit Zarefsky’s description of a culture in which people “argue both to form and to test their beliefs” (Zarefsky, 2009, p. 4). It is also in this regard that the kind of argument that these arenas facilitate, resemble personal disagreement more than public debate.

This chapter has shown how the issues that are recognized as Twitter-friendly invite people to reflect on their own identity. Twitter-friendly issues allow people to explore and promote their own personal opinions in relation to the political community, but the informants talk more about how the debates surrounding these issues have affected them personally, than how they affect public opinion or collective decisions. For most of the informants, engagement with these issues is clearly seen as a personal interest and not a form of political mobilization or collective action.

Similarly, issues that are seen as typically Facebook-friendly are easy to personalize and invite a form of moral positioning that highlights both the speaker’s and the audience’s political and social identities. This gives us an idea of the particular kind of disagreement these issues spark and how it affects the argument culture of

Facebook. When the informants talk about the characteristics of Facebook-issues, they are less concerned with differences in political interests than disagreements over moral authority, and political issues and ethical dilemmas are quickly interpreted as debates about moral integrity.

Chapter 10: #ihaveexperienced

The particular case that is explored in this chapter is the viral spread of the hashtag #ihaveexperienced (#jegharopplevd). The case demonstrates how the introduction of a social media-campaign had a noticeable impact on an ongoing public debate. By sharing their own personal experiences of sexual harassment, the hundreds of women that contributed to the #ihaveexperienced-debate shifted the focus of the public conversation from general statements about sexual harassment to the personal experiences of individual women.

The chapter presents a rhetorical analysis of the ideational structures of a selection of tweets with the #ihaveexperienced-hashtag. The analysis gives us a detailed impression of how the *personal action frames* of participatory media are formed on the textual level. It demonstrates how the tweets establish a particular propositional attitude, implied in the act of sharing personal experiences, and a consistent personal perspective, formed by the speakers' deep personal connection to the issue, that challenges the distance between personal experience and social issue.

The chapter offers an example of how insights gathered from interviews can both guide analyses of rhetorical events and be further examined through such analyses. As a public issue, sexual harassment fits many of the characteristics of social media-friendly issues. The text analysis provides an example of how events surrounding this type of issues can unfold. The #ihaveexperienced-campaign is also a particular vivid example of the individualization of political debate that the interviews suggest is characteristic for political talk in social network sites. This is one element of the informants' experience that is hard to describe by only using only interview data.

Other central themes from the interviews, like the concepts of "chatter" or social media-wit, are less relevant for understanding the progression of this particular issue. Neither is this particular case a good example of the limited networked public that the interviews describe. Although many of the central figures in this particular event fit the description of expert citizens and "the Tweetocracy" given in previous chapters, the viral campaign was also clearly marked by the contribution of "ordinary" citizens.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the results of the analysis in light of the theoretical perspectives on rhetorical arenas and political rhetoric that has been established earlier in the thesis. I argue that the case demonstrates how Twitter can be utilized by a very loosely connected group of people to create salience for an issue and frame the debate, but also that the non-centralized form of organization that characterized this campaign appears to be better suited at gaining momentum and creating salience than to promote a specific message.

The Stages of the Debate

Before turning to a rhetorical analysis of a sample of tweets posted with the hashtag, consider the following summary of the events in six stages.¹²

Stage One: Controversial Television Entertainment

The pretext to the #haveexperienced-debate started two month before the introduction of the hashtag. In February 2015, a late-night talk-show on the main public broadcast channel (NRK1) showed a short film with humorous but clearly pornographic content (*NRK1*, February 17th 2015). The film was produced by American pornography actors, but written and paid for by the Norwegian talk-show. The show, “The Welfare Office” (“Trygdekantoret”), deals with contemporary and often controversial and sensitive issues in a humorous and not always “politically correct” manner. The film provoked strong reactions among many viewers. The most prominent criticism came from feminist activists who claimed that a publicly founded broadcaster should not support the porn industry by ordering and airing these kinds of films.

Two months later, on April 7th 2015, “The Welfare Office” aired a second pornographic film. This time, the characters in the film was based on the talk-show host and one of the strongest critics of the first film (*NRK1*, April 4th 2015). This time, several critics, including the offended woman, announced that they would report the

¹² The summary is based on 163 newspaper articles (print: 79; online: 84) retrieved from searches in the news surveillance site www.retriever.no, in addition to four radio segments and three television news segments. Search period: April 7th 2015 – May 7th 2015.

Broadcasting sources: NRK P2 Radio, NRK P3 Radio, NRK1 News, TV2 News

Newspaper sources: *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidene*, *Dagbladet*, *Dagsavisen*, *Dag og Tid*, *Dagens Næringsliv*, *Klassekampen*, *Morgenbladet*, *VG*, *Vårt Land*

Online newspaper sources: aftenposten.no, bt.no, dagbladet.no, [VGnett](http://VGnett.no), nrk.no, vl.no

incident as a violation of the Norwegian prostitution ban (*Dagbladet*, April 9th 2015; *VG*, April 10th 2015). The film was described as “revenge porn” (*dagbladet.no*, April 8th 2015) and as harassment of a critic (*VGNett*, April 9th 2015; *Aftenposten.no*, April 9th 2015). The day after the film was aired, the talk-show host, Thomas Seltzer, and the depicted woman, Kari Jaquesson, met at the radio debate show “Six O’clock News” (*NRK P2*, “Dagsnytt Atten”, April 8th 2015). Here, Seltzer accused Jaquesson for being a conspiratorial and “slightly sexualized” public figure.

In the following days, the Norwegian broadcasting council received over six hundred formal complaints. The reactions to the film were covered in all major Norwegian news sites. The most common criticism was that this type of discriminatory and offensive depictions of women effectively silences women in the public debate. A group of anonymous female politicians claimed that the national broadcasting service led a “battle against women in the media” (*Dagbladet*, April 10th 2015) and a Member of Parliament called NRK “the macho-channel” (*madam.no*, April 10th 2015). Those who defended the film in the public debate claimed that it should be within the boundaries of ordinary freedom of speech (*VGNett*, April 10th 2015; *Aftenposten*, April 11th 2015) and that the massive reactions was a testimony to the poor conditions of satire in Norway (*dagbladet.no*, April 10th 2015).

Stage Two: The Reactions on Facebook and in the Newspapers

In the second stage of the debate, the controversy grew as the debate shifted between Facebook and newspapers’ opinion-sections. April 12th *Aftenposten*’s online edition posted a chronicle by preschool teacher Cathrin Svanevik Frøyen, titled “A kind of response to Thomas Seltzer” (*Aftenposten.no*, April 12th 2015, 10:59am). This became one of the most well-read, and certainly among the most-discussed, contributions to the debate. The chronicle was based on a post on Frøyen’s Facebook-page and rewritten for the newspaper by request. It described how women of different ages experience sexual harassment and verbal and physical abuse on a daily basis. Frøyen claimed that “some involuntary penetration has become ordinary” and that she felt it “risky to have contact with men”. The main claim was that the film and the public defence it received were examples of how women were being ridiculed and silenced in

the public debate through the same form of harassment that dominated women's everyday lives.

This initiated a new stage in the debate. The chronicle was a particularly clear expression of an opinion which at this point seemed to be shared by many: that women cannot participate in public debate without being harassed and assaulted. The chronicle represented a thematic turn in the debate, from the talk-show's films in particular to the situation of women in the public sphere in general. This also provoked new types of responses, most notably accusations that these types of claims were anecdotal and generalizing of all men.

The same day, Kjetil Rolness, a well-known newspaper columnist with a highly active Facebook-profile, shared Frøyen's chronicle together with some pointed comments to spark debate on his Facebook-page: "Should we acknowledge this women-reality? Or should we rather wonder why our biggest national newspaper prints paranoid generalisations about men that would be totally unacceptable if they were directed at any other population group?" (*Facebook*, April 12th 2015, 2:20pm).

In the next three days, the Facebook-post got 146 comments from 67 different Facebook-profiles.¹³ These comments mainly revolved around three main perspectives. The first questioned whether the chronicle was an appropriate contribution to the debate, or questioned Frøyen's ethos.¹⁴ The second perspective addressed the general problem that was raised. Some shared their personal experiences with everyday discrimination and harassment as a way to back up Frøyen's claim, or they discussed the question of how men should best react to these experiences in order to solve the problem. The third perspective consisted of people who saw this as an example of a feminist agenda in the news and in the public. From this perspective, some actors also referenced the original Jaquesson-response and the #haveexperienced-hashtag that after a while started buzzing on Twitter.

As a response to this debate on Facebook, Heidi Helene Sveen, a freelance writer and blogger, published a new chronicle in *Aftenposten*, with the title "Why is it so important to silence women?" (*Aftenposten*, April 15th 2015). The newspaper

¹³ The post and the comments are set to "public" by the page-owner, both at the time of publication and at the time of the publication of this dissertation. All comments have been accessed using ordinary search engine tools.

¹⁴ At least one comment used derogatory descriptions of Frøyen. This was confronted by the page owner.

dedicated four full pages of this edition to the topic, including an interview with Sveen and the front page of the culture section. Sveen quoted several of the comments on Rolness' Facebook-page and claimed that the thread was "raining with condescending comments". Sveen stated that she felt "obligated to share her own experiences in solidarity with [her] sisters that may think they are the only ones with these stories", but that she "could not carry the burden" of public suspicion that was likely to follow. Sveen claimed that: "It seems like many people have an urgent need to dismiss that there is a problem that men subject women to sexual harassment".

This far, the debate unfolded in a way that is typical for public debates in hybrid media systems. The debate took place in and between many different rhetorical arenas in many different media. Some of the most prominent contributions were op-ed pieces written in *Aftenposten* that referred directly and indirectly to ongoing debates on Facebook. The writers of these op-ed pieces were in turn invited to the "Six O'clock News" on NRK Radio (*NRK P2*, April 15th 2015), which generated new activity and debates in social network sites and blogs.¹⁵

Stage Three: Introducing the Twitter-Campaign #haveexperienced

In the third stage, the attention of the public was drawn to Twitter by the massive support for the #ihaveexperienced-campaign. By now, it was clear that the controversy was recognized as a public debate, in the sense that it was being referred to as a form of extended rhetorical situation surrounding a particular and recognisable matter. In the national newspaper *Dagbladet's* online edition, it was referred to as "the Jaquesson-debate" (*dagbladet.no*, April 14th 2015), a description that later caught on in social network sites.

April 15th 2015, the feminist review *Fett* launched the hashtag #ihaveexperienced together with a blogpost that described the intentions of the campaign. The blogpost explicitly referred to Frøyen's chronicle and to Rolness' Facebook-page. According to the blogpost, the majority of the response to the chronicle had been characterised by "indignation on behalf of men". The post then encouraged women to share their stories of sexual harassment in participatory media:

¹⁵ cf. Hobbeldstad and Doremus, *dagbladet.no: 04.19.2015*

“Sexual harassment exists on our streets, and people who publicly share their experiences deserve our support. We encourage more women to share their experiences with the tag #ihaveexperienced in order to draw attention to a problem that many people have to live through. We will not accept that sexual harassment is trivialized”.¹⁶

Links to the blogpost was then shared on Twitter with the following captions:

@CharlotteMyrbra: Sexual harassment is real, and debaters who share their experiences deserve our support. #ihaveexperienced. (April 15th 2015)¹⁷

@FettTidsskrift: Many women experience sexual harassment – even in Norway. Share your experience and support others with the tag #ihaveexperienced. (April 15th 2015)

In the following days, hundreds of women shared their personal stories of sexual harassment on Twitter. Typically, women would share stories of how they had been harassed on bars or public transportation, how they had been verbally abused in public places, and how they had been subject to degrading comments or sexist treatment in the workplace. Some shared stories of rape and assault. Among the thousands of tweets that contributed to the hashtag, some also questioned the premises, arguing that the campaign and its contributors were inherently hostile towards men or that they tried to criminalize ordinary human behavior.

Soon, the online newspapers had picked up the story. First the Bergen-based newspaper *Bergens Tidende's* online edition published a commentary on the campaign titled “The women strike back” (*bt.no*, April 15th 2015, 5:39pm). Not long after, the three biggest online newspapers in Norway, VG Nett (8:42pm), Aftenposten.no (7:06pm), and *Dagbladet.no* (7:45pm) ran the story on their front-page. All featured examples of tweets and a thorough description of the campaign’s intention and form. Later that same night, Aftenposten.no published an interview with the national

¹⁶ fett.no/jegharopplevd/, retrieved March 13th 2017

¹⁷ Throughout this chapter, I name only Twitter-accounts that have an official connection to any of the relevant media sources. @CharlotteMyrBra is the account of the current editor of the review Fett.

ombudsman for gender issues (10:29pm), who raised questions directed to the Minister of Children and Equality.

Stage Four: The #ihaveexperienced-Campaign Goes Viral

April 16th, #ihaveexperienced was still trending on Twitter and the campaign was high on the online news agenda. *VGNett*, Norway's biggest online news site, published interviews with women who had been tweeting (12:38pm). The news site also published a commentary (12:53pm), a follow-up story with famous bloggers who had participated (2:01pm), an interview with various social media experts (6:45pm), and a background-story of the British campaign #everydaysexism (6:48pm). Similarly, *Aftenposten.no* published a news story covering the campaign (6:42pm), a short story in the column "Recommended" (2:01pm), a commentary about the journalist's own experience (1:34pm), a news story about how the hashtag had started to trend in Denmark (7:50pm), and a critical opinion-piece (9:28pm).

The online newspapers covered the campaign as a viral phenomenon. In the evening April 15th, *Aftenposten.no* reported that "almost 5000 tweets" had been posted on the hashtag (10:29pm). The next morning, *Bergens Tidende's* online newspaper reported 9300 tweets (updated 1:30pm), and by the evening of April 16th, the newspaper reported 11000 tweets (8:37pm).

In addition to covering the viral campaign, the online newspapers closely followed the development of the conflict surrounding the pornographic films on NRK. April 15th, the talk-show host, Thomas Seltzer, had an opinion-piece in VG (VG, April 15th 2015) and *VGNett* (8:16am) as well as an interview in *Dagbladet.no* (9:40am). The insulted woman, Kari Jaquesson, had an opinion-piece in *VGNett* the same day (7:25pm). April 16th, *Dagbladet.no* published an interview with the ombudsman for gender issues in support of Jaquesson (6:01pm), and April 17th, the weekly newspaper *Morgenbladet* published a feature article with Rolness, about his position in the debate and in the Norwegian gender-debate in general (*Morgenbladet*, April 17th 2015).

