Being political in the media

Political identities in journalistic and Twitter discourse

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För Edgar och en framtid värd att tro på

Doctoral Dissertation

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The author of the thesis is the single author of all the constituent papers.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of a long time and now slightly faded or perhaps shifted interest in the political and the media. It is not any longer, thankfully, what I dream about at night, and hence some of the people that should be acknowledged in a place like this has slowly started to fade away as well. There are temporal implications of memory, why it is all too easy to forget those who are not top of mind, or last spoken to. A few minutes of rethinking the last six years or so does however make a few pretty faces stand out from the shadow. There is of course a strict form to this kind of text so I stick with that. Discourses do make order of what seem as chaos. First of all I would like to thank my supervisors Bengt Johansson and Annika Bergström who made me feel more capable than I (thought I) was, and who generously read my papers over and over and pointed out problems with the texts. Often the same problems the fourth or fifth time as if it was the first. After every meeting I felt a strong sense of moving forward. I'm also grateful for the engagement with which Jakob Svensson took on the reading of my work before the final seminar, during which we had a quite engaging discussion. The seminar was a great reminder of how fun it can be to be engaged about discourse and theory. I would also like to thank Magnus Fredriksson who gave the manuscript a last read. From his comments I hope that I managed to better the arguments of and for the thesis.

I am very grateful for the collegial, warm and generous environment at JMG, the department of Journalism, Media and Communication at University of Gothenburg, where no topic could be too serious or trivial to be discussed over lunch. I would like to thank you all. A special thanks to Mats Ekström for his many and interesting interventions during the departments' higher seminars, making us all aware why a plurality of research strategies are of such importance, especially discourse studies of course… I am also grateful to have been a part of such a lovely and diverse group of PhD-students (of course, some of you are not PhD-students anymore) that I would like to thank for their strong encouragement when the state of things were not at its best: Ulrika, Alla, Nora, Nabil, Pavel, Per, Peter, Diana, Amanda, Sherwin, and most importantly Georgia, Sara, Mia and Johanna.

But most grateful am I for my family and friends, mom and dad, Thérese, Micke, Wicki, Sussi, Oskar, Philip, Mikael, David, Nora, Pontus, Elna and Sussi, with whom I never had to talk about my thesis, leaving space for the more

important things in life. And Edgar of course, with whom every single conversation turns into an adventure.

Malmö, August 2019

Being political in the media – Political identities in journalistic and Twitter discourse

Contextual chapter

Introduction

Few today would disagree that people have things to say about the world in which we live. If we look around our mediated environment, in news journalism and on social media, in our daily flows, people with something to say are everywhere. Some want to discuss matters in intimate circles; others want to be heard by the masses. For those who want to be heard and listened to, the media are one of the most important settings in which their voices can be heard. This thesis is about the role of media discourse in shaping the political identities of those who want to be heard in public. The ways in which people are able to speak, know, and feel in political situations have important implications for how we conceive of the possibilities to be engaged in contemporary democracy. Whether we, when we are trying to raise our voice in and through the media, are granted a position as people who are capable of changing the world or as losers, victims of circumstances, and full of resentment matters a great deal, as this tells us how the playing field of mediated politics is open to us. Alternatively, if we want to claim knowledge, it is important whether the public space of the media is open to us to speak with authority or just as witnesses or to be ignored. The modes in which one can be political are placed at the core of these communicative practices. The media as an institution, regardless of whether we understand it as comprising journalism or social networking services or perhaps both, are invested with many expectations regarding their facilitation of political engagement (Asp, 2007; Dahlgren, 2009; Ekström & Tolson, 2017). Such normative investment, regardless of whether it is found in theories of how journalism enables public voices to be heard or in theories of how new media platforms are enabling new forms of participation, constitutes a fertile ground for trying to understand how being political is a rather complex process. This is exactly what this thesis sets out to achieve by offering four empirical studies of how political identities are constructed through journalism and social networking services in cases in which people have decided to make their voices heard. Identities constructed through mediated participation have important implications for how we understand the possibilities to act politically in public, a public that that is characterized as having a multifarious media ecology. By shedding light on the practices through which people actually take part in public discourse, either as sources in journalism or as contributors to political discussions on social network sites, the studies in this thesis aim to contribute to determining how media discourse in a broader sense is constructing complex political identities among those who participate. It intends to say something more general about the possibilities of the processes of political identification in

and through the media today. Hence, rather than establishing the extent to which the media facilitate political engagement or participation, the different analyses point to the possibilities and limitations of being political that emerge from different forms of political media participation.

As a social practice, politics can take many different shapes, not least when the field of political communication is opening itself up to the study of practices beyond the scope of party politics. The papers in this thesis are occupied with related but somewhat different forms of politics. The empirical basis for the thesis consists of different cases from political movements that belong to the antiracist left in Sweden, with a special emphasis on migrant activism. These choices were made on a theoretical as well as an empirical basis. A lead motif from the beginning of this thesis was to follow the eloquent Stephen Coleman and investigate how media discourse can "enable those who were previously locked out of meaningful discourse to refuse their given role and assert their political significance as people with something to say" (Coleman, 2013b, p. 219). It is hardly worth mentioning that many people have something say, but, by choosing empirical cases that contribute something strange and awry to the analysis, I want to point out something of theoretical significance. This forces me to analyse and discuss the way in which familiar public discourses, as journalism has been for a long time and social media have come to be, are shaping the political identities of those who act within them. Roger Silverstone indicates that media studies are continually engaged in investigating the always too familiar to us all and, as such, demand researchers to undergo "a process of defamiliarization" (Silverstone, 1999, p. 14). As researchers, we need to point out that the ordinary and the mundane are complex. The identities of those who participate in the media are not voluntary as such but contingent on the public performance through discourse and the complex processes of mediation:

> Only through mediation can representatives circulate their claims to speak for the public – and only through mediation can the public determine whether such claims are justified. To represent is to mediate between the absent and the present, between the spaces in which decisions have to be made and the spaces in which they cannot be made. (Coleman, 2013b, p. 17)

These performances of identities in public run through different aspects of discourse, of which a few key aspects are at the heart of the analyses in this thesis, such as the epistemic, the emotional, and the subjective and how these aspects order the ways in which political identities come into being.

In light of this, the thesis is guided by two major research questions. The sub-questions through which these questions are answered in detail are presented in the individual papers.

- How are political identities constructed through participation in different media discourses?

