

Why Does the Archbishop Not Tweet?

How Social Media Challenge Church Authorities

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Abstract

In summer 2012, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden appeared on Twitter. There was only one problem – it was not the Archbishop himself who was tweeting, but an anonymous person. A discussion then ensued on Twitter and in the blogosphere between those in favor of the Archbishop and his department and mainly social media proponents.

The present article describes and analyzes the social media debate, and how authority and hierarchies are negotiated in and through social media. The analysis is based on Heidi Campbell's "Religious-Social Shaping of Technology" model, and emphasizes the need to take into account not only the faith and tradition of the religious actor, but also the societal context in which the negotiating process takes place. In this case, the concepts of "mediatization" and "secularization" are used to understand the broader context of the process.

Keywords: authority, church, mediatization, religion, secularization, social media

Introduction

In summer 2012, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden (the former state church) appeared on Twitter. He began tweeting about all manners of things, for instance engaging in discussions with people and commenting on the Olympic Games. He instantly gained a growing group of followers, who saluted his initiative and expressed positive opinions about the symbolic value of having the highest leader of the Church of Sweden on Twitter. There was only one slight problem, soon noticed by the national Department of Communication – it was not the Archbishop himself who was tweeting. Only a couple of hours after the Archbishop's first tweet, the Department posted a tweet stating that the account was a hoax and that they would act against this fraud. The Department of Communication contacted Twitter Inc. and had the account closed, according to the rule: "You may not impersonate others through the Twitter service in a manner that does or is intended to mislead, confuse, or deceive others." (*The Twitter Rules*)

In the aftermath, on Twitter, blogs and in some major Christian newspapers and on some leading Christian websites, the tweeting Archbishop was discussed. Some people thought it was a good initiative, while others thought it violated the rights of the Archbishop as a person and as a Church representative. A few weeks later, the person behind the account posted anonymously on a Christian website to explain the reasons behind the account, and a short while thereafter he also revealed his identity. The person behind the fake Twitter account was himself an information officer within the Church, work-

ing in a local congregation. One reason for his actions, he said, was that he wanted to highlight the Church's need to be more public, use social media in its work, and thereby encourage transparency and engagement throughout the entire Church organization.

The present article will use the case of the tweeting Archbishop as a point of departure to discuss the role of digital media in relation to authority within church organizations – a major theme when interpreting and analyzing the consequences of contemporary digital media (Campbell, 2012; Cheong & Ess, 2012). The question of authority is also relevant outside the narrow scope of the Church. The so-called Arab Spring is one significant example where social media are said to have played a crucial role – a claim that has indeed been questioned (cf. Howard & Hussain, 2011; Lindgren, 2013). On a smaller scale, authority is also questioned on the basis of technological advancements. The disruptive and empowering character of the internet is often seen as actually being intertwined with the media itself (cf. Castells, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; Rheingold, 2002; Couldry, 2012), even though attempts are made by authorities, companies, and nation states to circumvent this feature (cf. Deibert, 2010; Howard, Agarwal, & Hussain, 2011). On a less radical scale, we see within education (cf. Erixon, 2010; Metzger & Flanagin, 2008), journalism (cf. Hayes, Singer, & Ceppos, 2007; Karlsson, 2011), politics (cf. Loader & Mercea, 2012; Nilsson & Carlsson, 2013) and so on how traditional structures of authority are being negotiated.

Although this is a rather limited case, it gives us the opportunity to pinpoint what is actually happening in detail, in contrast to more general (and ideological) claims regarding the anti-hierarchical structure of the internet. It becomes clear and visible how different actors are involved in the negotiating processes.

How to Interpret Religion and Information Technology

There are different ways to interpret the relation between information technology and its effect on religious faith and practices – authority included. The present article follows Heidi Campbell's categorization (2010), based upon Ferré (2003), arguing that there are three different approaches to how to view information technology in relation to religious transformation. First, technology is seen as value free and neutral – the media are only a conduit used to pass on the religious message. Second, others argue that information technology has its own "mode of knowing", or affordances, which by necessity changes religious faith and practices, as if there were a deterministic relation between them. Religious hierarchies and authorities are hereby transformed. Third, Ferré promotes an interpretation according to which religious actors are able to understand media and make conscious decisions about how to use media in their religious practices. Campbell follows his line of argument and also inspired by Social Shaping of Technology theory (SST), she promotes a theory that emphasizes the negotiation process and a conscious approach in relation to technological implementation within religious communities.