By this stage, the coverage of the viral campaign and the "Jaquesson-debate" was overlapping. The situation got more fragmented as the number of contributions increased. New contributions were formulated as replies to previous positions, and

their relations to the original issue got less clear. One example can be gathered from the Six O'clock News on NRK Radio on April 15th.¹⁸ Here, the writer Sveen and a columnist from *Dagbladet*, Inger Merete Hobbelstad, met for a debate about their own newspaper articles in light of the ongoing Twitter-phenomenon. In her original column, Hobbelstad had been critical to the potential for generalization and mixing of serious assaults and mundane events in the debate that followed "The Welfare Office's" films (*dagbladet.no*, April 14th 2015). Since this column had been published, the "ihaveexperienced-campaign had gone viral and the perceptions of the debate had changed. Hobbelstad's article could then be read as a critique of the vernacular responses that were spread on Twitter, which clearly made it more controversial. In the days that followed, this was debated on the radio (*NRK P2*, April 15th 2015), on private blogs (*ingermerete.blogg.no*, April 18th 2015),¹⁹ and in social network sites.

Stage Five: Establishing Political Frames in Traditional Media

At this stage, the #ihaveexperienced-campaign fully entered the media agenda, which also meant that the story of the campaign was informed by the frames of the traditional news media. April 17th and 18th, the issue dominated the op-ed sections of the print newspapers. Particularly *Aftenposten* and *Bergens Tidende* covered the debate extensively these days. April 17th *Aftenposten* ran a story about the complaints made to the broadcasting counsel, in addition to a commentary and opinion pieces about the #ihaveexperienced-campaign (*Aftenposten*, April 17th 2015). *Bergens Tidende* had an interview with Frøyen, a news story about the risks of sharing personal details in participatory media, an opinion piece and a commentary (*Bergens Tidende*, April 17th 2015).

In the weekend edition of the print newspapers, on April 18th, the issue was more clearly approached as a political and potentially deliberative issue. *Aftenposten* dedicated four pages of its culture and op-ed section to the issue, with the front page headline "13.000 tweets about harassment" (*Aftenposten*, April 18th 2015). The section contained an interview with the Norwegian for Children and Equality. Here, the

¹⁸ <https://radio.nrk.no/serie/dagsnytt-atten/NMAG03007415/15-04-2015>

¹⁹ http://ingermerete.blogg.no/1429370815_svar_til_doremus_og_s.html (retrieved March 15th 2017)

minister was reported to work on a new report to Parliament on gender equality and to increase the government's support to NGOs battling hate-speech. The story did not suggest that these initiatives were started or altered as a result of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign or the wider debate about sexual harassment. However, both the interview and the minister's response contributed to frame the issue in terms of gender equality and hate speech and as a governmental concern.

VG also reported on the minister's proposed course of action (*VG*, April 18th 2015). This story built on exchanges that followed the minister's Tweet about #ihaveexperienced (@SolveigHorne, April 16th 2015, 4:30am) and brought further the questions that were raised there. The leader of the radical left-wing party Red, Bjørnar Moxnes, was also interviewed in the story, on the basis of his own tweets that called for an improvement of the sexual education in schools (@bmoxnes, April 16th 2015, 11:15am).

April 18th, *Aftenposten* included an interview with a social media researcher who was questioned about how the campaign could translate to the channels of institutionalized politics and the formal processes of collective decision-making. The repeated questions of what the campaign "could lead to" implied an understanding of success or effect measured in judicial or financial decisions (*Aftenposten*, April 18th 2015).

The same newspaper also contained a commentary, "The dangerous men" (*Aftenposten*, April 18th 2015), that drew attention to a recently published report that claimed that male immigrants were the most discriminated group in Norway. By questioning whether the #ihaveexperienced-campaign could stigmatize this group even more, the article tried to frame the debate as a question of discrimination in public life in general and not women's right and sexual harassment in particular.

Another explicit attempt to frame the many tweets about sexual harassment as a demand for political action was made in an opinion piece in *Bergens Tidende* (April 18th 2015). Here, a young candidate for the Socialist Party interpreted the thousands of confessions as a demand for action, in form of improved sexual education classes in Norwegian middle-schools. In the print newspapers, the debate was still evaluated in the op-ed sections. In the Sunday edition, *Bergens Tidende* presented the debate and

all the momentum that was created by #ihaveexperienced as a successful campaign from local feminist initiatives (*Bergens Tidende*, April 19th 2015).

April 17th, NRK News featured a report on #ihaveexperienced. This report focused on the campaign as a way to raise awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace and contained an interview with a union representative (*NRK News*, April 17th 2015). Later in the week, *Dagens Næringsliv*, the biggest business newspaper in Norway, presented the debate as an example of the timeliness of harassment in the workplace (*Dagens Næringsliv*, April 20th 2015). This was also the topic for an opinion piece published in *Dagsavisen* April 21st (*Dagsavisen*, April 21th 2015).

Stage Six: #ihaveexperienced a Bill of Law

The following week, the issue had clearly lost momentum. It was no longer on the news agenda. On Twitter, fewer people shared their stories and general buzz around the #ihaveexperienced-campaign was slowly fading.

April 23rd, *Dagsavisen* reported that Member of Parliament for the Socialist Left Party, Kirsti Bergstø, would present a question at Parliament to the minister about the campaign (*Dagsavisen*, April 23rd 2015). Like previous attempts from socialist politicians to draw the debate into a formal political context, the issue was here framed as a political issue regarding the quality of sexual education in schools.

April 24th, the weekly newspaper *Morgenbladet* published a seven page long feature story about the #ihaveexperienced-campaign, with the title “Two sides of #ihaveexperienced” (*Morgenbladet*, April 24th 2015). This feature article was an attempt to summarize the debate. It included interviews with various people who had contributed to the campaign, three women and three men. The men interviewed had been very active in the debate that surrounded the campaign on Twitter, either by questioning the stories that were shared from women or by tweeting about how they themselves had been subject to unwanted attention from women. In this regard, the story kept with the frame established by the initiators of the campaign. Besides that, the majority of examples used were from workplace or educational settings.

May 6th 2015, the Socialist Left Party proposed a bill in parliament that would guarantee all citizens access to a professional assault center (Parliamentary document

8:111 S, 2014-2015). During question time at parliament that same day, Kirsti Bergstø directed a question to the Minister of Justice, asking “whether the minister supports The Socialist Left Party’s bill proposing to write the right to sexual assault centers into law, with reference to the importance of accessible assault centers with the professional expertise to secure evidence and proper care for the victims” (Stortinget, May 6th 2015). Bergstø explicitly referred to the #ihaveexperienced-campaign as a pretext for her question, and therefore also indirectly for the bill.

During the parliamentary debate that followed, questions were raised about attitudes among young men and the social taboos and stigmas surrounding sexual assaults. The bill was then assigned to the social committee for further deliberation. It was never put up for a vote.

The Textual Level: Making the Personal Political

This summary suggests that the introduction of the hashtag #ihaveexperienced and the viral campaign that followed had a noticeable impact on the ongoing political debate. The following analysis, focused primarily on the ideational function of the tweets, gives us an impression of how the tweets shifted the focus of the debate, from claims about sexual harassment as a public issue to the personal experience of individual women. Here I understand the ideational function as the content or idea expressed in an utterance and the rhetorical performance of this content.

The analysis is motivated by two research questions: 1) How were the particular conditions of Twitter as a rhetorical arena actualized in this particular situation? 2) What can the #ihaveexperienced-campaign tell us about political rhetoric on Twitter and its relation to the personalization of political opinion?

The analysis is based on a total of 3155 tweets posted between April 15th and May 7th 2015, gathered from the “advanced search function” in Twitter. The dates mark the period from the introduction of the hashtag #ihaveexperienced to the proposal of the Socialist Left Party’s bill at Parliament. There is no guarantee that the text sample matches the actual amount of tweets that were originally posted in the period, but 3155 tweets should give us a very good impression of the characteristics of the tweets in this rhetorical situation.

As a first stage of the analysis, I have sorted the tweets into five categories. The hashtag suggests that all the tweets relate to the same macro-theme. The five categories are based on a pragmatic combination of the tweets' propositions towards this theme and the gender of the speaker. As the stated intent of the campaign was to shed light on sexual harassment against women, I assume that stories shared from women and men are likely to be read different in this context. In the next stage of the analysis, I present a selection of tweets from each category for a more detailed analysis. Here, the analysis is concentrated on the ideational structures – the modalities, processes, and perspective-markers – that are identified in the sampled tweets.

The tweets posted on #ihaveexperienced can be broken down into five categories:

- 1) Tweets from women with personal experiences of sexual harassment, abuse, discrimination etc.
- 2) Tweets from women or men with general claims about sexual harassment, abuse, discrimination etc.
- 3) Tweets that are promoting #ihaveexperienced or media coverage of #ihaveexperienced
- 4) Tweets that are directly or indirectly attacking the claims or intentions of tweets in category 1 and 2
- 5) Tweets that contribute to discussions about the #ihaveexperienced-campaign by replying to, or commenting on, tweets in category 4

Category 1 includes the tweets that are most in tune with the intention of the campaign as expressed by Fett. The thematic focus of these tweets is the personal experiences of the senders. I here assume that only women can contribute to the intention of the campaign, which is to share personal stories of men's harassment of women. Contextual readings of tweets from men share personal experiences suggest that these can be read in many different ways (as support, as critique, as ironic etc.). Tweets in this category highlight different subtopics or micro-themes, like sexual harassment in

the workplace, threatening behavior in public spaces, verbal abuse, discriminatory and patronizing behavior, etc.

Examples of tweets in category 1:

#ihaveexperienced to be grabbed from behind on the street at night. (April 15th 2015)

#ihaveexperienced to have coins slipped into my shirt by a male supervisor who asked me which one of my colleagues I would like to fuck. (April 15th 2015)

Category 2 consists of tweets that are in tune with the general intention of the campaign, but do not include propositions about self-experienced incidents of sexual harassment. Tweets in this category typically include general propositions about sexual harassment or sexual assaults. This includes propositions from men who wish to contribute positively to the campaign.

Examples of tweets in category 2:

#ihaveexperienced a bad feeling when I hear women talk about how they experience behavior I'm guilty of myself. (April 15th 2015)

When many speak out together, with different stories that is really the same story, then women's voices become powerful #ihaveexperienced. (April 16th 2015)

Category 3 includes tweets that promote other articles, blogs, news stories, and so forth. It also includes tweets that directly promote the hashtag. The main propositions in these tweets are directed at other texts, typically news articles, blog-posts, or other tweets posted on the hashtag.

Examples of tweets in category 3:

Follow the hashtag #ihaveexperienced, great initiative from @FettTidsskrift. (April 15th 2015)

– Enough is enough. We will not put up with this anymore! #ihaveexperienced
aftenposten.no/article/ap-798... (April 16th 2015)

Category 4 consists of tweets that are clearly critical towards the #ihaveexperienced-campaign. Typically, tweets in this category challenge the truth-value of propositions in category 1, or they include propositions about incidences of sexual harassment by

women or ridicule the style and the form of the #ihaveexperienced-tweets in a way that is suited to undermine the campaign.

Example of tweets in category 4:

#ihaveexperienced gender-marxists who are trying to set the sexes up against each other by creating problems that does not exist, just to see the world burn. (April 15th 2015)

Category 5 includes tweets that discuss the function, nature, or relevance of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign. These can be described as polemic against critics. Typically these tweets include propositions about what kind of tweets should and should not be included in the campaign and about the different types of people who interact with the campaign. Many tweets in this category refer to and criticize tweets in category 4.

Examples of tweets in category 5:

You're a man and you have #ihaveexperienced ? Great, share! But don't steal the thread in order to turn your experiences to a defense against ours. (April 15th 2015)

It's got to be something wrong with men who use #ihaveexperienced as yet another opportunity to be an asshole against women. What's next? LOL at racism? (April 16th 2015)

Sorting the over three thousand tweets into these categories already tells us something about what kind of propositions dominated the hashtag, and what kind of disagreements and confrontations occurred. Also, this categorization can give us an impression of what kind of messages ordinary Twitter-users who checked in on the hashtag might have seen as dominating at different stages.

As the phrase #ihaveexperienced indicates, the campaign was characterized by claims of self-experienced stories. By sorting the entries by date, it becomes clear that categories 1 and 2, which consist predominantly of claims about sexual harassment as a phenomenon, have approximately three times as many entries as the other three categories combined on the first two days of the campaign (see table 10.1).

Table 10.1: Tweets by category:

Kappa test (N=300)

N=3155	April 15 th	April 16 th	April 17 th - May 7 th		Percent	Cohen's kappa	
Category 1	811	575	213	1599	93.94	0.9394	
Category 2	186	124	127	437	79.49	0.7949	
Category 3	140	105	189	434	86.89	0.8689	
Category 4	178	77	116	371	70	0.7	
Category 5	102	63	149	314	75.76	0.7576	
Composite							0.9364

*Confidence intervals for proportions are calculated according to the Wilson efficient-score method.

**Agreement measures for data: <0.00: "Poor"; 0.00-0.20: "Slight"; 0.21-0.40: "Fair"; 0.41-0.60: "Moderate"; 0.61-0.80: "Substantial"; 0.81-1.00: "Almost Perfect" (Landis & Koch, 1977: 165)

The inter-textual propositions and the meta-propositions that characterize the other categories (particularly categories 3 and 5) get a more prominent role after the first couple of days. The trend of people sharing their own personal experiences slowly faded as the traditional media agenda picked up the story. The issues was still debated – probably also in tweets that are not picked up by the sampling method used here – but the particular kind of utterance, which combined the personal statements with a trending hashtag, was fading. As the print newspapers and the broadcasters picked up the story and retold it through their generic frames, the “Twitter-storm” faded. This does not mean that attention from traditional media had a negative effect on participation in this spontaneous campaign, but it does suggest that it did not drive it further.

Dividing the tweets by types of propositions also gives us an impression of the nature of conflict and disagreements that surrounded the hashtag. The entries in categories 4 and 5 in this sample are substantial. A Twitter-user who consulted this hashtag on either one of the days it was trending, was likely to encounter several tweets that are either challenging the truth-value of people’s stories or the sincerity and relevance of the campaign.

After April 17th, a person who sought out the hashtag or encountered it coincidentally, was almost as likely to see it in a context of critique or disagreement as

in its intended use – based on this sample. As the overview of the media coverage suggests, this is when the issue reached its peak in attention in the news, and also when news media introduced more traditional news frames to the issue, by presenting it as a matter of work place security or as a political issue.

Ideational Analysis

In order to get an impression of what kind of utterances the viral campaign consisted of, a smaller sample of tweets is extracted and translated for text analysis (see appendix 5). This smaller sample consists of 75 tweets from different categories and different days in the time-period.²⁰ The tweets are picked as the first for each date from each category in the top ten percent of re-tweets, replies, and likes. This way, the corpus consists of tweets that a significant number of users have actually seen and responded to. Some adjustments have then been made to avoid several tweets from the same users and to ensure that a wide range of the subtopics are represented.