- What implications do the constructed and enacted identities have for our understanding of what it means to be political in contemporary democracy?

Throughout this contextual chapter, I will present the analytical framework and the aspects that are common to the different studies as well as what separates them. In this framework, I present both theoretical and empirical clues to the individual papers and a base for making some final and general conclusions. However, I will begin by presenting a summary of the studies and their contexts.

An overview: The studies and their contexts

Before delving into the analytical framework and the most important links between the studies in the thesis, I will give an account of the different papers and their respective theoretical, methodological, and empirical scope. My hope is that this will shape the context from which it is possible to draw the general lines in the subsequent discussions. I will begin by saying a few things about the historical context from which the empirical data derived. When this dissertation work was initiated in 2013, several political movements in different parts of the world had culminated in and in some cases transformed into something else or disappeared. Most notable were the uprisings in North Africa and the occupy movements in the US and UK as well as the Indignados movement in Spain. The many and different movements arising at the time gave empirical and theoretical emergence to the role that the media play in structuring political participation (della Porta, 2013).

At the time of planning the thesis, several different political events were happening in Sweden that would have been included. One was a migrant activist group stemming from other movements organizing refugees and antiracist activities. The specific group that is in focus in the case work for Papers I and III is called Asylstafetten (Asylum March). Its campaign centred on marching long distances to manifest the rights for asylum seekers and refuges. While activist initiatives focusing on migrant rights still exist in Sweden at the time of writing, the political context is rather different from the situation when the analyses of the media discourse of Asylstafetten took place during the summers between 2013 and 2015. In the autumn of 2015, Sweden drastically changed its policy on migration. While at the peak of what has been coined the "refugee crisis" (Bucken-Knapp, 2017), the Swedish Government moved from holding a position that in retrospect can be understood as generous to being aligned with European policies that meant imposing highly restrictive border controls. This drastic political change, I would argue, is not important for the analysis of the specific case, but it is important to mark how these larger political shifts might make an analysis of empirical data dependent upon their time of appearance. However, as the analyses do not aim to historicize a specific movement, this becomes less of a problem. Nevertheless, the context in which these practices exist is at the same time important as a background from which we can retrieve meaning regarding what the activists are claiming and what is explicitly in focus, especially in the first analysis. The same applies to Paper II and the event, Kämpa Malmö, on which the analysis is based. Kämpa Malmö took place in 2014, a year when antiracist and antifascist sentiments were widespread and when people were easily mobilized into public action. The fourth paper is not concerned with a specific case but rather sampled from active Twitter accounts and the accounts with which they interact. As such, it does not share the specific historical context of the first three papers. It does, however, share with the two other cases a similar political context in which accounts have been sampled from people taking part in political talk on Twitter concerned with antiracist politics in a broad sense.

Summary of the articles

The context of the cases in the first and the third paper is the same, but the theoretical and methodological implementations are somewhat different. They are both empirically centred on the news coverage of Asylstafetten, the first paper presenting an analysis of print journalism and the third focusing on radio interviews with activists. The empirical differences brought theoretical questions to the table that complement each other.

The first paper, *Ideological struggle of epistemic and political positions in news discourse on migrant activism in Sweden*, takes its theoretical departure from a discussion about "the political" (Mouffe, 2005) and the way in which news journalism as discourse offers activists possibilities to adopt a knowledgeable position in which they can talk about the situation that they want to change and their ability to change it. To be knowledgeable about political issues, to express this knowledge as well as feelings, and to claim efficacy are central aspects of political engagement and participation (Dahlgren, 2009), and as such it becomes important to understand how news discourse allows for those performances. It should be noted that this is a matter of studying discourse, given that we understand media discourse, and news media discourse in particular, as important discourses in shaping ideas; this paper suggests that, if we want to know what types of knowing and ability to act are tied to those who participate, we can and should investigate how these aspects of participation are enacted and expressed. The main conclusion of this paper is that journalism as a discursive practice is protecting its professional boundaries in relation to sources, limiting the activists as sources to be either witnesses in relation their knowing or dreamers in relation to what they can claim to achieve politically. However, rather than activism being something other than journalistic ideology, political activism is only possible in relation to the post-political ideology, which limits the ways in which it can appear and as a consequence the ways in which those who appear can exist as political.

The second paper, *Love, affiliation, and emotional recognition in #kämpamalmö: The social role of emotional language in Twitter discourse*, addresses and relates to discussions about what happens to politics in the digital age when, as it is argued, emotions are increasingly finding their place in political discussions. This being the point of departure, the study of Tweets from a political protest in which the emotional response was undoubtedly both strong and rich, the analysis sets out to study emotions'

role in the construction of subjects and objects in this discourse. As such, an imperative for this study, a normative claim even, is to deny or to cut the relations to the discussions regarding whether such a change of modality is good or bad and instead to understand how individual and collective identities are created through participation in Twitter discourse.

The third paper, *Speaking on behalf of oneself and others: Negotiating speaker identities in journalistic discourse on refugee activism in Sweden*, shares the immediate political and sociological context of Paper I but differs in terms of its theoretical and methodological scope. The matrix of this paper opens up the space to representation and engages in an analysis of the different ways in which activists in radio interviews talk about themselves and others. This analysis is related to discussions about who is talking and acting in political interviews. It reacts to a widespread idea in political communication that takes for granted a simple and transparent talking subject that can easily be counted (Coleman, 2013a). By drawing on Erving Goffman's framework on footing, the paper shows the complexities of talking in public and indicates that what makes up the speaking subject is dependent on discourse and interaction. It further points to the precariousness of speaker identities in journalistic discourse and shows that those who want to be listened to in public have to give up their control over how their respective identities are ascribed to them.

The fourth paper, *Self-presentations and political identities between ideology of authenticity and silly citizenship on Twitter*, shares the communicative context with the second paper and is based on Twitter as a site of communicative practice. The analysis is centred on the question about who we are when we communicate politically online against the background of a political–theoretical discussion about political identities as well as a discussion that is wider and connected to identities and norms and regulations of identification in online communication in general. By studying how participants in Twitter present themselves, the analysis shows how we can understand the forms and norms of identification in online political discussions. The paper indicates that there is a flux in the strategies of self-presentations that should be understood in relation to an interregnum that makes a plurality of norms possible at once, even in a relatively defined social space that belongs to active users in a Swedish antiracist context on Twitter. As such, all the four studies speak to the different ways in which participatory identities in politics are and can be enacted in a defined discursive context.