Campbell calls for an analysis in four consecutive steps, taking into consideration the fact that the attitude toward digital media within religious organizations is influenced and colored by four distinctive aspects: 1) "History and tradition"; 2) "Core beliefs and patterns"; 3) "The negotiating process", and finally 4) "Communal framing and discourse" (2010, pp. 57-63). The model aims to highlight how "the negotiating process" – rather than being determined beforehand – depends upon both "history and tradition"

and “core beliefs and patterns”. After negotiation, the implementation of technology is communicated according to existing discourses within the community, i.e., how it is justified and legitimized internally and externally.

The present article is inspired by and draws upon Campbell’s (and consequently Ferré’s) work, but will also underline the need to take external contextual factors into consideration. In this particular case, I would like to propose a slightly modified, and expanded, model emphasizing and adding a step when interpreting the negotiation process – “the societal context”.

Here it is argued that the role of religion in a specific society must be taken into account when interpreting how information technology is discussed within religious communities. A society of which religion is an integral part differs from a society in which religion is in decline, under pressure, or just invisible – and religious actors and representatives relate to this fact.

Religious Authority, Secularization and Mediatization in Sweden

The largest religious actor in Sweden is by any measure the Evangelical Lutheran, former State Church, the Church of Sweden, an institution that since the reformation up until the present day has colored the life of Swedes. However, the religious situation in Sweden (and other Nordic countries) today differs from large parts of the world, with Sweden being one of the most secular countries in the world (cf. Hamberg, 2003; Martin 2010). This means that religious authority cannot be taken for granted, as is well known within the religious community.

The concept of “secularization” is chosen because it refers to the role of religion in society, and “mediatization” because it refers to the role of media in society. Here, understandings of processes such as secularization and mediatization are considered important aspects for interpretation of the negotiating process, as will be further demonstrated below.

The combination of a secular and mediatized society is a non-negligible part of the discussion concerning the use of the internet by Swedish churches (for a similar approach regarding Finland see Moberg & Sjö 2012). The main argument seen in the Twitter discussion (especially from the social media proponents) for having a tweeting Archbishop is the need for the Church to reach out to a society where institutionalized religion is partially made irrelevant and that social media might be part of the Church’s way back.

Sweden has had a strong State Church throughout history – until the mid-20th century, being a Swede meant being a Lutheran. Since the Reformation in the 16th century, the State and the Church have been intertwined (compared to all other examples according to Parker, 1992). The Church of Sweden was disestablished as recently as 1 January 2000. The Church of Sweden is still governed democratically according to a structure influenced by the state. Elections to the General Synod and the diocesan and parish levels are held in every four years. The Church can be said to be broad and inclusive (vague and without focus, its opponents might say), encapsulating both liberal and conservative strands. From the early 20th century on, the theology of the folk church developed and “God’s grace was extended to all people regardless of their religious decision. Everybody within the parish territory was to feel included in the church” (Ryman, 2005, 53; see also Brohed 2001).

Practically all Swedes were members of the Church up until 1951, as they were prohibited from leaving the Church unless they joined another approved Christian denomination. Since then, Church membership and Church attendance rates have declined (Hamberg 2003), and approximately 68% of the Swedish population are members of the Church today, while around 2-3% of Swedes attend the Church's Sunday services (approx. 4-5% attend religious services overall during an ordinary weekend). Moreover, Swedish society in general has become more heterogeneous (Gunner & Ahlstrand 2008).

Sweden and the Scandinavian countries are exceptions on a global scale when it comes to adherence to religious values. David Martin (2010) singles out Scandinavia as an exception compared to the rest of the world with a pattern of "high identification [with Lutheranism] combined with diffuse belief and low practice" and where the welfare state has promoted an alternative to the Church (2010, 14). Based on a Gallup survey conducted in 2007-8, Ostergren and Le Bossé conclude that "the Scandinavian countries are home to some of Europe's most secular societies with an extremely low percentage of individuals who hold religious beliefs or regularly attend church services (typically less than 5%)" (2011, p. 200). Many Swedes, however, believe "in something" or that "there is a higher purpose" (approx. 4/5 of the population), but the proportion of atheists is also comparatively high (approx. 1/5 of the population) (Zuckerman, 2007; see also Hamberg 2003 or Sjödin, 2001).

The concept of secularization is a subject of much debate. While some researchers see a correlation between modernity and dwindling religious beliefs (e.g. Bruce, 1996), both in substantial and functional terms, others claim that there is no such correspondence and that religious adherence instead depends on a variety of contextual factors (cf. Casanova, 1994; Martin, 2010; McLeod, 2000).

