

Music and the public sphere

Exploring the political significance of Norwegian hip hop
music through the lens of public sphere theory

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lens of public sphere theory**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the political significance of Norwegian hip hop music through the lens of public sphere theory. It empirically investigates the role of music in the public sphere, and, probes key theoretical concepts from public sphere theory and democratic theory in regards to the perspectives these offer on the political significance of music. Thus, this thesis uses specific cases studies to address a wider question, namely, how to understand aesthetics and expressive culture within the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy.

The thesis consists of four independent articles, respectively exploring the following aspects of hip hop music as an aesthetic and political practice: audience, production, text and reception. The first article, a quantitative survey conducted among young politicians, asks broadly, how musical taste relates to political orientation and social background, and what genres or types of music are perceived to have political significance today.

The second article is an interview study of key actors on the Norwegian hip hop-scene. Set within the framework of public sphere theory this article asks to what extent the motivations and aesthetic practices of Norwegian hip hop artists are relevant to public discourse.

The third article is a musical and lyrical analysis of Lars Vaular's hit "Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen" ("Who Shot Siv Jensen?"). This article examines how the musical and lyrical characteristics of the song constitute the song as political discourse. It then discusses the expressive characteristics of the song, first, in light of recent theoretical revisions of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, and second, in light of Habermas' concept of communicative rationality.

The fourth article is a qualitative analysis of the public reception of Karpe Diem's hit "Toyota'n til Magdi" ("Magdi's Toyota"). This article charts and analyses the effects that this song had on public political discourse, and then discusses democratic value of these effects in light of public sphere theory.

This thesis empirically establishes that, contrasted with other musical genres in Norway, hip hop is a genre invested with political value, and that performers maintain a general commitment to addressing socio-political issues in their music, through aesthetic practices with potentially high relevance to public discourse. The thesis further elucidates how genre-specific expressive characteristics enable hip hop to function as aesthetically constituted public political discourse, and further empirically demonstrates how popular music under certain conditions may figure as an integral part of deliberative democracy by providing valuable input to discursive processes in the public sphere.

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the existing research literature by empirically substantiating theoretical conceptions of the role of expressive culture and music in deliberative democracy. One of this thesis' main contributions is that it demonstrates that public sphere theory offers a fruitful and distinct perspective through which to understand the politics of music. Furthermore, the thesis empirically substantiates how Habermas' 2006 model of the political system offers an anatomy within which one can meaningfully understand the role of music in the wider context of deliberative democracy. Moreover, the thesis further contributes to scholarly debate by problematising the dichotomy between 'rational' and verbal communication, and, "non-rational" musical communication.

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Bergen, June 2014

List of publications

All four articles that constitute part II of this thesis are single-authored by Torgeir Uberg Nærland. Two articles have been published, one has been accepted for publication and is scheduled to appear in the course of 2015, and one has been submitted and is currently under review. Except for some basic format changes I have not revised the articles for the purpose of inclusion in this thesis.

Article one:

“Music, Ideology and Party Politics: A Survey of Musical Taste and Aesthetic Sensibilities Among Young Politicians in Norway” – In review

Article two:

“Hip Hop and the Public Sphere: Political Commitment and Communicative Practices on the Norwegian Hip Hop Scene” – Published in *Javnost / the Public*. Vol.21 (2014), No. 1, pp. 37 – 5

Article three:

“Rhythm, Rhyme and Reason: Hip Hop Expressivity as Political Discourse” – Published in *Popular Music* (2014) 33:3

Article four:

“From musical expressivity to public political discourse proper: the case of Karpe Diem in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre” – Forthcoming, *Popular Communication*, 2015

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Part I: The Summary

1. Introduction

By means of mass mediation, music is evidently a salient and integral part of public life. It is a prominent fixture in the symbolic or actual arenas where we as members of cultural, social, but also political collectives, engage with both each other and with the symbolic forms that circulate in the public sphere. Music, always imbued with ideological value, sometimes through explicitly political articulations, thus potentially forms part of the symbolic and discursive interactions that take place in the public sphere and that is the bedrock of liberal democracy. However, very few studies of the politics of music have systematically approached music from the perspective of public sphere theory. Likewise, both empirical and theoretical studies of the public sphere have, but for a negligible number, left out the role of music.

Thus, in general terms, the aims of this thesis can be roughly described as twofold. The first aim is empirical: to examine the political significance of music by interpreting the results of specific studies through the lens of public sphere theory. The second aim is theoretical: to explore and discuss public sphere theory and this theory-tradition's grasp on musical communication. These aims yield the following general research questions: *What is the political significance of music in a public sphere perspective? And to which extent is public sphere theory a framework adequate to investigations of the political significance of music?*

1.1 Context, scope and case

These broadly stated research interests are in obvious need of a narrowing down, both in terms of national, political and cultural context, analytical scope, and in terms of which kind of music that is investigated.

The empirical context of this thesis is the present day Norwegian society and public sphere. The reasons for this are primarily pragmatic. Firstly, the Norwegian context, with its political, cultural and social characteristics, and its musical traditions and practises, is open to me as an indigenous researcher. Secondly, in terms of traditions, resources, institutions, and deliberative practises, Norway can be said to *have* a public sphere that is also, relatively speaking, a functioning one. However, this latter point brings to attention a paradoxical but significant aspect of studying the significance of music in the context of Norway: a study of music in a country with a less functioning public sphere might well render music *more* significant. The fact that the Norwegian public sphere, at least in principle, is open to all citizens, that by and large have the linguistic resources to partake in discourse, lessens the importance of music as a means to articulate opinion and social critique. By contrast, in less developed countries with weaker democratic traditions and institutions, for instance South Africa or Trinidad and Tobago, where song and dance are prominent means of political expression, music assumes a more obvious and important role. Nonetheless, Norway provides a fruitful research context, as it allows for an examination of the role of music in relation to key public sphere processes, as stipulated in theory, and is also valuable as a comparative study for countries with similar socio-political conditions

Public sphere theory is often used normatively as a means of evaluating how certain communicative practices live up to certain deliberative ideals. This thesis does not pretend to normatively assess the state of the Norwegian public sphere in light of any such standards, rather, it is *explorative*. Firstly it is theoretically explorative, in that it approaches the political significance of music in light of a theoretical framework and of concepts that have so far only rarely been used for this purpose. Thus, an overarching ambition of this thesis is to probe the theoretical grasp public sphere

theory has on music, and what kind of insights this perspective yields. Secondly it is empirically explorative, in that it aims to discover and identify the significance of music in actual, specific public sphere processes.

The thesis is also *explanatory* in that it is concerned with explaining the political and democratic relevance of the creative, textual and receptive aspects of music in light of the framework of public sphere theory. Previous theoretical research efforts, which will be highlighted in the following chapters, have suggested, either implicitly or explicitly, that music is of high relevance to discursive democracy and that public sphere theory is an apt framework within which to explore this relevance. A key ambition of this thesis is to explore, describe and explain the political relevance of music by means of empirical investigations, and thus provide empirical evidence that may shed light on this issue and yield further research.

Furthermore, this is a case based thesis, where the guiding principle behind the selection of cases have been the cases' suitability to illuminate the research questions and as material where public sphere theory can be put to play. Thus, this thesis does not pretend to chart the political relevance of music in Norway or elsewhere, neither is the primary ambition to produce generalisable findings. The empirical focal point of the thesis is Norwegian hip hop music. The main reasons for choosing hip hop as a case are the following: the genre's current extensive public outreach in Norway, the aesthetic allowance for critique and commentary through rapping, and, the generic attendance to socio-political issues.

1.2 Research questions

Having now preliminarily narrowed down the overall scope of the thesis, we can concretise the research questions. This thesis asks the following research questions.

1. *How does taste for different sorts of music relate to political and ideological orientation, which kinds of music are regarded as politically significant, and what is the current political status of hip hop music among audiences?*

2. *To what extent are the motivations and aesthetic practices of hip hop musicians relevant to public political discourse?*

3. *What are the characteristics of hip hop music as political discourse, to what extent does hip hop music entail expressive characteristics relevant to public political discourse, and, to what extent does hip hop expressivity adhere to the standards of communicative rationality?*

4. *What might be the effects of hip hop music on public political discourse, which factors may facilitate the politicised reception of music, and what is the democratic value of musically engendered public discourse?*

1.3 Introducing the four articles

Consequently the thesis consists of four independent but interrelated studies contained within separate articles, respectively addressing the following four aspects of hip hop music: audience, production, text and reception. The thesis is there for structured as follows: First, an orientational and quantitative audience study of musical taste and aesthetic sensibilities among young politicians, from here on referred to as *the audience article*. This is not explicitly written within the framework of public sphere theory, it is a piece of quantitative basic research in the sociology of aesthetics that serves to (1) provide a general and empirically based overview of how music align

with political positions among audiences, (2) provide insight into the musical tastes and orientations of emerging political elites and future actors in the political public sphere, and (3) empirically establish hip hop as arguably the politically most potent musical genre in present day Norway.

Second, an interview based study examining aesthetic practises and political motivations on the Norwegian national hip hop scene, from here on referred to as *the production article*. This study investigates (1) the extent to which Norwegian rappers are at all motivated to contribute to public political discourse and the nature of their engagement, and (2) how they use their music to publically address social and political issues. Moreover, this study (3) discusses the political relevance of both motivations and practises in light of public sphere theory.

Third, a textual analysis of a particular hip hop song, from here on referred to as the *textual article*. This study focuses on rap artist Lars Vaular's hit "Who Shot Siv Jensen" (*Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen*) – a song that was subjected to extensive public political discourse. The study (1) examines how the musical and lyrical qualities constitutes and enables the song as political discourse, and (2) discusses how the song can be seen to encompass expressive qualities emphasised in recent revisions of public sphere theory, and (3) discusses hip hop expressivity in light of Jürgen Habermas' theoretically concept of communicative rationality.

The fourth and final article is a reception study, charting the public reception of a particular hip hop song, and is from here on referred to as the 'reception article'. Focusing on the music and public role of rap group 'Karpe Diem' in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre, this study will first examine how their music both generated and contributed to public political discourse; second, outline the interplay of multiple factors that facilitated the politicised public response to the music; and, third, discuss the democratic significance of musically engendered public discourse.

The thesis thus, first, empirically establishes hip hop music as a research object, second explores the potential relevance of scene practises to public discourse, third

examines the ways in which hip hop expressivity may function as a distinct form of public discourse, and fourth examines how hip hop music actually enters public political debate, and de facto forms part of discursive processes vital to the public sphere and deliberative democracy. Thus the thesis moves from an orientational and general perspective, then moves on to explore potentials in both practices and text, before finally examining effects on actual public political discourse. Although all four studies empirically explore various aspects of hip hop music, they continually engage with key theoretical concepts and questions.

1.4 Thesis outline

This is an article-based thesis that consists of two main parts. Part I contains The Summary – the contextualisation of the four articles – and Part II the articles themselves. The summary consists of four chapters, plus a list of references. The first and introductory chapter outlines the overarching scope of the thesis, presents the research questions asked in this thesis, and outlines how the four articles address these questions.

The second chapter, containing five subchapters, theoretically contextualises the articles of the thesis. The first subchapter situates this thesis, and the study of the political significance of music in a public sphere perspective, within the existing body of research literature on music and politics. The second subchapter, first, provides a basic outline of the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy and of public sphere theory, and then third, outlines key critiques and revisions of this framework in terms of its grasp on expressive and musical communication, and further how these critiques and revisions relate to the studies encompassed in this thesis. The fourth subchapter outlines and discusses the relevance of the hip hop genre in a public sphere perspective, and moreover delineates which aspects of hip hop this thesis attends to. The fifth subchapter historically contextualises hip hop music as part of the tradition of musical political expression in Norway.

The third chapter first outlines the overall research design and approach of the thesis, then outlines the methodological approach employed in each separate study. The fourth, concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings of each article and then outlines how these together contribute to our understanding of the political significance of music. This is followed by Part II, which contains the articles. At the end there is an appendix that includes the survey set-up and interview guide.

2. Theoretical Contextualisation

This thesis is situated in the discipline of media and communication studies, but it is interdisciplinary in nature as it draws upon both research and theories from sociology, media studies, political science, cultural studies and musicology. It is also a thesis of potential relevance to these disciplines. The thesis is simultaneously intended as a study of the politics of music, through the lens of public sphere theory, and as a study of the political significance of music in the public sphere. Thus, this thesis primarily departs from and addresses two research fields: what I will here call *music and politics*, and *public sphere studies*. Although not a primary focus, the thesis draws upon and is relevant to research on hip hop music, particularly in the Norwegian context. The aim of the thesis is not to present an exhaustive overview of any of these fields, but rather to present perspectives and positions that are relevant for the scope of this thesis.

2.1 Music and politics

Music and politics hardly constitutes an autonomous, fully developed research field in its own right. The political significance of music is, as John Street notes in his book *Music and Politics* (2012: 174), a concern that is only haphazardly taken into account in the mainstream of various academic disciplines, not least political science. Similarly, Keith Negus, in his book *Popular Music in Theory* (1996) notes that the politics of music is not "...a subject that can be separated off into a discrete section from other issues (...)" yet also points out that "(...) studying the sounds, words and images of popular music leads directly towards debates about dynamics of power and

influence.". As a category 'music and politics' rather serves as a focal point for a variety of different studies and perspectives that from within different traditions and disciplines have approached the intersections between music and politics, or, more broadly speaking – music and power.

In the following six different perspectives on music and politics are outlined: 1) Music as social order, 2) Music as a site for ideological struggle and resistance, 3) Music and political / social movements, 4) Music and the politics of identity, 5) Music and censorship / policy. And lastly 6) I will highlight how the public sphere perspective has been present in research on music and politics, and how this perspective relates to the previously outlined perspectives. These outlines will by no means be exhaustive, however, they are necessary in order to pinpoint the distinctiveness of the public sphere perspective, and how it contributes to the wider field of research on music and politics. However, other categorisations of topics or perspectives within this field are both possible and certainly fruitful (see for instance Street (Ibid)). The logic behind the ordering of the first five perspectives is one that first assumes a general connection between music and power, and then presents perspectives that assume increasingly concrete and manifest intersections between music and politics.

2.1.1 Music as social order

This is not a perspective that connects music to politics in a strict sense – as electoral, parliamentary politics or political-administrative decision-making – but rather emphasises the ways in which music has important ideological dimensions, and is connected with overarching power structures. The idea that music is intertwined with social (and political) order has been present in scholarly thought since antiquity. Early Greek philosopher Pythagoras maintained, through his notion of the “music of the spheres”, that music is intrinsically linked to the mathematical and natural order as well as the social order of the universe. Plato, who was famously sceptical to music

due to its subversive effects on the youth, maintained that music and morality is interwoven and that "rhythm, melody and lyrics shape social relations" (Street, 2007:324). The idea that music dynamically both reflects and produces social and political order also echoes in the thought of modern philosophers such as Rousseau. He argued that it is through music that individuals and collectives come to know themselves, and further emphasised the importance of music in giving expression to emotions and passions – which according to the romanticist program were key ingredients in political life (Ibid: 325).

However, in the past century, it was Theodor Adorno who most sharply, but gloomily, conceptualised the ways in which (mass) music and ideology are mutually interwoven. In their seminal *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (2002), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that instrumental and goal oriented reason is a defining characteristic of modernity. In line with this argument Adorno, in "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (Ibid) and later in "The culture industry reconsidered" (1973), contends that popular music and culture have become subject to the same kind of goal oriented reason, where music, rather than being an end in itself, ultimately serves the needs of the market economy. Consequently, music becomes an object of fetishisation and commodification, and the audience, now understood as consumers, is objectified. For Adorno, the capitalist system that produces popular music is ingrained within its very form and structure; the aesthetic standardisation he ascribes to popular music reflects the industrial production modus of cultural industries. Adorno's argument therefore involves a 'deep' view of the politics of music in that he suggests that the very fabric of music itself, as organised sound, both reflects and produces social order. Hence, popular music becomes a carrier of dominant capitalist ideology, as the mass audiences' taste for all-pervasive popular music involves, according to Adorno, an identification with the dominant power, which in turn reinforces its position in the status quo.

Popular music thus functions as an important instrument for political domination and mass deception. According to Adorno, variety in style, new hooks and new

performers, the 'pseudo individualisation' of products, are all, in reality, manifestations of the 'eternal sameness' inherent in popular music, which then leads to a similar 'pseudo individualisation' of its audiences. Consequently, Adorno argues that the dynamics of cultural industry render the audiences of popular music subject to 'infantilisation' and social conditioning, and that, furthermore, engagement with popular music produces a conformism that contradicts the ideal of the autonomous freethinking individual. As a result, popular music becomes an obstacle to human emancipation.

The argument that popular musical form and production reflects dominant power structures clearly resonates in early contributions to the field of popular music research. Although Simon Frith is not a proponent of this perspective per se, his early, yet seminal, writings provide evidence of the general pervasiveness of these ideas within popular music studies. In *Sound Effects* (1983: 272) Frith argued that:

Rock music is capitalist music. It draws its meanings from the relationships of capitalist production, and it contributes, as a leisure activity, to the production of these relationships; the music doesn't challenge the system but reflects and illuminates it(...) For every individual illuminating account of our common situation there are hundred mass musical experiences that disguise it. Rock, for all the power of its individual dreams, is still confined by its mass cultural form.

In later writings Frith (1996a), similar to Adorno, argues that there lies an emancipatory potential in difficult music – i.e. music that by form negates or challenges the standardized form imposed by the capitalist system of production. By rendering the standardized form apparent, aesthetic negation could also prompt the listeners to envisage something different than that of the existing order. Whereas this was a quality that Adorno ascribed to radical avant garde music, Frith makes the case for the "unpopular popular" music. Frith (ibid: 20) argues that "The utopian impulse, the negation of everyday life, the aesthetic impulse that Adorno recognized in high art, must be part of low art too".