Analytical framework

The political – Making way for an agonistic public sphere

I will start with a discussion about where we can locate the political. To some, this might seem a strange question. Some might even counter with the obvious answer that the political is located wherever politics is discussed. Such an answer would be generous and inclusive. Another answer is more restricted and states that the political is located within certain institutions, such as parliaments or in news about politics. Even if such research does not state explicitly that politics is limited to these areas, the loci of many of these fields of research have constructed a strong image of it being limited to these areas. The position that I take includes both arguments insofar as it refutes them at the same time. The major theoretical trajectory for the development of this project can be found in the framework of the political (Mouffe, 2005). I will sketch the context in which this framework was developed and nourished as well as what it offers this particular project.

The framework of the political brings to the discussion a decentred understanding of politics. A decentred understanding of politics makes it possible to argue that relevant political events do not exclusively take place within traditional political spaces and that they might be placed on some other level of the social. Most commonly, this tradition is traced to the post-Marxist endeavour initiated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in the mid-1980s as a way to find a theoretical base for a Marxist analysis able to connect the various political struggles occurring at the time in a wider political project on the left (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). To achieve this, this they had to formulate a political ontology that diverged from the orthodoxy of Marxist economics. This gave rise to discussions about when and where articulations can be understood as political. These discussions have been important within both academic and activist contexts.

The framework has become widespread in social sciences in recent decades, and its main theorist is Chantal Mouffe (1993, 2005). Mouffe clarifies the conceptualization of the political in several publications. She finds her influence in Heidegger and his distinction between the *ontological* and the *ontic* level of human existence, which in her discussion

are transferred to the level of politics. The political in this sense is considered to be the ontological level of politics, in other words the constitutive level of politics as such. The second level, the ontic level, is what she refers to as "politics". "Politics" is what we understand as the normal functioning of political discourses and its institutions. What this argument brings to the discussion is the "contingent" nature of politics (Dahlgren, 2013a), which means that we, as analysts of political practices, have to consider where significant political struggles take place and not only stick to a reiterated idea of what politics is.

The political is constituted where there is conflict on the surface of the social. The point is that there can only be politics where there is antagonism, whereby new identifications are possible through negations of old ones. In the context of this project, the political perspective has offered support and arguments for where relevant political projects to analyse can be found. It provides a focus on political identities and subjects that are strongly related to the core problem of the thesis's interest in what participants become when they act through the media. In her conceptualization of the political, Mouffe argues for a non-essentialist understanding of political identities as something that emerges through discourse rather than being something that is essential. In situations in which the political is constituted, there will be dislocations of discourse in which those with an identity in relation to discourse are no longer recognized and thus are between identities. The dislocation of discourse thus enables new political identifications and new collective formations to evolve and be articulated (Stavrakakis, 1999).

The quote from Stephen Coleman in the introduction resonates well with the political perspective, and he stresses the importance of contributing to an understanding of how the media enable those who refuse their given role, either as marginalized migrants or as everyday citizens, and who want to assert their political significance as people with something to say. To refute one's given role implies dislocating one's already-ascribed role in discourse and trying to reassert one's significance through other than the given identities. This is the theoretical basis that was the principle for formulating the questions and context and seeking the cases.

This theoretical foundation, or to some extent the lack of foundation, steered this dissertation in some different directions. In the two different analyses of Asylstafetten, the focus is on its participation through

journalism, as this was identified as its main area for media participation. Relating this case to the broader concept of the political, social movements addressing the rights of migrants and asylum seekers attract considerable interest within political theory. The appearance of migrants in political discourse occurs when people try to assert their right to exist within a symbolic space in which they formally do not belong (Arendt, 1958; Dikeç, 2013; Rancière & Corcoran, 2010). They become what Jacques Rancière, in a somewhat similar conceptualization of the political, coins "the part of no part". To represent the part of no part is, according to Rancière, to ascribe oneself as a subject in the symbolic in a way in which the established symbolic order does not register as intelligible or, as Rancière names it in his aesthetic terminology, as sensible. To enact the "part of no part" is to dislocate the symbolic and to make new formations possible. Dikeç (2013) beautifully asserts this line of thought from a similar perspective when he is talking about the figure of the migrant in the democratic symbolic space:

> the emergence of this new political subjectivity, which was created through the actions of individuals who did not officially exist, who, nevertheless, were present in a "space of appearance". Space of appearance, then, is not only a space where subjectivity is disclosed, but also one where political subjectivity is produced. (Dikeç, 2013, p. 86)

The media, as such a space of appearance, thus produce political subjectivity and show what it is possible to be when appearing as political in the media, since such an appearance not only represents or reproduces an already-given identity but puts identity and identification as such into play and ready for contestation.

The relation between the political and the empirical cases is present in all the papers. In paper II and IV, it is somewhat different and not as clearly linked to the aspect of political identities being outside and trying to enter, as in the case of migrant activists. Paper II, in which the focus is on how emotional language is used in the construction of political identities, shows that emotions have been left out of the discussion and emotional forms of identification as such confront the idea of what it means to be political in relation to the academic literature on politics in general (Ahmed, 2004; Coleman, 2013b). When emotions and emotionality are included, this is mostly through a moralist narrative, in which the emotional is seen as a deviation towards politics rather than as inherent to it. In this case, it is not the actor itself that is understood as the analytical "part of no part" but the emotions, as a modality of acting in political protest and confrontation with the place that they have in the discussion around politics. The third way in

which the political is at stake concerns the struggle of identities and identification itself, especially in the fourth paper, which takes its departure from a flux in the politics of identity, actualized through the last decades of computer-mediated communication (Papacharissi, 2011, 2012; van Dijck, 2013; van Zoonen, 2013). Through the different studies, the political is confronted with the public on different levels.

