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THE ONGOING STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS  
OF THE DIGITAL PUBLIC SPHERE(S):  
THE ROLE OF JOURNALISM

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To my father, my mother, my brother  
- and my grandmother,  
for always holding my hand.

To my grandfather.



## Abstract

This thesis explores the current ongoing structural transformations of the (digital) public sphere(s) on Twitter, given that the technological advancements pose questions about the value, the sufficiency and the sustainability of Habermas' theory in a digital epoch. The theoretical framework is developed around the concepts of the public sphere, democracy and journalism, which are examined diachronically and through the lens of *hybridity*. It focuses on their systemic relationship, which is defined by their common ground, participation. By building a parallel between the Habermasian theory and Athenian Democracy, and by examining the evolving role of the *public*, the study focuses specifically on the role of media actors in political dialogue during elections. The deep interrelation of the concepts guided the thesis' rationale, which regards the public sphere through a different prism, that of its duality: as a concept with a normative and a pragmatic side.

The structural transformations of the (digital) public sphere(s) and its formation on Twitter are affected by two factors: the role of the *press* within the platform, and the current political and financial setting. As such, the empirical research looks into the General Elections of 2015 in the United Kingdom, and contributes to the development of appropriate empirical research methodologies, so as to shed light on the use of this popular platform by traditional media, net-native media and journalists, as well as to audiences' level of responsiveness. The empirical research consists of Twitter research on media actors' accounts and on electoral hashtags; and of interviews with journalists.

The thesis concludes with an internal conversation between the normative and the pragmatic models: the first defines how the pragmatic public sphere on Twitter is mapped, whereas the latter is the foundation for the thesis' proposal for the reconceptualization of the normative model in the digital epoch.



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## 1.0. Introduction

### 1.1. Public Sphere, Democracy and Journalism

It was in 1962 when Jürgen Habermas submitted for publication his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and introduced to the German-speaking audience at first, his public sphere concept (Finlayson 2005). Almost fifty years after its publication and twenty-five after its translation in English, Habermas' book on the public sphere remains not only a central concept for democratic theory but also an essential approach for the understanding of the relationship between media and democracy. Habermas' work started a lively and long-lasting debate among theorists from a wide range of disciplines, from social and political theory, cultural studies, media and journalism studies.

Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt focusing on how public sphere is discussed in media studies refer to a "fascination with Habermas' theory" which could be explained accurately by the term "the rise and rise" of the concept within this academic area (2013: 1). Its importance lies mostly in the argument that a vigorous public sphere helps citizens to "remain plugged into the daily routines of democratic governance and public affairs" (Papacharissi 2010: 114) and its key characteristic is that it aims to provide "a normative democratic theory centred on how public's participation, through discursive processes of deliberation, could legitimately influence political decision-making" (Livingstone & Lunt 2013: 5). Journalists and media have a critical role in these processes: by adopting the position of an institution operating in the public sphere they could contribute to the creation of the conditions that will encourage and facilitate civic participation and deliberation (Livingstone & Lunt 2013: 8).

The public sphere idea is affected by societal and historical conditions and for that reason it has been subjected to several transformations and criticisms. Habermas posits his ideal version of the public sphere, the bourgeois, in 18th century Europe, when the maturation of capitalism is being witnessed, and the transition from its early form to its mercantilist phase occurs (Habermas 1989: 19, Edgar 2006). In this context, he regards as the realization of his concept the institutions of that time, the coffeehouses - in a literal sense those social spaces where social gatherings took place and where rational-critical debate unfolded to reach informed decisions and to formulate public opinion. This visualization of the public sphere is particularly important for various reasons: it highlights its connection with democracy, it emphasises its

metaphoric essence as a concept with a significant degree of flexibility, and it manages to underline its contribution to the emergence of journalism and to the enhancement of the comprehension of how journalism is defined, even in contemporary times (Conboy 2004: 50, Örnebring 2010: 68).