Jaques Attali presents a similar conception of music and social order in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1985). Like Adorno, Attali argues that musical form has deep roots in the mode of production in a given society. For Attali, music, organised sound as opposed to noise, "(...) runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does." (Ibid: 10). Attali here connects music and social order at a very general, but also historical, level, where the organisation of sound into music produces and reflects the organisation of a particular society at a given point in history. Significantly, Attali ascribes particular importance to the role of music in political and social change, as "(...) its styles and economic organisation are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code." (Ibid: 11). Thus, Attali argues that musical style and modes of production can 'prophesise' new forms of societal organisation.

2.1.2 Music as a site for ideological struggle and resistance

This is not a perspective that connects music to political action in a strict sense, but rather concerns itself with the ways in which musical audiences, subcultures and scenes symbolically negotiate and contest dominant power structures. It is a perspective that is indebted to Adorno, particularly in the early formulations of sub-cultural theory, in that it presupposes that the form of popular musical is, ultimately, imbued with the logic of the market, and hence functions as a vehicle for capitalist ideology. However, this is also a perspective that emphasises the audience's capacity to use music and style as a way to resist and subvert dominant ideology.

Early writings on subculture, influenced by the emerging field of cultural studies associated with the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, including *Resistance through rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1975), *Profane Culture* (Willis, 1978) and *Subculture: the meaning of style* (Hebdige, 1979), focused on how style, aesthetics and music – integrated into an overall lifestyle – in various socially subordinate groups became a means to oppose, and develop alternatives to,

the dominant value systems. The politics of subculture was perhaps most clearly articulated in Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: the meaning of style* (1979). According to Hebdige music became an important means to articulate value orientations, identity positions and relations alternative to majority culture. This does not primarily involve verbal articulation of political interests and arguments per se, but rather aesthetic and style-based articulations. For Hebdige, punk music's dismissal of aesthetic norms involved a disruption of the dominant symbolic order, and hence an articulation of alternative orientations. Another key ideological aspect of subcultural practice is, according to Hebdige, how the appropriation of commodities originating from the dominant system of production functioned subversively, as a way to articulate the alternative values and identity of a given subculture.

2.1.3 Identity, the sociality of music and politics

The ways in which music facilitates the construction of identity, at both individual and collective level, is also a perspective that does not address politics in a strict sense, but which nonetheless has highly significant political implications. In emphasising the inherent sociality of musical engagement, Frith (1996a; 1996b; Frith and McRobbie, 1990) highlights that a prominent aspect of music is the way in which it facilitates the formation of identity. Frith argues:

Music, we could say, provides us with an intensely subjective sense of being sociable. Whether jazz or rap for African-Americans or nineteenth century chamber music for German Jews in Israel, it both articulates and offers the immediate experience of collective identity (1996a: 273).

Similarly, Born (2000: 32) points out that music function as "(.) a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities" and that it is a vehicle for engendering "musically-imagined communities" (Ibid:35). From a political perspective, the formation of a collective identity is significant on several levels. At one level, music is important in how it may contribute to the constitution

and consolidation of social groups that share political causes and interests. An obvious example of this is the significance of music in both how the African American population identified and acted, politically, as a defined social group (Garofalo, 1992b; Neal, 1999; Hanson, 2008; Kitwana, 2002). Similarly, music is also significant in constructing national identities (Weisethaunet, 2007; Bohlman, 2004) as well as a European identity (Sandvoss, 2008).

At another level, one that accentuates the transformative quality of identity formation, music can be important in engendering a sense of empowerment within certain subordinate groups, which may then stimulate political action, among either particular socioeconomic or ethnic groups, or groups formed on the basis of gender or sexuality. A different but significant take on the role of music in identity formation is offered by Tia Denora (2000) who, from a social psychological perspective, highlights how people also use music to manage their emotions, as ‘a technology of the self’. In contrast to the emphasis on ‘resistance’ and ‘empowerment’ in subcultural theory, Denora’s perspective is indebted to Adorno in that music here becomes an instrument for people to control their feelings and behave ‘orderly’. Thus, according to Denora, music also play a role in forming peoples identities in a way that shows them as conformists.

2.1.4 Music in social and political movements

Whereas the previous perspective focused on the ways in which music and its role in identity formation may have significant political implications, this perspective assumes a much more direct connection between music and political action in that it emphasises the role of music in groups formed around shared political or social causes and agendas. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) use the example of the American civil rights movement to argue that music and musical traditions may function as a key resource in "(..) the action repertoires of political struggle" (Ibid: 7). According to Eyerman and Jamison, the role of music within social movements has multiple

important dimensions: a social dimension, in that it facilitates collective identity formation and mobilisation; a cognitive dimension, in that it involves what they term a ‘cognitive praxis’, whereby a shared consciousness and vision is articulated through music; a cultural-historical dimension, in that musical becomes a means of remembering and reviving past political traditions; and, finally, an expressive dimension, in that music functions as a means for the public articulation of political opinion – at least at the level of slogan (See Frith, 1998a: 158-202, for a discussion of political lyrics in protest music).

Similarly, a number of other scholars have pointed out the importance of music in social and political movements, including: the role of popular music in the disintegration of East Germany (Wicke, 1992); civil rights movements in the US (Garofalo, 1992b); the role of punk in both anarchist and extreme right wing groupings in Sweden (Eyerman, 2002); and, the American feminist movement (Love, 2006). Other writers again have also showed how music may play a vital role as part of more specific political initiatives, such as: the Serbian student protests against the Milosevic regime (Steinberg, 2004); the cultural mobilisations against the radical populist party ‘Vlaams Belang’ in Belgium (DeCleen, 2009; Decleen & Carpentier, 2010); and the Norwegian anti-EEC campaign in 1972 (Grepstad, 1983). Music has also contributed more generally, as a vehicle for social protest (Peddie, 2006), political campaigning (Frith & Street, 1986) and anti-racism (Frith & Street, 1992).

An interrelated and important way that music can connect with specific causes and agendas is its role in politically motivated campaigns or media events. Garofalo (1992a: 26-35) argues that events such as Live Aid in 1985 potentially function as fundraising, conscious-building, artist activism and agitation. Similarly, Street *et al.* (2007) have argued that musically based and politically motivated mass events like Live 8 accommodate political participation, where music is an integral part of political discourse, and so constitute a platform for political action.

2.1.5 Music policy, regulation and censorship

This last perspective involves manifest and concrete intersections between music and politics in that music becomes the object for regulation, policy, censorship, but also promotion, first and foremost by official authorities and bodies, but also by interest groups and, more implicitly, by the commercial market itself. This can occur at an international, national, regional and local level, and is primarily a top-down perspective that emphasises the political power exercised by authorities over musical markets, mediation, production, live music, and also law.

Cloonan (1996: 75) uses studies based on a British context to define musical censorship as the "(..) attempt to interfere, either pre- or post-publication with the artistic expression of popular music artists with the view to stifling, or significantly altering, that expression. This puts the emphasis on censorship as a deliberate act." He argues that music policy might be motivated by commercial, moral but also political or ideological concerns (See Cloonan & Garofalo, 2003 for an international perspective, and Gripsrud, 2002 for perspectives on music policy in Norway). Music policy might also take the form of a promotion of certain types of music, for instance as a form of propaganda (see Negus 1996: 201-208 for a discussion of how music was used in Nazi-Germany), but also through quotas and market regulations aiming to promote indigenous forms of music.

Street (2012: 5-6) points out a further important aspect of both musical censorship and policy, one that transcends strict regulatory functions, stating that censorship and music policy both "(..) explicitly and implicitly invest music with political principle and political ideals". Street (2013) further argues that the value and legitimacy of music is routinely constituted through political prioritisations, where music, among the other arts, or particular kinds of music, are ascribed value that reflects and embodies political ideals.

2.1.6 The public sphere perspective and the politics of music: existing contributions

As is the premise of this thesis, the public sphere perspective represents a lacuna in research on music and politics. The reasons for this, I would hold, are manifold. One reason is popular music study's preoccupation with Gramscian conceptions of power and hegemony. Another reason is that public sphere theory, particularly in the Habermasian version, has been regarded as too rationalistic and verbally oriented to have any significant grasp on music. A further reason is that public sphere theory has been associated with idealised, rule-bound and polite conversations between men of means and education, conditions that do not immediately lend themselves to the world of popular music.

A final, but not insignificant, reason that public sphere theory may have been somewhat overlooked is that, although public sphere theory now has a prominent place within Anglo-American media and communication research, it was, for a long time, unknown within influential Anglo-American research on popular music. This may be due to the late (1989) translation of Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of The Public Sphere* into English (the original appeared in 1962, the Norwegian edition in 1971). However, this is not to say that the public sphere perspective has been completely neglected. It is a perspective that has, for decades, been implicitly present in studies of music and politics and has, for the past ten years, gradually been gaining increased scholarly attention.

Already in Tricia Rose's (1994) seminal book on hip hop culture *Black Noise*, there is an emphasis on the importance of mediation and public reception that is clearly contingent with a public sphere perspective.

Rap's cultural politics lies in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception. (..) The politics of rap music involves the contestation over public space, the meanings, interpretation, and value of the lyrics and music, and the investment of cultural capital.(Ibid: 124)

Similarly, Negus (1996) implicitly addresses key aspects of public sphere theory in relation to music, when he draws attention to the public sphere as an *arena* in which music connects to political causes and agendas, and further attends to the question of what sort of public communication music might constitute, in other words the ‘content’ of the arena. Negus (ibid: 191) also argues that the political significance of music relies on ”(..) processes of mediation and articulation through which particular styles of music are produced, circulated, experienced and given cultural and political meanings.”. And as Negus points out, these are political meanings that can be put to use for specific political agendas, causes and organisations. Focusing on how music has created transnational and ethnically transgressive affiliations, and foreshadowing more recent critical conceptualisations within public sphere theory, Negus also argues that music gains political significance as “counter-rational” and “affective communication” that potentially produces what he calls “public knowledge”.

Street’s *Music and Politics* (2012) is, today, the most comprehensive and general contribution to the study of the intersections between music and politics. Street’s (Ibid: 6-8) introductory clarification of the term ‘political’ music is one that clearly resonates with a public sphere perspective. Street here argues that:

It is only when musical pleasure (or musical displeasure) spills over into the public realm and into the exercise of power within it that it becomes political. It is where music inspires forms of collective thought and action that it becomes part of politics. It is where music forms a site of public deliberation, rather than private reflection, that we talk of music as political.

Street’s conceptualisation also serves to elucidate the scope of this thesis, in that this thesis is concerned with how hip hop music both in terms of its genre practise and textual characteristics may function as *public* discourse, the political values hip hop is invested with by the public, and which effects hip hop may have on actual public political discourse. It is thus a thesis that empirically investigates the expressive transfer from the private or subcultural sphere to the public sphere, and through the

lens of public sphere theory attempts to clarify the political significance of such a transfer.

Street (ibid: 65) also observes that Jürgen Habermas “(..) gives more prominence to the place of music in the public sphere than is often acknowledged.” He is here drawing attention to how the Habermasian framework of deliberative democracy allows for a conceptualisation of the way in which musical engagement can foster civic participation, and the role of expressive culture in constituting discursive arenas separate from the market and the state. However, echoing Frith’s (1998) critique of the tendency within popular musical analysis to reduce music to words and their literal meanings, Street (ibid: 73) further comments that also within both Habermas’ and Eyerman and Jamison’s analytical frameworks is “(..) a real danger of reducing music to a form of literal communication (...)” where the forms “(...) in which it operates (as sound and rhythm, as well as words) are obliterated.” Although hip hop is, comparatively speaking, a verbally oriented musical genre, an ambition of the textual article within this thesis is to explore how hip hop music, as an expressive form constituted by rhythm, melody and words, may function as public and political discourse, and, moreover, how we can make sense of this musically constituted discourse within the framework of public sphere theory.

Along similar lines to Street (see also Inthorn, et al 2012), Hesmondhalgh (2007) has also addressed the participatory dimensions of musical engagement as part of what he terms the ‘aesthetic public sphere’. Hesmondhalgh’s concern is how audiences talk *about* music and how value judgments and expressions might involve the forging of interpretive communities. Hesmondhalgh concluded that musical evaluation might provide a route to commonality that transcends social and ethnic dividing lines.

Charles Fairchild’s (2012) book *Music, radio and the Public Sphere* offers an interesting take on the role of music in the public sphere, which, however, does not focus on the political significance of music in a strict sense, but rather on how music – through the medium of community radio – can foster democratically constituted discursive arenas and publics. Fairchild sharply contrasts community music radio with

commercial music radio, arguing that whereas the latter is imbued with instrumental and corporate rationality and hence construct the audience as consumers, the former is organised and programmed in a way that leaves musical meaning unpredictable and open-ended for its audiences. Thus, community music radio gives shape to a public that is defined by a democratic and shared construction of musical meaning. Fairchild's focus is primarily on how the non-corporate organisation of community music radio forges "(...) particular 'power-free' relationships between actors in a public space." He further argues that community radio thus involves (ibid: 70 "(...) a fairly straightforward enactment of a classically Habermasian model of communicative action,"), inviting both aesthetic and social validation of musical output. Whereas Fairchild is primarily preoccupied with the ways in which music may progressively contribute to the constitution of public spheres, what one might call a pre-deliberative dimension of music, the primary focus of this thesis is how music itself may function as, feed in to or generate political public discourse. Moreover, this thesis is not primarily concerned with how hip hop music functions as part of alternatively organised niche arenas, but rather on how Norwegian hip hop music addresses the national public sphere at large.

The remaining body of literature that explicitly frames a politics of music from a public sphere perspective has, in some way or other, focused on music as part of counter-, proletarian- or subaltern public spheres. Fornäs' (1979) examination of the Swedish progressive music movement of the 1970s is a pioneering work in this respect. It is a study that primarily emphasises the organisational and economic aspects of musical life, rather than music's expressive, aesthetic or performative qualities. Starting with Habermas' account of the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation* and Negt and Kluge's (1973/1974) concept of *proletarian* public spheres, Fornäs argues that the contemporary public sphere in Sweden was ultimately shaped by capitalist modes of production, both in terms of its communicative practices, therein music, and its functions and architecture. The notion of a proletarian public sphere, by contrast, emphasises the necessity of establishing public spheres constituted by their own independent means of production and distribution, parallel to

that of the bourgeois public sphere. Thus, according to Negt and Kluge, a proletarian public sphere facilitates an independent organisation of experience, and moreover, a structure in which a more independent process of identity- and opinion formation can take place. Crucially, Fornäs (Ibid: 70) finds that the politically radical and aesthetically explorative progressive musical movement was one that represented “(..) a real counter public sphere (*motoffentlighet*), in the sense that its identity as a movement was materially based in the extensive establishment of production and distribution facilities.” (My translation, TUN). The progressive movement had its own associations, record companies, magazines, distribution apparatus and concert circuit. Thus, as a whole, it functioned as a structure that facilitated both an alternative experience to that of the bourgeois public sphere and the formation of oppositional identity and opinion. However, according to Fornäs, due to pressures both from within and outside of the progressive movement, it constituted a rudimental proletarian public sphere, and, only for a given period of time.

Within the context of early 70s ‘hippie’ festivals Kramer (2007: 150) discusses the democratic merits of what he calls the ‘psychedelic public’ and how these festivals became arenas for deliberation, arguing that they “(..) were proto-political spheres – emergent zones of civic interaction that sprang from the market place, but took on a political air.” Kramer here addresses the inherent tension between consumption and rock music as a space for civic interaction. He further argues that such festivals, in spite of being organised for the purpose of consumption, provided opportunity for deliberation and action, where the organisational logic itself became an object of deliberation, for example relating to entrance-fees and ownership. In conceptualising the psychedelic public Kramer here draws upon Habermas’ notion of ‘occasional public spheres’.

Similarly, Hanson (2008) provides a historical account of the role of black music in the forging of a critical and politically motivated mass Afro-American public during the 1960s and onwards. Hanson’s is another account that elucidates connections between the public sphere perspective and the social movement and identity

perspectives outlined previously. In his study Hanson explores the interface between musical aesthetics and politics as it played out between popular black music and Black Nationalism as a political project, commenting that:

As an informal public sphere, the folk and vernacular traditions in black culture, of which music is a principal component, have often functioned as privileged modes of political and non-institutional expression. (Ibid: 346)

He further points out how Afro-American music of this period involved what he calls 'aural blackness', where political identity was powerfully constructed through the stylistic and aesthetic, as well as social sensibilities of soul, jazz and funk. However, in spite of the prominence of popular black music as political expression, Hanson argues that activists of the Afro-American nationalist project were unable to mobilise the mass black public through music, and failed to translate the enormous and political appeal of artists like James Brown and Sly Stone into strategic and political action. According to Hanson one of the main reasons for this was that political black music became commodified and thus emptied of any political significance. Another reason was that Black Nationalists focused overly on literary and verbal modes of political action and thus failed to employ the more elusive, yet politically potent, expressiveness of Afro-American popular music. Hanson here highlights a more general problem: how to make sense of music as a primarily non-verbal, non-referential and aural expression, within a political framework that privileges speech and argument.

Similarly, and in response to this issue, the concept of a "Black Public Sphere", most prominently brought to attention by The Black Public Sphere Collective (1995) and Neal (1999), involves the reformulation and expansion of Habermas' original concept in order to accommodate the vernacular practices, forms of expression and institutions specific to the African American community – including also music. This literature emphasises how hip hop culture constitutes (micro) counter public spheres, where collective African-American experiences and values can be contested and negotiated – upholding 'the hood' to be an important communicative space (Neal, 2003). This

literature also brings to attention to the role of hip hop music in bringing African American experiences and concerns into the eye of the wider public.