The analysis is concentrated on the ideational function of the texts. This function draws attention to the ways in which the actors are organizing ideas about the world. To analyze this function is to explore the texts' thematic structure, how they compose and organize different propositions and processes, and with what modality and what perspective they communicate these propositions and processes. The campaign message of #ihaveexperienced was shaped by hundreds of personal expressions on the individual level. These were in turn given meaning as social and political messages by the campaign that surrounded them. Here, I focus on the ideational function in order to show how the #ihaveexperienced-hashtag facilitated a particular kind of individual and personalized expression and how that in turn shaped the course of the debate.

Propositional Attitude: #ihaveexperienced as Sharing

There are two features that stand out about how the tweets in category 1 construe their reality. The first is the particular propositional attitude that is implied in sharing

²⁰ The sampling is done in the following way: 10 tweets from category 1 and 5 tweets from categories 2-5 have been sampled for April 15th, April 16th, and April 7th-May 7th.

personal experiences. The second is the personal perspective that is formed by the speakers' deep personal connection to the issue.

The most common syntactic construction in category 1 is a one- or two-sentence tweet initiated by the formulation #ihaveexperienced. The hashtag is thus the most important element in determining what kind of “representation of reality” and what meaning and attitude towards the issue we should ascribe to the propositions in the tweets. With few exceptions, the tweets in category 1 provide accounts of self-experienced past events: “#ihaveexperienced being told ...”; “#ihaveexperienced being groped ...”; “#ihaveexperienced being yelled at ...” etc. The typical tweet consists of declarative sentences in the present perfect tense and in the passive voice. Most of the tweets are built on material or behavioral processes in which women – the speakers – are objects for the actions of men. By focusing on “I have experienced” as the central figure in the tweets, we can also choose to read them as confessions based on mental processes. Attention is then drawn to how women experience acts of harassment. This is emphasized by how tweets in category 1 rarely include direct expressions of judgement or opinions, but often imply personal perceptions – indicated by the choice of verbs, like “grobe”, “yell”, “expect” – or subjective evaluations – “It’s all too common”. A tweet from April 15th can serve as a typical example of this category:

#ihaveexperienced being groped on the breasts by passing men on the street, because I was vulgar enough to ... stand on the sidewalk alone. (April 15th 2015)

This 110 characters long story gives us an impression of the particular kind of propositional attitude that characterizes tweets from women in the #ihaveexperienced-campaign. This propositional attitude is denoted by the verb “experience”. Statements are presented as subjective experiences, which also mean that any form of acknowledgement or contradiction is directed towards the speaker.

In this particular tweet, claims are made not only about the event, but also about the men’s motivation (“because I was vulgar enough to ... stand on the sidewalk alone”). To hurt the woman is not simply a consequence of their actions, but their intention. This serves to make the action even more unreasonable and to constitute “men” as antagonists. The truth-value of all these statements is attached to how the

speaker experienced the events, not to the accuracy of the events or the inferences of opinions.

The propositional attitude that is supported by the “I have experienced ...”-form also gives us a clue about the interpersonal structures that are in play in these tweets. The rhetorical action that this form invites is not “to claim” or “argue”, but “to share”. As a rhetorical action, sharing suggests both an individual attitude towards the issue and a personal relation between the speaker and the audience. It requires confidentiality between the person who shares and the persons who are invited to share the experience. All assessments and viewpoints that are implicated in the “experiences” can be seen as part of the experiences that are shared, and are therefore covered by the same interpersonal relation. Acknowledgement or contradictions are likely to be seen as disproving or endorsement of the truthfulness of the speaker. Therefore, it can also be problematic to challenge the tweets as factual statements or as opinions. To challenge the truth-value of these propositions would be to challenge whether something was experienced in a certain way.

This propositional attitude can also be found in tweets that are not built around particular events:

#ihaveexperienced a society that think it’s my responsibility not to get raped. (April 15th 2015)

In this example, the speaker presupposes that society places the responsibility for prevention of rape on the women. As a statement about society, many readers would probably reject such a claim, at least without further grounds. As a presupposition, however, it becomes part of the speaker’s experience and is covered by the same propositional attitude as the other tweets in this category. To criticize this presupposition, then, is not simply to challenge its truth-value, but to question the trustworthiness of the speaker. Similarly, to endorse this presupposition is not necessarily to accept it as true or as likely, but to support the speaker who shares her experience of being a young woman vulnerable to sexual assault.

A similar example is offered by another user:

#ihaveexperienced living in a society where it's rarer to hear a girl say she's a feminist than to hear her say she's been raped. (April 15th 2015)

Again, the particular propositional attitude allows the speaker to propose what would otherwise be seen as a controversial claim about society as a subjective experience. The speaker feels that she lives in a time where rape is common and feminism is in retreat. In the context of the campaign, the function of this statement is not necessarily to offer factual propositions about the state of Norwegian society, but to share the sender's own personal experiences. Attempts to modify or refute the statement could thus be seen as beside the point. Vernacular responses support this reading. The tweet got relatively many responses in form of "retweets" (84) and "likes" (110). The only comment that the tweet received was a short expression of support: "#shoutout" (April 22nd 2015).

In sum, the propositional attitude of the women who shared their stories on #ihaveexperienced is that their tweets represent personal experiences. Principally, the propositions presented in the tweets should not primarily be seen as factual statements or political opinions, even if such proposition can be extracted from the tweets. This has consequences for how other actors can relate to and process these propositions. To question either factual statements or opinions in the tweets would also be to question the truthfulness of the speaker's experience.

The propositional attitude of personal experience does not occur in all the tweets in category 1. Some combine factual and non-factual statements with various truth-values in a way that is more easily recognizable as opinion-statements. This is case for four out of thirty tweets in the text sample. One example can be gathered from April 15th:

#ihaveexperienced that inflicted shame is internalized. And I know that goes for many women. You'll probably not read the worst stories here... (April 15th 2015)

Here, the tweet offers a general insight, followed by a clear opinion ("I know ..."), and a modified prediction ("You'll probably not ..."). These latter two propositions are open for the possibility that alternative claims can be raised. Although the second statement is marked by a high value epistemic modality ("I know ..."), the

wording is also a way to recognize that the truth-value of the statement can be challenged. The propositional attitude that is found in this tweet is closer to what we usually associate with opinionated political discourse.

Personal Perspective: The Social Issue as it is Felt by the Individual

The second characteristic feature of the tweets in category 1 is that they apply a particular personal perspective on the issue. This perspective is established by a consistent use of the first person singular, the recurring rhetorical action of “sharing”, the mental processes, and the frequent references to personal feelings. These features form a perspective that is individual and very close to the situations that are described, which is unusual for public statements about political issues.

This tweet from April 15th contains several of the perspective markers that are typical for tweets in category 1:

#ihaveexperienced uncomfortable situations that are important to share, but I don't dare, because I'm afraid people will think I'm desperate for attention. (April 15th 2015)

Here, the issue is approached from the individual perspective of the speaker. This perspective is established by the use of the first person singular (“I have experienced ...”; “I don't care ...”; “I'm afraid ...”), the present tense, evaluative words (“uncomfortable”; “important”), and descriptions of the speaker's emotions (“I don't dare”; “I'm afraid”). This speaker could have applied a collective perspective (e.g. “we are afraid to talk about uncomfortable situations”) or an issue-oriented perspective (e.g. by using a generic term for the participants: “today, a girl cannot talk about sexual harassment in fear of being labeled desperate for attention”). When applying an individual, subjective perspective, the speaker draws attention to her own feelings and her own experiences.

Another example is found earlier that same day:

#ihaveexperienced being told that I shouldn't have so many opinions if I ever want to get a boyfriend. (April 15th 2015)

In this tweet, the individual perspective is less conspicuous. There are no words or phrases that reveal the speaker's emotions or judgements. However, the individual perspective is emphasized by the absence of markers of any collective perspective. The general issue is here something that has affected the speaker in a specific event. It is, however, not clear in what way this is thought to constitute a general problem or a collective issue that can be shared by the speaker and the audience. In the context of the campaign, this particular experience is likely to be read as an example of the types of discriminatory statements that women encounter on a general basis. It was most probably understood that way by the majority of Twitter-users who encountered it in a more natural setting. If that is the case, then its potential as a political statement is drawn altogether from the situational context. The personal perspective is made public, and potentially political, by the campaign that forms its situational context.

There are some signs that suggest that, if read together, for instance by a person who seeks out the hashtag, a larger selection of tweets with women's experiences will form a more issue-oriented perspective. Overall, there are few explicit assessments of values in the tweets. Because of the limited number of characters and the high tempo, the tone of the short stories is usually very sober and neutral. Despite of frequent use of personal pronouns, most of the tweets use a passive form, and although the campaign is aimed at changing attitudes, there is very little use of imperative mood or direct address. Also, the passive voice draws attention to the person acted upon. It makes the actor in the situation – men – less important, as the focus is placed on the person acted upon and on the nature of the action.

However, the issue-oriented perspective that characterizes the overall impression of the campaign is constituted by many different individual perspectives on the textual level. When hundreds of different speakers apply a subjective and person-oriented perspective, it is likely to affect how the ordinary reader encounters the topic and what they understand the issue to be. As it is presented here, the central issue – what the ordinary Twitter-user can reasonably be expected to think that the campaign was “about” – is the consequences of sexual harassment on the individual.

Categories 2 to 5: Controversies as Personal Disagreement

Comparing the propositional attitude and the perspective found in tweets in category 1 with tweets from the other categories, emphasize how the tweets in category 1 come to form a joint vernacular expression that in turn shapes the context in which each proposition is read.

In category 2, the propositional attitude of personal experiences is often fused with political opinions. Here we find tweets from men who share their own personal experiences with discrimination and harassment of women. An example of this can be gathered from a very early stage in the campaign:

#ihaveexperienced female patients who want sick leave since they're sexually harassed in the workplace. (April 15th 2015)

Unlike the women in category 1, the men do not have an active role in their own stories. The experiences they share also tend to be more general. While women share stories about specific events, men describe general tendencies and reoccurring situations, like how they feel that they have to act the role of the boyfriend to protect friends out on town, or how they, in a professional setting, interact with women who are discriminated.

Still the men tend to follow the same linguistic structure as the women in category 1, such as starting the tweets with #ihaveexperienced, using the first person singular, and using very few marks of modality. This way, these tweets also take on the form of self-disclosure. However, in category 2, speakers tend to portray experiences as evidence of more extensive social structures. These tweets typically consist of a factual proposition followed by a discription of the social structures that are in play (“... because they have to be”; “... because that’s the only thing I can actually do”; “...because single women get groped and harassed”; “...because I am a man”). This way, they often include both personal experiences and general claims about society.

Based on the sample texts, a common form for tweets in category 2 is the combination of two types of declarative statements with different perspectives. The first is usually based on the figure offered (“I have experienced”), followed by

personal experiences or observations. The second statement usually connects this observation to a more general social issue. This form helps maintain a distance between personal experience and social issue, thus giving the tweets a more argumentative expression. One of the first tweets in this category is an example of this:

#ihaveexperienced none of this, just because I'm a man. (April 15th 2015)

This tweet has the form of a personal disclosure, but is in reality an opinion. The main proposition in the tweet is an opinion on causation with high value modality (“[it is] just because I’m a man”). The relevant rhetorical action is not “sharing”, but “asserting” or “arguing”. The propositional attitude in this tweet is therefore fundamentally different from women who share their personal experiences. It is also clear that other actors perceive this proposition as an opinion that can be challenged and refuted in a different way than the personal experiences in category 1. The tweet got seven replies, all challenging the claim that men are not subjects to sexual harassment. This is far more polemic replies than even the most shared tweets in category 1.

In category 3, propositions refer either to other texts or media performances or to the #ihaveexperienced-campaign in general. These tweets usually function as encouragements to other Twitter-users to seek out either the hashtag or reviews of the campaign. As many tweets in this category are focused on #ihaveexperienced as phenomenon, they potentially influence how these stories are perceived as a collective issue. Many of the tweets in this category provide sober information about media coverage. Others contains direct encouragements to the audience, either to read a particular article or to seek out the campaign in general. A tweet from April 15th serves as a typical example:

Everybody should read what is shared on #ihaveexperienced. Especially those who claim that feminism no longer matters. (April 15th 2015)

In addition to encourage people to read the hashtag, this user suggests a broader social context for the campaign. The tweet implies an antagonistic relationship between feminists and “those who claim that feminism no longer matters”. This way,

by promoting the campaign, the tweets in category 3 often contain meta-textual propositions that place the campaign in a wider social and political context.

Tweets in category 3 also give us an impression of what some of the actors consider as the main audience for the campaign. Men who tweet about the hashtag and the campaign in general, address other men directly (“Men, read!”; “All guys should read the hashtag #ihaveexperienced”). Based on this sample of tweets, the rhetorical audience that is constituted in the texts – presumably consisting of actors who have the opportunity to resolve the exigency of the rhetorical situation – is “men in general”. None of the selected tweets in this category are explicitly directed at actors who have roles in formal processes of decision-making. As suggested under “stage 5” above, the Norwegian Minister of Children and Equality was involved in discussions about the campaign on Twitter and in the news media by April 16th. However, these exchanges of opinions and confrontations are exceptions from the general pattern. Tweets in category 3 suggest that participating actors understood the campaign as directed at “men in general”, and not decision-makers or media gatekeepers.

The most striking feature with tweets in category 4 is that they have an ironic distance to the theme and to the campaign (this form of irony should however not be confused with the kind described in chapter 6). The clearest and most unmistakable cases of irony are likely to be read not as propositions about actual events or the speaker’s experiences but as propositions about the campaign and tweets in category 1. A tweet from a male Twitter-user on April 15th can serve as an example:

#ihaveexperienced women along the highway with engine failure. They want contact then. Oh God, how they want contact then! (April 15th 2015)

This tweet suggests a metonymic connection between a stereotypical situation in which a woman seeks help from a man and women’s attitude towards men in general. The tweet thus implies that the #ihaveexperienced-campaign is an example of female hypocrisy. The proposition in the tweet does not challenge the campaign’s truth-value or its political or social soundness, but its genuineness. The majority of tweets in category 4 present propositions with no factual or ethical claim. These tweets are still likely to sabotage the intention of the campaign by interrupting the

genuineness and seriousness that surrounds the theme in tweets from categories 1 and 2.

In the context of the campaign, most of the Twitter-users who encountered this tweet by seeking out the hashtag were probably able to pick up on both its irony and its critical presuppositions, as it is apparent in the obviously stereotypical situation and the exaggerated exclamation (“Oh God!”). Actors who encountered this tweet in their own feed probably had some kind of specific knowledge of the rhetor and are thus even better equipped to detect the irony.