This contextualization is not only important to understand the conditions that led to the existence of the public sphere historically, but also to perceive how different social backgrounds affected the concept, as for instance, its disintegration and decline at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to neo-mercantilist policies (Habermas 1989: 165-166, Webster 2006), or the revival of the debate due to technological advancements, like the Internet. It also highlights the contribution of the present thesis, which by positioning the concept in the digital epoch and by mapping the present political arenas on Twitter, underlines that the public sphere is not a static, but a flexible, open and adaptable concept. It also argues that the related academic discussion focuses almost exclusively to the public sphere *per se*, and not to its structural transformations. By moving the focus of interest to the latter, though, the thesis supports that Habermas' theory not only points to the *ideal model* that was realised in the 18<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois society, but that he also offers a measure of comparison on the reasons why his concept existed in different, less perfect, forms afterwards. Based on this argumentation, it is suggested that the factors that led to the formation of the public sphere and its transformation still exist and still cause structural transformations on the concept. Consequently, the thesis proposes a dual perception of the public sphere in normative and in pragmatic terms (as analysed in Chapter 5): The normative public sphere offers a model of comparison for the pragmatic, whereas the latter provides the basis for the re-conceptualization of the concept in the digital era. In both these perceptions, the discussion concerns as much the role of journalism as that of the public and its participation within new mediated environments.

At this point, also lies the importance of the perception of the public sphere as a metaphor, which when it is materialized, may take several shapes and forms and adopt multiple incarnations (Papacharissi 2010: 119). Papacharissi explains that the metaphor itself has been broadened to address contemporary critique and approaches and thus, it remains open to see “how well, how poorly or simply how the Internet fits in this metaphor” (2010: 119), providing this way a starting point and simultaneously a context to the dialogue about how the Internet - or by expanding this for purposes of this work, social media - could host a public sphere or



revitalise the Habermasian concept. In other words, “Habermas’ public sphere presents a theoretical model that allows us to discuss the civic gravitas of the Internet, contextualise it within the contemporary socio-economic setting, and compare it to that of other media” (Papacharissi 2010: 113).

This reasoning highlights the main inquiry of the present work, which is to explore whether social media meet the requirements to be considered as the new arena(s) in which political dialogue could take place and, subsequently, if they could be considered as digital version(s) of the public sphere. In these, the role of journalism is under examination, and particularly how different journalistic actors incorporate networking platforms in their everyday practices so as to serve their democratic role. The in-depth analysis of the interconnection of involved concepts (public sphere, democracy, journalism) as presented in the literature review [Chapter 2] is the key to understand their historical roots and their theoretical substance. Before proceeding, though, a brief reference to social media is needed.

The advent of social media<sup>1</sup> was accompanied by a wide range of reactions regarding their ability to affect the public sphere, either by expanding the current one or by introducing a digital version of it, and, subsequently, about their democratic dynamic. These varied from euphoria and enthusiasm to pessimistic predictions. Reactions of this kind are not new: they accompanied previous technological advancements as well, especially when it comes to journalism (Eldridge 2015). However, once again, the appearance of these new platforms triggered narratives about the promises they hold, encouraged discussions about their democratic expectations, and led to the framing of these discourses within utopian or dystopian polarities that ultimately manage to highlight the hopes and fears that are projected on new technologies (Papacharissi 2010). More importantly, social media posed challenges not only for the three emerging concepts of this thesis separately - public sphere, democracy and journalism - but for their relationships too.