The mediality of the political – An agonistic public

The media is a place in which publicness can be created. There are many ways in which the public have been understood and conceptualized throughout the history of this academic field. I will offer a conceptualization of the public in two parts: one that is in alignment with the perspective of the political and one that has a more pragmatic relation to the ways in which we can understand publics as the spaces in which politics is expressed. Oliver Marchart, writing about the media as a public space from a Mouffian perspective, argues that the media as public cannot be seen as an empty container that in itself is unrelated to what occurs inside it but a place in which antagonism, ways in which things could be otherwise, can be made visible:

> A public sphere is nothing other than a space opened by the mediality of antagonism, a space wherein the very incompletion and ungrounded nature of any community is communicated. (Marchart, 2011, p. 79)

This is much in line with the political perspective; it is also a perspective that echoes other authors' understanding of the publicness of the media. While the media can be many things, they can also be a site for publicness that not only signifies identities in a limiting and ideological sense (Althusser, 2008; Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 2013) but also opens up for the antagonism of the political whereby our ideas about who and what we are seem to be incomplete and open to debate (Coleman & Ross, 2010). On the other hand, however, I situate this project in the midst of political communication as the empirical studies are concerned with journalism and social networking sites as possible sites for the political and publicness to take place. Therefore, while the political guides the choices made in terms of the political movements that are included, this idea of the mediality of the public therefore becomes the analytics with which media discourse is confronted. This analytics means that we are able to say something about the extent to which publics are agonistic and allow for performances of conflict rather than only reproducing hegemonic identities (Lünenborg & Raetzsch, 2018). This will be discussed further in

the concluding section in relation to the extent to which the different studies as a whole can contribute to this discussion about media and its publicness.

Identities in media discourse

Identity studies constitute a field of high complexity in terms of both its history and its contemporary field of employment, ranging from interest in the self, social groups, and the intersection of personal identity and social groups to the fragmented subjects in discourse (Wetherell, 2010). It involves the study of fragmented identity in discourse that glues together the different studies that in this strand of identity research are part of a research tradition that has "turned to the implications of what endured among this plurality, what became invisible, what was hegemonic and with what consequences" (p. 15). In the different papers, we present analyses of how political identity endures in media discourses and what is visible and not really visible, which forms of identities need to struggle to be visible, and what consequences that has for how we understand political engagement and what it can be.

To say something about how political identities unfold in media discourses is to say a great deal about what it means to be political in contemporary democracy, as the public is continuously mediated. The aspects of being political put into focus in the papers deal with the figure of the political subject and what this figure is able to do, know, feel, and be. The different complex identities constructed in discourse, like the outcome of participation in these settings, give us variants of the possibilities and limits of participation in discourse. It is important to note that identity as well as subjectivity (i.e. the political subjects asserting their agency) should not be understood as a psychic and experienced internal feeling among those individual activists who in different ways are included in the study but as something registered in discourse (Edwards, 1997). This is important for two different reasons. The first reason is that I find it ethically dubious to ascribe experienced feelings to people who appear in media texts. Secondly, for the sake of the study of discourse, it is not self-evident that it would matter if the felt identity and the identity in discourse would differ. As this thesis deals with the way in which different political identities are made possible in discourse, it is important for epistemological reasons to point out what this design does not allow. However, there is important critical work guided by ethnographical designs on how participation in the

media is experienced and how it facilitates engagement (Couldry, 2000; Lomborg, 2014; Palmer, 2017; Vivienne, 2016).

With that stated clearly enough, research on political identity emphasizes different aspects of the importance of identity in research on political agency. Some theorists (Amnå & Ekman, 2013; Dahlgren, 2009, 2013b) and researchers link the importance of political identity to the internalized idea that people have of themselves as political, not seldom of being knowledgeable about and able to make changes to the society in which they live (Amnå & Ekman, 2013; Doona, 2016; Ekström & Sveningsson, 2017). Rather than being in opposition to such research, I place myself alongside this tradition but adopt a stronger post-structuralist (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001; Marchart, 2007; Stavrakakis, 1999) position in which emphasis is placed on the field of political action, in this case media discourse, rather than people's experience and perceptions. However, this is an epistemological choice that can be seen as a complement to the research referred to above. Identities within the tradition with which I align myself are unstable and performative (Butler, 2005; Goffman, 1959). Likewise, they are not fully or at times even slightly voluntary (Costera Meijer & Baukje, 1998). They are enacted in as well as imposed by discourse. They are understood as a range of possibilities, which in their own way are related to the possibility to act in certain ways. The starting point, however, is that they are decentred and contingent, but the radical contingency of discourse and identities, and the study of it, inevitably also points to certain hegemonic forms of identity and identification in discourse that contribute to the discussion about what a citizen can be and what those who act politically have to become when they enter media discourse. Again, as with publics and publicness, there is an important dialectic in the theoretical understanding of identities as decentred, but they, in the context of the social and discursive settings, are rather structured. The dialectics in this analytical movement between the possibilities in identities and the structuration of discourse opens up for a discussion of the possibilities in which those who participate are and are allowed to be political in specific public settings.

Media discourse and how political identities come to matter

One important surface on which these participatory identities take shape and come to matter is media discourse. Without downplaying all the different ways in which media matter in people's lives, there is a constant in what it does, and that is to produce discourse. While discourse can be different things, the important thing that media discourse allows that is of particular interest to this thesis is "producing discourse of political (dis)engagement" (Ekström & Tolson, 2017, p. 1). Ekström and Tolson point to the importance of studying media discourse as a way of grasping how it constitutes and allows for political engagement. To a great extent, the figure of engagement can be shown in relation to what those who are supposed to be engaged become through this intersection of acting and discourse. Media as discourse provides a comprehensible analytical scope for analysing action, knowledge, and emotions. While it is important to acknowledge the importance of the non-discursive, one major point of this dissertation is to show that it is through the layer of discourse that the relevant aspect of the social is presented to us. On the basis of epistemological coherence, I have therefore chosen to stay close to the discursive. One could without doubt have considered other ways of conceptualizing media and its relation to political identity actions that would have been of relevance, such as "media as practice" (Couldry, 2004).

The studies are bound together through discourse, as it has theoretical and empirical implications for all the studies at the level of theory and methodology as well as in terms of the empirical data. One reason to highlight the importance of discourse is to place this project in the productive research field that studies the intersection of politics in a wider sense and its relation to media discourse (Ekström, 2002; Ekström & Tolson, 2017; Fairclough, 1995; Hutchby, 2006; Tolson & Ekström, 2013).

A critical adventure

The interdisciplinary field of discourse studies in general and critical discourse studies in particular has been very productive in studying the relation between social structures and texts. Media and communication studies occupy a privileged place in this field, as media texts are often

immediately available to researchers (Talbot, 2007). The combination of the availability of data and the theoretical argumentation for the importance of texts gives us ways to cope with the wider social implications of media texts. As I will try to show, this combination builds an important basis for why the framework of critical discourse analysis is contributing to the problem at hand. The relation to CDA is not as strongly articulated in all of the different papers, but they are all associated with more general and programmatic ideas formulated within the field of CDA. I will draw on Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 1992) to situate the theoretical and epistemological scope of the thesis as a whole as well as to address the aspects of this model that are implicated in the different papers.