Gwendolyn Pough (2004: 27) argues that: “The fact is, some of the most humanizing and accurate accounts of life in impoverished ghettos come from rap songs and not the network news”. Pough further contends that the hip hop-specific communicative practice of directing and managing public attention by means of disruptive spectacle, boasting and overstatement is key to understanding the way that hip hop may play a progressive role in the wider public sphere. These attention-commanding aspects of hip hop music are also explored in this thesis, both as part of creative practice, in musical-lyrical text, and as observably played out in the public sphere.

These contributions are valuable to this thesis in their emphasis on the significance of the vernacular and socio-culturally specific modes of communication in counter public spheres, as they provide starting points for further investigations. However, this thesis not primarily concerned with hip hop as part of any counter public sphere, but focuses on how hip hop may address the dominant public sphere.

2.1.7 The distinctiveness of the public sphere perspective

This section will preliminarily describe the key points whereby the public sphere perspective, when applied to the politics of music, differs from those previously outlined, and so indicate the sort of ‘politics of music’ that a public sphere perspective proposes. These are aspects of public sphere theory that will be elaborated on in subchapter two.

First, the public sphere perspective fundamentally differs from Gramscian conceptions in that the former implies a role for music in consensus-oriented discourse rather than in power struggle. This does not mean that a public sphere perspective is blind to the conditions and dynamics of power, but rather that it additionally accentuates the role of music in democratic politics, a politics that

emphasises discursive processes governed by principles of reason and inclusivity, rather than a politics understood only or mostly as struggles for power.

Second, the public sphere perspective places discursive engagement at the very heart of democratic politics, thus also implying the relevance of music, as a form of communication. Music is an expressive form that potentially involves an articulation of specific identity positions, as well as lifestyles, and, as will be highlighted in this thesis, explicit political critique and commentary. Moreover, musical communication often involves an articulation of private or sub-cultural experiences and perspectives, which are posited and engaged with in the public sphere. Music is thus an integral part of public life, where musical articulations may be discussed, interpreted and criticised. Hence, music may enter discursive processes vital to deliberative democracy, thus both constituting public discourse in its own right, and integrating into ongoing public discourse.

Third, the term ‘public sphere’ both denotes concrete spaces and institutions, and offers a conceptual framework that allows for an understanding of the political functions of music. The public sphere is located between the state, the market, and the private, or intimate, sphere, and ideally facilitates the discursive formation of public opinion, which, alongside elections, is the principal democratically legitimate basis of decision-making. Thus, it has a strength as a political theory, in that, in contrast to Gramscian inspired frameworks that emphasise interpretation and critique of power (see for instance Stuart Hall’s Encoding / Decoding model), connects music, as part of public discursive engagement, with concrete political processes and institutions. As will be elaborated on in subchapter two, the public sphere forms part of an anatomy of democracy in which also the political significance of music can be envisaged.

The public sphere perspective has a broad scope in that it potentially encompasses the role of music in subcultures as well as social movements, both of which can take the form of ‘subaltern’ or ‘counter’ public spheres. Both subcultures and social movements potentially involve communicative spaces where ideas, critique and opinions are collectively articulated through processes of discursive interaction. In

this perspective, music may also function as an important expressive vehicle for communicating these interests, opinions and critique into the main public sphere. Theories of the public sphere and deliberative democracy thus offer a larger framework in which to locate and understand the workings of subcultures and social movements, and how these connect to the wider dynamics of democracy.

A number of theorists (see for instance Eley, 1992; Peters, 2005; Fraser, 1992) have also emphasised that the public sphere both constitutes a space where identity formation takes place and offers a conceptual framework in which to understand such formations – therein musically facilitated, yet politically, significant identities. Furthermore, as was highlighted in several of the previous perspectives, collective identity construction facilitated by music may also engender politically engaged *publics*.

Finally, the perspective of musical policy, regulation and censorship addresses two important aspects of the public sphere. First, the infrastructure and functional quality of the public sphere itself, in that musical policy and regulation are key to maintaining, promoting or inhibiting musical plurality and artistic freedom of speech, all crucial elements of a functioning public sphere. Second, that musical regulation and policy should itself be contested and debated in the public sphere, and so consequently become a product of public opinion.

2.2 Public sphere theory, deliberative democracy and music

Research on the public sphere has yielded a vast body of literature, encompassing a range of different dimensions and problematics that branch out into various other fields and disciplines. It is a framework that not only deals with the political and democratic organisation of society, but also addresses a multitude of questions about

the economic, communicative, technological, social and psychological aspects of how society is organised. However, this thesis departs from the body of theory of addresses the question of the role of aesthetics and expressive culture in the public sphere and in deliberative democracy.

Habermas is by no means the only one who has made fundamental contributions to the field of public sphere research. However, the conceptualisation of the public sphere he presents, first in the seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and then revised in subsequent works, unquestionably provides the richest and most substantial account of the public sphere and its political ramifications available today. In the introduction to *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992:41) Craig Calhoun comments:

The most important destiny of Habermas' first book may prove to be this: not to stand as authoritative statement but to be an immensely fruitful generator of new research, analysis, and theory. (...) this book will inform and indispensable point of theoretical departure. It should also continue to inform a rich tradition of empirical work.

Habermas' writings on art and aesthetics are relatively few and diffuse, but they are by no means insignificant. As this chapter will show, Habermas' framework, although not initially framed explicitly to understand the role of expressive culture, nevertheless opens the way for a fruitful conceptualisation of the role of music. There is a lacuna in his theory regarding the role of expressive culture, that, as this chapter will show, many scholars have addressed and gradually start to fill, and which also this thesis addresses.

2.2.1 Habermas and deliberative democracy

Bohman (1998:401) offers a general definition of deliberative democracy as: "(...) any one family of views according to which public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision making and self-government. In "Three Normative Models of Democracy" (1994) Habermas calls his own branch of

deliberative democracy *the discourse theory of democracy* (used by him interchangeably with a ‘deliberative model of politics’).

. In outlining his own position, Habermas here distinguishes between the liberal, republican and what he terms the ‘proceduralist-deliberative’ view of democratic politics, being himself a proponent of the latter. Habermas' view both incorporates and deviates from important elements of the republican and liberal tradition. His model of democracy is on the one hand founded in the republican tradition in that it emphasises citizens' ability and will to collectively strive for the common good through rational discussion:

The republican model as compared to the liberal one has the advantage that it preserves the original meaning of democracy in terms of the institutionalisation of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens. (Ibid: 3)

In contrast to the liberal tradition, which views politics as private in that each citizen votes individually, in accordance with private interest, politics is for Habermas a public matter, where people collectively and discursively orient themselves towards the common good, and thus transcend individual and private interests. Hence, whereas in the liberal model of democratic politics is understood as market-analogous bargaining between pre-established and private interests, the deliberative model assumes that citizens are capable and motivated to *transform* their interests through discursive interaction. However, on the other hand, Habermas model draw some key elements from the liberal tradition, firstly by emphasising the importance of individual autonomy, secondly, by maintaining a clear separation of the state and civil society, and thirdly, by maintaining that public deliberation should be instrumental in regards to political decision-making.

In the article “The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory” political theorist Jon Elster (1983) clarifies the strengths of Habermas’ theory of deliberative democracy. Elster here discusses and compares what he terms ‘the private-instrumental view of politics’, participatory democracy and Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy. Attacking what he labels ‘economic theories of

democracy', where the legitimate basis for political decision making is the aggregation of individual interests through voting (most notoriously propagated by Joseph Schumpeter (1942)), Elster (ibid:11) argues that the "(..) the principles of the market must differ from that of the forum". He further criticises participatory democracy, where collective political engagement have important educative and ethically integrative dimensions, but which is none the less divorced from actual decision-making. Thus, participatory democracy involves an insubstantial view of politics which " (..) is not *about* anything"(Ibid:26, original emphasis). Elster concludes by arguing that the key strength of Habermas' view of democracy is that it, by combining the republican and liberal tradition, asserts that politics are both "public in nature" and "instrumental in purpose".

As in the liberal model of democracy, Habermas maintains the boundary between society and the state, but also sets a further boundary, between civil society and the market. Civil society, in Habermas' model, "(...) provides the social basis of autonomous public spheres that remain as distinct from the economic system as from the administration" (1994: 8). In Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy one vital function of the public sphere is that it facilitates the formation of public opinion, which involves the exercise of popular sovereignty and thus legitimises political decision-making. Significantly, and in contrast to the emphasis of the republican tradition on the ethically and communally integrative dimensions of political participation, public discourse must also be concerned with what Sheila Benhabib (1996: 6) calls 'political discourse proper', which involves moral questions of justice and instrumental questions of power and coercion.

In Habermas' view, public opinion is politically instrumental in two ways: first, through the voting channel, where discursively engendered public opinion informs their voting, which in turn leads to administrative and legislative action; second, through communication between civil society and the state. This latter process can, according to Weigård and Eriksen (1999: 253-254), be described in three steps. First, people form shared conceptions and standards of how to deal with inequality through

discourse in peripheral public spheres – public discourse thus facilitates the formation of identity and solidarity. These common conceptions are in the next step tested in rational debate, through which legitimate demands and suggestions directed at the political-administrative system, are articulated. Lastly, these demands and suggestions filter into the political administrative system, where they are discussed in institutionalised and procedurally governed forums, to be potentially realised in political administrative decisions.

Within this framework the relevance of music can primarily be seen at play at the first of these steps. Music is always somehow ethically and ideologically charged (Street, 1997; Frith, 1996a), and as the first study of this thesis highlight; aesthetic and ethical-political sensibilities are connected to each other. Moreover, music frequently involves more specific articulations of value positions and politics. Thus, the public engagement with music and the formation of shared or conflicting musical tastes also implicitly entail the negotiation of ethical standards. Further, as previously pointed out, music often play a prominent role in the public processes of both identity- and solidarity formation. However, and as is the primary focus of this thesis, the relevance of music may manifest also at the second step; music sometimes both provoke, stimulate and feed into to public debates about political issues, or what Benhabib terms “political discourse proper”.

2.2.2 Habermas and the bourgeois public sphere

Whereas the theoretical tradition of deliberative democracy is relatively new – it was developed from the eighties and onwards (Bohman, 1998; Held, 2006) – the idea of the public sphere is much older. The pre-modern Greeks had their ‘agoras’ and Romans their ‘forums’ that, amongst many other functions, also served as a space for people to assemble to exchange ideas and information. As Gripsrud, *et al.* (2010) point out, the emergence of the modern idea of a public sphere is closely entwined with the emergence of the enlightenment period. The concept of the public sphere,

from its initial formulations, was already underpinned by what would become pillars of enlightenment thought in that it presupposed the precedence of reason, freedom of expression and the individual autonomy of man. Thus, the public sphere was seen as important because it facilitated public exercise of reason over tradition, and was a space where autonomous individuals could meet freely as citizens in discourse. Accordingly (Ibid: 1), the public sphere in the enlightenment era was understood to be "a sphere for critical discourse, placing all established powers and truths before the tribunal of reason". For thinkers such as Immanuel Kant the public use of reason was connected to both enlightenment and autonomy at the individual level, but also to political legitimacy, holding forth that, in order to be legitimate, laws and restrictions on freedom must be subjected to public scrutiny.

The role of the public sphere and public opinion has been a key concern for subsequent political theorists, including interwar writers such as Walter Lippmann, John Dewey and Joseph Schumpeter, and post-war, Hanna Arendt. However, the concept of the public sphere gained unforeseen prominence through Habermas' seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962/1971).

The structural transformation is both a historical account of the emergence, and later decline, of the public sphere, and a contribution to political and social theory. In Habermas' analysis, the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere is intertwined with key historic developments from the renaissance period and onwards. According to Habermas, feudal society was characterised by a 'representative' public sphere, where public space functioned as an arena for the king, nobility and clergy to display symbols of power and announce decisions *in front* of the people. Political legitimacy rested in tradition or God, and political discussions and decisions were taken in forums withdrawn from the people. The bourgeois public sphere however, emerges as a consequence of, and alongside the growth of industrial and merchant capitalism in eighteenth century France, Germany and Great Britain. The growth of first merchant and then industrial capitalism, called into being a new class, the 'bourgeoisie', which was roughly placed between the aristocracy and the workers, including the farmers.

Simultaneously, a more extensive and powerful executive state apparatus evolved, initially dominated by feudal actors – the king and the nobility. Moreover, the accelerating trade facilitated bettered communication, more traveling, sharing of stock and price information, and also a burgeoning press.

It is these historical conditions, combined with new found enlightenment ideals, that rendered possible the bourgeois public sphere that Habermas both historically accounts for, and, holds forth as an ideal. The bourgeois public sphere was initially played out through face-to-face meetings in salons, or coffee and tea-houses, public spaces where citizens could assemble to discuss matters of economic and political importance. Discussions often revolved around pamphlets, periodicals and books, hence (print) media were of key significance already from the start of. Crucially, these spaces were, to a varying degree, governed by institutionalised criteria, involving as set of discursive ideals. These ideals included (Ibid: 36) the disregard for status and wealth, inclusivity and discourse committed to reason giving. Habermas notes that these were partly actualised ideals that had "(...) become institutionalised and thereby stated as an objective claim.", and," further notes that if they were not realised in full, they (..)“(..) were at least consequential." (Ibid)

The public sphere was enabled by the market, yet separated from it, and also separated from the state. As Fraser (1992:111) notes:

"(...) the concept of the public sphere permits us to keep in view the distinctions among state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic associations, distinctions that are essential to democratic theory."

Thus, a key political function of the public sphere is that it functions as a space where citizens, uninhibited by the state, can identify common problems and interests, and articulate these as either criticism or suggestions directed towards the state.

In his account of the public sphere, Habermas draws a distinction between the ‘literary’ public sphere and the ‘political’ public sphere, arguing that the former, historically, preceded the latter. The literary public sphere was a cultivating force in

that it prepared its participants for the discursive interaction in the political public sphere. More importantly it facilitated discussions of a different subject matter than that of the economically oriented political public sphere, including aesthetic, moral and existential questions and experiences. Thus, although centred on literary texts, the literary public sphere allowed for the addressing and discussion of matters originating from the intimate sphere of the home and family. Habermas (Ibid:51) notes that the literary public was "(...)held together by the press and its professional criticism.", and further argues that :

They formed the public sphere of rational-critical debate in the world of letters within which the subjectivity originating in the interiority of the conjugal family, by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself.

The literary public sphere thus, in its thematisation of "(..) what was 'human', in self-knowledge and empathy (..)" (Ibid: 50), had the important function as a space that facilitated the formation of both subjectivity and identity. These formative processes, whilst occurring within the literary public sphere, also had significant political dimensions, as they involved a pre-deliberative articulation of values and sentiments that could then be tested through rational discourse and argumentation. It is worth noting that here Habermas is predominantly concerned with the publics arising from literature, and discussions about or in relation to literature, rather than the contents of the texts themselves.

Habermas also addresses the role of musical concert life, which he argues changes in this period in a way that is illustrative of the transition from the representative public sphere of the feudal society to the bourgeoisie public sphere, and the role of capitalism therein. Until the eighteenth century public music, or concerts, primarily had representative functions in the sense that they were either celebratory of the king or nobility, were religious or ceremonial. However, the establishment of musical societies untied musical performance from these representative functions.

Admission for a payment turned the musical performance into a commodity; simultaneously, however, there arose something like music not tied to a purpose. For the first time an

audience gathered to listen to music as such – a public of music lovers to which anyone who was propertied and educated was admitted. (Ibid: 39)

Thus, Habermas does ascribe significance to music, in its early ability to generate publics. Moreover, untied from its representative functions musical concerts now also invited publics to exercise their own preferences as well as discussing and testing these through discourse.

The structural transformation, or decline, of the bourgeois public sphere takes place from the 19th century, as a consequence of what Habermas considers the dissolution of the boundaries between the state, the market and the public sphere. Private interests organised into either political parties, unions or other interest groups gradually now comes to dominate the political public sphere – which becomes an arena for political tug-of-wars rather than critical-rational debate. Questions about politics, economic matters and the distribution of power are now predominantly negotiated directly between market actors, political parties, interest organisations and the state. The public, according to Habermas, is only haphazardly drawn into these negotiations, and even then mostly for the purpose of giving acclamation. As a consequence, Habermas argues, a ‘re-feudalisation’ of the public sphere takes place, where politically instrumental debate yet again predominantly takes place within forums that are withdrawn from the public. The public sphere, in turn "(...) assumes advertising functions. The more it can be deployed as vehicle for political and economic propaganda, the more it becomes unpolitical as a whole and pseudo-privatised.” (Ibid: 175). The competition between organised private interests that takes place in the public sphere, consequentially causes a shift from ‘critical’ to ‘manipulative’ publicity.

Clearly echoing the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers, Habermas connects this negative transformation also to the growth of the popular press and the cultural industries, which in turn has deteriorating effects on the literary public sphere, its public, and its political functions. Whereas exchange value and quality, according to Habermas, were separated in the bourgeois public sphere, culture now assumes the

form of commodities, and the laws of the market penetrate the very substance of cultural works. Tabloid and 'pre-digested' forms that, in effect, inhibit reflection and spontaneity, replace the classical forms of the bourgeois public sphere. This later part of his book makes clear that Habermas' early conceptualisation of the bourgeois public sphere clearly privileges speech and writing – the world of letters – as the preferred form of discursive interaction. Commenting on the rise of mass entertainment and new media technology he writes:

Radio, film and television by degrees reduce to a minimum the distance that a reader is forced to maintain toward the printed letter – a distance that required the privacy of the appropriation as much as it made possible the publicity of a rational-critical exchange of about what had been read. (Ibid: 170)

Consequently, Habermas identifies a transformation from culture-debating to culture-consuming publics, and the initially autonomous literary public sphere now dissolves into a pseudo-public and pseudo-private area of cultural consumption. As a result of primarily serving the needs of the market, the literary public sphere loses its political function and no longer serves as a space where citizens can discursively and rationally engage and articulate critique, and thus no longer provides a legitimate basis for the formation of public opinion.