The secularization perspective can be intertwined with the mediatization theory promoted by Stig Hjarvard (2011). The point of departure for the mediatization approach in general is that media in contemporary society have a strong and autonomous role, permeating every part of society. The media of today are run like other businesses with their own media logic – a logic that religion, politics, work and others have to adopt (cf. Hepp 2013; Hjarvard 2013 for an overview). The theory applied to religion has emerged from the "specific characteristics of the Nordic countries which can influence the interplay between religion, media and culture" (Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012, 10). Media are a strong power in Swedish society and Sweden also has a high degree of internet connectivity (93% of the population), among the highest in the world; for example approximately 55% of the population have a Facebook account (cf. *Internet World Stats for the European Union*).

Religion, Hjarvard points out, has become more public in the media in recent decades, which does not necessarily entail a religious revival. It is rather a matter of media logic – it interests people (Hjarvard 2011, p. 39). David Martin (2010) argues along similar lines, claiming that religion is not simply coming back into public life due to some sort of revival, but because of a new interest within the public sphere and among its gatekeepers, such as journalists and scholars. According to Hjarvard, "the mediatization of religion ... is changing the representation of religion in late modernity at the same time that secularization ... is evoking both a decline and a transformation of religious organizations, practices and beliefs" (2011, 22). Thus, nowadays, the power to practice and define religion and religious content is largely dealt with in and through media

(Hjarvard 2011, 27). Hjarvard's theory is indeed contested, among other things for its deterministic and universal approach to how media transforms religion (cf. Lövheim, 2011), but for the present purposes Hjarvard's perspective highlights the need to take the strong societal position of media into consideration when interpreting the transformative impact media have on religion.

Tweets, Interviews and Network Visualization

The present article is mainly based on the discussion that took place on Twitter regarding the fake Archbishop. Tweets were collected and archived from the fake Archbishop's account containing the tweets written by the Archbishop and tweets posted in response (all in all 690 tweets were found through this account). The fake Archbishop posted approximately 200 tweets himself. An archive based on the hash tag (#) "biskopsriot" was also created through the web-based service *Twapperkeeper.com*, an archive that consists of 751 tweets in total. Blog entries mentioned in the Twitter feed were located and saved, and Google searches found a few more entries. All in all, about 20 blog posts were found, although not all of them are mentioned here. Online newspaper articles number approximately 30 and come from the two main Christian newspapers (*Dagen* and *Svenska kyrkans tidning*) and a web-based Christian news site (*Dagens Seglora*).

The article is based on a combined qualitative and quantitative approach to the empirical material. All tweets and blog entries are read qualitatively and generalizable themes are identified. Digital software such as *atlas.ti* is used at the same time to count the frequency of different twitterers to see who the most active twitterers are and from what position they tweet. The software *Textometrica* (Lindgren & Palm, 2011) is used for co-occurrence analysis of tweets and visualization of the network of twitterers to highlight and visualize what the relationship between them looks like.

Two additional interviews were held – one with Programme Director for National Communication, Department of Communication (Marianne Ejdersten/@MarianneEjder), and one with the person behind the Archbishop's Twitter account (Jacob Sunnliden/@jacobsunnliden), who is the information officer within a local parish. These interviews are mainly used to provide the whole event with a background and context.

Online material (tweets and blog entries) are in the public domain and open to anyone with an internet connection, and, I would argue, free for researchers to use without any particular ethical concerns. In the article, the twitterers have been anonymized. The interviewees have of course given their consent.

The Tweeting Archbishop

The fake Archbishop's first tweet was posted in response to a local church's Twitter account, which welcomed him to Twitter and offered him help with Twitter, if needed. The second tweet is in response to a journalist at *Dagen* who noticed the ambiguity in the Twitter biography concerning the real identity of the Archbishop. The Twitter biography stated: "Non-official account. Has nothing to do with Archbishop Anders Weryd... wjry... ..wejery..." (seemingly people think his surname is difficult to spell). The same day, the chaplaincy at Malmö University invites the Archbishop to visit them, obviously believing they are addressing the real Archbishop. These two short conversations also

appear in the Church's report to Twitter as evidence of impersonation. On the same day, the Church of Sweden's official Twitter account announced that "somebody has opened a Twitter account in the name of Anders Wejryd [the Archbishop's name] – It is not the Archbishop himself. We are now taking action against this account." The Church's central secretariat's countermeasures against the fake Archbishop were in other words fairly immediate and decisive, which was picked up later in the discussion. According to the Programme Director for National Communication, this is a standard procedure (interview 121206).

Soon after the first tweets, speculation regarding the identity of the person behind the account began. Questions were put to the Archbishop to try to find clues. "Have you gone by train lately?" – apparently the real Archbishop is a big fan of trains. "Are you the middle brother of three?", "I guess for ... [him or her]", "who knows social media and has been quiet in recent days", "maybe it is the Archbishop himself – that would be a real surprise", and so it continues. Some people are singled out as potential twitterers, and people deny such accusations but seem quite flattered at the same time. The people named are all fairly Twitter-experienced – either information officers or clergymen. A large proportion of the tweets related to and directed at the fake Twitter account concern the identity behind the account.