The tradition of critical discourse analysis (CDA), being a broad umbrella tradition for the interest of studying discourse in its social contexts, takes into account both the structural and the textual aspect of discourse in the analysis of specific texts. Fairclough offers, in an influential account, an analytical scheme of discourse that is divided into three different dimensions, all dialectically related to each other, that the researcher as CDA analyst has to take into consideration. These dimensions are the *social practice (socio-cultural practice)*, *discursive practice*, and *text*. The level of social or socio-cultural practice corresponds to the level of wider social structures that needs to be theorized to understand and the social aspect of discourse. The level of discursive practice is the institutional structures and routines in which discourse is produced and consumed.

To discuss the ways in which the relation between the three-dimensional model in CDA and the different analyses is materialized, I will use a metaphor and treat the model as something sticky, which sticks in different ways to analytical objects in the different studies. By sticky I refer to how these dimensions should be seen as analytical concepts that glue together levels of analysis with different kinds of *text* and *contexts*. The dialectics of the three-dimensional model should be understood in such a way that, if we want to say something about discourse as a social phenomenon, we have to integrate the analysis of text into a wider framework in which the discursive practice and social practice are taken into account. If we want to say something about how texts and discursive practices are constitutive as well as disruptive of norms and ideas in society, it is especially important to have a sociological as well as a theoretical idea of the constitution of such norms and ideas. Much of the work within CDA argues that we understand the importance of how ideologies, for example neoliberal,

sexist, racist, and post-political ideologies, are (re)produced in media discourse. This is important work as it shows, when at its best, in detail, how social systems of domination and power relations are intertwined in everyday and institutional language use. While I undoubtably place myself within this tradition, I also want to emphasize that discursive practices can disrupt and complicate ideas and norms. In addition, to relate CDA to the political, the latter is one such theoretical ground for pointing questions at discourse and the way in which it allows political conflict and its subjects to appear. Discourse also presents fissures and cracks, which point to the incomplete relation between social structures and discursive practices (Macgilchrist, 2011).

All the four papers present studies of discursive practices through the analysis of text. Two of them include analyses of journalistic discourse, derived from both print and radio, and two of the analyses are texts from different aspects of Twitter discourse. The different types of text analysed in the papers are constituted through different discursive practices, which need further discussion in a few important ways. The specifics of the discursive practices are elaborated in each paper, but they are also raised here against the background of the more general problem.

Media discourse as a place of political engagement

> ... it is the attributes of the (mediated) discursive environment itself that becomes pertinent. These shape the character of the political field, as well as the specific contours of the civic subject in concrete situations. (Dahlgren, 2012, p. 83)

In alignment with Peter Dahlgren's argument in the quote above, the reason to give media discourse a privileged place is that media as discourse shapes our understanding of politics as a practice; more specifically, and important for our discussions about political identities, it give us the contours of those who are acting politically in specific situations. Media discourse can imply many different settings, and in this thesis I attempt to focus on two important public settings through which people undoubtedly are acting politically. The choice of including these two discursive settings in this project should not be seen as facilitating a mere comparison between the two. As the subject matter, political identities in media discourse, is a little like a moving target, the thesis is also highly motivated to study a moving target in different settings and to provide insight into the ways in which identities are both hegemonic and disruptive in two different settings. First, journalism, in the tradition of media and communication studies in general

and political communication specifically, has had a privileged role in many countries and contexts. Second, social networks, and more specifically Twitter, have become a predominant setting to study when it comes to political communication in a broad sense. Below I will give an account of the relevant discursive practices in each setting, while the end of this chapter concludes with a discussion of the common and different characteristics of the "social practice" of these settings. As such, the two-sided empirical focus is first of all not theoretically but empirically motivated, as these are discursive settings in which these practices are taking place as well as settings with which media and communication studies are occupied.

Journalistic discourse – Doing, knowing, and talking

I will now discuss how the dimensions in CDA stick to the empirical analyses in the articles, in which journalism as discourse is in focus. In Papers I and III, the discursive practice is constituted of news journalism in which activists are acting as sources and interviewees. The activists are here subjected to different negotiations in terms of what they are able to be and say. In the first paper, in which I analyse print newspapers, the focus is on how knowledge and political efficacy are expressed. In Paper III, in which radio interviews with activists are featured, the analytical focus is on how the interviewed subject is constituted, with a focus on the complex and fragile process in which one can speak about others and oneself. The dimension of discursive practice in these two papers can be found in the vast literature on how journalism as a practice is to a great extent occupied with protecting its own boundaries and how journalism and its sources are bound up in relations of power (Hopmann & Shehata, 2011; Kroon Lundell & Eriksson, 2010; Schudson, 2012; Thorbjørnsrud & Ustad Figenschou, 2014). The relations of power between the journalist and the interviewee as the source are intertwined in political, technical, and professional structures, in which the source or interviewee and his or her discursive participation are made possible but at the same time conditioned by these structures.

Previous research shows how and in which ways news journalism is highly integrated into the hegemonic idea of politics and represents political actors (Cammaerts, 2012; Fairclough, 1995; Hallin, 1989; Hearns-Branaman, 2013; Jacobsson, 2016; Markham, 2014). The consequence of some of this research is that journalism is a public discourse in which intelligible

politics is mainly limited to that of institutionalized, predominantly parliamentary politics. As such, journalism, it is claimed, echoes the "post-democratic" (Crouch, 2004) or "post-political" (Mouffe, 2005) tendencies in society, concepts that point out how politics represses conflict and denies political change. In relation to political movements, this post-political internalization in journalistic practice leads to a difficulty for journalism, seen as a profession, to understand as well as making intelligible demands, hopes, and dreams of radical political movements, as these are either not understood or not seen as legitimate when they are cut off from legitimate spheres of politics (Hearns-Branaman, 2013). What is shown in the two papers is that the post-political horizon structures the possible political identities that activists can enact in their participation in journalism.