2.2.3 Updating the concept of the public sphere

Habermas offers a revision of the concept of the public sphere in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), one that is more attuned to the complex, media driven society of late capitalism. He maintains that the public sphere is still vital to democracy, as it continues to serve as the space where problems are identified and detected, but he additionally holds that "(...) the public sphere must (...) *influentially* thematize (the problems), furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes." (Ibid: 358)

Through his updating and nuancing of the notion of the public sphere from the physical spaces offered by coffee houses and salons to the space generated through communicative action, Habermas describes the public sphere thus:

(..) as a network for communicating information and points of view (I.e. opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes); the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesised in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions. (Ibid: 360)

In response to the increasing internationalisation, complexity and fragmentation of publics, Habermas (Ibid: 373) further distinguishes between different types of publics, according to the "density of communication, organisational complexity, and range". He distinguishes between 'episodic' publics, "found in taverns, coffee-houses or on the streets", 'occasional' publics, appearing at particular events such as concerts and party assemblies, and 'abstract public spheres' "(...) of isolated readers, listeners, and viewers scattered across large geographic areas, or even the globe, and brought together only through the mass media." Although this thesis will not address the consequences of this reconfiguration of the public sphere, the updated conceptualisation nonetheless does serve to highlight how, today, music engenders publics at different levels. For instance, scenes, subcultures and musical associations potentially involve the formation of episodic publics; concerts and festivals may constitute occasional publics; and, music can engender abstract public spheres through taste, fan and practitioner communities, which are increasingly geographically scattered but today are brought together through social media and content sharing network sites, for example Youtube, Soundcloud and Myspace.

2.2.4 Communicative rationality, the public sphere and aesthetics

We have, so far, focused on what could be called the 'spatial' and 'functional' dimensions of the public sphere, in other words the public sphere as a space for discourse, and how this space, through its connections with the state, market and the

private or intimate sphere, performs various political functions. This spatial dimension contributes to a clarification of the political significance of music, as it suggests an anatomy of democracy in which music also has its place, a point that will be discussed further in later chapters. This section, however, will address a further aspect of Habermas' theory of the public sphere, one that is of key relevance to how we understand the role of music, namely the nature and quality of discourse, or the 'discursive content' of the public sphere.

The free, inclusive and argument-driven discourse that, according to Habermas, characterised the bourgeois public sphere, foregrounds the concept of 'communicative rationality' developed in *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol 1*, (1984). This concept is central to Habermas' theory of the public sphere, for two interrelated reasons.

First, the concept of communicative rationality has a strong normative bearing on how critical and rational discourse is envisaged within theories of the public sphere and deliberative democracy. It is a central concept in Habermas' project, and one in line with the tradition of critical theory, as he attempts to establish a theory that not only describes or explains how social and discursive interaction works, but also allows for the critical assessment of actual practices and tendencies, and how these affect various social institutions.

Second, communicative rationality is central to Habermas' overarching critical project. In a critical revision of Max Weber's claim that the various domains of modern society are increasingly characterised by 'rationalisation', along with Horkheimer and Adorno's claim that modernity had ultimately rendered reason instrumental, Habermas distinguishes between the 'life world' and the 'system world'. The former is the domain of informal and culturally grounded understandings, and the latter the technically and instrumentally governed domains of the market, administration and government. Habermas' key concern here is that the instrumental logic and reason of the 'system' is increasingly colonising the 'life world', thus suppressing existing forms of social integration. However, in an attempt to 'rescue'

reason and the enlightenment project from what his predecessors held to be the inescapable conditions of modernity, Habermas establishes a differentiated concept of rationality which, as well as instrumental-practical reason, also includes moral and aesthetic reason, attaining to different domains of society. The public sphere, if it is free and inclusive, thus has a key role in balancing the relationship between the life world and the system world, particularly in countering the colonisation of the former by the latter. The public sphere, according to Habermas, therefore functions as a 'buffer' against the instrumental logic of the system world, enabling the imperatives of the market and the state to be contested and countered through the exercise of communicative rationality.

Commenting upon the theoretical development of Habermas' project, Baker (1992) notes that whereas the rational discourse outlined in *The Structural Transformation* was both a historical account of discursive practises and a formulation of a normative ideal of rational public discourse, the concept of *communicative rationality* is, in contrast, primarily normative. This is because, according to Baker (Ibid: 183), it involves "the effort of disengaging more explicitly the notion of the rational public sphere, as normative ideal, from the historical formation in which it was first embedded (...)"

For Habermas, 'the rational' involves expressions that can be supported with argument and subjected to rational scrutiny. He states that "An expression satisfies the preconditions for rationality in and insofar as it embodies fallible knowledge and therewith has a relation to the objective world (..) and is open to objective judgement." (1984: 9). 'Objective' judgement is made possible if the expression is open to intersubjective judgement, in other words that it has the same meaning for all actors involved in discourse and can be judged by the same criteria. It is important here to note that these meanings are not absolute, and shared standards of judgements are not derived from a positivist conception of reality, but products of social and discursive interactions between people.

Habermas (Ibid: 75-102) then argues for a concept of rationality differentiated into three categories, each corresponding to a different set of validation criteria. The first category is cognitive-instrumental reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their truth-value. The second is moral-practical reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their moral rightness. Third is aesthetic-expressive reason, which validates claims in regards to the degree to which they are authentically made and held by those who utter them. A fourth validation criterion, encompassing all three types of claims, is 'comprehensibility', the degree to which a claim makes sense to the discourse participants. These four communicative principles normatively underpin public discourse in the public sphere; to be rational, discursive claims should be subject to these standards of validation and be oriented toward intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and consensus.

Habermas' is thus a conception of rationality that gives primacy to verbal communication, argumentative speech and writing. By comparison, aesthetic dimensions of discourse, or aesthetic expressivity in itself, is ascribed significance as an indicator of the level of authenticity and sincerity of the speaker. Although aesthetics and art seem therefore to be of lesser concern in his account of communicative rationality, Habermas does, in passing, imply a more open conception of the expressive features of art:

(..) reasons have the peculiar function of bringing us to see a work or performance in such a way that it can be perceived as an authentic expression of an exemplary experience, in general as the embodiment of a claim to authenticity. A work validated through aesthetic experience can then in turn take the place of an argument and promote the acceptance of precisely those standards according to which it counts as an authentic work. (Ibid: 20)

In this somewhat enigmatic formulation Habermas can be seen to be ascribing value to critics, promoters, curators and the like, in the way that they, through argument, bring individuals to experience works of art as authentic expressions of what he calls an 'exemplary experience'. Thus, Habermas here seems to suggest that aesthetic experience first enters the realm of communicative rationality when it is 'translated'

into verbal language and arguments. However, Habermas here also suggests that artworks "can take the place of an argument" and "promote the acceptance" of "standards", and further argues that aesthetic experience can itself become a rational motive for "corresponding standards of value". Habermas is here acknowledging that art may, by its own expressive means, contribute to rational discourse, but also emphasising the role of the critic in both guiding our perception of the artwork and making its authenticity apparent.

2.3 Critique and revisions

Habermas' conceptualisations of the public sphere have yielded a rich body of criticism, encompassing a range of historical, political, philosophical and social aspects related to his theory¹. The aim in the following subchapters is to outline the main strands of critique directly relevant to the question of how to understand the role of expressive culture and music in the public sphere. These criticisms mainly revolve around two interrelated issues: first, the nature and quality of discourse, and the implications for democratic participation; second, how to understand the role of discourse in relation to fundamental and problematic issues in democratic theory such as power, passion and rationality.

¹ See for instance Calhoun's (1992) anthology *Habermas and the public sphere* for a substantial contribution to the body of critical literature

2.3.1 Discourse and exclusion

Garnham (1992: 359-360) argues that the historical idealisation of the bourgeois public sphere neglects the importance of the development of 'plebeian' public spheres, for instance trade unions or other organisations that, that albeit in different institutional forms, also involve discursive interaction about socio-political issues. Several other prominent writers within the field of public sphere theory are also strong advocates of this line of criticism, emphasising the exclusionary aspect of such an idealisation.

For example, Negt and Kluge (1973) introduced the notion of a proletarian public sphere, a class based and oppositional public sphere facilitated by its own means of production and distribution. These spheres are ephemeral in nature as they primarily manifest in particular situations of crisis, such as strikes and the occupation of factories. Similarly, but from the perspective of feminist critique, Fraser (1992: 123) introduced the concept of 'subaltern counterpublics', defined as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs". Both Fraser's and Negt and Kluge's critiques involve the problematisation of Habermas' sharp separation of the public sphere from the private sphere and the household, which, Fraser argues, means that questions of gender relations are neglected.

This exclusionary aspect of Habermas' public sphere has also been critically addressed by Benhabib (1996) and Young (1996), who both argue that it is a concept that, in its original formulation, is inadequately equipped to tackle gender differences and socio-cultural differences more generally. What both writers make clear is that questions of inclusion and questions of how we conceptualise democratic discourse are inherently linked. They both argue that the verbal, argumentative discourse that Habermas idealises is in itself exclusionary, in that it necessitates both a culturally and socially specific competency that many social groups do not possess. Consequently, they both call for a somewhat less strict concept of democratic discourse that allows

for other forms and modes of communication. Young (Ibid), at a general level, argues for the need to include other socio-cultural practices, commenting that "(...) a broader conception of communicative democracy requires in addition to critical argument: greeting, rhetoric and storytelling." Young's theoretical contribution is highly relevant to the theme and arguments of this thesis, and will be discussed further in article two, which explores the extent to which these modes of communication form part of the communicative practices and strategies of Norwegian rap artists, and in article three, which will investigate the extent to which the aforementioned communicative modes characterise the musical expressivity of hip hop and enable it to function as public political discourse.

2.3.2 Communicative rationality and aesthetics

The centrality of verbal argument and communicative rationality to Habermas' theory has been identified as problematic by a number of writers. For example, Calhoun (1996: 35) links Habermas' focus on communicative rationality to his "(...) tendency to impoverish his own theory," which Calhoun identifies as problematic because it is exclusionary and overly idealistic, and hence does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of the multitude of communicative modes and forms that evidently form part of public discourse. Furthering this point, Garnham (1992) argues that:

(...) Habermas' model of communicative action, developed as the norm for public discourse, neglects, when faced by distorted communication, all those other forms of communication not directed towards consensus. (...) Therefore he neglects both the rhetorical and the playful aspects of communicative action, which leads to too a sharp distinction between information and entertainment (...).

Similarly, Dahlgren (1995: 109) comments that "(..) if our horizons do not penetrate beyond the conceptual framework of communicative rationality and the ideal speech situations, we will be operating with a crippled critical theory". Dryzek (1990: 220) also highlights this aspect of Habermas' theory, commenting that:

(Communicative rationality) does not speak to theatre, wit, religion, music, visual arts, play, poetry, or private experience, unless of course those activities enter into the constitution of collective choices.

Duvenage's (2003) book *Habermas and Aesthetics* is perhaps the work that, from a philosophical angle, most systematically deals with Habermas in relation to aesthetics. Duvenage informatively charts and discusses Habermas' theoretical integration of aesthetics from his first phase of writing on the public sphere, to his second phase, in which he developed the theory of communicative action, before concluding with a discussion of Habermas' view on aesthetics in light of post-modern critics. According to Duvenage, the first phase of Habermas' thought involved a concern with aesthetics where he ascribed an important role to literature and music, as an organising force behind critically reasoning publics. However, Duvenage argues that Habermas' understanding of aesthetics changes as he is inspired by the critical account of the cultural industries offered by the first generation of the Frankfurt School, and he begins to see art and entertainment predominantly as tools of manipulation and objects for consumption.

Duvenage observes that the second phase of Habermas' theoretical development is characterised by a 'linguistic turn', and involved a shift "(...) in the direction of a formal account of communicative reason that allowed even less of a role for aesthetics in public reason" (Ibid: 22). Further commenting on the role of aesthetic expressions in the theory of communicative rationality, Duvenage, (ibid: 58) argues that aesthetic validity claims are primarily reduced to the subjective sphere of the speaker – including emotions and intensions – "(...) with the implication that their possible rational-discursive potential is inhibited." However, Duvenage asserts that, within the Habermasian framework, art has the important, albeit different, function of constituting an autonomous sphere separate from the rationalising tendencies of modernity, a 'laboratory' for learning where individual experience more openly can be communicated and transformed. However, the learning process and non-verbal open reflection that art involves must, ultimately, conform to the processes of rational discursiveness.

2.3.3 Alternative conceptions of the public sphere

Bernhard Peters (1994; 1997) offers an alternative conceptualisation of the public sphere, with a significantly more pronounced focus on expressive culture. Peters elaborates on Habermas' conception of the public sphere, in terms of the communicative forms and modes that constitute democratic discourse, but he also challenges its apparent rigidity. Although distinguishing argumentative-discursive communication from non-discursive 'expressive communication', Peters argues that the latter is also an integral and important aspect of a democratic public sphere.

It should be noted that Peters (1997: 78) operates within a relatively loose conception of public deliberation in the first place, which "(..) denotes a broad class of public communication, which is characterised by the attempt to provide some kind of justification or evidence(..)" and can include television documentaries, talk-shows, and also news and actuality programmes that have an entertainment dimension. By 'expressive communication', Peters is referring to aesthetic means of expression in a multitude of forms, encompassing transitory events like ceremonies, demonstrations and festivals, but also visual forms of expression as well as high and popular cultural expressions, such as music and film. On this point, Peters (1994: 58) argues that:

All of these forms make powerful impression on modes of experience and motivation. Historical experiences show that such forms of public symbolisation can be introduced to rein in, or otherwise render ineffective, public discourse (War propaganda is the classic example here). On the other hand, as the experience of the 60's shows, a revival of 'presentative' culture can also be accompanied by an extension of the public discursive sphere.

In accordance with the Habermas' conceptualisation of the literary or cultural sphere, for Peters, expressive communication, such as music, is thus an important vehicle for self-reflection, empathy and the formation of identity. Moreover, these forms of expression are also important as a means of making public a plurality of views and experiences.

Another commentator, Mouffe (1999), offers an agonistic model of democracy that serves as a radically different and fruitful point of comparison for Habermas' model. Mouffe's model elucidates important and contested issues in Habermas' theory, such as the focus on rationally achieved consensus, the role of power, the role of passions and emotions, and, implicitly, the role of expressive culture in democracy

Mouffe's model is inspired by agonistic and conflict-oriented theorists such as Carl Schmitt (1932)², and argues that the main proponents of deliberative democracy, namely Habermas and Rawls, are fundamentally misguided in their focus on rationally achieved consensus. Consequently Mouffe asserts that they neglect the ineradicably conflictory nature of the value pluralism that characterises modern democracy³. She further criticises theories of deliberative democracy as being too rationalist, leading to disenchantment with traditional politics, in turn causing either political extremism or apathy. The key criticism of Habermas here is that he fails to acknowledge the importance of passions and emotions, and regards these as dangerous distortions of democratic discourse, whereas for Mouffe, passions are critical in facilitating collective identification in politics. On this point she argues that "Passions and emotions are key in ensuring democratic allegiance and democratic citizenship – rational participation is not enough"(1999: 10).

Mouffe also draws on a number of earlier Marxist and post-structuralist Habermasian critics to offer a further criticism, that Habermas fails to come to terms with the importance of power in constituting social relations and how this, in effect, makes rational discourse impossible. Mouffe argues that we must accept that social relations,

² Important to mention, Schmitt is often considered to be one of the "dark" theorists of democracy, whose thinking involves the suspension of fundamental democratic ideals, and whose theories were also adopted by the Nazis to legitimate the Third Reich. Mouffe on the other hand, is inspired by an aspect of Schmitt's thinking in that she shares the view that politics are inherently conflict driven.

³ See Karpinen *et. al* (2008) for a thorough discussion of Habermas' and Mouffe's positions in regards to empirical media and communication research. The authors here argue that whereas the standard readings of both theorists are often characterized by unproductive polarization, both positions can, if eclectically combined, help us reflect upon the ideals of democratic public communication. Moreover, the authors emphasize the value of Mouffe's position as a starting point from where to critically reflect upon Habermas' framework.

and consequently public discourse, will always be constituted by hegemonic power relations, and further argues that rather than to seek to eliminate power from democratic politics we must "(...) constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values" (Ibid:14).

In her agonistic model Mouffe suggests that we need to "(...) create democratic forms of identification that will contribute to mobilise passions towards democratic design". Starting from the premise that both difference and power are ineradicable, she argues that we must construct our opponents as 'adversaries', rather than enemies. Democratic legitimacy rests on the mutual acknowledgment between adversaries in discourse; thus, 'antagonism' becomes 'agonism'. The public sphere is key to her model of agonistic pluralism, as a space where passions can be channelled, and confrontation between different hegemonic political projects can play out.

Within Mouffe's model, the role of music can be clearly envisaged, as a passionate and emotional expression of different value-positions and political sentiments. Moreover, if music is committed to thematise social or political conditions, or by means of performance, reception or mediation integrates into politicised contexts, it could from this perspective also be seen to involve a mobilisation of passions that contributes to an increased identification with the political field, and thus engender political enchantment and engagement. The role of music in actual social and political movements provides empirical evidence of such a dynamic, and studies of the role of music in political participation (Street, 2007; Inthorn *et al.*, 2012) and in generating cultural citizenship suggests so.