Many tweets are written in a tongue-in-cheek style, quite humorous and also personal. The intention of the person behind the account was to be able to tell the Archbishop the jokes in front of him personally (interview 130820). At one point, the Archbishop is pondering the possibility of trading his crosier for a small summer house in a nice area, that he has found a second crosier in a closet back home, that he is considering visiting the Pride parade in Stockholm, and he also tells jokes about Pentecostals and so on. Most followers also seem to enjoy the humorous tone. One twitterer even claims that the account gives hope about the existence of God and that the Church needs some self-distance. But there are also hints about the fact that the Church seems to lack the same sense of humor, given its rather stern countermeasures.

There are also tweets with more serious content, dealing with questions about what the Church is, about its inclusiveness or tendencies to exclude, the structure of the Archbishop's position and more. Whether this reflects the real Archbishop's opinions or not is never obvious, but it is pretty clear the Archbishop's account is run by someone with knowledge about the Church.

"It is a Paradigm Shift We are Seeing"

One interesting thing here, in terms of how social media negotiate and challenge, is how social media are discussed in relation to the Archbishop. The mere fact that social media make the negotiating process public seems to fuel the debate. As early as the first day, a short discussion is seen between the fake Archbishop and an information officer who writes – "This might encourage the real Archbishop to start tweeting. How can the account be available? I'm surprised." The fake Archbishop replies: "That would be fun. He can have this account!". And when the representative of the real Archbishop claims they will take legal action, the fake Archbishop finds support from some twitterers, who hope the account will continue while waiting for the real Archbishop. One claims that the tweets have been rather weak, but the phenomenon surrounding the whole event has

been interesting. Another writes about power and the shifting paradigm that social media bring about. “It is a paradigm shift we are seeing; from information to communication and relation. Brilliant!”, one twitterer claims.

The conversation related to the Archbishop’s account ends with how the person behind it goes public with the offer to hand over the account to the real Archbishop at an event planned and hosted by the Church. Soon after the identity of the fake Archbishop was revealed through a web-based newspaper, accounts were registered for the other bishops around the different dioceses in Sweden. During the period of the tweeting Archbishop, a hash tag had been established for discussions regarding the whole affair – the #biskopsriot tag. In other words, the tag itself indicates an attempt to overthrow established structures, though in a rather playful spirit.

The tone toward the Church and its representatives was rather harsh on Twitter, with quite a few people thinking the Church overreacted and thereby proving itself to be unprepared and not experienced enough for the alleged new communicative paradigm it is facing. The act of closing the account was seen as a sign of not being competent, sensitive or aware of what it was doing, and the Church’s tone was considered too unfriendly. Someone suggests that people should report other “troll accounts” to the Church for them to close, for example accounts related to for example God and Jesus (@_Gud [@_God], @herren_gud [@the_Lord_God], @jesus, and similar), as it is obviously not God and Jesus themselves who are tweeting. People also point to the fact that the Church does not have a sense of humor and is therefore dead. Another claims “the Church wants greater web presence from its co-workers, but only if it is done in the right way. Dislike!” Some people express the idea that the whole affair implies that there is interest in a more web-active Church, but the Church is now spoiling this interest.

Through the Archbishop’s representatives, the Church replies in defense, saying for example that impersonating and “stealing” someone’s name and picture can never be OK, even if the intentions are good. It is also claimed that the initiative to be active on Twitter (or social media in general) must be a personal decision, not something one is forced to do. But there were also attempts by the Church, during the course of the #biskopsriot affair, to involve people in their work with media strategies, so as to compensate, asking “the Twitter sphere” for opinions regarding the existing media policy. People are also invited to an upcoming seminar on the use of social media within the Church.

The discussion moved back and forth, with arguments from both sides, even though there is a bias toward a critical approach to the Church. A few express the opinion that the fake account highlights the need for a discussion about social media and the Church. Here one might assume that the fact that the discussion takes place on Twitter makes people’s attitudes toward social media more positive. Twitter is a rather limited medium in terms of participation – only 3% of Swedes are active on Twitter daily (compared to 36% on Facebook) (figures taken from *Svenskarna och Internet 2012* (The Swedes and the Internet 2012)). Interestingly enough, many arguments for a more active web presence by the Church are founded on the idea that social media can put the Church in a new position. “It is a revolution!”, one twitterer exclaims. “Why not invite the most active church-related twitterers to discuss the Church’s forthcoming media strategy?”, one suggests. The Church has to be more transparent and adopt an open attitude in this new situation.