Knowledge has increasingly become its own site of conflict in recent years (Dahlgren, 2018), and mainstream journalism has been placed at the centre of these conflicts, being a common target for nationalist groups, for example. However, the epistemology of journalism itself is important to discuss, as it cuts right across the discussions about what it is possible to claim and from which position within journalistic discourse (Ekström, 2002). In the context of the two studies on journalism, the epistemics of journalism is not in crisis but belongs to a rather traditional news journalistic position, which in turn becomes interesting as those activists who are trying to make claims are confronted with the strong modality of knowledge claims found in journalism, one that is highly important in the constitution of journalistic identity and ideology (Ekström, 2002; Schudson, 2012).

Twitter discourse – Feelings and identities in communicative capitalism

At the risk of stating the obvious, political participation in and through social network services in general and Twitter in particular offers us something different from what we consider to be traditional journalism. Keeping the idea of Fairclough's dimensions as sticky, it is inevitable that Twitter discourse has analytical as well as textual aspects to it that will be stuck to the surface of the three dimensions, which are different from those of journalism. The discursive practice of a tweet or a Twitter profile is rather different from what we are interested in when we are studying print or broadcast journalism, even with similar overarching search questions.

Critical scholarship on social network sites (Couldry, 2014; Dean, 2010; Fuchs, 2013) is to a large extent occupied with political economy. The reasons for this should be understood against the background of how these networks are embedded within a predominantly global corporate sphere of capital. SNSs are not only embedded into global capitalism in a more radical sense than traditional media but have also become one of the most important financial drivers in contemporary capitalism, which puts these at a different structural economical level from mainstream journalism. Even though the economic structures in themselves constitute the object of study for the thesis, critical discourse analysis prompts the analyst to include relevant social structures that are important to the constitution of a specific discourse. As such, it is necessary to raise some of the predominant discussions about the economic aspects of this communicative system. One of the most influential critics of the role of capitalism in structuring politics in the digital age is Jodi Dean. She names the era of capitalism in which we find ourselves "communicative capitalism", which she argues is a

> strange convergence of democracy and capitalism, in networked communications and entertainment media. On the one hand, networked communications technologies materialize the values heralded as central to democracy. Democratic ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation are realized in and through expansions and intensifications of global telecommunication networks. On the other hand, the speed, simultaneity, and interconnectivity of electronic communications produce massive distortions and concentrations of wealth as communicative exchanges and their technological preconditions become commodified and capitalized. (Dean, 2010, p. 4)

This long quote captures not only her critical position but also much of what has attracted both critique and, perhaps even more, fantasies about how the advent of social networks could save a democracy in crisis. Fantasies about access and inclusion as well as participation colonized the discussions about social networks for a long time, while the voices that emphasize the accelerated temporality and the commodification of communication have become louder in recent decades (Kaun, 2016). As already noted, the socio-economic aspects of social networks do not have strong operational value in the empirical studies, but they are an important structuring factor for the way in which participation is possible through social networks and for the choices of analytical focus that will be argued for below. To analyse and discuss the role of emotions and identification in political participation on social network sites, this level of analysis is of importance.

The emotive social networks

One of the most prevalent discussions in recent years about politics in general and politics on social networks more specifically concerns the worrying echoes of the increasing presence of emotions in public discourse. This is often linked to the growing fear of what is often condensed as "populism". I will not discuss this specific debate about emotions and populism, as it lacks relevance to the thesis. Rather, I will point to the different ways offered by research to understand the emergence of feelings in public settings, such as social network sites, and the political and democratic consequences of this emergence. As noted before, much of the literature on political communication is devoid of emotions, but there is a growing quantity of literature dealing with public feelings (Burkitt, 2014; Coleman, 2013b; Frosh, 2011; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001; Papacharissi, 2015; Staiger, Cvetkovich, & Reynolds, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2016). In the increasingly vast and diverse literature on public feelings, the emotional aspect is understood both as something that enables people to create bonds of solidarity (Papacharissi, 2015) and as the only possible modality of response in contemporary public space, a space made up of social networks that demands instant reaction from its users and in which deliberation becomes impossible (Dean, 2010). Emotions become a modality in SNSs that has structured much of the talk and as such is an important aspect of the discursive practice dimension of SNSs in general and Twitter specifically.

Identification in crisis on social networks

The politics of identity, as well as identity politics, has attracted a substantial amount of interest both in the public debate and in research, since computer-mediated communication and social networks, in their different incarnations, have turned the concept of identity on its head more than once. This extends from the early emphasis on the limitless opportunities to express and play with one's identity in unprecedented manners (Turkle, 1995) to the contemporary moral panic about the loss of authenticity of users whereby commentators imagine a dark environment full of trolls and predators lurking behind the screen, not to mention non-human bots (van Zoonen, 2013). Identity and the problem of identification have thus come to be at the centre of important debates concerning online security, authenticity, fake news, and integrity. They are further discussed in terms of what happens with the political figure in this context in which social networks offer quite wide possibilities for people to define

themselves in the way that they want to while at the same time governments and business models promote ideas that users should identify and define themselves in accordance with these norms.

Methodological reflections

The process of writing a doctoral thesis in the form of a compilation of papers had its impact on the methodological choices. Not every choice was predetermined from the beginning of the process, which demanded a pragmatic rather than a programmatic stance in relation to the choices of empirical data as well as the methodological framework. As already noted in the rather extensive chapter on media discourse, the methodological choices are discourse oriented and guided by critical discourse analysis as a framework for thinking about and relating the analysis of texts to wider social practices and relations based on theories for understanding these relations in the literature. However, this approach demands that these relations between text and wider social practices are studied. This relation is, however, different in the individual papers. The methodological strategies were chosen to encompass the differences in each paper and the research questions, but perhaps even more important for the choice of method was the nature of the empirical data for each of the studies. The discursive practices in the different settings have already been discussed, but the methodological implications of this and the basis of the choices made will be discussed in this chapter.