2.4 Public sphere theory, expressive culture and music

2.4.1 In critical defence of Habermas

Although the previously outlined critiques elucidate problematic issues in Habermas theory, I will argue that none of these fundamentally debilitate his theory's grasp on the democratic role of music. First, I would argue that Habermas' framework does entail an *openness* to the roles of both expressive culture and passion. Rather than suppressing the existence of passions, he implies only that these must, in the final instance, be articulated as contestable arguments. As such, there is indeed room for political mobilisations and enchantment through emotional and expressive communication, but these must eventually enter deliberative processes if they are to be part of a legitimate formation of public opinion. Similarly to the scepticism of entertainment and 'manipulative' culture that Habermas adopted from his preceding Frankfurt school generation, his diffuse grasp on aesthetics may also be a consequence of a lack of attendance to expressive culture and aesthetics, rather than substantial objections.

Commenting on this apparent disregard for expressive culture and entertainment, Gripsrud (2009: 210) argues that Habermas' theoretical framework contributes to a clarification of the democratic role of expressive culture, but at the same time:

It is (...) striking how Habermas manages to say so much about the public sphere without ever directly commenting on the role of television documentaries, lifestyle magazines, popular music, movies, soap operas, sit-coms, novels, musicals and stand-up comedy [...]

Also testifying to the conspicuous absence of aesthetic-affective communication within the Habermasian framework, Dahlberg (2005: 116) similarly problematises others' interpretations of this framework:

The idea that the public sphere of communicative rationality excludes or suppresses aesthetic-affective modes of discourse is based upon a particularly narrow reading of the conception. This "rationalist" reading does not simply result from poor stylisations of the

conceptions by critics attempting to illuminate their own positions, but is also supported by Habermas' own antipathy towards aesthetic-affective modes of communication in politics.

Similarly to Dahlberg, Gripsrud (2009) also argues that an untenable dichotomy between rational verbal discourse and 'non-rational' expressive communication has been constructed that, in effect, has inhibited an understanding of the role of music in the public sphere. Both writers emphasise the fact that, whereas rational communication always entails rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions, expressive communication is not inherently irrational. Following up on Young's (2000: 64) point that "Any discursive content and argument is embodied in style and rhetoric.", Dahlberg further contends that, "Arguing that certain forms of communication does not contain rhetoric is simply naïve (...)". In consequence, he suggests that the line must be drawn between 'persuasive' and 'manipulative' communication rather than rational and non-rational.

This is a problem that will be addressed in the textual article of this thesis, which will examine how hip hop music constitutes political discourse, aesthetically and rhetorically, and consider hip hop expressivity within the parameters of communicative rationality.

In holding forth the reciprocal recognition of agonistic positions as the basis of democratic legitimacy, Mouffe's model is itself normative at its core. However, it assumes conflicting interest and hegemonic power structure to be ineradicable, and thus a driving force in democracy. Nonetheless, in branding Habermas' and Rawls' position as 'escapist', she shares a certain similarity with 'realist' conceptions of democracy, such as those associated with Walter Lippmann and Joseph Schumpeter (see Gripsrud *et al.*, 2010: 23-24). Habermas does not, however, close his eyes to the role of power, but rather suggests that it is possible, through institutionalised, communicative procedures and discourse ethics, to minimise the power dimension of political discourse, something that in my view should be essential in democratic politics. Moreover, the idea of communicative rationality presupposes the meta-contestation of the conditions and premises that underpin discourse, and so

necessarily involves continual reflection on the power structures that constitute social relations. As Dahlberg (2005) also argues:

The public sphere norm provides a structure through which critical reflection on constraining or dominating social relations and possibilities for freedom can take place

Furthermore, the normative dimensions of Habermas' theoretical framework, in other words the ways in which it is also intended to be a critical theory, has important implications for the issue of power. Habermas (1992: 326) notes that "(...) even under favourable conditions, no complex society could ever correspond to the model of purely communicative social relations," and further stresses (ibid: 325) that a key strength of the idealistic nature of his theory is that it has an "(...) easy time displaying the facticity of a world that is not set up this way". It thus involves, as Dahlgren (2005: 123) notes, an ideal exclusion of coercion and domination where "(...) the domination-free public sphere is an idealisation for the purpose of critique." Hence, social inequality and hegemonic power structures are not separated or 'eradicated' from the public sphere, but rather public sphere theory offers a framework through which to detect and criticise these dimensions of power, and in which to create institutional designs that, as far as possible, minimise the democratic deficit produced by unequal power relations.

2.4.2 Sensitising public sphere theory to music

Although not addressing the role of expressive culture and entertainment in any elaborate manner, Habermas does offer, in his later revisions, a framework more sensitised to communicative forms and modes other than just verbal and argumentative. In *Facts and Norms* (1992: 369), he argues that:

From the perspective of democratic theory, the public sphere must, in addition, *amplify* the pressure of problems, that is, not only detect and identify problems but also convincingly and influentially *thematise* them, furnish them with possible solutions, and *dramatize* them

in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes. Besides the "signal" function there must be an effective problematisation. (My italics, TUN)

Here, the 'amplification of pressure' implies a role for expressive culture and music. For instance, film, drama and literature frequently thematise various political and social problems, bringing these into both the public eye and that of decision makers, and can hence be seen to heighten interest, awareness and engagement in regards to various topical issues, not least by evoking passion and affect. The role of music in social movements is here a classic example of how music, in the most literal sense, amplifies pressure, by furnishing political programmes and causes with sound.

Furthermore, the 'dramatisation of problems' also assumes a role for expressive culture and music. Dramatisation is surely a communicative mode in the domain of expressive culture; again film, literature, and drama provide a host of examples, but also music. Through the aesthetic-affective language of both music and lyrics, and what Born (2000) calls the 'hyper-connotative' nature of music, music can be a potent source of public dramatisations of identity, as well social and political conditions. This thesis addresses these points at several levels; article two (the production article) asks to what extent, and by what aesthetic means rap artists are inclined to dramatisate experience and socio economic conditions; article three (the textual article) asks to what extent the musical-lyrical language of hip hop facilitates such dramatisations; the fourth article (the reception article), question what sorts of effects such dramatisations may have when entering public discursive processes.

Lastly, the influential thematisation of problems implies a further role for expressive culture and also music. Through stylistic and affective appeal music can provide emotionally charged thematisations of various problems; this is a point that is addressed in the fourth article (the reception article), where the ability of hip hop music to publicly address particular issues and problems is empirically explored and discussed.

2.4.3 Situating music in the anatomy of democracy

In the article 'Political Communication in Media Society' Habermas (2006) presents a model of the public sphere that is more explicitly open to a role for expressive culture and music. It is a model that softens the conception of public discourse and offers an anatomy of deliberative democracy in which the role of music can be situated. Acknowledging that public discourse may take on different forms, Habermas argues that:

The public sphere is rooted in networks of wild flows of messages – news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, shows and movies with an informative, polemical, educational or entertaining content.

He further makes the point that mediated political communication "(...) need not fit the pattern of fully fledged deliberation."

Habermas outlines an anatomy of deliberative democracy, organised along the axis of the centre and periphery of what he here terms 'the political system'. At the centre are the decision-making institutions, including government, parliament and administrative bodies, where deliberative forums are institutionalised and procedurally governed. At the periphery is the public sphere, which is constituted by both informal and mediated networks and arenas. Between the centre and the periphery is a continual 'flow of communication', which is ideally 'laundered' and 'filtered' throughout the different arenas of the political system as a whole. As a result, the input from the public sphere on the periphery is channelled through and becomes discursively processed in the arenas closer to the centre of the system. Deliberation is thus expected to function as a "(...) cleansing mechanism that filters out the "muddy" elements from a discursively structured legitimation process". Legitimation therefore rests upon both the deliberative processes and procedures that occur across the system, and the formation of public opinion in the public sphere, and, the exercise of popular sovereignty that this involves.

This model thus emphasises the mutual responsiveness and circuitry between the centre and the periphery, where communication...

(...) circulates from the bottom up and the top down throughout a multilevel-system (from everyday talk in civil society, through public discourse and mediated communication in weak publics, to the institutionalised discourses at the centre of the political system) (...) (Ibid: 415)

The 'unruly' public sphere, as Habermas understands it, is connected to civil society and the private and intimate sphere. Thus this model connects the interests, needs and opinions of the individual, as discursively negotiated in the public sphere, with administrative political decision-making.

As music is a part of public life, this is a model that potentially offers a better understanding of the democratic role and politics of music, and will be central to the discussions and arguments offered in this thesis. In the second article (the production article), the model is employed to make probable how the efforts and practices of rap artists may enter the framework of democratic politics. In the fourth article (the reception article), it is used to demonstrate how, through politicised reception, music can affect public discourse and thus provide an input to the system Habermas describes. Moreover, this article will use empirical evidence to suggest how the model might be further elaborated to offer greater sensitivity to the role of music.

2.4.4. The cultural public sphere: the literary public sphere revised and revisited

In recent years, Habermas' conceptualisation of the literary public sphere has undergone multiple revisions and discussions that help to clarify the role of music within the framework of deliberative democracy. First, the concept of the literary public sphere has been updated to the wider notion of a cultural public sphere, which is more adept to account for present day, media-saturated, conditions. On this, Gripsrud *et al.* (2011a:x) write:

The literary public sphere, now more adequately termed the cultural public sphere, is thus the part of the public sphere where one finds the institutions, organisations, practises and texts of arts, sports, religion and variety of leisure activities – and public discussions thereof.

Gripsrud *et al.* further argue that the cultural public sphere has three main functions in facilitating deliberative engagement. First, it provides a space for the formation of social identities. Second, it facilitates familiarisation with the other, “It encourages us to enter the lives of strangers, both real and imagined”. Last, it cultivates our abilities for empathy and argumentation.

Goodin (2003), although not explicitly connecting his ideas to the concept of a cultural public sphere, but resonating with Gripsrud's two latter points, makes a powerful case for the importance of various forms of expressive culture (he primarily refers to film) in facilitating democratic deliberation. As complex mass democracy does not allow for the ‘conversationally present’, the ‘imaginatively present’ becomes all the more important. Thus, the ‘internal-reflective deliberation’ “(...) that takes place within the head of each individual” provides a vital input to collective decision procedures. Consequently, Goodin asserts that film becomes a powerful vehicle for the ‘emphatic imagining’ of non-present others, as well as for internal reflection upon the conditions and problems of the other, stating that:

Suppose our imagination has been fired by some film or fiction; we have been led by those artifices to imagine vividly what it would be like to be *them*, or to be in *that* situation; we ask ourselves, 'What we would say, *then*?'(...) (original emphasis) (Ibid: 180)

Thus, the cultural public sphere has a key, and perhaps overlooked, function in meeting the challenges addressed by the ‘difference critics’ of Habermas, such as Benhabib (1996) and Young (1996), in both cultivating the same norms of discursive interaction and in fostering mutual understanding across socioeconomic and cultural dividing lines.

The function of the cultural public sphere was in Habermas' original conceptualisation primarily pre-deliberative, in the sense that it prepares citizens – or function as a training ground - for engagement in the political public sphere. Thus, as Larsen

(2010) notes, the tradition of Habermasian public sphere research has tended to value the activity of the political at the expense of the cultural public sphere.

However, McGuigan (2005) assumes a more directly political role for expressive culture, as a means of public articulation of politics. McGuigan argues that the discursive norms of deliberative democracy are biased towards the cognitive aspects of communication, and therefore fails to account for the vast amount of more emotionally grounded communication that is evidently circulating in the public sphere, not least in the various forms of popular culture. For McGuigan (ibid: 427), the concept of a cultural public sphere also refers to the “(...) articulation of politics, public or personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication.” He therefore assumes both that the cultural public sphere is a space where political matters are contested and reflected upon, and that affective-expressive culture is an important means for the articulation, reflection and contestation of politics.

The different functions of the cultural public sphere outlined above serve to clarify and narrow the scope of this thesis. The performance, mediation and reception of music in general, and more specifically hip hop music, primarily takes place in the cultural public sphere – and is thus susceptible to all of the functions outlined above. The integration of hip hop music and musicians into public life, for instance, has undoubtedly been significant in processes of personal and social identity formation, particularly socio-cultural, ethnic, regional-urban and generational identities. As will be argued in the articles of this thesis, by publicly exhibiting experiences that are socio-culturally and individually specific, hip hop music provides a potentially powerful vehicle for the ‘emphatic imagining’ of the other. And furthermore, by attending to and potentially fostering greater engagement with matters of social and political importance, hip hop may very well cultivate people's ability for argumentation.

All of the above are highly interesting aspects of the role of music in the public sphere, however, a systematic exploration of any one of these functions could

constitute a Ph.D. thesis in its own right. Although these are all functions that this thesis will take into account, the primary scope is to explore the more explicitly political significance of hip hop music. Consequently, this thesis primarily concerns itself with the ways in which hip hop may function as an expressive vehicle for the articulation of political matters in a strict sense, i.e. matters of political interest in present day Norway. As such, this thesis is also concerned with the ways in which hip hop music may enter or generate public and political discourse, and so have significance in both the cultural and the political public sphere. The selection of cases represented in the four articles reflects this scope. The first article explores how members of political communities associate with explicitly political music. The second article investigates how the motivations and aesthetic practises of rappers may be of relevance to public political discourse. The third article investigates the expressive characteristics of a hip hop song with explicitly political lyrical content. And, the fourth article investigates how a politically explicit song entered public political discourse.

2.5 Hip hop music as case: relevance and key scholarly contributions

It should be noted that this section does not intend to cover the vast body of literature available on hip hop music. Instead, relevant scholarly contributions to research on hip hop music will be presented and discussed in the individual articles of this thesis. The aim of this section is to argue that, in comparison to other genres, hip hop music makes a particularly interesting case study for examining the role of music in the

public sphere, and also to pinpoint the particular aspects of hip hop music that the articles in this thesis addresses. As previously outlined, this thesis is concerned with the political significance of music, thus, it will primarily draw upon literature that directly or indirectly addresses the political aspects of hip hop music.

Krogh and Stougaard Pedersen (2008: 10) comment that Scandinavian hip hop in general plays out in the field of tension between 'aesthetic expression' and 'culture as a way of life', between 'globalisation' and 'localisation', and between 'mainstream' and 'subculture'. The term 'hip hop' is frequently understood to denote a broader cultural phenomenon, encompassing stylistic and social attributes and sensibilities including music, graffiti art, fashion and sport, as well as indicating sub-cultural formations. However, this thesis, is primarily concerned with hip hop as musical practice and expression. Characteristics associated with the broader cultural phenomenon of hip hop, such as socio-political history, sub-cultural style, sensibility and politics, are relevant to this thesis, but, in the main, only when these inform or integrate with hip hop music as an expressive practice. For the sake of further clarification, throughout this thesis the term 'hip hop music' will be used interchangeably with 'rap music'. The singular term 'rap' will be used to denote the verbal contribution of the rap artist, in other words, the 'MC'ing'.

Norwegian hip hop can fruitfully be seen in light of processes of 'glocalisation'. Although the hip hop acts this thesis focus on are all heavily inspired by American hip hop, they have also, to a considerable degree, adapted it to Norwegian conditions, and also to their own city and even neighbourhoods. Although to some degree these adaptations are evident at a musical level, they are particularly obvious at the vocal or lyrical level, where local Norwegian dialects create specific kinds of 'flow', and the subject matter is informed by the local and Norwegian conditions. Thus, the local adaption of hip hop in Norway should be viewed as a part of the more general internationalisation and hybridisation of hip hop described by Mitchell (2001) and Solomon (2009; 2011). Dyndahl (2008) also describes the Norwegian adaption of hip hop music, specifically in terms of a process of 'glocalisation' whereby, in contrast to

the 1980s, Norwegian hip hop in the eighties involved copying the style from the U.S., the late nineties was characterised by experimentation with rapping in Norwegian, whereas the previous decade saw the breakthrough of rap in dialect – which remains the norm today.

In parallel to this progression, I would argue that there has been similar development in terms of the discourse of authenticity on the Norwegian hip hop scene. Early on, hip hop authenticity was tightly connected to what Dyndahl (Ibid) called a ‘ghetto-centric’ discourse of authenticity, rooted in the American tradition. Today, though, hip hop authenticity appears to be more flexible and less reliant on the American rap scene. An indicative example of this shift is the way in which present day nationally prominent rap artists originating from Bergen (including *A-laget*, *Lars Vaular* and *Store P*) evade hip hop orthodoxy by incorporating elements of techno and trance into their music, and asserting that the Bergen rap artists are part of a ‘music scene’ rather than an explicitly hip hop scene per se.⁴ Several studies of Norwegian hip hop have shown how the genre has been appropriated in various urban-local or regional contexts, including immigrant milieus in (sub)urban Oslo (Knudsen, 2008; Vestel, 2004; 2012; Sandberg, 2008) and in various cities in the northern region of Norway (Danielsen, 2008; Fagerheim, 2010)

Crucially, what seems to be hip hop’s inherent adaptability to national, regional and local conditions, as both musical form and subculture, is also a quality that renders it relevant in a public sphere perspective. As this thesis explores, in terms of both aesthetic practices and text, hip hop music may, under certain conditions, be an expressive vehicle for critically addressing nationally specific socio-political issues rooted in the experiences of Norwegian rap artists.

Moreover, this thesis is primarily concerned with Norwegian hip hop music and artists that by means of commercial success or/and critical acclaim have entered the

⁴ Personal interview with Lars Vaular og Vågar Unstad

mainstream of Norwegian popular music. Thus, the thesis will not discuss hip hop music from the perspective of a sub-cultural practice or an underground phenomenon. Although hip hop music today is still very much a part of local scenes and social groups with sub-cultural characteristics, the focal point of this thesis are the artists that engage a larger and, mainly, national public. The second article of the thesis will, however, explore the ways in which the motivations and aesthetic practices typical of the hip hop scene, informed by sub-cultural sensibilities, may equip hip hop music to function as public political discourse.

In the following sections, three related yet distinct aspects of hip hop music will be discussed, all of which make the genre a promising case through which to study the political significance of music in the Norwegian context. These aspects are: popularity/public outreach, aesthetic characteristics and political commitment.