“New media are uncontrollable” and “those who adapt win”, one twitterer claims. The same person claims the Church has “to change communication into conversation, only then will you be in the right paradigm”. In short, social media are, according to its proponents, about conversation, and not about one-way communication – and the Church has to acknowledge this.

The Network of Twitterers

The description above is primarily based on collected tweets related to the Archbishop’s account (@AndersWejryd) and the #biskopsriot archive. All the tweets from the Archbishop are available (approximately 190 tweets before it was shut down), but it has not been possible to create an archive comparable to the structured archive you get via a Twitter archive service. The archive collected based on the interactions with @AndersWejryd, however, shows content and tendencies in terms of the volume of tweets and twitterers.

When the tweets are studied using a quantitative approach, an additional interesting pattern appears. The #biskopsriot archive contains 802 tweets, and the top 20 twitterers posted 74% of all the tweets and of these the largest proportion (22% or 178 tweets) was posted by the person behind the Archbishop’s account. The next top seven twitterers posted between 20 and 42 times, and 16 posted between 19 and 7 tweets. Among these top 20 Twitter accounts, we find 15 people who describe themselves as having a profession related to an interest in ICT and communication, 13 who work with communication within the Church of Sweden, and 3 who are representatives of the national Church and close to the Archbishop’s office. Another 3 of the top 20 are clergymen (one of whom is also an artist and satirist) and another account is connected to a group of student clergy at a university – of whom the satirist is one. One person is studying theology. One is the brother of the fake Archbishop and works with marketing development, one works with strategies for congregations for the Church of Sweden, and another account is related to a political party active within Church politics. As far as can be read from the Twitter biography, two people are “ordinary” people (i.e. they do not work with information and/or within the Church), but have an expressed general interest in Church-related issues.

When we look at the tweets sent in relation to the @AndersWejryd account a similar pattern emerges. Among the top 20 twitterers sending tweets addressing the Archbishop, there are five clergy/pastors and theologians, and one undergraduate in Theology. Eleven (one of whom is the fake Archbishop) of the twitterers express an interest in or work with communication and media in one way or another. Three of them are more difficult to find relevant information about, but appear to be “ordinary” people.

After using a statistical approach to identify the most frequent twitterers, I turned to co-occurrence software, *Textometrica* (Lindgren & Palm 2011), to detect and visualize the relations between different twitterers. Based on the .net-files created through *Textometrica*, I created different diagrams visualizing the #biskopsriot-network with the aim of detecting co-occurrences of twitterers (presented as nodes). For this purpose, the online visualization tool *MapEquation.org* and “the map generator” was used. The diagrams show only co-occurrences (interactions) – who tweets (with an “s” before the username), retweets (“rt” before the username) and is mentioned (only the username).

One individual twitterer who does not mention someone else is not visible, but gives a sense of how the network is constructed.

In *Figure 1*, no differentiation is made between sender, receiver, and retweets, which gives an indication of how frequent they are in the discussion. Hence, some nodes only show twitterers who are mentioned but never interact themselves. In *Figure 2*, which differentiates between the different categories, this is clearer. The size of the node indicates the degree of activity, and the thickness of the lines indicates the strength of the links between the nodes. Each visualization, however, has to be understood in a combination with a quantitative reading of tweets.

Figure 1. *The network of twitterers (sender, mention, and retweet merged together) in the #biskopsriot archive.*