As already noted, the studies all offer implications for how identities in discourse structure participants' possibilities to appear as political. I will present the analytical concepts used in each paper and point out the ways in which they help to explicate the joint questions of the thesis. Paper I includes an analysis of modality, which, in critical discourse studies (Fairclough, 1992; Machin & Mayr, 2012), is an important analytical concept when analysing how authority or legitimacy is enacted in discourse in relation to speaker identities. Modality in discourse should be understood more specifically as the strength with which something is expressed. Fairclough argues that the study of modality makes it possible to analyse how personal and social identities are textured in discourse "in the sense that what you commit yourself to is a significant part of what you are" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 166). This analysis is conducted in relation to the speaker identities of activists in printed news discourse with a focus on how political claims and dreams as well as knowledge are expressed by activists in quotes and accounts of their claims made by journalists in Swedish news articles. Paper II studies Twitter discourse and as such deals

with a different discursive practice. The unit of analysis in this case is individual tweets and the use of emotional language. As in Paper I, Paper II points in a similar way to a specific expression, knowledge, political hope, and efficacy in Paper I and emotions in Paper II and the way in which these expressions construct different political identities. They deal with different discursive settings but share a common focus on the "ideational" (Halliday, 1978) level of political discourse. That is, both these papers are mainly interested in the kind of politics that is constructed through the identities, and the political identities are related to the ideational content of discourse.

This relationship is tilted in Papers III and IV and, while they also differ from each other in terms of the discursive context, they share that they are both concerned with the direct analytical confrontation of participatory identities in discourse (Goffman, 1959). Paper III is based on an analysis of news radio interviews and how activists who are interviewed negotiate between the possibility to talk about others and the possibility to talk about themselves. In this sense, the focus is turned from the political as content to the political and discursive aspects of participatory identities themselves. In Paper IV, this focus returns as it studies the ways in which people who talk about political issues present themselves on Twitter. Both these papers point to the inherent (im)possibilities in different discursive settings for people to be political as such rather than to be by claiming facts, desiring change, or feeling public love, sorrow, and rage. If it would be possible to say that we have one disparate analysis at hand, it concerns the precarity of how identities come into being through political knowing, feeling, and being.

Sampling

In the selection of cases as well as the empirical focus of the cases, there were several objectives to take into account. As already stated, I started my path with the case Asylstafetten without knowing how far that would take me or what would follow. After conducting interviews with the group as well as participating in their manifestation, I came to understand that, for this particular group, the most important media discourse practice was their interaction with news journalists. What this meant for the forthcoming studies was that I needed to move my focus to other discourses of political participation, as I wanted to include more than one media discourse as the empirical basis for my work. The second site of participatory discourse was

found on Twitter regarding the event Kämpa Malmö. It came from taking a course on the sociology of emotions during which I became interested in the role that emotions play in online discourse on political protest. This made me consider possible empirical cases. Kämpa Malmö seemed to be a rich and interesting case to study in that it was both tragic and euphoric in its expression. The third scene and sampling were at the same time more difficult and easier to motivate. For the fourth paper, I wanted a broader sample of Twitter accounts that did not belong to a specific political movement. Simultaneously, I wanted to limit my study to a political context that was familiar to the other three studies. As such, I decided to sample accounts based on the interaction with a few strategically chosen accounts, all engaged in different parts of the antiracist left in Sweden. The different sampling strategies were separate and dependent on what might be the most valid empirical data to analyse in relation to the specific research interest.

Concluding remarks

The most important aspect of this text is the bringing together of the different studies to show that they are part of a joint project while being both similar to and different from each other. If we understand the different papers as standpoints from which we can observe something emerge, this is what I will try to achieve in this section. What remains is to highlight the most important conclusions that can be drawn from the project as a whole. There are important common and separate conclusions to be drawn; some are tied to one or more study and some are common to all of them. The first attempt is to tie together and give order to the disparate case studies of identities in discourse. The second aims to emphasize the precarious state of political identities as such and a call for continuous interest in the space between participatory practices and mediated identities and to resist making participants' positions essential as we analyse political events.

Political identities – A matter of mediated discourse and action

One important conclusion derived from the different analyses is that political participatory identities are contingent on (media) discourse. From the start of this project, this was an important problem and to some extent a normative departure to delve into political identities at the surface of the

discourse and to try to understand how these are shifting in their making rather than a way to adhere to ideal types or fixed models of political identities. The relation between the media, as both a space in which discourse circulates and as a public in which action is undertaken, and the figure of the political participant are strong in the fields that are engaged with civic and political participation. Questions such as how media facilitate or offer informational depth and width for people as citizens to be able to make electoral decisions (Asp, 2007) or how forms of participation do or do not reach the ideal type models offered by political theory are very important (Carpentier, 2011). However, what these very different fields of research share is a rather fixed idea of the political subject and what it is supposed to be. This thesis has, through the different papers, shown how media discourse configures political identities in different ways, with some different implications for the kinds of subject that appear, for example the knowing, the passionate, and those who are not allowed to know but are allowed to feel or witness: the individual and the collective identities emerging from public appearance.

What I also try to show is how using different methodologies and theoretical foci highlights slightly different aspects of what we learn about political identities. If we are zooming in on the expression of knowing in journalism, political identities will have a specific horizon, as emotions on Twitter will show other parts of the processes of identification. While these might be somewhat bland results, one can think about them as representing what Vattimo (2012) in philosophy calls "weak thought", as an ethical principle in presenting the cracks and impossibilities rather than the big eternal answers and being aware of what it cannot and will not say.

A precarious democratic subject

The main contribution stemming from taking a discursive approach to political identities is to complicate the way in which identity is made in the media. We need to be careful about making too simplistic assumptions about those who make their voices heard in public or what they need to become in undertaking this, and there is a necessary precarious quality to become political. This line of thought runs through a more general scene in which these studies should have a place. It puts it right at the centre of the discussion about what the democratic subject is and the implications for mediated political identities. The political subject that tries to emerge in the practices analysed in the different papers are precarious in their different

ways, but they are precarious and in need of mediation to exist and through mediation and discourse they are also made both possible and impossible; they need to struggle in and through their existence.

I will not enter into all the intricate discussions on this matter, and it will become obvious that the essence of this subject, which is supported by all the studies, should not be sought after directly and in itself. Important support for this can be found in Judith Butler's work. To point to who is political at a certain moment and in a certain context should not be a nominalist adventure. Discussing public assemblies and the ways in which they are democratic, she states:

> So, apart from the nominalists who think that democracies are those forms of government called democracies, there are discursive strategists who rely on modes of public discourse, marketing, and propaganda to decide the question of which states and which popular movements will or will not be called democratic. (Butler, 2015, p. 3)

The democratic political subject is not static; rather, it is important to emphasize its precarious form and the fact that it has to perform itself every time in every new context. If we then return to the different papers and the analyses of a few different forms of performance and their im(mediate) discursive context, we can see how the precariousness of the subject is shaped and understood differently. The form of journalism and the relation between activist and journalist as well as journalism as discourse are creating different limits from which the democratic subject can emerge from Twitter. What these media discourses have in common is that they place the subject in a precarious state, however different they may be. Therefore, I would like to propose that, rather than pushing research in the direction of the nominalist strategy, I argue for continuous research on the precarious forms of appearance, as, when we describe the ways in which things are precarious, we can grasp so much more about the enacted identities and their contexts and how they cut through each other.