2.5.1 Public outreach

Whereas the hip hop of the 1980s onwards was largely a sub-cultural phenomenon, mainly confined to urban scenes (see for instance Holen, 2004), it is today solidly established as part of the mainstream Norwegian popular musical landscape. However, this is not to say that hip hop did not occasionally surface in the popular music charts in the early days and, since the 1990s the genre has also had national public representation through late night national radio show ‘The National Rap Show’, on NRK radio’s Channel 3 (the public broadcaster).

Today hip hop is one of the most popular musical genres in Norway, as measured by sales figures (VG Lista), radio airtime (Gramo-statistikken, 2010/2011/2012) and festival and concert attendance. In 2012 the music trade magazine *Ballade* (2012) reported "a total dominance of hip hop", showing that since 2007 hip hop and R ‘n’ B had been dominating radio playlists, as well as streaming services such as WiMP. In parallel to this growing commercial success, Norwegian hip hop music have increasingly been included in the mainstream Norwegian musical culture, as well as

receiving critical acclaim. For instance, among the most prominent artists in the Norwegian music scene, Madcon has won six Norwegian ‘Grammies’ (Spellemansprisen) over the past ten years; Karpe Diem has won a number of awards indicative of popular cultural legitimacy, including the Norwegian ‘Grammy’ award for best overall artist, Alarmprisen, Bendikprisen and P3 Gull (http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpe_Diem; karpediem.no). Another artist, Lars Vaular, won the award for best lyricist (Spellemann.no) as well as other awards, including Edvardprisen (TONO) and Norsk Målungdoms Dialektpris, for his use of dialect. The music of Lars Vaular and the public reception of the music of Karpe Diem will make up the empirical focal points of, respectively, articles three and four of this thesis.

As supporting evidence of the increasing cultural legitimacy of hip hop music, culture-bearing newspapers such as Klassekampen and Morgenbladet now regularly feature reviews and commentaries of both Norwegian and Anglo-American hip hop music. Accordingly, hip hop performances, songs and the activities of artists are, as this thesis will evidence, objects of wide public interest, and frequent fixtures of the Norwegian mainstream media. The fact that Norwegian hip hop is, by now, a well-integrated fixture of the Norwegian public sphere, both in terms of performance, mediation and reception, is thus one of the principal reasons that this genre has been chosen for this thesis.

2.5.2 *The genre aesthetic*

The centrality of rapping to the hip hop genre makes it perhaps the most linguistically centred genre in popular music, allowing for direct commentary and critique. The hip hop aesthetic thus involves a characteristic expressive interplay between verbal and musical-rhythmical elements that is potentially highly relevant to public discourse. Frith (1998a: 165-166) reflects that, generally, in popular music “(..) a song doesn’t exist to convey the meaning of the words; rather, the words exist to convey the

meaning of the song.” Thus, for Frith, lyrics primarily have the function of conveying emotions and establishing a communicative situation between artist and audience, for example in protest songs, where lyrics “(...) don’t function to convey ideas or arguments but slogans.” Although rapping is certainly situated within an aesthetic whole, where beats and rhymes work together, hip hop is, as Anne Danielsen (2009) notes “message oriented”. The semantic and rhetorical dimensions of the lyrics are, compared to many other musical genres, of high importance in the genre’s aesthetic. Rose (1994:2) argues that “Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling *accompanied* by highly rhythmic, electronically based music.” (italics added, TUN), thus emphasizing the importance of the lyrical meaning within the musical aesthetic.

In privileging the verbal and the message-oriented, hip hop music more readily addresses it self to the Habermasian framework of deliberative democracy than less verbally centred musical genres, such as for instance jazz or electronica. Arguably, these two latter genres would not allow for the same analysis as conducted in this thesis. Such a task would require a somewhat differently attuned analytical and conceptual framework.

Hip hop music does, however, involve the integration of words into an aesthetic whole that is also constituted by musical groove and melody, and thus involve the musical articulation emotions or identity positions (Se for instance Krims, 2000; Alim, 2003; 2004). Furthermore, the delivery of words, the rapping, has an aesthetic dimension in its own right, in addition to rhetorical and semantic ones. As Walser (1995) shows in his article ‘Rhythm, Rhyme and Rhetoric’ hip hop music can, in some instances, function as an original and highly potent form of aesthetically constituted political discourse. The third article (the textual article) of this thesis will address this issue by investigating how the musical and lyrical properties of a particular Norwegian hip hop song have enabled it to function as a particular form of public political discourse.

2.5.3 Political commitment

As a genre, hip hop has, although certainly not unequivocally, or without contradictions (hip hop music has, throughout its evolution certainly involved its fair share of sexism and homophobia, as well as glorification of violence and conspicuous consumption), generally entailed a commitment to addressing social and political issues. Rose (1994: 102) here argues that, from its origin, hip hop music has formed part of a counter hegemonic struggle:

Rappers are constantly taking dominant discursive fragments and throwing them into relief, destabilizing hegemonic discourses and attempting to legitimate counterhegemonic interpretations. Rap's contestations are part of a polyvocal black cultural discourse engaged in "discursive wars of position" against dominant discourses.

Similarly, Perry (2004: 39) also comments that hip hop is an art form that is attendant, but not reducible to, substantial socio-political issues, and one that is characterised by the "(...) simultaneous movement of social critique and a celebration of the status quo.". Perhaps more so than most other musical genres, hip hop is arguably characterised by a genre discourse that both allows for and invites political and social criticism. Empirical studies of hip hop in Norway do suggest that hip hop music has been appropriated as a musical-political expression. For example, Vestel (2012) found that hip hop music functioned as an important expressive vehicle for socio-political commentary and critique among young amateur rap artists with a minority background in Oslo, as well as a channel for public representation of marginalised identities. Similarly, Knudsen (2008) also found that, for young hip hop musicians, the genre functioned as a means of giving expression to oppositional values and identity positions.

The two first articles of this thesis consider the status of hip hop music as a political expression in present day Norway, from both an audience and a creative actor perspective. The first article, the audience article, investigates the extent to which hip hop music in the context of present day Norway is seen to be attendant to social and political questions, and how the genre relates to specific ideological-political

orientations. The second article, the creative actor article, investigates the degree to which the general Norwegian hip hop scene is politically committed, and the sort of politics that is being championed.

2.5.4 Contextualising hip hop as political expression in Norway

However, politically committed hip hop music in Norway does not find itself in a historical vacuum. Although hip hop music is characterized by a different aesthetic and predominantly draws its subcultural sensibilities from elsewhere, there is a tradition of politically committed music in Norway to which hip hop must be seen as part response and part continuation.

Despite a lack of scholarly attention, over the past centuries music has played an important part in both nationalist (Bue, 1974), religious (Herresthal, 2005) and social (Gripsrud, 1981) movements and struggles in Norway. For instance, Gripsrud (Ibid: 216), comments that singing played an important role in meetings and rallies in the interwar Labour movement (*Arbeiderbevegelsen*) as a means both of political mobilisation of workers and the consolidation of collective identity. Significantly, the ideologists of the Labour movement considered music and singing to be an important strategic tool in, through emotional appeal, fostering enchantment and solidifying allegiance with the Labour movement and its cause. Moreover, collective singing was an important part of the organizational life of the multitude of political and social movements that were prominent in the decades after the war, including the various youth movements, religious movements and agricultural movements.

Although subject to a fair deal of retrospective romanticism it is, however, during the 60s and 70s that the intersections between popular music in recent history could be seen most manifestly at play. This occurred alongside the emergence and subsequent radicalisation of global popular music, and the vital role this came to play in what is often referred to as the broader counter-culture (See for instance Garofalo, 1992b: Peddie, 2005). Regarding these developments, in their book ‘1968 in Europe: A

History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977' Klimke and Scharloth (2008: 13) describe music as tightly interwoven with the widespread political activism that emerged in Europe from the mid-sixties onwards:

The rise of alternative lifestyles and countercultures as additional forms of dissent was another truly transnational aspect of the protest movements in the late 1960s and 1970s. A global popular culture, inspired by new aesthetics emerging in art, music, film, architecture, graphic design, and fashion, joined with hippie ideologies and lifestyles and melted into a set of symbolic forms, which became an infinite resource of mobilization in both the East and the West.

At the start of the 1970s a range of western bands and popular music scenes were politicised through their connections with not only social and protest movements, but also with political organisations with closer affiliations to party-politics. As such the 70s in Scandinavia was the decade when the broader and more spontaneous youth-based counterculture that emerged in the 60s was organized and channeled into social and political movements – where music often formed an integral part of the political engagement, and also, as in the case of the Swedish “Proggrørslan” (Østberg, 2002; Fornäs, 1979) and its Norwegian equivalent “Musikkbevegelsen” (Gravem, 2004), into musically based movements with political and social engagement.

In the Scandinavian and Norwegian context this was first and foremost evident at the political left. Music was here important both as communal song, as performed at political arrangements, and, more generally as an integrated aspect of lifestyle (Førland and Korsvik, 2006; Nielsen, 1984). The seventies saw a general integration of popular music and political causes in Scandinavia. Commenting on the Swedish musical movement ‘Proggrørslan’ (‘The progressive movement’) Swedish historian Kjell Östberg (2008:347) writes that:

It was considerably politicized, reflecting in its lyrics the women's movement, the wildcat strikes, the anti-imperialistic barricades, the environmental movement and the ‘green’ wave. The musical groups themselves were generally members of the movements or appeared as artists at their assemblies and demonstrations.

In Norway, music was integrated as part of radical Marxist organisations such as AKP-ML (Rognlien & Brandal, 2009), and also less radical social democratic organisations such as the Labour party and movement. Their use of music, predominantly in the form of folk songs, is evident in the numerous volumes of printed songbooks issued by various political organisations at the political left, and also the quantity of political songs written and distributed as part of mobilisation around key political events, such as the referendum on Norwegian membership of the ECC (EU) in 1972.⁵

In the major historical work on the history of music in Norway (Aksnes *et al.*, 2001: 154) the late 1960s and the 1970s are described as a period of time when music was characterised by marked links to political and social agendas:

The period between from 1967 until the mid 1970's can be seen as a youth rebellion, albeit with many different dimensions. A common feature was the resistance to established norms and conventions. But the rebellion manifested itself both as a political protest, a university rebellion, a lifestyle rebellion, a cultural rebellion and a feminist protest. Music was used in all these contexts, from supporting the general 'zeitgeist' to explicitly emphasising political messages. (My translation, TUN)

Thus, the seventies saw the emergence of a number of artists in Norway whose repertoires to various degrees had political dimensions and where the artists also to various degrees had ties to social movements and political parties.

The relationship between musicians and political activity is most directly exemplified by AKP (ml)'s establishment of their own record label, MAI, which predominantly, and with some commercial success, released music that supported or promoted their Marxist agenda (Gravem, 2004). Throughout the seventies a vast number of artists, mostly within the folk genre, but also in other genres such as (progressive) rock and jazz, were affiliated with the radical left in Norway, either as part of MAI's catalogue

⁵ Grepstad (1983) registered 362 unique compositions, the grand majority against membership in the EU, but notes that to collect the full number of different songs that circulated before the referendum "would amount to a life work".

or through an expressed sympathy with the Marxist-cause (Rognlien & Brandal, 2009). Several of these artists, such as Vømmøl, Halvdan Sivertsen and Lars Klevstrand, enjoyed mass-appeal during the seventies and so establishing themselves as popular artists during this period.

Although the majority of artists were not closely affiliated with politics, the seventies nonetheless represented a definitive historical high point in Norway in terms of visible manifestations of the intersections between music and politics. In an article investigating the relationship between political orientation and musical preference in the U.S. in 1984, Peterson and Christenson (1987: 15) comment that:

The force that is absent today, was absent in 1950, but present in 1968, is a political climate of such urgency that it compels the superimposition of political ideology onto forms of youth culture.

Similarly, as the general zeitgeist of political urgency also lost its force towards the end of the seventies in Norway, music underwent a general disengagement from politics. With the notable exception of the emergence of punk music in the late seventies (although in the Norwegian context this movement involved far less of a pronounced affiliation with political causes, and was a comparatively marginal cultural phenomenon), throughout the eighties and nineties music in general assumed a much less direct association with politics.

Although the political popular music of the 60s and 70s certainly had roots in historical traditions, and the decades after also had its share of politically oriented artists, the configurations between music and politics of this period are significant to the scope of this thesis for several reasons. Most importantly, this period was formative in terms of the initial Norwegian conception of indigenous politically expressive popular music. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argue that this period involved the establishment of the musical-political tradition that was mobilised in later years. This and the particular lifestyle configurations between aesthetics and politics of the seventies are issues that are being addressed in the audience study. Further, as the production study makes evident, the shape of politically and socially

committed hip hop in Norway today must partly be understood in light of the politically expressive popular music as it evolved in Norway in the sixties and seventies.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overall research design

As stated in the introduction, the general interest of this thesis is both empirical and theoretical. It involves the joint exercise of both an empirical exploration of the political significance of music through the lens of public sphere theory⁶, and also a theoretical probing of the public sphere theory perspective on the politics of music. In terms of research design this is a theoretically driven thesis in that the overarching case – Norwegian hip hop music – and the multiple cases hereunder were selected on the basis of its suitability to illuminate key theoretical concerns and problematics.

The combined empirical efforts of this thesis can thus be described as a ‘collective case study’ that encompasses several cases “... in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition.” (Stake, 2000: 437). Further, it is a collection of instrumental case studies, defined by Christensen *et al.* (2011: 375) as case studies “... conducted to provide insight into an issue or to develop, refine, or alter some theoretical explanation.” Moreover the cases were selected on the basis that they promised sufficient depth and richness of information, and so readily allow for an analysis framed from the public sphere perspective, and hence support the theoretical ambitions of the thesis.

The selection of hip hop music as the overarching case can, according to Flyvbjerg’s (2006: 229) typology of case studies, be described as an ‘extreme case’, not in the literal sense of the word, but in the sense that hip hop music and its role in public life

⁶ See Hånska-Asy (2014) for a clarifying discussion of public sphere theory and its epistemological implications for explorative empirical research

have a set of highly pronounced characteristics that, in the context of this thesis, are “... well suited for getting a point across (...)”. Thus, Norwegian hip hop music has been selected due to its potential as a case through which to explore public sphere theory. However, an objective of this thesis is also to provide empirical knowledge about Norwegian hip hop music and to expand our understanding of both genre characteristics as well as the role of Norwegian hip hop in Norwegian society and public life.

An instrumental and strategic approach to case-selection has important implications in terms of the epistemological status of the findings of this thesis. As stated in the introduction, the primary goal of this thesis is not to produce findings that can be generalised. However, although the case studies involves an in depth and detailed investigation of confined and ‘bounded systems’ (Christensen *et al.*, 2011: 374), this is not to say that the findings and conclusions of this thesis will not have relevance beyond the actual cases studied. As Flyvbjerg (2006: 228) notes, case study approaches have often been wrongly criticised on the grounds that they cannot produce generalisable findings and therefore are an insufficient grounding on which to build a theory. He further argues that social science research, which concerns fluid entities such as people, communication, processes and culture, is often biased towards natural scientific and formal ideals of generalisation. Consequently, Flyvbjerg argues that formal generalisation in social science is “(...) overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas the ‘the force of example’ is underestimated.”.

By focusing on Norwegian hip hop music and its integration into public sphere processes, the ambition of this thesis is thus to provide an example of how the politics of music can be studied through the lens of public sphere theory, and moreover what kinds of results this theoretical approach might yield. In addition, the fact that public sphere theory has, thus far, only scantily been used for this purpose, and, to my knowledge, never systematically in regards to the expressive qualities of music, necessitates a case study approach where these aspects of music can be investigated in depth.

A potentially significant contribution of this thesis may thus be that it provides an example both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, by exemplifying how the theoretical framework of public sphere theory can be operationalised in order to study the political significance of other musical genres and practices. Empirically, by illuminating characteristics of production, text and reception that may be applicable to other musical genres or practices, and so will serve as a point of comparison through which the specificities of other musical genres can be brought to the fore.

Yin (2009: 38-40) further argues that case studies can be illustrative of conditions and developments within their contextual settings, and so can also facilitate analytical generalisations and theoretical developments. The contextual setting of this thesis, the Norwegian public sphere, is maintained throughout the thesis; implicitly in the audience study, and explicitly in the production and textual studies, where appendixes containing examples of public reception are included. The last article, the reception study, has its full focus on how hip hop music plays out in the context of the Norwegian public sphere.

3.2 A process oriented case design

Whereas collective case designs are often utilised for the sake of comparison, or for illuminating different dimensions of the same phenomenon, the case design of this thesis covers the various stages of an implied communication process. The audience study is primarily orientational in purpose, and is important in empirically establishing hip hop music as a fertile research case and in providing empirical background data for the subsequent studies in this thesis. The three remaining articles, however, are organised around the key moments of any basic process of (public) communication: production, text and reception. This organisation of the thesis is productive, as it allows for an investigation of the motivations and aesthetic practices at the level of production, how these motivations and practices are manifest at the level of musical

text, and how these texts are publicly received, and thus may have effects on public discourse.

This research design is informed by public sphere theory in that it facilitates the illumination of how musical expressivity, originating from the private or sub-cultural spheres on the periphery of the democratic framework, may provide a substantial input to the cultural and political public spheres closer to the centre. A next step, however, which is not undertaken in this thesis, would be to study how the discourse generated by music actually affected political decision-making processes, i.e. the degree to which musically engendered discourse is politically *instrumental*. Such a step would highlight the full trajectory from private-subcultural aesthetic expression to political-administrative action. However, apart from when music itself becomes the object of regulation and law-making, such an empirical effort would involve some considerable methodological challenges, not least in regards to how to actually discern effects.