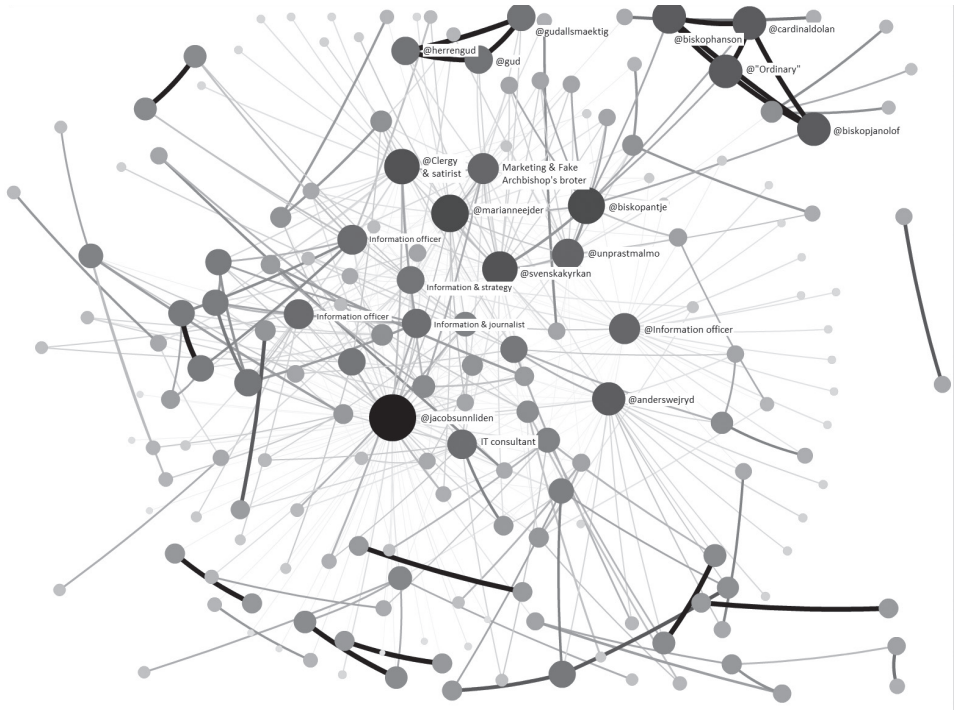
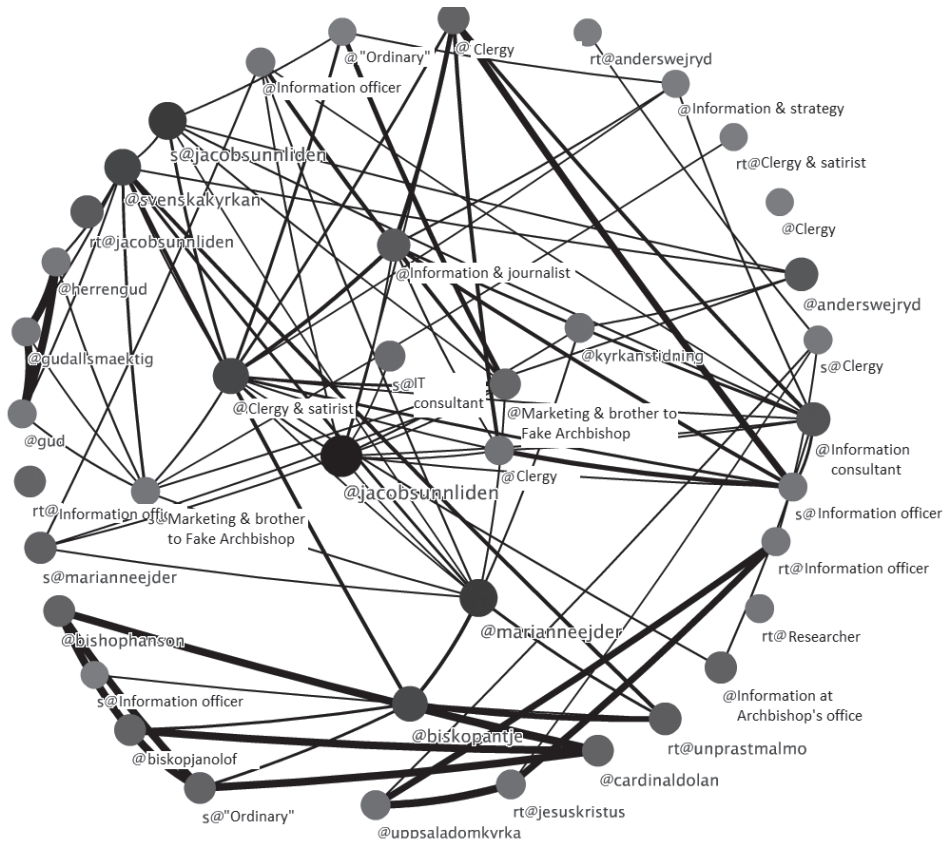


Figure 2. which visualizes the 40 most active nodes, differentiating between the different categories, shows a similar pattern but adds information about who tweets and how they are related to each other.

Simultaneously with the Twitter discussion, the argumentation also appeared in blogs and in the Christian press (both online and offline), and was also mentioned in the secular press. The discussion in the blogosphere is pursued along similar lines. Of approximately ten bloggers, a majority are in favor of the initiative, while others (only three bloggers) clearly do not condone stealing or kidnapping (expressions used in the debate) a person's identity, even if it is for a good purpose. This is of course a discussion with nuances and conflicting interests and desires. The material from the blogs is quite sparse, and it is difficult to draw any generalizable conclusions from them. A few more voices (a handful) stood up for the real Archbishop and his representatives' view.

Figure 2. Circle Tree Diagram Visualizing Senders, Mentions, and Retweets in the #biskopsriot archive



When looking at the discussion in quantitative terms, it becomes obvious how the question regarding the tweeting Archbishop is an issue among the already interested – among people who are fairly tech-savvy and already into online communication. Critical voices were mainly heard from the three accounts connected to people with positions at the Church of Sweden’s national Department of Communication.