In this sample, very few tweets in category 4 offer explicit opinionated propositions about the campaign or claims put forth by contributors to the campaign. The critique is more often performed through ironic representation of the propositional attitude (they “share” ironically) and of the personal perspective (they are overly “personal” in their concessions). Typically, tweets in category 4 are based on the same grammatical structure and a similar modality as tweets in category 1. They consist of one or two declarative sentence initiated by #ihaveexperienced, with the same present perfect tense and the same passive voice. However, in most of the behavioral processes or action in these tweets, it is men who are objects for the actions of women.

Clearly, many of the tweets in category 4 can be read as genuine attempts to share personal, traumatic experiences. In such cases, it is far from certain that the audience has perceived the tweets as critical or attributed the speaker antagonistic motivations. This tweet from April 15th can serve as an example of the tweets from men in category 4 that can potentially be read in different and even contradictory ways:

#ihaveexperienced elderly women in a nursery home who constantly touch me in an inappropriate way, while my female colleagues think it’s funny!! (April 15th 2015)

This tweet has strong resemblance with the tweets in category 1, with the clear difference that it is a man who shares his experiences of being harassed by women. There are no clear indications in the text that this tweet should be understood as ironic or satirical. Still, it is possible to claim that this man, by adopting the same propositional attitude and the same personal perspective as the women who share their

experiences, but with vastly different consequences for the issue, imply that the #ihaveexperienced-campaign is irrelevant. Accepting this proposition would suggest that at least one aspect of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign – in which the campaign makes salient the problematic relationship between men and women in the public domain – is misplaced.

In category 5, most propositions refer to men who are believed to interrupt or sabotage the campaign, usually men tweeting in category 4. Tweets in category 5 utilize a variety of different rhetorical functions, one of the most prominent being the use of humor. The first entry in this category can serve as a typical example:

Congratulation, men who try to take over #ihaveexperienced with bitter comments, you're all huge winners. (April 15th 2015)

Despite the wide variety of rhetorical functions, it is possible to extract a joint macro-proposition from the tweets in this category. Almost all the tweets placed in category 5 propose that some men interrupt and disrupt the campaign by delegitimizing either specific assertions or descriptions put forth in categories 1 and 2. In the processes in these tweets, it is exclusively men who have a participatory role (“... defend the men and blame the girls”; “... making fun of it”; “... get offended by the #ihaveexperienced-thread”; “... make fun of an important message”; “... spreading bullshit about #ihaveexperienced”). Tweets in category 5 give us an impression of how the different controversies and conflicts were perceived by actors who were actively engaging with the campaign on Twitter. The attitudes found in category 5 support the notion established in category 1, that contradictions are likely to be seen as disproving or endorsement of the truthfulness of the speaker.

Personal Action Frames as Rhetorical Strategy

The particular rhetorical expression of the #ihaveexperienced-hashtag has strong resemblance with what Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (L. W. Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, 2013) have described as “personal action frames”. According to Bennett and Segerberg, the new forms of civic mobilization that characterise the individualized society, are based on a discourse of personalized communication. This is distinguished by a combination of “symbolic inclusiveness”, that gives people an

opportunity to customize engagement with issues and actions, and “technological openness”, that permits networking and direct interaction between individuals and between individuals and organizations (L. W. Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 744).

Central to this personalized communication is the presence of personal action frames. This concept describes how political participation on the individual level is framed as a form of personal involvement. People are engaged politically not by endorsing collective opinions but by sharing their own experiences, hopes, and grievances in networked publics. Whereas collective action frames (associated with what Castells calls “secondary relations”, such as political parties and movements) encourage people to join the cause, personal action frames invites people to make the cause their own personal statement.

The #ihaveexperienced-campaign is marked by this personalized communication in different ways. The campaign is initiated by a direct call to “share your story!” The viral campaign is formed by hundreds of individual vernacular expressions. The analysis has also shown how, within the context of the campaign, disagreements are likely to be approached as personal disagreements, and criticism is perceived as attacks on the women who share or as poor attempts to hide the critic’s own discriminatory behavior.

The case of #ihaveexperience also gives us a rare detailed impression of how personal action frames are formed on the textual level. To summarize the analysis of the ideational function, there are two features that are particularly salient about the tweets that supported the #ihaveexperienced-campaign. The first is that the tweets that followed the stated intention of the campaign exhibit a particular propositional attitude towards the issue. Women used the hashtag to share personal experiences in a seemingly confidential manner. The second is that these tweets exhibit a particular personal perspective towards the issue. This perspective is individual and subjective and very close to the issue, which is unusual for public utterances. Combined, this propositional attitude and personal perspective establish a propositional attitude of “sharing”, which suggests both a personal attitude towards the issue and a confidential relationship between the speaker and the audience. This way, the ideational function of these tweets establishes a position in which there is no distance between personal

experience and social issue. The issue is addressed solely through personal action frames. The campaign's collective message is the sum of numerous individual statements, and its truth-claim is built on the same statements.

The analysis gives us insights into how actors who interact with the campaign perceive its social and rhetorical function. Men who tweet in support of the campaign tend to have a more argumentative expression than women who share their personal experiences. Sexual harassment is here more directly discussed as a political issue that requires actions, invites decision-making, and allows different arguments and positions. Men cannot be the subjects to this particular form of sexual harassment (the one directed at women), and thus they cannot use the same rhetorical strategy of personal disclosure.

The personal action frames that are formed by the combination of propositional attitude and personal perspective can also make criticism and counter-argumentation difficult. At least it is challenging for a speaker to perform such criticism while maintaining an expression of goodwill towards the audience (gr. *eunoia*). The lack of any explicit common position means that contradictory propositions are likely to be seen not as political or issue-oriented disagreements, but as attempts to challenge the truthfulness of the women who share their personal experiences. When the message is made up of hundreds, and even thousands, of different personal stories, attempts to challenge the campaign's message are likely to be seen as attempts to discredit the personal stories.

The analysis has shown how critique against the campaign is often performed through ironic representation of the propositional attitude and of the personal perspective that is characteristic of the campaign. Critics – usually men – imitate the particular expression of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign to ironically “share” their own experiences. Reactions to these hostile tweets are most often directed at the motivations of the senders. Both these patterns support the impression that contradictions are likely to be seen as disproving or endorsement of the truthfulness of the speaker, and thus approached as a form of personal disagreement.

#ihaveexperienced as Political Rhetoric

What, then, can the analysis tell us about the characteristics of Twitter as a rhetorical arena and the kind of political rhetoric it facilitates?

The course of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign, and the broader debate about sexual harassment and discrimination that surrounded the campaign, was clearly influenced by the different arenas it unfolded in. The massive engagement in participatory media was clearly influenced by the opinions expressed in the newspapers' op-ed. section, but the form of the campaign would not have been possible without the technical capabilities of Twitter and the rhetorical characteristics of this rhetorical arena.

The personal action frames that are formed by the combination of personal disclosures, supportive comments, and ironic rejections draw attention to numerous characteristics of the rhetorical arena that have been described in previous chapters. Sexual harassment is clearly an issue that is covered by the informants' descriptions of the topical structures of the rhetorical arena. The issue can fit the descriptions as "emotionally guided", potentially polarizing, and based on values and principal questions.

The particular expression of this issue in this debate is made possible by the rhetorical affordances of Twitter. The propositional attitude of sharing is made possible by the affordances of social interactivity and the conversational setting this creates. Viral spread and inter-media agenda-setting are made possible by the hashtag-function that allows every actor to potentially reach any other Twitter-user without any prior connection.

The particular propositional attitude and the consistently personal perspective that is found in the campaign, is an indication of how the actors perceive the rhetor-audience relation in this arena. "Sharing" assumes a seemingly confidential and personal relationship between a speaker and the audience. This kind of sharing can only be done by people who interact as private individuals. The analysis suggests that people interact with this issue differently, depending on whether they are men or women. Only women can share their personal experiences in line with the intentions of the campaign.

Raising the question of *rhetorical decorum*, the analysis suggests how the broad public on Twitter adapts and incorporates existing social codes, like gender-roles and understandings of what is personal and private, and can in turn effectively be used to challenge or provoke. The same message can be an expression of support or a request for change of attitude, depending on whether a woman or a man assumes the role of audience.

As political rhetoric, the #ihaveexperienced-campaign displays how Twitter can be utilized by a very loosely connected group of people to create salience for an issue in the public. The campaign managed, for a period of time, to define a social issue and frame the preceding events in line with the initiators' world view. The campaign and its contributions are not clear examples of deliberative rhetoric. Few tweets suggested the need for collective decisions, and even fewer addressed what such decisions could or should entail. It was primarily national politicians and the news media who suggested that the campaign demanded collective actions. As the news media framed the issue in line with established news frames, the number of women who shared their personal experiences went down, and when the Socialist Left Party used the extensive involvement around the campaign as a pretext to launch a new bill of law, there were hardly any reactions on Twitter. Nothing suggested that people who had contributed to the campaign saw this bill of law as a sign of success. Neither did they promote any other political decisions.

The way the #ihaveexperienced-campaign played out is a particularly telling example of inter-media agenda-setting between social network sites and the news media. The campaign and the issue got major coverage, particularly in the press. The nature and the timing of the media coverage suggest that the media interest was largely a result of the campaign's form. The combination of a record-high number of participants, the novelty of social media politics, and the personal perspective provided in the tweets, clearly met the news criteria of the papers. All the newspapers that covered the campaign printed at least one article that included estimates of the number of posts on the hashtag, descriptions of the initiative behind the campaign, and examples of stories that were posted.

Overall, the #ihaveexperienced-campaign can be seen as a way to systematically reframe the debate about “The Welfare Office’s” films and the controversies that followed. By the time the hashtag was introduced, the debate accommodated different frames of understanding. Some clearly approached the issue as a question of the entertainment media’s moral responsibilities when joking with named individuals, while others approached the issue as an example of sexually charged public harassment. By effectively generalizing this latter claim, the #ihaveexperienced-campaign managed to frame the debate as an example of how society in general and men in particular marginalize and rationalized sexual harassment of women. When the news media fully picked up on the campaign’s message, claims about the prevalence of sexual harassment had moved from assertions to presuppositions, thus increasing its chances to influence future deliberative practice.

The thousands of tweets that contributed to the campaign can also be seen as vernacular expressions of communal values. In this sense, they have many of the characteristics of epideictic rhetoric. The tweets praise the audacity of young women and they blame the actions and attitudes of men. The texts that initiated the campaign, explicitly called for women to share their experiences as signs of support with women in public positions. Recognizing this motivation, the women’s stories and the men’s support can be seen as what Beale calls “performance of community” through expressions of solidarity and unity within and across gender-boundaries (Beale, 1978).

The non-centralized form of organization that characterizes this campaign appears to be better suited at gaining momentum and creating salience than to promote a specific message. According to the understanding of political rhetoric I promote here, the power of creating salience is connected to potential influence over future processes of decision-making. As it clearly had the ability to create salience, as well as rhetorically enforce collective values and virtues, the #ihaveexperienced-campaign can have laid the grounds for future collective decision-making – but the viral campaign did not in itself suggest how it might do so.

Chapter 11: Findings and Contributions

Two main research questions have motivated the empirical studies and the theoretical reflections in this dissertation:

RQ1: What characterize social network sites as rhetorical arenas?

RQ2: What characterizes political rhetoric in social network sites?

In this final chapter, I reflect on how the different chapters and themes relate to each other and answer the research questions.

First, the study provides an empirical contribution to our understanding of rhetoric in networked publics and of political talk and vernacular rhetoric in digital environments. I have argued that in order to better understand public discourse in new rhetorical arenas, we need studies that explore how discourse is experienced by people involved. The networked public of Norwegian expert citizens has proven to be a particularly rich case in this regard.

Second, the study demonstrates the usefulness of a “rhetorical arena”-approach. This is designed to study rhetorical practice on the meso-level, with equal attention to social, discursive, and material circumstances. This is where we best can describe the particularities and characteristics of networked publics. In this chapter, I summarize the characteristics of Twitter and Facebook as rhetorical arenas and ask how deep and how variable their structuring properties are.

Third, the study demonstrates the usefulness of a rhetorical understanding of political discourse. Much political talk is best described in terms of agenda-setting, framing, or epideictic rhetoric. In this final chapter, I draw some general conclusions about what characterizes political rhetoric in these arenas and discuss their democratic potential.

Recurring Themes in the Interviews

The informants’ experiences can be summarized through the seven central themes that have been identified in the analysis.

1) The first central theme is how these networked publics consist of, and shape the perception of, a certain segment of *expert citizens*. This has been thoroughly established through the pre-study, the sampling process, and the 34 in-depth interviews. Active participants experience the existence of a networked public as interrelated with political talk in social network sites. This is described in chapter 6, “The Chattering Classes of Social Media”. Typically, expert citizens are people with high access to the arenas of traditional media, like the newspapers or talk-radio, and are believed to have more influence on public opinion than other citizens. They are journalists, editors, lawyers, and academics. They are referred to as “the opinion-elite”, “opinion-makers”, “the Tweetocracy”, and “the Facebook prominence”, and they describe themselves as “the chattering classes”, “talking heads” or “the punditocracy” of the digital public. They also see themselves as an autonomous part of the system that shapes public opinion and influences processes of collective decision-making.

2) The second central theme revolves around the type of talk these expert citizens engage in. This I have described as “*chatter*”, or talk about news, pop-culture and current political issues. Both Twitter and Facebook are compared to other everyday settings where political talk might occur, like “discussions around the lunch-table”, “among friends at a dinner-party”, or “at the pub”. Although the informants see social network sites as an important environment for political debate and citizenship, there is clearly something unpretentious and relaxed about the conversational setting that these arenas facilitate. This too is elaborated in chapter 6.

3) This leads to the third theme, a particular *argument culture*. The informants suggest that these networks are devoted to exploring and testing different sides of an issue. “The political” is seen as a discursive construct, and exploring different sides to an argument is seen as a form of political engagement. In chapter 7, “The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics”, I describe how Twitter is believed to support stronger and more rigorous argumentation norms than other rhetorical arenas. These norms are heavily influenced by academic standards of discourse. Facebook is seen as an arena that can effectively draw attention to argumentation-fallacies. Here, everybody must be prepared to defend their positions “on the spot”. Others describe Facebook as a

rhetorical arena characterized by its lack of argumentation norms and a culture of “strategic suspicion”, “hair-splitting”, and “polarization”.

4) A fourth recurring theme is how political talk is concentrated around a set of *social media-friendly issues*. These include immigration, religion, gender roles, prostitution, sexuality, abortion, and freedom of speech. These issues allow people to negotiate and express political and social identities. Disagreements about these issues are largely motivated by differences in identities and moral authorities. The informants describe them as “hot button issues” and “emotive issues” and disagreements over these issues as a kind of “culture war”. They are thought to have a particular potential for pathos-based argumentation and require little subject-specific knowledge. The nature and characteristics of social media-friendly issues is described in chapter 9, “Topical Structures and Individualization”.