3.3 Choice of methods

Although one of the four articles in this thesis uses a quantitative survey, this thesis primarily falls within the tradition of qualitative research. On the nature of qualitative research, Denzin (2003: 5) notes:

The many methodological practices of qualitative research may be viewed as soft science, ethnography, bricolage, quilt making, or montage. The researcher, in turn, may be seen as a *bricoleur*, as a maker of quilts, or, as in filmmaking, a person who assembles images into montages. (...)The qualitative researcher as bricoleur or maker of quilts, uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand.

The research design of this thesis, comprising a variety of cases and methods, can similarly be understood in light of the bricolage metaphor, as the constituent parts of the thesis allow the researcher to present an intelligible montage that may help

illuminate the role of music in the public sphere. However, such an approach must not be confused with naïve eclecticism. In clarifying the strengths of the qualitative approach, and emphasising the centrality of mixing methods and cases, Denzin further (Ibid: 8) argues:

Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry.

Moreover, this thesis is ultimately a hermeneutic exercise as it relies on my interpretation of the various data. On this point Jensen (2012: 29) notes:

Hermeneutics suggests that the very process of reading and analyzing texts is both creative and incremental – readers gradually work out their categories of understanding in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation.

Although Jensen is here primarily referring to texts in the more literal sense, a hermeneutical approach is necessary in most studies of human communication. Further, this is a fundamentally a hermeneutical exercise as it has involved the continuous (re) interpretation of the various types of data in light of the wider context of the project at large, which accordingly also has dynamically been adjusted and changed in keeping with the insights gained at the level of specific texts and data analysis.

This thesis thus makes use of a variety of methods, including quantitative survey (the audience study), expert interview (the production study), musical-textual analysis (the textual study) and qualitative reception analysis (the reception study). This involved a pragmatic approach to methodology, where choice of method was subsequent to the selection of research questions and case studies. As Nelson *et al.* (1992: 2) argue, the “... choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context”. Thus, rather than approaching the research with a pre-established methodology, the research questions and cases informed the choice of

methods. According to the same logic, the case design necessitated the *triangulation* of methods. This is an approach that allows for comparing multiple sources of data collected by multiple methods to look for convergence of meaning (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 240-241).

An important methodological objective, that I established already in the initial phases of this thesis, was to combine the, relatively speaking, abstract and conceptual language of public sphere theory with a methodology that generates in depth empirical knowledge. More specifically, it was an important objective to combine public sphere theory, as a *political theory*, with an in depth approach to music as a particular form of *aesthetic practice* and *expressivity*. Although there are many exceptions, studies of the politics of music have tended to avoid systematic analysis of the expressive features of the music itself, and have rather focused on its organisational, economic and social aspects, and how these relate to various theoretical frameworks. Therefore, this study explores aesthetic practices among hip hop artists through interviews, and the expressive features of hip hop music itself through musical-textual analysis. Furthermore, the reception analysis is partly framed in a way that highlights how the expressive features of hip hop music actually generates or feeds into public political discourse.

This thesis makes use of a *mixed methods* design implying the supplementing of quantitative and qualitative methods (Bergman, 2008:1). The first, quantitative, audience study supplements and supports the later qualitative efforts by empirically establishing hip hop to be a politically potent genre, and also by providing empirical background data on how political orientation aligns with a taste for hip hop music. As Christensen *et al.* (2011: 381) note, mixed methods are also valuable in providing both insider and outsider perspectives on a given phenomenon. Accordingly, the quantitative audience study provides an outsider perspective on the politics of hip hop music, the degree to which audiences understand hip hop to be of political significance, whereas the qualitative production study offers an insider perspective on the same thing, discussing how the artists themselves regard the politics of hip hop.

Significantly, this highlights another beneficial consequence of the mixed methods approach: that it provides multiple sources of evidence that, in turn, may strengthen the validity of the findings. In this thesis, the quantitative study of audience's tastes and attitudes, and the qualitative studies of scene-practices, expressive qualities and public reception all, in albeit different capacities, find that hip hop music entails political significance, which strengthen the validity of this finding. In consequence, this employment of mixed methods also strengthens the generalisability of the findings in this thesis.

3.4 Quantitative survey of young politicians – the audience study

The first study, the quantitative audience study⁷, comprises the following research questions:

How does taste for different sorts of music relate to political and ideological orientation; which kinds of music are regarded as political significant; and, what is the current political status of hip hop music among audiences?

These research questions were operationalised by surveying young politicians on their musical preferences and attitudes towards music as political expression. The sample (N=324) consisted of position-holding members of the youth wings of five major political parties in Norway. Position-holding members were selected in order to improve the chance that the sample contained respondents who were committed to their organisations as well as respondents with political aspirations.

As a case study, the audience study had two central dimensions. First, and most important, it made up a source of data that could provide general indications as to the political status of various types of music in present day Norway, and therein of hip

⁷ Important to mention, this study also had qualitative elements as several of the survey questions were open ended and required the respondents to formulate their own responses and.

hop. The choice of young politicians affiliated with different and politically divergent parties was strategically motivated, because a pronounced political divergence between respondents allows for a clearer elucidation of how musical taste aligns with political orientation. Furthermore, the membership of youth wings means that respondents were of an age (generally between 16 and 25 years old) when musical interest, relative to other age groups, is heightened. Therefore, members of youth wings provide a sample population that promises a richness of information and one where the intersections between musical taste and politics can more vividly be observed and studied. This study thus provides evidence indicative of the general status of hip hop music as a political expression in present day Norway, and a point of departure for the subsequent qualitative and more detailed case studies of the thesis. This first study thus allowed me to establish the current status of hip hop music as political expression among audiences, i.e. the degree to which the respondents identify hip hop music as politically significant (both as a political expression and for their political engagement), attain an overview of how hip hop music generally aligns itself with other musical tastes and so empirically establish hip hop music as a fertile overarching research case. Additionally, this study was instrumental in identifying the hip hop artists that were the informants in the subsequent production study.

Second, youth wings of political parties make up a compelling case study in its own right. Youth wings perform a key function in the recruitment and schooling of young people into party and parliamentary politics, and, as such, their members represent emerging political elites and future actors in the political public sphere. Moreover, youth wings represent a political force in their own right in issuing well publicised and often radical reprimands of both their own parties and of parliamentary politics in general.

An important, but secondary dimension that is investigated in this study is the way in which the configurations of musical taste, political orientation and socio-economic background can be explained through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural sociology. A rich body of research (see for instance Peterson & DiMaggio, 1975; Savage 2006;

Gripsrud *et al.*, 2011b) in the tradition of Bourdieu has demonstrated that musical taste is connected to socio-economic factors. On the basis of the quantitative data from this study, the audience study also explains the respondents' musical tastes in relation to the broader concept of aesthetic sensibilities. These sensibilities are conceptualised as part of the respondents' lifestyles, which in turn are rooted in a particular socio-economic background and habitus.

In this perspective, the audience study can also be regarded as a study of the social structures that underlie the (public) reception of music. Although this is not an aspect that is emphasised in this thesis, the study of musical taste in relation to socio-economic background offers insights into the basic dynamics that guides the reception of music in the public sphere, including the social characteristics that inform musical preferences, why certain musical qualities are identified as politically significant by some but not by others, and how the preference for certain kinds of music in turn is connected to both taste and distaste for other kinds of music. Moreover, in surveying musical taste among young and aspiring politicians, this study offers a view of the receptive conditions for music in the future political public sphere in Norway.

A quantitative study was chosen as the methodological approach to operationalising the research question, as it allowed me to identify rough but systematic differences in how young politicians of divergent political-ideological orientations understand music as a political expression. Interviews with young politicians would unquestionably yield highly relevant and in depth data, but would not allow for an identification of more general and systematic differences. A web-based survey was judged to be most suitable as it allows for easy dissemination and collection of data.

During the development of the questionnaire (the period April-May 2011), two informal pre-studies were carried out. First, an interview with a position-holding member of KRFU (Norwegian Young Christian Democrats) tested out an early version of the survey, and then a subsequent observation was carried out at a regional meeting of KRFU. In the early stages of the research process these preliminary studies were valuable in guiding the selection of artists and genres to be covered in the

survey. The questionnaire contained questions that surveyed: the organisation; the position within the organisation; socioeconomic background data, including gender, geographical location, parents' occupation and education; opinion of particular political issues; level of musical interest; and, musical preferences, including genres and specific artists (see Appendix 1).

Respondents were instructed to grade pre-defined selections of genres and artists, and to indicate their preference (both taste and distaste) in response to open ended questions. Variables included general orientations in musical taste, but also genres and artists indicative of music associated with political causes, agendas and organisations (see the method section of the audience article for an outline of how the category 'political music' was operationalised in the survey). In the pre-defined selections, genres and artists considered to be 'political' were coded in advance. Answers to the open questions were coded subsequently. The questionnaire also contained several sets of questions that surveyed attitudes towards music as a political expression, and open questions that asked respondents to identify political music. In terms of data analysis, a simple bivariate analytical approach was employed. This allowed the researcher to identify distinct configurations between political orientations, musical taste, including for politically expressive music, as well as attitudes towards music as political expression.

In implementing the survey, potential respondents and their e-mail addresses were first identified through the central administrative offices of the various political parties' youth wings, and subsequently contacted by e-mail. The sample of participants included position-holding members at both regional and national levels. However, in the case of SU (the Socialist Youth) the email lists provided also contained the addresses of some position holding members at local level, which it was not possible to single out and so, consequently, they also became part of the data material and the final analysis. However, these were few, and did not significantly alter the general tendencies identified within SU. The survey was distributed to a total

of 451 potential participants, of which 324 responded, yielding an overall response rate of 64%.

The survey was distributed electronically, together with a letter of invitation. It was activated on May 3rd 2011 and closed on November 30th 2011, between which times three reminders were sent out. Most participants responded during the initial month following the issuing of the survey. However, 9% answered after the Utøya-massacre of young members of AUF (the Workers' Youth League) on July 22nd. Tragically, it is probable that several of the respondents from AUF were among the victims. However, as only 9% of participants responded after July 22nd, this is insufficient reason to believe that this significantly altered the general tendencies identified among the youth wings. In order to comply with Norwegian data protection law, I applied and obtained permission from NSD (Norwegian Social Science Data Services), before disseminating the survey.

3.5. Semi structured interviews of creative actors – the production study

The key question asked in this case was if hip hop musicians are at all motivated to contribute to public discourse, the nature of this motivation and moreover how hip hop music is used to address and engage the public. The study therefore comprised the following research question:

To what extent are the motivations and aesthetic practices of hip hop musicians relevant to public political discourse?

From a methodological perspective, operationalising this research question involved empirically exploring typical motivations and aesthetic practices on the hip hop scene and discussing these in light of central concepts drawn from public sphere theory. The selection of informants for this interview-based study included five rap artists and two critics (see the Appendix for the production article for a full list, including

biographical details). The main criterion for the selection of the rap artists was that they were prominent on the national hip hop scene, in terms of either (sub-)cultural legitimacy, having played an important role in the evolution of the genre, or being at the forefront of the present scene. It was also important that the rap artists addressed a national audience through their music. Similarly, critics were selected on the basis of longevity and centrality to the scene, in order to provide substantial and historical overview. Longevity and centrality were important for the selection of both rap artists and critics, since one of the objectives of the interviews, in addition to uncovering individual motivations and practices, was also to gain more general information about the motivations and practices at the hip hop scene at large. Hence, informants had the joint status of being practitioners and experts. The interviews facilitated the collection of rich, in depth data that are indicative of dominant tendencies, but also discrepancies, in terms of both political motivations and aesthetic practices. It was crucial to supplement the accounts of rap artists with those of long established and, comparatively speaking, more 'objective' critics.

The selection, however, did not include artists associated with the more exclusively commercially oriented part of the Norwegian hip hop scene. Apart from the artists from Bergen, neither did the selection include representatives of any regional or local scenes. A possible consequence of these two omissions could be that more apolitical and market-oriented approaches to hip hop production, and the political dimensions of rapping in Norway's geographical and political periphery, were not brought to the fore.

Bogner *et al.* (2009) clarifies that expert interviews pertain to a person's knowledge and experiences, which result from their actions, positions or experience as part of particular institutional or social settings, which in the case of this thesis is the Norwegian hip hop scene. As such, this research was interested less in the informants' individual biographies, but as them being experts representing the scene. Consequently, the interviews were framed to gain access to the informants' perspectives and factual accounts, rather than trying to tease out their inner

convictions and feelings. Whereas some interview approaches emphasise the construction of meaning that occurs in the process of discursive interaction (Fontana & Frey, 2003), the approach of these interviews was more straight-forward in the sense that the informants' responses were primarily treated as informative and factual accounts. This is an approach that has proved fruitful in previous interview-based studies of creative practitioners that I have undertaken (Larsen & Nærland, 2011).

However, two of the informants – which perhaps typical of the hip hop scene inhabited an anti-establishment ethos – expressed resentment to the fact that someone from the 'politically correct yet remote' academic sphere or the cultural press 'once again!' showed an interest hip hop due to its perceived political progressiveness. This may have created a discursive dynamic in the actual interviews where the informants were reluctant talking about the political dimensions of hip hop.

Since this case was the first empirical effort of the thesis that exclusively and explicitly focused on hip hop music from a public sphere perspective, it had an important explorative dimension. Østbye *et al.* (2007: 239) comment that explorative case studies are valuable in the early stages of a research project, as they can provide important initial insights, and a means to identify relevant phenomena and theoretical concepts. Thus, it was in this study, and in the early phases of the overall thesis project, important to openly explore and identify relevant characteristics of the hip hop scene, both in terms of motivations and practices, and moreover consider the relevance of these in relations to concepts from public sphere theory.

Crucially, the form of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2 for the interview guide), and the conversational mode of data collection for the interviews in general, allowed me to test out the research hypotheses and frameworks of understanding. As a consequence, several of the themes and theoretical conceptualisations highlighted in this study reverberate in the two subsequent studies of text and reception. In terms of the explorative dimension of this case study, semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow for an open-ended response, meaning that the informants can offer their take on the different interview themes. Moreover, they allowed for unforeseen

issues or topics to be raised and explored. In contrast, a quantitative approach to establishing the motivations and practices of the hip hop scene, for example in the form of a survey, may have offered more reliable data about the scene at large, but it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to motivate national hip hop artists and critics to participate in such a survey. It would also, to a significant degree, exclude the possibility of attaining the in depth data that semi-structured interviews can procure. Another possible method could have been the observation of hip hop artists in their creative context, which, although may have yielded similarly rich and in depth data on creative practices, would have been extremely time consuming and so would necessitate a strict limitation of the number of informants and cases.

An initial pilot interview was carried out with music critic, hip hop expert and editor of the music magazine ENO, Eirik Kydland. This was useful as it offered an opportunity to adjust the questions and language used. Subsequent interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide, and focused on the following issues: the degree to which the hip hop scene is committed to remaining politically and socially relevant; communicative strategies and practices typical of the scene; the hip hop scene as a counter public sphere; mediation between the hip hop scene and the wider public sphere; and, informants' experiences and understanding of themselves as actors in the public sphere.

Rappers were recruited through their management, critics by direct contact. The interviews were undertaken in either Oslo or Bergen, in the period between 13.08.2012 – 14.09.2012. All interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings, lasted between forty-five and ninety minutes, and were subsequently transcribed.

3.6 Musical and lyrical analysis of hip hop music – the textual study

The first objective of this case study was to highlight the characteristics of hip hop as a particular type of political discourse; a second, theoretical aim was to explore and discuss the extent to which hip hop expressivity entails the communicative qualities emphasised in revisions of public sphere theory; and the last, to consider hip hop expressivity as a form of rational communication. Thus this study attended to the fundamental problematic of how to understand aesthetic communication within the largely verbally and rationally oriented framework of Habermasian public sphere theory. This study thus addressed the following research questions:

What are the characteristics of hip hop music as political discourse; to what extent does hip hop music entail expressive characteristics of relevance to public political discourse; and, to what extent does hip hop expressivity adhere to the standards of communicative rationality.

Lars Vaular's hit "Kem Skjød Siv Jensen" (Who shot Siv Jensen) was chosen first, because it had already provoked considerable public response and politicised debate, secondly, because it entailed explicitly political lyrics. Thus, the analysis allowed me to elucidate the characteristics that enabled the song to function as public political discourse and to enter public discursive processes. Given its receptive and expressive dimensions, compared to most other Norwegian hip hop songs, this song must be regarded as an exceptional case, both in terms of its lyrical content and the extensive public response it provoked. However, the song is still a typical example of Norwegian hip hop in terms of composition, style and rhetoric, and so is still representative of how the general hip hop aesthetic may function as political discourse.

Commenting on the lack of scholarly attention to musical qualities in research on the politics of music, Frith (1998a: 159) comments that:

(...) arguments about pop's political and social value are still more likely to refer to pop words than pop sounds. There are mundane reasons for this – fans, academics and moralists alike are more used to dealing with verbal than with musical meaning, and find it easier to talk about (and censor).

This analysis was thus framed to elucidate how beats, melody, vocal performance and lyrics together constituted the song as an expressive whole, and enabled it to function as a form of political discourse. Analytically this called for an investigation of both the musical and the lyrical qualities of the song and how these expressive modes support each other. The lyrics were analysed in terms of their rhetorical as well as semantic dimensions, and the musical score was analysed in terms of its compositional, affective and rhetorical qualities. These were then assessed in light of recent important contributions to public sphere theory. The analysis of the musical score was also informed by a basic semiotic framework, organised around what Middleton (1990: 88-99) calls the levels of 'primary signification', where the basic 'denotative' sign units are identified (represented in transcription of the groove), and of 'secondary signification,' the connotative signification that arises from primary signification.