According to the initiator of the Twitter account, one aim was to help (and push) the Church and its bishops to register Twitter accounts before they ended up in someone else’s hands. The other reason was to initiate a discussion about social media and the Church. He concludes that he managed to stir up a discussion, and, according to himself – “an information officer cannot hope for more buzz regarding an important issue”. The public discussion was, in other words, an aim in itself, and something he sought, and by knowing the genre, the media, and its affordances, and the rules to follow, the information officer was able to fuel the discussion (interview 130819).

People who participate in the discussion, we note, to a large extent already work with media or within the Church. In other words, the openness and the alleged anti-hierarchical structure of Twitter has to be questioned.

Authority, Digital Media and the Public Debate

Religious actors cannot merely be seen as victims of technological progress, according to Campbell (2010), but have the initiative to negotiate the use of technology. However, in a mediatized society, authority and negotiation of power are intertwined, as for example in the Nordic countries, according to Hjarvard and Lövheim (2012). It is also almost taken for granted that the internet is a place where power – secular and religious – is contested (Cheong, Poon, & Huang, 2009), even though such claims requiring some nuancing (Cheong 2012). The case above indicates the validity of such a claim. The tweeting Archbishop shows how the debate is fueled by the openness of the internet, and how arguments in favor of a Church active in social media has its starting point in the idea that the Church is acting in a media-permeated, i.e. mediatized, society.

Definitions of “religion” differ but are related to beliefs in God (or gods) and connected to structures, institutions and systems of belief, in contrast to the more loosely knitted concept of “spirituality”. Religious authority is thus linked to hierarchy, exclusivity, and institutions – to have access to the “right” and monopolistic interpretation of how to understand and come in contact with the God (or gods) (Grieve, 2013). The internet is said to undermine such exclusive rights, and the leadership is thereby challenged (Anderson, 1999; Cheong, 2012; Wagner, 2011). This is nothing new, but can be seen previously in history, often related to the invention of new information technologies (cf. Gelfgren 2012).

Information technology has contributed to a democratization of interpreting religion, and thereby negotiated and transformed faith and practices throughout history. Today, the internet is doing similar things, giving voice to new “experts”, seekers and believers [who] now experience increased access and ability to initiate debates and even actively confront religious authorities with online information” (Cheong, 2012, p. 76). One major difference today is the large-scale openness that the internet brings about, which is apparent in the argumentation concerning the tweeting Archbishop. According to Horsfield, “digital media provide the means for equal distribution and circulation of theological ideas developed by the theologically uneducated as for the theologically educated”, which differs from the previous situation in which theological debates took place primarily among theologians themselves (2012, pp. 254-5).

Adapting to the New Paradigm

Two clusters of arguments for a more social media active Church, promoted by the social media pundits, stand out in relation to the discussion regarding #biskopsriot. These are: 1) that contemporary society is something different than it used to be and 2) that social media are a part of that new context. And the conclusion is: If the Church wants to stay relevant, it has to adapt and learn how to engage in communication, an argument that is logical if one agrees with the concept of a mediatized society.

The openness and interactivity of digital media do not perfectly fit the history and tradition (the first point in Campbell’s aforementioned model) of the Church of Sweden, as a former state church with an almost monopolistic position in Swedish religious life. The Church has a rather rigid and at the same time institutionalized representative democratic structure, meaning that major decisions and policies have to go through the bureaucracy. While revivalist movements and free churches have been faster to respond to societal transformations, the Church has moved with more inertia, probably because of

its institutional structure and because it has been part of the state church monopoly (cf. for example Hamberg, 2003; Ryman, 2005). In general, newer and freer denominations (of Protestant affiliation) have been faster to adopt new technology in their work than have more traditional and hierarchical institutions, in line with Campbell's Religious Social Shaping of Technology model (Campbell 2010; see also Brasher, 2001).

Hardly anything in the Church of Sweden's core beliefs and patterns (Campbell's second point) argues against the use of social media or engaging in dialogue with its members or society. Most churches probably see engagement and interaction as a positive development, at least on an official level. But given history and tradition, and the hierarchical structure, communication has been colored by a top-down perspective. The Church of Sweden's social media policy for its employees from February 2011 is colored by such a perspective – i.e. use social media but remember who you represent (“Policy för användning av sociala medier i tjänsten,” [“Policy for the use of social media within the Church”] 2011). In the debate following the fake Archbishop's tweeting, this is a recurring theme, claiming the Church is not fit for the new paradigm brought about by social media, compared to the former situation when the Church, and the Christian faith, could be taken for granted, and when the Church took itself for granted too.