5) The fifth theme, *social media-credibility*, describes standards for how a person is perceived as authentic, knowledgeable and trustworthy within the networked public. It is important for the informants that other people think that their opinions are original and the result of an independent process of reasoning. In order to be seen as an interesting actor within these networked publics, one must combine novelty of expression and originality of argumentation with consistency of opinions. This theme is described in many different parts of the dissertation, most notably in chapter 6, “The Chattering Classes of Social Media”, and in chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”.

6) The sixth theme describes *social media wit* as a form of humor and quick-wittedness that characterizes these networked publics. Irony is seen to be a central part of what differentiates expert citizens from both political- and media-professionals and ordinary citizens. This is particularly relevant for Twitter. Irony is a way for expert citizens to differentiate themselves from the political system and the media elites on one hand and ordinary citizens on the other. The ironic attitude assumes that the networked public shares some knowledge and an approach to politics that elevates it from the rest. The role of irony and humour in these networked publics I have described in chapter 6.

7) The seventh and final central theme in the interviews is how social network sites influence the *opinion flow* that forms the basis for public life. On one hand, the interviews confirm that these network publics do not create their own agenda, but feed on the agenda of the news media. Social media-friendly issues are picked up from the news media because of their potential for conversations and disagreements. On the other hand, the interviews describe how social network sites are believed to influence public opinion, and how public opinion is formed and spread. The informants frequently talk about their closeness to the arenas of established media. Also, established media actors are believed to alter and adapt the genres and rhetorical strategies of the opinion- and commentary sections of the newspaper to better fit the logic of social network sites. This theme informs different parts of the dissertation, but is described in most detail in chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”.

In sum, the interviews suggest that these networked publics have a consistent understanding of who they are and what they do. At the core of their experience is the form of political talk they typically engage in. These arenas are associated with a particular argument culture, a particular set of issues, and a particular attitude, tone, and style that make them distinguishable both from other media and other uses of social network sites.

These themes are identified by analysing the informants’ experiences, and the kind of knowledge we gather from these findings should be adjusted accordingly. Here I briefly offer two examples of how findings from interviews differ from more traditional methods of rhetorical analysis. The informants clearly believe that these networked publics support local argument cultures that are more open and more inquisitive than other rhetorical arenas. Their experience of this social reality gives us valuable insights that argument analysis or other observations cannot produce. Interviewing people about argument norms cannot replace argumentation analysis, but it can give us access to the actors’ perception of audience and risk, and of what they believe to be the function and scope of argumentation in this setting. The study demonstrates how these perspectives are particularly relevant when dealing with new rhetorical arenas (cf. chapter 1). In the absent of clearly defined situations, the

informants' descriptions provide a context for analysis and give us an idea of for whom and for what purpose arguments are intended.

Similarly, interviewing key-informants about what issues they see as typical, should not replace content analyses, but it gives us a better sense of what key-informants experience as typical and characteristic in these setting, and thus give us an idea of “what goes where” and of the relative significance of different issues.

The Wider Context

In this dissertation, I have introduced a variety of theories and perspectives that help us see the case of Norwegian expert citizens in relation to the more fundamental structural changes that accompany the emergence of participatory media.

All the chapters of the analysis have introduced new theoretical perspectives to the understanding of rhetorical practice in networked publics. In chapter 6, “The Chattering Classes of Social Media”, the informants' understanding of themselves as expert citizens and their narration of the network as a modern, digital version of the bourgeois public sphere are seen as key to understanding the role of the rhetor and the particular speaker-audience-relations that Twitter in particular facilitate. This is further emphasised by the central role of irony. Clearly, this is a trait of this particular segment of users, but it also relates to the particular encounter settings of the arena. Social network sites create a particular kind of conversational setting that promotes commitment to seemingly egalitarian conversations and “easiness” of expression. The anticipation of familiarity between individuals, the “verbal” character of the exchanges, and the opportunities this offers for social connection and dis-connection are likely to affect rhetorical practices beyond these particular networked publics.

Similarly, in chapter 7, “The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics”, the informants' descriptions of local argument cultures draw attention to both the uniqueness of the case and general characteristics of the arenas. The informants describe their audience as the “P2-segment”, which is very specific to this context. However, the possibilities for social positioning, on which perceptions of audiences rest, are likely to be actualized beyond this case. For instance, the maintenance of academic norms of argumentation, that is central to the local argument culture of the “tweetocracy”, is supported by the interactive affordances of hyperlinks and hashtags.

This demonstrates how the interactive functions of these arenas are not only used to connect people but also to distinguish people along social hierarchies.

Chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”, shows how “individualisation of politics” looks like in practice. The informants are particularly interested in how social network sites change how they relate to journalists and politicians as individuals. These experiences are enforced by the Norwegian context (cf. p. 16). However, the experiences of individualisation of the political debate that can be gathered from the interviews rely heavily on the rhetorical affordances of these arenas. Affordances of social interactivity, profile management, and social connectivity amount to a rhetorical setting resembling an egalitarian and informal written conversation, where assessments of *ethos* and individual relations are formed over time and in relation to social hierarchies. Although expressions of these affordances will vary, these arenas are likely to promote an individualization of the political debate in different contexts.

In chapter 9, “Topical Structures of Individualization”, a theory of an ongoing “culture war” in western democracies is used to describe how new political dimensions accompany the networking functions of participatory media. This theory captures something about the topical structures of these arenas that is relevant beyond the informants’ experience. The expert citizens are particularly engaged in emotive and “low-threshold” issues. These issues accord with the particular encounter settings that these arenas offer. This way, the study demonstrates how these arenas influence not only how people talk about political issues, but also what they talk about.

The Research Questions Revisited

In order to answer the research question in this dissertation, it has been necessary to clarify how we can best approach the question of systemic form in networked publics. Therefore, one of my main concerns in this dissertation has been to demonstrate how a conceptual framework for *rhetorical arenas* can open new understandings of network locations. This framework pays equal attention to how discursive, social, and material circumstances shape rhetorical practice on the meso-level. The first research question (RQ1) relates directly to this way of conceptualizing social network sites as arenas for rhetorical practice. Of the seven sub-questions that were introduced, the first four are

based on the different analytical dimensions that describe the structuring properties of rhetorical arenas:

RQ1.1. How do active participants describe the dominant rhetorical affordances of these arenas?

As a central part of the “rhetorical arena”-approach, I have proposed how a concept of “rhetorical affordances” can be used to describe how the physical and technological environment provides different constraints and possibilities for rhetorical action. As an analytical concept, “rhetorical affordances” is particularly useful when dealing with new, dynamic media environments, where we are confronted with the technological aspects of rhetorical circumstances in a much more direct manner.

In chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”, I identify three ways in which the affordances of Twitter and Facebook facilitate individualization of politics. 1) The affordances of social interactivity promote an interaction setting similar to that of an egalitarian conversation. This setting implies a strong connection between identity and opinions. 2) The affordances of profile management contribute to the formation of individual social and political identities. 3) The affordances of social connectivity promote ethos-formation based on social networks and a practice of evaluating other actors based on who they interact with.

The affordances of social network sites also influence issue salience. In chapter 9, “Topical Structures and Individualization”, I discuss how the conversational setting promotes talk about issues that are not only perceived to be politically relevant, but relevant for the individuals, and, not the least, easily accessible for individuals to form and defend independent opinions about.

The case of the #ihaveexperienced-campaign (chapter 10) provides a practical example of how the affordances of Twitter allows for a new type of rhetorical situation. Although this chapter describes events and actors beyond the particular network that is the focus of the interviews, it demonstrates many of the rhetorical characteristics described here. The case demonstrates how a propositional attitude of

sharing personal experiences becomes a form of political activity by the affordances of social interactivity, the conversational setting, and the hashtag-function.

RQ1.2. How do active participants describe the dominant topical structures of these arenas?

In the “rhetorical arena”-approach, I have suggested how the topical structures of rhetorical arenas can be approached analytically through classic and contemporary understandings of rhetorical *topoi*: the cognitive structures that are easily available to the actors and shape people’s perception of what they typically talk about in these encounter settings. This gives us the means to recognize particular arenas based on what topics people talk about and how they talk about them.

In chapter 9, “Topical Structures and Individualization”, I demonstrate how these networked publics balance a close connection to the news agenda with expectations of what constitute social media-friendly issues. The analysis suggests how the *structural topoi* of social network sites are at least in part adopted from the news media. The “tweetocracy” and the “Facebook-public” do not set their own agenda as much as reflect and comment on the news. Social media-friendly issues are then picked up from the news agenda because of their potential for conversations and disagreements. However, the interviews also reveal a clear understanding of what constitutes as social media-friendly issues. These are centred on gender issues, international affairs, and everything that has got to do with immigration. For some of the informants, this complex of issues informs their understanding of almost all other areas of public life. People feel a strong emotional attachment to these issues, as they are intertwined with their personal sense of morale and identity. This way, social media-friendly issues are believed to be particularly important for how people identify themselves politically and socially. The encounter settings of Twitter and Facebook promote contention about issues that the actors see as “principle” and “value based” and generate attention to what the informants call “value politics” or “culture wars”. “Culture wars” describe a deeply rooted and long lasting disagreement over polarizing and morally conflicting issues. When the informants use this term, it suggests that they

recognise that some recurring themes and debates primarily serve as symbolic expressions of more deeply rooted contentions based on political identities.

The text analysis of #ihaveexperienced in chapter 10 shows how a campaign surrounding a typical social media-friendly issue progressed in practice. Here, hundreds of women shared their stories of sexual abuse on Twitter to draw attention to this social problem. The analysis reveals how emotive and personal issues invite a particular propositional attitude based on a personal perspective. Although the viral campaign as a whole clearly had the marks of a political campaign, the individual tweets had the form of personal stories, which made it difficult to oppose the campaign or its message without questioning the credibility and genuineness of the participants. This type of issues corresponds with what the informants describe as social media-friendly issues.

RQ1.3: How do active participants describe rhetor-audience relations in these arenas?

I have suggested how the rhetorical concepts of rhetor and audience can be used to describe expectations and opportunities attached to the role of speaker and audience in different encounter settings. Such expectations and opportunities are based on people's general knowledge of the arena and their specific knowledge of other actors in the arena. For people who play the role of audience-members, this present itself as the *ethos* of the speaker. For the speaker it represents the constraints and possibilities associated with the particular audience.

In chapter 7, "The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics", I describe how the informants perceive the audience on Twitter to be a particular segment of politically knowledgeable and up-to-date citizens. This is further supported by how ironic discourse contributes to an "ironic and sarcastic community" that is "relaxed" and "always a little tongue in cheek".

The expert citizens of Facebook have a strong sense of the networked public as their own, personal network, organized around their group of friends. Here, people constantly balance different audiences and perceptions of audiences. This informs how

they manage their profile page and the actions of others on this page. Page owners “moderate” debates in line with what they wish to communicate to the general public. Although they often have a particular understanding of their audience, the informants internalize normative standards of “the public” when drawing the line for what is acceptable behavior in their feeds.

The interviews also reveal what particular expectations people have to speakers in these arenas. In chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”, I demonstrate how Twitter and Facebook are seen as arenas where political actors can display their genuine opinions free from strategic considerations. Social network sites have become important arenas for “branding” of the individual journalist’s “image”. Impressions of journalists’ individual character and personal opinions are increasingly deemed relevant for evaluating news content. This is due in part to the particular conditions social network sites place on *ethos*-formation. In social network sites, people tend to see each other as conversation partners rather than audience members. Peoples’ opinions are assumed to be their own personal opinions, rather than the expressions of political organizations or collective ideologies. Moreover, social network sites allow people to acquire specific knowledge about each other over time. The audience is likely to invoke personal action frames when they interpret and assess utterances. This means that journalist and politicians must assume that people read their opinions as individual and personal.

The case of the Norwegian expert citizens demonstrates how the formation and maintenance of a networked public in itself can be seen as an expression of political rhetoric. It suggests how the ability to shape an online “persona” and being associated with the “right” people – with expert citizens, politicians, academics and well-known journalists – strengthens a person’s initial *ethos*.

RQ1.4: What are the norms that influence the participants’ understanding of situations and decorum in these arenas?

I have used the concept of *rhetorical decorum* as an analytical entry point to the structuring properties of social norms on rhetorical practice. By asking what is

considered decorous in particular settings, we can access the underlying social norms that give stability and systemic form to rhetorical arenas.

In chapter 6, “The Chattering Classes of Social Media”, I demonstrate how expert citizens associate the interaction setting of Twitter and Facebook with other everyday settings where political talk might occur. These comparisons promote a certain tone and style that is unique for this network. The informants describe egalitarian and informal conversations. Here, assessments of *ethos* and individual relations are formed over time and in line with internal social hierarchies. These types of encounter settings apparently have the same type of inclusive and interest-free attitude that has been described as an ideal of the early bourgeois public. They differ from political debates not because people are more likely to change their initial perspectives, but because the conversation is carried out *as if they were*. The egalitarianism of the setting is a result of loose social conventions and expectations of social equality. Actors must grasp this premise to be recognized as competent participants.

Rhetorical decorum is also drawn from the actors’ social knowledge and background. As expert citizens, the informants master the vocabulary of the elite networks and possess the expert knowledge necessary to interact with them. However, to act fittingly in these networked publics also means that one does not overtly exploit such connections or act openly strategic. In chapter 8, “Individualization of Political Debate”, I reveal how an aversion against “spin”, “strategy” and “propaganda” is built into the informants’ understanding of their own networked publics. All the informants express some kind of dissatisfaction with people who use social network sites for unilateral criticism or to spread a political message without regard to objections or counter-arguments

Moreover, the informants describe the encounter setting of Twitter as “easy”, “unpretentious”, “relaxed” and “quick-witted”, suggesting that this form of political talk should not be taken too seriously. To joke about serious political issues is not seen as a breach of *decorum*, but is an important part of the networked public. Ironic attitude is one way for expert citizens to differentiate themselves from both the political system and the media elites on one hand and ordinary citizens on the other.

Descriptions of Facebook suggest that the informants also associate this networked public with breach of *decorum*. In chapter 7, “The Argument Cultures of Networked Publics”, I describe how Facebook is seen as a rhetorical arena characterized by a lack of argumentation norms and by “strategic suspicion”, “hair-splitting”, “repetitions and accusations”, and political polarization.

In all circumstances, the networked public of expert citizens on Twitter and Facebook are organized around the logic of arguing. These expert citizens do not use social network sites to organize political participation, but to discuss and argue political issues. Their interactions are not characterised by politeness or strict social conventions, but *rhetorical decorum* dictates that one gives others the room to argue and accepts the possibility that one can be shown to be wrong in the eyes of others.

Beyond these research questions, the rhetorical arena-approach encourages reflections on how these structuring properties contributes to the *systemness* of the rhetorical arena. Arenas have varying degrees of systemness depending on the stability or flexibility of the structuring properties, and how we can analyse this along dimensions of depth, power, and formality.