It is important to note that, according to Middleton (1990: 227), in musical forms constituted by both music and lyrics, the signifying power of these two modes can be understood in relation to where the musical form in question aligns itself on a continuum between the following two poles: the 'verbalisation of musical expression' and the 'musicalisation of lyrics'. Hip hop, as a musical form, characteristically involves the verbalisation of musical expression (see for instance Rose, 1994: 2; Danielsen, 2009: 204; Smitherman, 1997; Alim, 2003; 2004; Van Leuven, 1999: 2). The analytical position of this study is thus that the rhymed delivery of words occupies a privileged position in the song as an expressive whole. This is not, however, to say that rapping does not produce or reinforce rhythmical excitement, which in hip hop it certainly does. Accordingly, Krims' (2000) conceptual framework was used to highlight how the specific 'flow' of the song has both significant

rhythmic and rhetorical functions, which is also of relevance to hip hop as political discourse.

In response to what came to be seen as the inaptitude of formal analysis to deal with the essentially social nature of popular music (see for instance Sheperd, 1991), Frith (1996a: 263) argues that:

Purely musical descriptions – technical accounts of what’s being heard – fail to articulate the ‘character’ and qualities of the music, and do little to explain why music may engage us as appreciative listeners.

Frith further argues the need for figurative and adjectival description as a means both to make sense of the piece of music in question and to present an interpretation to others. Hence, as musical experience is subjective and context dependent, Frith (Ibid: 264) points out that descriptions of music must be “*apt* rather than true” (italics added, TUN). Accordingly, the ambition of this analysis was not to present objectively valid interpretations, but apt descriptions of the song and its latent meanings. However, a transcription of the groove, adopted and further elaborated from that provided by Machin (2010: 127-132), and excerpts of the lyrics were here presented so as to provide evidence for my interpretation. A similar approach is also evident in Walser’s (1995) seminal ‘Rhythm, Rhyme, and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy’, where a combined musical and lyrical interpretation is presented, and where continual attention is given to how these expressive modes constitute the affective, rhetorical and semantic output of the song.

Based on this analysis a set of potentially politically relevant utterances, or communicative acts, embedded in the song were identified. These were subsequently considered within the parameters of communicative rationality. In order to situate the song within a public context, this analysis was supported by contextual information and data. In order to situate the song in the public context it was part of examples from the media reception of the song were included in an appendix. Interview data from an interview with Lars Vaular allowed me to supply the analysis of the song with the artist’s own creative intentions and considerations.

3.7 Qualitative reception analysis – the reception study

The primary objective of this case study was to empirically account for how music, as an aesthetical form of expression, may provoke or form part of public political discourse. It can as such be described as a study of the effects music may have on public discourse. A second objective was to highlight the various conditions and dynamics that facilitate a politicised public reception of musical expressivity, in other words, how and why music is occasionally identified as politically significant and publicly responded to as such. A third, more theoretical objective, was to consider the democratic value of musically engendered public discourse in the light of Habermas (2006) model of the political system. The research questions were thus the following:

How might hip hop music have an effect on public political discourse; what factors might facilitate a politicised reception of music; and, what is the democratic value of musically engendered public discourse?

The empirical focal point of this study was the public role of rap act Karpe Diem in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre on July 22nd 2011, and the subsequent public reception of their chart hit ‘Toyota'n til Magdi’; (Magdi's Toyota). Karpe Diem was, at that time, the most commercially successful Norwegian hip hop act. They had a past as politically agitative rap artists and played a prominent role in the national mourning ceremonies that took place after July 22nd. The release of ‘Toyota'n til Magdi’ approximately a year after the massacre, a song with manifestly political lyrics, generated considerable and heated public debate that also included political actors and fed into wider political discussions. Thus, this case represents, relatively speaking, highly pronounced expressive and biographical conditions, and, as this study makes evident, exceptional receptive and political conditions. According to Flyvbjerg’s (2006) typology, it can justly be described as an ‘extreme case’. A clear benefit of studying such a case is that both political and discursive dynamics are lucidly displayed, and thus readily allow a consideration from within the framework

of public sphere theory. As a result of the exceptional nature of this case, the study is not intended to produce generalisable findings. Nonetheless, it is still a case that can highlight the processes through which music can affect public discourse under less pronounced conditions.

This study charts and qualitatively analyses the media debates that Karpe Diem and their music both generated and fed into. The qualitative case study-approach employed here has previously proved helpful (see Christensen & Christensen, 2008) in examining the public reception of musical and cultural events. Moreover, the approach allows for the elucidation and systematisation of both the arguments and actors involved in discourse, and further, how debates about specific themes unfold over time.

The first step in the methodological procedure was to identify and collect all relevant articles with a national readership (101 in total) in print or online press. Only articles explicitly considering the music and performances of Karpe Diem in relation to political, cultural and social issues were judged to be relevant. These articles included reviews, interviews, commentaries, chronicles and opinion pieces where the music, performance or artist is the focal point of politicised attention, or a point of reference in discourse concerning general political, social or cultural questions. Local press and niche media were generally excluded. However, when opinions or debates originating from local press, niche-media or online debate-forums became a point of discussion in national press, these articles and debates were referred to.

The relevant articles were identified and retrieved using the digital media archive 'Atekst', which allows for detailed thematic searches across media-content. Although the reliability of the program coding of Atekst has been called into question (Srebrowska, 2005), it remains a resource frequently and successfully used in research for both monitoring and analysing media coverage and debate in Norway. In order to follow the evolution of debates over time, relevant articles issued between July 22nd 2011 and March 1st 2013 were selected. The most discursively central articles, as well

as those that exemplified general characteristics of the debate, were directly referred to in the analysis (see the Appendix of the reception article).

Framing analysis (see for instance Kuypers, 2010) could have been a productive analytical approach, as it would highlight also how conditions related to editorial choices, media formats and conventions affected debate and positioned actors. Also, a discourse analysis (see for instance Schröder, 2012) of these debates might have been productive in highlighting the underlying values and assumptions informing the debates. However, as the primary empirical objective of this study was to chart and elucidate how arguments, opinion-positions and actors involved in the debates manifested in public discourse, such an elaborate analytical framework was unnecessary. The articles were thus analysed in terms of: what kind of political messages the music was construed to be conveying; how these messages were responded to; which debates the song either raised or fed into; how the songs were construed as significant within these debates; and, the actors, opinion-positions and arguments that emerged at the level of reception.

4. Findings and conclusion

In this chapter the main findings from the separate studies will be summarised. The findings are presented, substantiated and discussed in detail in each article. This chapter will also pinpoint how the separate studies together answer the overarching research questions of this thesis.

4.1 The political status of hip hop among audiences

In the audience study of musical taste and attitudes among young politicians, hip hop stood out as the musical means of political expression par excellence. When respondents from all youth wings were asked to identify ‘political’ bands or artists, hip hop music was the single most reoccurring genre. Independently of the respondents’ own political affiliation, hip hop artists associated with causes, agendas and organisations of the political left were identified, thus indicating a general identification of hip hop as a form of left-wing musical expression. However, there were significant distinctions drawn within the genre; main stream, chart-based hip hop was generally endorsed by members of youth wings on the political right and rejected by those on the left, whereas politically expressive hip hop was rejected by the political right but endorsed by the left. Giving further evidence of the status of hip hop as a left-wing political expression, members of the left leaning youth wings frequently reported that they acquired a taste for hip hop music after joining the youth wing.

At a more general level, this study indicated systematic differences in regards to the aesthetic sensibilities found among young politicians on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum. Whereas the former were oriented towards more explicitly

political music, ‘alternative’ music, and music characterised by a disruptive aesthetic, the latter preferred apolitical, ‘commercial’ music characterised by a non-disruptive aesthetic. Moreover, whilst there is general endorsement of the idea that music is politically significant, and recognition of youth wings as taste communities, at the political left, at the political right these ideas are rejected.

This study further found that the systematic relationships between the taste for (political) music and political-ideological orientation must be understood as composites of the respondents’ lifestyles, and in relation to their socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, the members of the left and right displayed divergent aesthetic sensibilities and musical tastes which are informed by where the members are positioned in relation to the ideologically hegemonic – and socioeconomically speaking privileged – centre of the political landscape of Norway.

4.2 Motivations and practices on the hip hop scene

The production study made evident that key creative practitioners on the Norwegian hip hop scene share motivations of potentially high relevance to public discourse. First, evidence is given that among Norwegian hip hop artists there remain a commitment and inclination to be politically relevant by means of thematising and problematizing, every day, private experiences, and bringing these into the public eye. Although the hip hop artists of today largely do not identify with the explicitly political traditions of the past, there remains an inclination to lyrically thematise socio-political conditions.

Secondly, this study makes evident that hip hop artists today remain committed to publicly exhibiting marginalised or subaltern experiences, either based on their own personal biographies or in terms of their identification with, or adoption of, outsider perspectives. The hip hop scene at large is here also identified as being politically left leaning.

The study further showed how practitioners make use of aesthetic strategies of potentially high relevance to public discourse. First, artists typically employ a rhetoric of hyperbole, involving provocation, profanity and exaggeration, in order to command public attention. Thus, through aesthetic and lyrical disruption, hip hop artists may stimulate and facilitate public discourse. Second, the study explains how storytelling constitutes a prominent lyrical form, strategically used in order to foster empathy and solidarity for the lyrical subjects, which in turn can strengthen or facilitate public discourse.

Based on these empirical findings, this study suggests that hip hop music is relevant to public discourse in four major ways. First, by phatically establishing communicative situations, thus initiating public discourse. Second, by mediating between the private and the public sphere. Third, through this mediation providing what Dahlgren (1995) terms symbolic ‘raw material’ for public deliberation, where songs and performances become an object of public debate and in doing so generate political and social debate about the issues raised in the songs’ lyrical content, the style and context of the performance, or the performers’ backgrounds. Last, through their expressive capacity to address politically and socially relevant issues, hip hop songs and performances can, under certain circumstances, function as contributions in their own right to ongoing public debates. Based on these findings, Habermas’ 2006 model of the political system is mobilised in order to make probable how the aesthetic and lyrical efforts of hip hop artists integrate into the wider framework of deliberative democracy.

4.3 Hip hop expressivity as political discourse

In the textual study, Lars Vaular’s song ‘Who shot Siv Jensen’ was analysed in regards to how its lyrical and musical elements constitute the song as political discourse. In this study both motivations and practices typical of the hip hop scene were seen to be manifest in the music through musical and lyrical text. The analysis

showed how the aesthetic and verbal elements together constituted the song as a particular yet highly potent form of musically enabled political discourse. The analysis highlights how the song entailed a set of key, musically enabled, political utterances. These includes the hyperbolic and provocative suggestion that an FRP-politician had been shot, the ridicule of the interplay between tabloid media, populist politicians and the social stereotypes of audiences, and a non-explicated statement of anti-FRP sentiment.

From the starting point of recent revisions of public sphere theory, the analysis shows that the song entails expressive characteristics that enable the song to function as public political discourse. The song phatically facilitates public discourse by means of hyperbolic language. Moreover, the song rhetorically employs both lyrical and musical devices in order to effectively address and engage its audience, and also to convince the audience of the songs political messages. The song's specific 'flow' has a significant function in that it emphasises, energises and draws attention to key lyrical points. Furthermore, the dramatic, melodic and rhythmic qualities of the song is argued to be highly significant as they not only constitute the song as a piece of political satire, but also invest political discourse with a sense of drama, humour, affective force and energy. Such qualities potentially have revitalising effects on public political discourse and may engage audiences beyond the confines of traditional political communication. Thus, the case of 'Who Shot Siv Jensen' demonstrates how hip hop music can function as an alternative yet expressively potent vehicle for the aesthetic, affective and verbal articulation of politics.

Lastly, this study discusses hip hop expressivity in relation to communicative rationality by considering the embedded utterances of the song in terms of key rational validation standards. Through problematising the dichotomy between 'rational' verbal communication versus 'irrational' aesthetic communication, it is argued that these utterances are, for the most part, susceptible to validation in terms of both truth value, moral value and truthfulness, but become less clear when assessed in

terms of their comprehensibility, which requires a hip hop-specific generic code competency.

4.4 Hip hop in public political discourse

In the reception study both the motivations and practices typical of the scene and the expressive characteristics found at textual level, i.e. dimensions of hip hop music of potential significance to public political discourse, could be manifestly seen at play in public and political debates. The case of Karpe Diem's chart hit 'Magdi's Toyota', and their public role in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre empirically demonstrates that their music both generated and fed into political and ideological debate in the Norwegian public sphere. Initially debates focused on questions about the acceptability of the lyrics of the song and the role of Karpe Diem in the post-22nd July commemorative ceremonies. However, Karpe Diem and their music subsequently became the discursive focal point and a point of reference in debates about long-enduring political and ideological issues in Norway, including artistic freedom of speech, the relationship of the political left to the cultural field, and meta-debates about the more general discursive climate in Norway. Significantly, these debates not only took place within the cultural public sphere, but also encompassed a range of political actors, topics and discursive arenas associated with the political public sphere.

Furthermore, this study highlights the process and trajectory through which Karpe Diem and their music became publicly identified and responded to as politically significant. Although both expressive and biographical factors were instrumental in this process, this study also makes evident the importance of contextual factors in facilitating the politicised public reception of their music. This case study thus highlights how the highly particular public, political and discursive conditions following the 22nd of July, were pre-requisites for the investment of political significance into Karpe Diem and their music.

Based on these findings, the study conclusively points attention to how the music of Karpe Diem and their music de facto entered and stimulated the multilevel discursive processes central to the framework of deliberative democracy, as laid down and substantiated in Habermas' 2006 model of the political system. Moreover, and based on the findings, this study suggests how this model can be further sensitised, at a conceptual level, in order to account for the role of aesthetic interventions in the public sphere.

4.5 Towards a 'public discursive' conception of the politics of music

To return to the first principal research question asked in the introductory paragraphs of this thesis: *What is the political significance of music from a public sphere perspective?* The case studies contained within this thesis firstly make evident that different kinds of music, and hip hop therein, are understood to be politically charged and significant by audiences and align with particular political orientations. Narrowing down the focus to hip hop music, the thesis further makes evident that there are both motivations and practises of potential high relevance to public discourse at the level of production. It further shows that the musical and lyrical language of hip hop music both facilitates and invites the aesthetic articulation of politics, and that these articulations may integrate into the public political discursive processes that operate at the heart of deliberative democracy. Thus, as the last case study of this thesis makes evident, hip hop music can assume political significance by generating and stimulating concrete public debate about questions with important political and ideological ramifications, and among actors with divergent political and ideological views.

This implies what I will term a 'public discursive' conception of the politics of music. This is not a politics that primarily accentuates the ways in which music is used in the service of traditional political agendas, organisations or actors, neither is it a politics that accentuates the role of music in political elections, nor that stresses the ways in

which music prompts political action in a directly causal sense. Rather, it is a conception that bases itself upon the fundamental premise that the public sphere and the discursive interaction that occurs herein constitutes the *modus operandi* of democratic politics. Thus, music, by integrating into these discursive interactions, either as aesthetic public discourse in its own right, or by stimulating verbally based public discourse, becomes politically significant.

Consequently, from the public sphere perspective, a politics of music must rest upon the following three conditions: the degree to which the music is public, i.e. also has a life beyond the private sphere of individual audiences; the degree to which music is discursively engaged with, i.e. collectively interpreted and debated in public forums; and, lastly, the nature of this discursive engagement, i.e. the degree to which music addresses matters of collective interest and is interpreted and debated in relation to political questions. The two first conditions accommodate for a politics of music in a wide sense; by means of public nature and discursive engagement music is part of processes of the negotiation of ethical standards as well as the formation of identity and solidarity. The third and last condition assumes a politics of music in a strict sense – where music stimulates or feeds into public political discourse proper. Crucially, this conceptualisation is not necessarily confined to music. It may also be productive in the understanding of the politics of other forms of expressive culture, be it film, poetry or photography.

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive conceptualisation – most music and the public life it lives do not meet these criteria, which certainly do not imply that the music in question must be devoid of political or ideological significance. Rather, the conceptualisation that this thesis suggests clarifies how music can, under particular circumstances, and to varying degrees, assume political significance. It also rests upon a particular and partly normative understanding of politics. It is thus a conceptualisation that supplements established perspectives on music and politics and highlights one of many aspects of the role of music in society.

However, a key strength of the public sphere perspective utilised within this thesis is that it firmly situates music within the wider framework of democracy. Significantly, music entails democratically desirable functions as an expressive vehicle mediating between the private/subcultural sphere and the public sphere, and as a mediating vehicle between citizens and elites. When the perspectives and opinions originating from the private / subcultural sphere (as shown in the productions study), articulated through the aesthetical language of hip hop (as shown in the textual study), is posited and engaged with in the public sphere (as shown in the reception study), it assumes potential political significance. The musically engendered discourse among actors and in forums located towards the centre of Habermas' political system (2006), where political-administrative decisions are made, brings attention to how music contributes to the sustaining of two key principles of deliberative democracy. First, music engenders discursive participation and engagement that may, second, be instrumental in political decision-making.

Finally, to briefly attend to the second principal research question of this thesis: *To what extent is public sphere theory a framework adequate to investigations of the politics of music?* I would argue that the theoretical framing, use of concepts and the findings of this thesis itself answer this question. The composite effort of this thesis demonstrates that public sphere theory is a productive starting point for such investigations. Significantly, the public sphere and the framework of deliberative democracy provide an overarching architecture of democracy in which music and the processes it is part of can be located. Yet, as many critics have rightly noted, particularly of the Habermasian version, it is a theory that privileges verbal and rule-bound communication. However, and as has been the ambition to substantiate in this thesis, it is a theoretical framework that, given the critical and eclectic use of supplementary theory and method, accommodates for a clarification of the role of expressive and aesthetical communication in deliberative democracy – therein music.

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