The case of the tweeting Archbishop shows the tension between social media specialists working regionally and locally within the Church, and the Church of Sweden's official Department of Communication. It is clear how social media both make the whole discussion, the negotiating process, transparent and visible, and therefore simultaneously also feed the discussion itself.

There is a correlation between transparency and negotiating authorities. Jon W. Anderson writes that when it comes to Islam, “media not only place messages into wider circulation, but also rebalance their authority from that of the sender to include circulation itself” (1999, pp. 42-3). Circulation, i.e. transparency, pushes established power structures into negotiating. Anderson also emphasizes the role of the early adopters, such as people working with media and technology, for example academics, journalists, and engineers. What is also important is how these early adopters have also been those who, from the very beginning, have defined the internet, its infrastructure and consequently its use (Anderson, 1999; Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

A Discussion Among the Already Convinced?

Most participants in the discussion concerning #biskopsriot are in favor of a Church engaged with social media, and they also come from fairly communication- and tech-savvy environments, as shown above. In line with what is proposed by the concept of mediatization, these social media supporters claim the Church has to play according to rules set by the mediatized society. The answer for the Church to the dilemma the internet and a secular society brings is to face the fact that the Church is living under new conditions, and that it has to adapt to and comply with the current social context and media logic. The openness and transparency of Twitter and social media in general mobilize interested people and draw attention to ongoing discussions. Digital media can be and indeed have been used as “an open and public forum that allows one to question cultural, symbolic, economic, and theological practices of modern church life in ways not often possible within traditional religious institutions” (Teusner 2013).

So when the Archbishop's representatives argue against the "prank", trying to explain their stance, they are seen as stuck in an old paradigm in which the Church was able to define the conditions. The Church and its representatives simply do not follow the rules of the mediatized society, according to the keen media supporters.

There is also a component of power negotiation between the information officers and the traditional structure within the church, the person behind the Archbishop's account admitted. While it might be difficult to criticize other more traditional professions within the Church, he thought that anyone seemed free to have opinions about the work of the information officers (interview 130820). He thereby expresses a frustration found among professional information officers (a relatively new group within the Church's organization).

Being a Church in a Secular and Mediatized Society

As suggested in the introduction, the negotiating process is related to the fact that the Swedish state is a secular and mediatized society. To what extent Sweden is a secularized society can be discussed and depends on one's definition, but there is a common understanding among both Christians and non-Christians, and in the public debate, that traditional religious institutions have lost ground during recent decades. This shines through in the debate, in arguments concerning relevance and the "fact" that social media have brought about a new paradigm when it comes to communication. In a world where the Church has lost its relevance for many people, mutual interaction and communication are the answer, at least according to the social media pundits at Twitter.

Representatives of the Archbishop's office apparently had problems with defending their initial stance and gradually opened up for dialogue and invited people to discuss internal social media policies after only a few weeks of #biskopsriot. This change in position must itself be related to the fact that the entire discussion is in open circulation and public. This follows the logic of a mediatized society, and takes place in a society where Christian institutions are questioned and undermined in general, due to the process of secularization – and this is forcing the authority's representatives to negotiate its power. In Hjarvard's words: "if there is one general outcome of the mediatization of religion in the Nordic countries, it is the diminishing ability of religious organizations (the churches) to control the public representation of both religion in general and the churches' in particular" (2012, 28). Without the experience of living in a secularized and media-permeated society, with dwindling religious institutions, the discussion described here, and the response from the Church, would have looked very different. Now, transparency and the public character of social media make it harder to ignore the discussion, even though it is carried on among a somewhat limited but outspoken group of actors.

Epilogue

It is difficult to evaluate the outcome of the #biskopsriot affair, and not the aim of the present article, but at least it drew attention to social media and their potential impact – with both positive and negative sides – even though the Church was already working with its internet strategy.

The person behind the fake Archbishop account was invited to a seminar where the Church of Sweden and its web presence were discussed. The Programme Director of the Church's Department of Communication said the affair made people within the institution more careful and hesitant as regards digital and social media overall, as it seemed to open the door to hoaxers and impostors. The Church should therefore be rather careful about how it engages online. The representative claimed that the already ongoing process had been slowed down, as people were intimidated by how social media were used in this particular case (interview 121206). The information officer behind the account claims that the "prank" at least enabled the discussion and guided it in a positive direction (interview 130820). Only the future will show the actual outcomes.

However, the contemporary Archbishop, Antje Jackelén, who replaced Anders Wejryd in 2014, is today an active user of Twitter.

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Interviews

Interview 121206 with Marianne Ejdersten (recording)

Interview 130820 with Jacob Sunnliden (recording)

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