The informants’ experiences give us an impression of the struggles that are fought over different aspects of the rhetorical affordances of these arenas, based on perceptions of public and private, the uses of interactive functions (like “tagging”), the meaning of new semiotic resources (like “hashtags” and “likes”), and so forth. The analysis of the interviews demonstrates how networking functions and relatively stable encounter settings can exist despite of such constant negotiations and changes to the structuring properties of the arenas.

In sum, there are few formal criteria that maintain systemness in these arenas. The “rules” of interaction on Twitter and Facebook are neither clearly defined nor deeply rooted. As rhetorical arenas for political talk, then, social network sites are characterised by low levels of systemness.

According to the understanding of rhetorical arenas I have outlined in this dissertation, this low level of systemness does not mean that these arenas are not active and relevant settings for rhetorical action. It suggests that they allow for more

variations in interpretations of rhetorical situations, more strategic actions, and more influence from adjacent rhetorical arenas.

The analysis suggests how this low level of systemness influences practice and contributes to the distinct expressions and functions of these arenas. On Twitter, this low degree of systemness seems to strengthen the maintenance of networks, as it makes it easier for expert citizens to differentiate themselves from “ordinary” citizen. This is evidenced by the selection of informants resulting from the snow-balling-process. The majority of potential informants are highly educated, urban people with connections to the established arenas of the public.

On Facebook, the low degree of systemness creates a tension between the potential for dialogue across political and ideological differences and a “strategic suspicion” and “hair-splitting”.

Analysing the informants’ experiences, we get an impression of what kind of power the structures of these arenas imply. In this dissertation I have referred to this type of political talk as vernacular rhetoric. The study also suggests how political talk on Twitter and Facebook is seen as oppositional to the institutionalized authority of the political parties and the media. However, this is not to say that they do not promote a particular kind of authority. The study demonstrates how the maintenance of local argument cultures and the individualization of political debate support authority based on academic credibility and informal social hierarchies. This is the kind of authority that this segment of users have access to. The kind of political talk that the informants engage in on Twitter and Facebook promotes an ideal of citizens as intellectually resourceful but politically independent. This profile fits the informants’ identity, as “expert citizens” and “the chattering classes”.

Moreover, the analysis suggests how the rhetorical arenas of Twitter and Facebook overlap and interact with other arenas the informants participate in and interact with. The most notable examples are found in descriptions of topical structures. When describing the *formal topoi* of these arenas, the informants draw on argumentations norms from academia, and when describing what issues are seen as typical, the *structural topoi*, they are clearly influenced by the institutionalised *topoi* of the news media. This way, these networked publics combine easily recognizable

features of other area of the public. Although social network sites offer radically new ways for people to interact, established social and discursive structures still have a major influence on how people discuss politics in these arenas.

What Characterizes Political Rhetoric in Social Network Sites?

The second research question addresses the nature and characteristics of political rhetoric in social network sites. Here, the sub-questions are related to the different processes of political discourse described in chapter 2, “Decision-Making, Salience and Collectivisation”.

RQ2.1: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on political deliberation?

The study clearly demonstrates how these networked publics are formed around political talk about current issues. Although they do not facilitate collective decision-making in any proper sense, the expert citizens can impact deliberative processes as they move between different situations and different rhetorical arenas. They perceive themselves as an autonomous part of the political system that can generate new, original positions and opinions. This way, they can have more or less direct influence on processes of collective decision-making.

The informants tend to describe the nature of discourse in these arenas in ways similar to what I have described as an ideal view of political rhetoric (see chapter 2). This view maintains that political decisions should follow as a result of deliberation involving different parts of society. Whether or not this self-reported reality corresponds to actual practice, it gives us an impression of how these networked publics believe they can have an impact on political decisions.

In line with an ideal view of political rhetoric, the democratic potential of these arenas has been associated with their ability to facilitate dialogue between ordinary citizens and elite networks. This study provides a more nuanced understanding of how these interactions are interpreted by the actors involved. Clearly, the informants believe that Twitter and Facebook have the potential to make elite networks more accessible and stimulate interactions between and across such networks. However,

they also reaffirm impressions of how expert citizens mark their distance to the general public. By drawing on argumentation norms from academia and relating conceptions of audience to pre-existing social hierarchies, the networked public of Twitter subtly mark their distance from “ordinary” citizens less likely to pick up on such discursive and social cues. Similarly, the egalitarian interaction form of political talk on Facebook is not always genuine, as talk and discussions between expert citizens and ordinary citizens always hold a tension between the ideal of equality in conversations and the social differences that always comes to the surface. In the case of Norway, the logic of networked publics thus seems to work in contradiction to the deliberative ideals the participants themselves refer to and support.

RQ2.2: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on processes of creating salience for political issues?

The study demonstrates the central role of framing and agenda-setting for understanding political talk in digital environments. Much of what is believed to be characteristic for these networked publics is related to what issues they talk about. The informants’ extensive descriptions of social media-friendly issues also bring new dimensions to understandings of how these arenas influence the political agenda and understandings of what constitutes relevant issues for the political community.

The conversational settings of social network sites draw attention to issues that people can debate from the positions of their own personal opinions. I have suggested how theories of issue-obtrusiveness can describe some of this effect. Social media-friendly issues are “low threshold”-issues. They allow ordinary citizens to explore and promote their own personal opinions in relation to the political community, and they require little subject-specific knowledge for people to formulate an opinion. Moreover, social media-friendly issues can evoke pre-existing sensitivities and trigger emotions that affect what people perceive as salient. The informants describe them as “hot button issues”. Typically, these issues highlight people’s need to define political convictions and identities through moral categories.

The informants' unison experience of social media-friendly issues demonstrates what constraints and possibilities social network sites place on processes of creating salience. On the one hand, these issues are believed to originate from fixed values and belief systems that most people recognize as conflicting and controversial. Through these issues, political talk in social network sites has the potential to incorporate and re-frame existing political conflicts and renew and reinforce existing political dimensions. On the other hand, political talk in social network sites can directly influence the media agenda and the political agenda, as it often involves, or at least gets the attention of, typical gatekeeper actors.

Beyond this, the informants are not very concerned with how public opinion leads to collective decisions. They are more concerned with how political talk in social network sites allows people to explore and promote their own personal opinions in relation to the political community. When social media-friendly issues are repeatedly described as emotive issues, it is because of their ability to disclose values that people form their social and political identities in relation to. This way, they can also contribute to the formation and re-formation of collective identities.

RQ2.3: What constraints and possibilities do social network sites place on collective identity formation?

An underlying theme in the dissertation has been how political talk in social network sites can fill the role of epideictic rhetoric. This form of talk can be seen as on-going negotiations about which values and beliefs should shape the political community. The informants describe how participating in these networked publics has given them a better understanding of the values that govern opposing political positions. They believe that this form of talk should clarify and challenge the convictions and beliefs on which political opinions are built.

The study has shown how individualization of political debate is fuelled by strong connections between person and belief, an individualistic approach to public and professional roles, and an argument culture in which public debate is largely approached as personal disagreement. Thus, the question of social and political identity

becomes central for political discourse. When the informants describe recurring topics as expressions of a “culture war”, it suggests that they recognize their epideictic functions as more than an always-present element of political talk. The emotive issues that dominate in social network sites are believed to be particularly suited to bring more profound differences in values and worldviews to the surface.

For the participants in these networked publics, to be political does not necessarily imply working for a particular decision or influence processes of deliberation, but to be a part of the discourse that shapes the perceptions of the issues and values that shape contemporary society.

Chapter Summary: The Main Contributions of the Dissertation

Beyond answering these research questions, this dissertation offers three particularly relevant contributions to the study of rhetoric in networked publics.

First, in addition to new empirical insights, the study demonstrates how in-depth interviews can be used in rhetorical studies. For now, digital environments represent major challenges for studies of rhetorical discourse. The complex and changeable nature of a Twitter- or Facebook-feed makes it difficult to isolate situations and events in ways that correspond with people’s own experiences. We need a better understanding of how people read these environments and what they perceive as the most relevant aspects of rhetorical practice. This concerns not only researchers interested in social network sites, but all who wish to understand the changing nature of rhetorical practice in the networked society. Within the field of rhetoric, this coincides with an increased interest in vernacular expressions and a willingness to adopt new methods to explore “the field” beyond textual expressions.

By providing one example of how interviews can be used to produce new data, this study offers an answer to the methodological challenges that face rhetorical studies of new media. Interviews can give us insights into people’s motivations, their interpretations of effects and consequences, and, not the least, what they see as essential elements of different situations. As researchers in new environments, we are faced with numerous decisions of what is relevant and what is not. We are better equipped to make such decisions when basing them on the experiences of the people involved rather than simply gathering them from the position of the researcher.

Through the particular case of #ihaveexperienced, the dissertation also demonstrates how insights from qualitative interviews can guide text analyses. Here, concepts generated by analyses of the interviews, such as social media-friendly issues and the individualization of political debate, are pursued through concept-driven rhetorical analysis.

The second contribution of the dissertation is the introduction of the term “rhetorical arenas” to studies of networked publics. Drawing on theories of structuration, I have suggested how social network sites can be seen as rhetorical arenas and analysed as practice on the meso-level. Analyses of rhetorical arenas can describe how rhetorical practices are formed and maintained in relation to the places and the social networks they are associated with.

Introducing this new framework, I also suggest that there are aspects of rhetorical practice in networked publics that are difficult to describe using theories of rhetorical genre or rhetorical community. Still, theories of genre and community will have much to contribute to studies of discourse in digital environments, but as analytical approaches these theories are not focused on capturing the rapid and comprehensive changes in material and technological circumstances that characterize these environments. The rhetorical arena-approach builds on these theories, but is explicitly concerned with how changes in technological and social circumstance affect rhetorical action.

The study demonstrates how the structuring properties of rhetorical arenas can be analysed through the rhetorical concept of *topics*, *rhetor-audience relations*, *rhetorical decorum*, and *rhetorical affordances*. It should be seen as an example of how different forms of political talk among citizens are not simply made more easily available by these rhetorical arenas, but are also shaped and maintained in interrelation with them.

The third contribution of this dissertation is that it offers new ways to describe the function and scope of political rhetoric in new media and between new and old media. To understand the nature of political discourse in social network sites we need a broader theoretical framework than one that limits political discourse to deliberative and electoral processes. I have suggested that political rhetoric should be seen as all

utterances and events relating to three communicative processes: 1) processes of collective decision-making; 2) processes of creating salience in the public realm; and 3) processes of collectivization. This opens new ways to understand the political potential of everyday settings and should be relevant for anybody interested in the significance of everyday talk to political communication or the role of the vernacular in rhetorical encounters.

What is new about this approach to political rhetoric is that it encourages us to include perspectives on deliberation, framing and agenda-setting, and epideictic rhetoric, within the same conceptual framework. This study has shown how this three-part definition of political rhetoric can open new perspectives on political talk in networked publics. It demonstrates how much political talk in networked publics is not best understood in terms of deliberation, but as reflections and disagreements about how we should understand central issues of our time and on what basis we respond to them.

As talk in social network sites is closely related to the news agenda, it focuses not so much on decision-making per se, but on condemning or praising actions, actors, and event. Its focus is placed not so much on what is the best possible outcome of political issues, as on what are the essential characteristics of Norwegian society that should form the basis for political decisions. This way, approaching the political and civic debates in the Norwegian social media-sphere as processes of collectivization and identity-formation, opens up new dimensions for analysis. Thus, the study can also contribute to a better understanding of the different ways in which new networked publics can impact the collective decisions that constitute the heart of modern democracy.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide, Facebook

Roles and relations

1A: How do the informants recognize and define the arena?

Can you first describe Facebook for me?

Who are on Facebook? / Who do you interact with on Facebook?

Can everything be discussed on Facebook?

Are some issues better suited than others?

What's the aim of discussing on Facebook?

How much time do you typically spend on Facebook on an average day?

How big part of you day is Facebook?

1B: How do the actors understand their own role in the arena?

Why do you engage in political talk on Facebook? What was your initial motivation?

What kind of Facebook-user are you? (Follow-up on the relation between blogging and tweeting, social identity, issue-identity etc.)

Who do you think people compare you to?

Are there well-known categories out there? (Follow-up on different sub-cultures, different environments etc.)

Who's your target audience? / Who do you hope to reach?

1C: How do the informants perceive their relationship to other actors?

Who do you talk with on Facebook?

Do you usually interact with people you agree with or people you disagree with?

Who usually start the debates on Facebook?

1D: What do the informants perceive as political within this networked public?

Do you think people associate you with a particular political identity on Facebook?

Do people you interact with usually have a clear political identity or profile?

Can you recall a situation in which you were able to change someone's opinions on Facebook?

Can you recall a situation in which your own opinions have been changed?

Have you political engagement offline changed as a result of your activities in social network sites?

Social norms

3A: How are norm violations and unwanted behaviour identified and sanctioned?

What characterize a good debate on Facebook?

What kind of behaviour annoys you the most on Facebook?

How do you react when people annoy you?

Have you ever argued with people on Facebook?

Functionality and affordances

2A: How do actors relate to possibilities and limitations?

What can you do on Facebook that you cannot do in other arenas?

Recall the latest week, when do you decide to share something on Facebook?

How do you use likes? Shares? Favourites? Lists?

Discourse

4A: What kinds of discourse ideals to the actors relate to?

How would you describe the quality of debate on Facebook?

What do you do to improve the quality?

Have you tone changed during the time you've been active on Facebook?

4B: How do the actors deal with irony and implicit forms of communication?

Do you ever share stuff simply because it's funny?

What characterises a good Facebook-thread?

What characterises a good Facebook-user?

What characterises a good update?

Other:

Would you say that you're a political actor?

Have tweeting changed you role as political / public actor?

Who else should I talk to?

Anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix 2: Interview guide, Twitter

Roles and relations

1A: *How do the informants recognize and define the arena?*

Can you first describe Twitter for me?

Who are on Twitter?

Can everything be discussed on Twitter?

Are some issues better suited than others?

What's the aim of discussing on Twitter?

1B: *How do the actors understand their own role in the arena?*

Why do you tweet? What was your initial motivation to start tweeting?

What kind of Twitter-user are you? (Follow-up on the relation between blogging and tweeting, social identity, issue-identity etc.)

Are there well-known categories out there? (Follow-up on different sub-cultures, different environments etc.)

1C: *How do the informants perceive their relationship to other actors?*

Who do you talk with on Twitter?

Do you usually interact with people you agree with or people you disagree with?

Who usually start the debates on Twitter?

1D: *What do the informants perceive as political within this networked public?*

Do you think people associate you with a particular political identity on Twitter?

Do people you interact with usually have a clear political identity or profile?

Can you recall a situation in which you were able to change someone's opinions on Twitter?

Can you recall a situation in which your own opinions have been changed?