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Svensk sammanfattning

Vad innebär det att vara politisk i medierna? Det är vad den här avhandlingen både försöker svara på och komplicera betydelsen av. Avhandlingen består i huvudsak av fyra enskilda studier som i detalj analyserar vad det innebär att vara politisk i medierna idag och vilka konsekvenser det har för hur vi förstår demokratiskt deltagande. Genom att studera olika former av politiskt handlande som här hemma inom den antirasistiska vänstern i Sverige mellan 2013 och 2018 och hur dessa tar sig uttryck i olika mediala diskurser, journalistik i tryckt såväl som radioform och Twitter, vill avhandlingen diskutera hur politiska identiteter skapas genom deltagande. Den tar sin avstamp ur en forskningstradition som är intresserad av hur mediala diskurser formar möjligheterna att göra och att vara. Det vill säga hur det mediala språkets sammansättningar och bruk sätter ramar för varandet och görandet, i detta fall ett politiskt sådant. Vad det innebär för den specifika samling studier och vad som binder samman dem är ett intresse i hur olika former av *vetande, handlande, kännande och varande* och möjligheterna till dessa skapas i samspelet mellan politiskt handlande och den mediala kontext som det sker i. Den gör det med ett fokus på hur politiska identiteter konstrueras i detta samspel, som på så sätt berättar för oss en större berättelse om de politiska subjekt som är möjliga i en samtida demokratisk kontext.

Frågeställningarna som är gemensamma för avhandlingsprojektet har varit:

1. Hur är politiska identiteter konstruerade genom deltagande i olika mediala diskurser?
2. Vilka implikationer har identiteterna och hur de kan konstrueras för hur vi förstår vad det betyder att vara politisk i den samtida demokratin?

Avhandlingen försöker svara på frågorna genom en teoretisk utgångspunkt i frågor som rör det politiska och vad gränserna för detta kan vara, vilka kommunikativa praktiker som är politiska och på vilka sätt de kan vara det. Det är sedan genom studiet av ett antal politiska händelser och deras mediering som frågan om det politiska och de politiska identiteterna aktualiseras. Det är som ett raster uppdelat i fyra punkter som avhandlingen som stort delar upp sitt fokus, där de olika studierna erbjuder ett eller flera fokus vardera. Två studier har journalistik som sitt empiriska underlag och två har Twitter. Det är framförallt inom ramen för vad som har kommit att kallas Kritisk diskursanalys som avhandlingen har sin teoretiska och metodologiska hemvist, vilket innebär att

avhandlingen vill visa på hur sociala relationer (re)produceras genom diskurs, i detta fall mediala diskurser.

Den första studien utgörs av en analys av hur journalistik som en diskursiv praktik möjliggör för aktivister att ge uttryck för politiskt vetande och möjlighet till handling. Den gör det genom att studera en grupp asylaktivister och deras uttalanden i svensk dagspress. Analysen visar att journalistiken begränsar möjligheterna till både vetande och anspråk på politiska drömmar och framtiden, genom att deras aktion anpassas till en förståelse av politisk som karaktäriseras av att oförståelse inför något radikalt annorlunda. Aktivisternas förhoppningar och drömmar får möjlighet att artikuleras men kan inte bemötas med frågor. Likaså blir deras uttalanden om hur situationen för asylsökanden ser ut begränsade till att vara personliga och individualiserande vittnesmål snarare än politiskt legitima sanningar sprungna ur erfarenhet.

I den andra delstudien analyseras vilken roll känslouttryck har i Kämpa Malmö, en antifascistisk manifestation och dess mediering genom Twitter. Den tar avstamp i en diskussion om hur känslor varit ett ämne antingen utestängt från diskussionen om politisk kommunikation eller behandlad med viss reservation, som om det vore något avvikande och icke önskvärt inom ramen för demokratiskt handlande. Studien har sitt fokus på de sätt på vilka olika identiteter och subjekt skapas genom en känslomässig politisk kommunikation. Analysen visar på hur olika deltagare på Twitter binds samman genom känslomässiga uttryck.

Den tredje delstudien har åter journalistik och samma asylrättsaktivistiska grupp som sin empiriska fokus, men istället för tryckt press är det radiointervjuer som studeras. Radiointervjuerna bjuder in till en samtalsanalys av interaktionen mellan journalisterna och aktivisterna för att kunna lyfta frågan om hur de olika institutionella relationerna mellan journalistik och aktivism ser ut och förhandlas fram. Analysen visar hur den identitet en talare har i en institutionell kontext inte är given utan måste förhandlas fram mellan aktivist och journalist och att den är en prekär identitet som inte kan tas för given.

Den fjärde delstudien har likt den andra Twitter som sitt studieobjekt men här är det frågan om att analysera hur politiskt engagerade personer väljer att presenterar sig på Twitter. Analysen visar att det finns en mängd olika strategier i att presentera sig och att de knyter an till en större diskussion om jaget på nätet och de normer som reglerar vilka vi får, bör och kan vara. Den visar på att det råder en stor osäkerhet, eller pluralitet, kring hur vi bör presentera oss.

Genom avhandlingens delstudier presenteras en samling likartade men ändå skilda analyser som på olika sätt lyfter fram det prekära i mediala identiteter, som visar på att mediets, oavsett om det är journalistik eller Twitter, prekära kontext gentemot vilken poliskt deltagande aldrig kan stå som autonom. Det betyder att en av huvudslutsatserna är att vi *inte* kan ta för givet vem någon är och blir när denna någon ger sig in i en framträdande och offentlig medial kontext. Detta subjekt blir kringskuret på olika sätt vilket alltså är en begränsning likaväl som det är en förutsättning för allt deltagande. Men ett framträdande drag för just den här kringskurna identiteten är att den är i många fall är en individuell identitet som snarare än att möjliggöra en förnimmelse av en framväxande del av ett kollektiv, begränsas till att ge uttryck för egna personens "autentiska" insats, åsikt och vetande.

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