Have your political engagement offline changed as a result of your activities in social network sites?

Social norms

3A: *How are norm violations and unwanted behaviour identified and sanctioned?*

What characterize a good debate on Twitter?

What kind of behaviour annoys you the most on Twitter?

How do you react when people annoy you?

Have you ever argued with people on Twitter?

Functionality and affordances

2A: *How do actors relate to possibilities and limitations?*

What can you do on Twitter that you cannot do in other arenas?

When do you decide to tweet something?

How do you use hashtags? Re-tweeting? Favourites? Lists?

Discourse

4A: *What kinds of discourse ideals do the actors relate to?*

How would you describe the quality of debate on Twitter?

What do you do to improve the quality?

Have your tone changed during the time you've been active on Twitter?

4B: *How do the actors deal with irony and implicit forms of communication?*

Do you tweet or re-tweet stuff just because it's funny?

What characterises a good tweeter?

What characterises a good tweet?

Other:

Would you say that you're a political actor?

Have tweeting changed your role as political / public actor?

Who else should I talk to?

Anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix 3: Complete list of codes

Code	Description	Example
1 Participatory vs traditional media	Informants make comparisons between social media and traditional media (content, practice, function, quality etc.)	“All in all I think it's a more open arena for debate, at least compared to the newspapers' comment sections, which neither I nor anyone I know seek out” <i>(Facebook 11)</i>
2 Twitter vs Facebook	Informants make comparisons between Twitter and Facebook (content, practice, function, quality etc.)	“There are some differences between Facebook and Twitter. I think it's easier to build a steady crowd on Facebook than on Twitter, without being a well-known person” <i>(Facebook 4)</i>
3 Elite networks vs. “ordinary” media users	Informants make direct/indirect comparisons between what they consider their own networked public (SNS public) and other activity in social network sites	“This only applies for the small sphere that I am in, which concerns itself with Norwegian culture, some political stuff, migration, Islam, those kinds of things” <i>(Facebook 6)</i>
4 Networked publics vs. offline publics	Informants make direct/indirect comparisons between the networked public and the offline public sphere	“I'm going off-line more often now. It improves the quality. When you have to sit and think about what you want to write, and formulate sound arguments – it's not as spontaneous. Because Twitter is very spontaneous and emotional” <i>(Twitter 7)</i>
5 Private vs public	Informants directly/indirectly	“Facebook is a more

		discuss what they consider private, personal, and public, and how they perceive the dynamic between public and private in this media landscape	social place to discuss politics, because it's your original friends who tend to form the audience. I think it gives people another kind of confidence to say what they really think" <i>(Twitter 14)</i>
Technical features			
6	Interface functions	Informants' descriptions and evaluations of interface functions (feed, pages, threads, character-limitation etc.)	"You put on a hashtag to indicate that it's meant to be for laughs, and then it's usually very, very ironic" <i>(Twitter 2)</i>
7	Interactive functions (Relational properties)	Informants describe and evaluate different forms of non-verbal interaction (hyperlinks, blocking, tagging etc.)	"The blocking is a problem. Because those who are blocked can't see what the person who blocked them writes – and that's fine – but if we're having a discussion, then the rest of us don't immediately realize that they don't know that there are things that they can't see. It creates a mess. And the rest of us has to explain what's going on" <i>(Facebook 7)</i>
8	Archiving/storing functions	Informants describe interface functions that have the affordance of saving or deleting content	"I've never been the victim of "screen dumps" of what I writing there. In social settings I like to tell a lot of strange jokes and stuff like that. But I don't do that on Facebook" <i>(Facebook 8)</i>
9	Quantifiable elements	Informants describe interactive functions as quantifiable	"... and you get fascinated by these

	<p>elements that can be measured. These are often treated as measures of success (e.g. “likes”, “shares”, number of friends etc.)</p>	<p>quantifiable elements. It’s like cross-country skiing. You don’t necessarily count kilometres, keep track of your time or calculate your average pace. But I think everyone who’s skiing is a little bit aware of it. And I think everyone on Twitter is aware of the retweets, the favourites and the number of followers”</p> <p>(Twitter 9)</p>
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Issues

10	Types of issues	<p>Informants describe recurring or typical topics of the networked public as different types of issues, such as <i>political</i> issues, <i>principal</i> issues, or <i>value</i> issues.</p>	<p>“There is a lot of culture war-issues. Immigration, racism, gender, those kinds of things. Doctors’ right to not perform abortions. Circumcision. A lot of those things”</p> <p>(Twitter 8)</p>
11	Issue focus	<p>Informants describe what is typically the thematic orientation or framing of the issues debated, e.g. if a debate is typically “framed” as a party politics-issue, a question of personal opinion, approached as meta-debate etc.</p>	<p>“People usually link to news stories, things they think are controversial, or hope are controversial. It draws the attention towards the emotional and ideological aspects of the news agenda”</p> <p>(Facebook 11)</p>
12	Issue value	<p>Informants directly/indirectly describe the <i>aptness</i>, <i>propriety</i> and <i>salience</i> of an issue in the networked public</p>	<p>“Oh my god! Half the country are going bananas on Twitter over circumcision”</p> <p>(Twitter 13)</p>

Personal involvement

13	Motivation of participation	<p>Informants describe their personal, professional or political motivations to be active</p>	<p>“It’s a very easy way to socialize with people without leaving the</p>
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		participants in the networked public	house” <i>(Facebook 1)</i>
14	Introduction to participatory media	Informants describe how they were introduced to Twitter or Facebook, who introduced them, what was their initial motivation etc.	“At first I thought it sounded a bit silly. Only 140 characters. It sounded like a gimmick. But OK, my friends are there, so I’ll join and see what this is about” <i>(Twitter 12)</i>
15	Own media use	Informants describe their own news consumption and media habits, usually in form of their daily news orientation	“It is a bit cyclical. But I read fewer newspapers than I used to. So instead of flipping through “Aftenposten”, “Dagsavisen”, “Klassekampen”, I follow interesting people on Twitter” <i>(Twitter 3)</i>
16	Personal consequences	Informants describe how their participatory media engagement has affected their personal, professional and political life and on their beliefs and opinions	“I have gotten a more nuanced attitudes towards – and that is one of the most difficult dilemmas with free speech, both academically and morally – how does one respond to hateful utterances?” <i>(Facebook 10)</i>
Inter-media effects			
17	Inter-media effects from social network sites	Informants’ descriptions and evaluations of how social network sites influence the agenda and the discourse of established media	“... first there is an opinion piece in “VG” (national newspaper) that has certain flaws, to put it gently, and then I make some thorough comments on my Facebook-page with a link to the original article. And then one of the editors of “VG” calls me and asks me if I want it in the newspaper”

<i>(Facebook 12)</i>		
18	Inter-media effects to social network sites	<p>Informants' descriptions and evaluations of established media influence the agenda and the discourse of social network sites</p> <p>"As I'm talking about it I realise how news-driven it is, what is happening on Facebook. It is triggered by what has symbolic or emotional influence for these people. But it is very much motivated by forces outside of Facebook"</p> <p><i>(Facebook 11)</i></p>
19	Inter-media development	<p>Informants describe how inter-media processes between social network sites take place, usually based on own examples</p> <p>"For instance, now right before eastern there was a verdict on the Data Retention Directive from the European Court (CJEU). The first thing I did was to put out a message on Twitter that the Norwegian government should stop this directive immediately. Three minutes later "Aftenposten" (national newspaper) called. "I saw you put this out on Twitter". It was the stop story on their webpage that afternoon"</p> <p><i>(Twitter 15)</i></p>
20	Comment and opinion pieces	<p>Informants describe and evaluate the media's comment and opinion genres</p> <p>"We have discussed that a lot here (in the newspaper), that op ed and commentary have become more important since it has a very high turnover in social media. It's easy to share. Before, op ed pieces used to be an exclusive thing. Now it fucking two million commentators out there"</p>

(Facebook 5)

21	Blog-Twitter interdependency (Twitter)	Informants describe the dynamic between a blog-account and a Twitter-account	“I can write a blog post, communicate it on Twitter, get contacted by a journalist, and it ends up in the newspaper or on the radio. It is almost like a loop. From blog to social media and to the established media” (Twitter 11)
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Roles and identities

22	Opinion makers	Informants directly or indirectly describe what characterises the opinion makers that make up the social component of the networked public (what characterize “insider actors”)	“It’s the chattering classes. People who write chronicles and comment on each other’s stuff and have an opinion about what’s in the newspaper or listen to “political quarter” and have an opinion about people’s performance. It is kind of like the political class in Oslo, and those who are active in organizations and those kinds of things – they use it a lot” (Twitter 1)
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23	Opinion makers network	Informants describe the relations (professional, private, political) between actors that are considered to be insiders to the networked public	“It has become as social <i>milieu</i> . I have come to care about a lot of people. And I’ve spent a couple of Christmas eves, new year’s eves, and national days there” (Facebook 6)
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24	Professional roles	Informants describe the norms and expectations attaches to the professional and public roles that are most common in the networked public (academic, lawyer, journalist, politicians)	“I don’t use my authority as a researcher there, but I use my skills and my knowledge about methodology and my training in principal thinking”
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			(Facebook 3)
25	The role of journalists	Informants directly or indirectly describe the norms and expectations that the role as journalist carries with it on Twitter and in Facebook	“In this job you have to be neutral. And I guess I changed by role to be more like a broadcaster. I send out stuff that I think is interesting, and then other people react to it” (Twitter 12)
26	Credibility	Informants describe what properties make actors credible/trustworthy within the networked public (relating to the actors’ <i>ethos</i>).	“What’s important is what you say and what you know. That’s what gives you authority – if you can back it up with facts and such. Then their professionalism will shine through” (Facebook 1)
27	Ideological identity	Informants discuss the role of political ideology (stable values and opinions) in the formation of identity in the networked public	“I think people perceive me as liberal. Not conservative. And not a socialist. But liberal” (Twitter 10)
28	New political dimensions	Informants discuss whether social network sites might bring new dimensions and new divisions into the political debate, and what these dimensions might be	“I often think that Facebook has drawn attention to what it sometimes called the rubbish left. That the part of the left that has been ruining political meetings and been making a lot of noise by yelling, and they try to come of as good people buy labelling others as racists and xenophobic” (Facebook 13)
29	Types of Twitter-users (Twitter only)	Informants describe public roles that are particular for the networked public of Twitter	“Well ... perhaps I’m two different kind of Twitter-user. I’m often political and I often try to be funny”

(Twitter 1)

Norms and violations

30	Social norms	Informants make direct/indirect reference to norms that are thought to govern actors' social behaviour in social network sites	"It's not much that bothers me on Twitter. I think it's bad taste for top politicians to tweet like a spin doctor, when they don't really answer stuff ... But that was a bigger problem a few years back"
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(Twitter 14)

31	Norm violations	Informants make direct/indirect reference to violations of norms that are thought to govern actors' social behaviour in social network sites	"People share stuff and write "Oh my god! How stupid!" without including or linking to the person who wrote it. Even if they know the person. That should be a criteria for decency: When you bully someone on Twitter, always include them so they can reply"
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(Twitter 3)

32	Reasons for norm violations (Facebook)	Informants discuss reasons for why someone might break active social norms	"It was one of those things that outside of that group of guys ... They had probably been drinking. And it's safe to say that they got a bit indiscreet"
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(Facebook 1)

33	Sanctioning of norm violations	Informants describe how norm violations might be sanctioned, how they sanction what they considered to be violations of norms, and if and how they themselves have been subject to sanctioning (very often blocking)	"If they don't behave, it doesn't take much for me to throw them out. "You made your point, now it's enough". If they don't stop, I throw them out"
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(Facebook 11)

Insider activities

34	Civic and political engagement	Informants discuss whether their participatory media activity can be understood as a form of civic or political engagement or activism	“Some people will claim that I’m an activist. I’ve been discussing with Islam-scholars that accuse me of being an activist, you know, while they have a strictly academic approach” <i>(Twitter 4)</i>
35	Commenting on media content	Informants describe their activity in social network sites as running commentary on news and entertainment	“It’s an arena where you react to things. Just like the comment sections are. In practice, it will reflect what’s on the agenda of the day. There is much tweet about whatever is on TV” <i>(Twitter 1)</i>
36	Curating as activity	Informants describe how they actively try to influence which actors dominate their pages and feeds, based for instance on their expert knowledge or political stance.	“I learn a lot. But it depends ... It’s always a matter of curating. Who do you follow? There are people who deliberately only follow people that agree with them” (T2.19)
37	Debating as activity	Informants directly or indirectly describe the nature of debates and debating as an activity that actors in the networked public are engaged in	“Sometimes there can surely be fights. Classic combative debates, or whatever you want to call it, when it is really all about the people listening. It’s a standard debate, really. It’s a scenic sport, where the aim is to persuade the viewer not your opponent” <i>(Facebook 1)</i>
38	Moderating as activity	Informants describe how they actively try to moderate and handle debates between other actors that takes place in their	“You have to follow through. That’s why I have given up on some people (mention names).

	threads or on their pages	They post an update and say “Go! Debate!” and then they don’t give a damn. They have 3000 friends who they let scribble away” <i>(Facebook 6)</i>
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Groups and relations

39	Rhetor-audience relations	Informants describe the nature of relations in social network sites	“There is an incredible commitment. Sometimes the debating culture is fierce in a way that you would never experience face-to-face. When you’re in front of a screen, there is a distance to the other, and people say and do thing they wouldn’t in a face-to-face situation” <i>(Facebook 5)</i>
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40	Audiences	Informants draw attention to how actors in the networked publics understand the concept of audience, often by discussing the nature of Facebook-friendship and Twitter-followers	“On Twitter, people are a bit more ... Perhaps there is a bit more sympathy for different political stances on Twitter. In a way it’s more influenced by people who partake in political debates and who understands the different nuances of issues and what you mean” <i>(Twitter 15)</i>
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41	Basis for networks	Informants describe the factors they assume are the basis for different groupings	“There is a common core. I’m sure it is. It’s based on respect for facts and knowledge and those kinds of things. It is a distinctly positivistic group” <i>(Facebook 13)</i>
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42	Personal conflicts	Informants describe personal conflicts between members of the networked public, either particular conflicts or conflicts in general	“... and he (mentions name) has lost a lot of his friends because of it. Real friends. It has gone a bit too far and he has been perceived as a bit too strategic” <i>(Facebook 13)</i>
43	Echo chambers	Informants discuss the concept of echo chambers and their prevalence	“Even more than Facebook, Twitter is a echo chamber-medium. You put together your own feed and for the most part you follow the people who follow you back, so the people talking have chosen each other” <i>(Twitter 9)</i>
Information flow			
44	Information access	Informants assess Facebook and Twitter as sources of information about current events, politics, entertainments etc.	“It’s a way to stay up to date. To air ideas. Get an impression of what moves out there, of opinions, maybe input on projects. For me it’s definitely a source tool” <i>(Facebook 8)</i>
45	Information spread	Informants assess Facebook and Twitter as arenas to spread their own texts, opinions, beliefs etc.	“It’s like a poster wall. An electronic poster wall” <i>(Facebook 1)</i>
46	Source access	Informants describe how they use Facebook and Twitter as a channel to access news sources, political actors, academic experts etc.	“There are students and young employees that can follow their role models, or a professor or someone, and ask them a question and perhaps get a reply. It might be an opportunity for people to discuss topics they wouldn’t otherwise

		discuss with people they wouldn't otherwise reach"
		<i>(Twitter 14)</i>
Context		
47	The cultural context	Informants describe the wider cultural context or refer to the cultural context in order to explain a phenomenon in the networked public
		"Norwegians are not trained in debate technique, like for instance the Americans are. They have debating classes where they learn from early on that you don't get extra points for reconstructing your opponent's argument as stupid as possible just to reject it. If we had, then we would have a rhetorical exchange, but now not so much"
		<i>(Facebook 10)</i>
48	The political context	Informants describe the political context or refer to the political context in order to explain a phenomenon in the networked public
		"People I have met have stuck to the point. And then you can discuss issues more thoroughly. But I should say that I was never very socialist and I haven't become very right wing. Norway is a very, very homogeneous country. There is not a big difference between far left and far right in Norwegian politics. Really"
		<i>(Twitter 2)</i>
49	State of the press (Facebook)	Informants make direct/indirect descriptions of what they consider to be the general state of the Norwegian press (financially, professionally, institutionally etc.)
		"Dagbladet (national newspaper) have removed them entirely. So it's moving in the direction of the newspaper's giving up.

		Without me knowing for sure, I figure that Facebook has taken the newspapers' place. They have understood that a lot of the debate about articles no longer takes place in the comment section below the article but on Facebook" <i>(Facebook 13)</i>
50	State of the public sphere	Informants make direct/indirect descriptions of what they consider to be the general state of the Norwegian public sphere "I think we're currently in a golden age of civic and political debate. Before, with the party press and everything ... I don't think people would hang out in the same pubs and casually socialize and have long discussions across party lines in this way in any other period of Norwegian political history" <i>(Twitter 1)</i>
Perceptions of quality		
51	Qualities of the debate	Informants consider the overall quality of the political and civic debates taking place in social network sites "Yes, I think that despite these tendencies, it's a lot of fun. First of all it's fun. It is a source of ... it's a great way to relax. Yes, and it's light and entertaining, and there are sometimes pretty good discussions. On some pages and some threads there are good discussions. And those are the ones that keep you going" <i>(Facebook 10)</i>
52	Qualities of interaction	Informants describe what determines the quality of "That's when there are multiple participants

	interactions in particular participatory media	involved and it stays on topic. And when people link to interesting articles that shed light on the topic” <i>(Facebook 12)</i>
53	Qualities of the speaker Informants describe what characterises a good rhetor within the networked public (<i>ethos</i>)	“Ideally you should always be hard-hitting and funny” <i>(Twitter 1)</i>
54	Qualities of text Informants describe what determines the quality of texts in particular participatory media (the text norms of a good tweet or Facebook-update)	“It can be humorous or it can be a pun, or it can be very precise and to the point. That’s things I strive for and think is alright” <i>(Twitter 11)</i>
Interaction		
55	Interactions/situations Informants make direct/indirect descriptions of the communicative situations that Twitter and Facebook facilitates	“The nature of the conversation is much more similar to that of a party. The strict limitations on the number of characters makes it very casual” <i>(Twitter 14)</i>
56	Motivation of argument Informants describe what they consider to be the point and value of debating and discussing political issues in social network sites	“Facebook is debating and exchanges of opinions. You sharpen your arguments. And arguments can get spread far beyond your own feed, because you link to other texts. So it’s a kind of advanced debate. But it is also a way to tend to the herd, and a way to feel important. And there’s a lot of other elements as well” <i>(Facebook 13)</i>

57	Characteristics of the debate	Informants describe what is characteristic about the political and civic debate in social network sites that make it distinguishable from the general public debate	“Everyone is very suspicious of other debaters and read things in the worst way possible. Perhaps even just to create some fuzz” <i>(Facebook 5)</i>
58	Argumentation norms	Informants make direct/indirect reference to norms that are thought to govern how actors construct and perform arguments	“You are expected to reply and to carry on a dialogue. If you have started something, you can’t just ignore it” <i>(Twitter 3)</i>

Appendix 5: List of tweets, #ihaveexperienced

Category 1:

#ihaveexperienced that a man behind me on a full bus rubbed his erection against me. I had the kids with me. Incredibly uncomfortable. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being told that I shouldn't have so many opinions if I ever want to get a boyfriend. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being groped on the breasts by passing men on the street, because I was vulgar enough to ... stand on the sidewalk alone. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced a «best friend» that thought that he deserved my virginity because he was kind to me even though I had been bullied. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced living in a society where it's rarer to hear a girl say she's a feminist than to hear her say she's been raped. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being yelled at because I wasn't «thankful for the compliment» when a guy told me I was «rape-material». April 15th

#ihaveexperienced that a man yelled «shut up, whore, I'm gonna rape you» when I asked people move further in on a crowded bus. Nobody reacted. April 15th 2015

@idarokkum: #ihaveexperienced beign called «a tease» because I've been nice but didn't want to get fucked. April 15th 2015, 11:34am

#ihaveexperienced that way to many people say that women exaggerate. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced uncomfortable situations that are important to share, but I don't dare, because I'm afraid people will think I'm desperate for attention. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that inflicted shame is internalized. And I know that goes for many women. You'll probably not read the worst stories here... April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being asked by the police what I was wearing after being subjected to an attempted rape. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced a society that think it's my responsibility not to get raped. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced was 25 years old, new in business, met a drunken client Saturday night in the mountains. The contract was mine if I went back to the cabin with him. I ran the

other way. April 16th 2015

: #ihaveexperienced when I still was working on contract, to be asked by male colleague 50+ if the entertainment at the Christmas party could be me stripping. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being asked by a male colleague in the party to behave like a good girl, because we disagreed on an issue. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced Was attempted undressed at the dance floor. I broke his finger. His buddies laugh at him, and praised me afterwards. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced always getting groped when I'm out on town, so I barely think about how unpleasant it is anymore. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being yelled at with the argument that women have not done shit for the world and haven't invented anything, because I didn't want to sleep with him. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced getting the following question at a job interview regard being a single mom: «Oh yeah? Is that a kid you got from a one-night-stand?» April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that a 40 year old man crawled into my bed. He raped me. I was 15. I'm still ashamed about what happened. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that my 3 year old daughter turned down a kiss from her pal in kindergarden. The boy's mom said "just keep trying. She's just playing hard to get" April 16th 2015

I hope that #ihaveexperienced achieve that we as women don't have to be ashamed that it's our fault that we get raped. It wasn't my/our fault. April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced touching from a disgusting man because my lipstick «was light and I clearly asked for it». He has experienced a kick in the nuts. April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being told by my teacher that I had to cover up because he couldn't concentrate. I was 14. April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced repeatedly being referred to as «that blonde girl» in official academic contexts where I have presented. April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being asked "Are you really the founder and CEO? But you are a woman". April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that a policeman expected a kiss on the cheek as a "thank you" for having found my wallet at 4am. I felt threatened. April 17th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that the molester told me as a child that the reason for my pain was that I was the only child that God couldn't love. April 18th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that I couldn't go outside to smoke at #apl原因 because there was a violent man outside. April 18th 2015

Category 2:

#ihaveexperienced none of this, just because I'm a man. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced female patients who want sick leave since they're sexually harassed in the workplace. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being shocked and embarrassed on behalf of my gender from reading what people have experienced. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that women I know with strong public voices feel its normal to get rape and death threats. April 15th 2015

I don't think I know a single woman that can say that she's never experienced sexual harassment. That's why we need campaigns like #ihaveexperienced. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that men without ulterior motives have walked me to a cab/bus to make sure I get home safe. There's a lot of good men as well. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that girls are condescending towards people trying to pick them up and THAT'S OK BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO BE OR SOME PEOPLE NEVER STOP FFS. April 15th 2015

Most men don't view women as objects. But enough men do just that, so that being a woman is a high risk sport #ihaveexperienced. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced spending close to half an hour reporting some Twitter-users, because that's the only thing I can actually do. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced having to play the boyfriend to friends because single women get groped and harassed at bars. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced strange girls reaching out to tell about sexual harassment in the workplace and don't know where they can seek help. April 16th 2015

Sexual abuse is NOT OK!! We want remind everybody that NO MEANS NO! Sex without consent = rape. Take care of each other for graduation. #ihaveexperienced. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that my opinions are thought to matter more than my friends, who have

the exact same opinions, because I am a man. April 17th 2017

#IHaveNotReallyExperiencedAnything – but am fully supporting all girls and women who share their experiences #ihaveexperienced. April 18th 2015

After having read #ihaveexperienced I am extra keen on teaching my son to respect women's integrity. April 18th 2015

Category 3:

All guys should read the hashtag #ihaveexperienced and if you've done any of these things you should be ashamed and get a grip. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced is the most important thread you can follow today. April 15th 2015

Everybody should read what is shared on #ihaveexperienced. Especially those you claim that feminism no longer matters. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced gives me the chills. You guys who share are cool. Especially the guys who recognize the issue based on their own experiences. April 15th 2015

Enough is enough. We will not put up with this anymore!
<http://www.aftenposten.no/kultur/--Nok-er-nok-Vi-finner-oss-ikke-i-dette-lener-7982979.html...#ihaveexperienced>. April 15th 2015

SåTotally agree #ihaveexperienced «Da damene slo tilbake» – Bergens Tidene
bt.no/share/article-... April 16th 2015

A vent is opened, out pours darkness. Terrifying stories about harassment, threats, and abuse. Men, read #ihaveexperienced. April 16th 2015

Are you a man, relate to #ihaveexperienced and need someone to talk to? The resource center for men's got a line for men 22340960. April 16th 2015

Unwanted attention and harassment. Women tell about their experiences with men. Why are we in such bad shape? #ihaveexperienced. April 16th 2015

Here is this morning's segment on #GoodMorningNorway with @SORstavik and myself about #ihaveexperienced : tv2.no/v/906586. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced to be touched that the campaign now has spread to Denmark
#jegharoplevet

I have made a statement on behalf of @Jentevakta in @vgnett check out
[vg.no/nyheter/innenr ... #jegharoplevd](http://vg.no/nyheter/innenr...#jegharoplevd) April 17th 2015

It might seem surprising to men that women have different experiences than their own. The bigger reason to listen. #ihaveexperienced. aftenposten.no/meninger/debat... April 17th 2015

Finishing the week with an interview about #ihaveexperienced. Watch the News on NRK and take care of each other after this week's debate. April 17th 2015

Does it make you less of a man to be a victim? asks @AsbjBakke. Powerful comment about #ihaveexperienced: "I too have experienced"

Category 4:

#ihaveexperienced fucking much, I tell you. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced never being harassed because I'm not a pussy that gets offended by everything and everyone #sorrynotsorry. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced women along the highway with engine failure. They want contact then. Oh God, how they want contact then! April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced elderly women in a nursery home who constantly touch me in an inappropriate way, while my female colleagues think it's funny!! April 15th 2015

@maelund #ihaveexperienced being extremely provoked at how trivial and innocent things some women want men to be ashamed about. April 15th 2015

#ihaveexperienced being hit by a woman I was in a relationship with and being told "it's not so bad when women hit you, because they can't hit very hard". April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced a groping woman at a party. I tell her to stop, she continues. #happentoeverybody. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced having «dat ass» shouted at, on the international women's day. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced that I can't come on girls' night. Not the worst thing in the world, but a little hurtful still. April 16th 2015

#ihaveexperienced as a male taxi driver that women act surprisingly similar to how men are described here. #womennobetterthanmen. April 16th 2015

Anybody else who have noticed that a lot of the women who use "#ihaveexperienced" are women who you wouldn't even sexual harass when your drunk? April 17th 2015

@StianTStaysman: #ihaveexperienced a female Receptionist locking into my room,

begging to perform Oral sex on me. Said no thanks. #nicetry. April 18th 2015, 4:14am

#ihaveexperienced watching forth graders dance ”reinlender” i an hour and a half without a break. April 18th 2015

@edgarpaasche: #ihaveexperienced that ladies act very butt hurt after getting a compliment that they, judging on the way they’re dressed, have been begging for. April 17th 2015, 3:19pm

#ihaveexperiencedtoo sexual harassment. Even if I’m a man. Nobody should have to experience that, regardless og gender! #ihaveexperienced #tabu

Category 5:

Congratulation, men who try to take over #ihaveexperienced with bitter comments, you’re all huge winners. April 15th 2015

@DagfinnNordbo #ihaveexperienced that the least fun guy in this debate is the guy that defends humor in VG. Good luck with THAT. April 15th 2015

the #ihaveexperienced-tag is so important and those making fun of it should be ashamed. April 15th 2015

I bet a lot of those who get offended by the «ihaveexperienced-thread ar the same people who nag about reverse racisme as soon as somebody bring up racism. April 15th 2015

The only thing missing now is that some old man calls the #ihaveexperienced-thread subtle bragging. Today’s campaign has brought out the worst in many people. April 15th 2015

Men are not generalized on #ihaveexperienced . These are experiences that women are often subjected to. By SOME men. Of course not all men are like that. April 16th 2015

@knallipadden if there’s anyone who’s ridiculous it’s people who make fun of an important message. Do you do things like that yourself, perhaps? #ihaveexperienced. April 16th 2015

It speaks to your sense of solidarity when you react to #ihaveexperienced with «I DON’T HARASS WOMEN !» instead of “Wow, can I help?” April 16th 2015

To all men out there spreading bullshit about #ihaveexperienced because you feel offended: Shame on you! It’s a crazy good initiative! April 16th 2015

How dumb are you on a scale from 1 to 32 if you walk around in the #ihaveexperienced-tag to “debate” the experienced with those who share? April 16th 2015

Hi, you men who are negative to #ihaveexperienced – is that because you feel exposed?

April 17th 2015

To you "men" who ruin #ihaveexperienced: I hope you get a daughter some day ...#carma.
April 17th 2015

"Poor" men who take #ihaveexperienced personal. If you haven't said/done anything
offensive, it's not about you. Get a grip! April 17th 2015

Confronted some of the men who sabotage "ihaveexperienced" and was called Rat, Pakki,
Rapist, Bullshiter, and Muslim. No imagination!:) April 17th 2015

The nice thing with #ihaveexperienced is that it's a gender neutral hashtag. It wasn't
"shehasexperienced". Some men never got that. April 17th 2015