Having as a starting point that social media “have fuelled an explosion” of participation in news processes (Hermida 2012: 312) by exploiting the possibilities that Web 2.0<sup>2</sup> offered, they have facilitated the involvement of the audience in several stages of these processes: the

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of social media is included in the Glossary (Appendix C)

<sup>2</sup> The definition of Web 2.0 is included in the Glossary (Appendix C)

observation, selection, filtering, distribution and interpretation of events (Hermida *et al.* 2012: 816). However, how people are involved in those processes and how they experience this involvement tends to be underestimated as it is substantially more varied than often assumed. Irene Costera Meijer and Tim Groot Kormelink (2014) studied news consumption in the decade after 2004 and identified 16 different practices of how users experience news and how they choose to name this participation. Thus, users experience news by reading, watching, viewing, listening, checking, snacking, monitoring, scanning, searching, clicking, linking, sharing, liking, recommending, commenting and voting (2014: 12), which according to the authors, has been deepened and increased by the digitization of journalism. Their findings suggest that there is an alteration to what users consider as news (2014: 13), a view shared by Kate Crawford who suggests that, especially on Twitter, what counts as news differs between individuals, and varies according to a multitude of factors like geographical location, nationality, age, interests and profession (Crawford 2010: 116). What is more, Costera Meijer and Kormelink point to the fact that new user routines constantly emerge. What constitutes a significant aspect of their results concerns the previously discussed social side of digital media, as they argue that these platforms increasingly meet the need for “public connection” (2014: 13). Although, they underline that the value of news in people’s everyday lives seems to be more dependent on the user’s needs and less on the increasing technological, social and participatory affordances of these platforms (2014: 13), highlighting an important question: what does this changing perception of news mean for actual journalistic practices?

Additionally, social media platforms encouraged new forms of journalism to flourish. Hermida, for instance, developed the notion of *ambient journalism*, which “conceptualises journalism as a tele-mediated practice and experience driven by networked, always-on communication technologies and media systems of immediacy and instantaneity” (2012: 311). According to this theorization, journalism becomes “fragmented, omnipresent, and ingrained in the everyday media experiences of users, with contributions from both professionals and non-professionals” (2012: 311). Hermida’s concept highlights journalism’s presence on social media from a different perspective, which is further analysed in Section 2.2.3.3.

Apart from these two elements, social media platforms have affected journalism in various ways: They have brought in the spotlight alternative forms of journalism (Atton & Hamilton 2011), they have integrated the public in the process of gathering, reporting and

recommending news, they have reframed the role of the public as *active recipients* who are expected “to act when news happens and react when news is published” (Hermida 2011, 2012: 313), but they have also challenged existent forms of journalism as much editorially as ethically: In the verification process, in the interpretation of objectivity, and in the attempt to present distinct boundaries between the personal and the professional (Hermida 2012). Siapera and Dimitrakopoulou (2012) underline their effect in the power of the media to control the information flow, while Deuze (2005) referred to the issue from a financial perspective, by underscoring that the prevailing market logic faced severe financial challenges, depicting recent digital dilemmas on the topic of financial viability of digital journalistic outputs (Cornia *et al.* 2016). At the same time, Deuze (2005) poses questions about journalism’s ability to redefine itself. In a similar vein, Bowman and Willis (2003) note that social media offer the opportunity to challenge media hegemony and power relations in media organizations as well as the absence of private interests that will amplify the chance for a more democratizing environment. These challenges are critical as the appearance of social media triggered a series of definitive events for the journalistic profession from more than one perspective. However, central for this work are questions they posed for the public sphere and their impact on the ways they manage to enhance the democratization of communication and information processes. The changes that occurred in the journalistic profession and their relationship with the public – critical to understanding their effects on the public sphere and on democratization – are highlighted by the ways that legacy media, net-native media and journalists use these new platforms, and this inquiry points directly to the first research question of the thesis (presented later in this section).

With regards to the public sphere specifically, the aim is to explore whether these social spaces are governed by the same rules and norms as the public sphere that Habermas visualised - in other words, if one could locate digital version(s) of the Habermasian coffeehouses. What is more, questions are posed about their ability to democratise public dialogue by providing appropriate public arena(s). Putting this discussion into a historical context, this primarily highlights the notion of *hybridity*, a term that demonstrates the current work’s reliance on the aspect of *diachronicity*, which draws on Andrew Chadwick’s perception of it as “something new that nevertheless has continuities with the old” (2013: 8), or in terms of the Internet, as an aspect that could be translated as “the encouragement of the audience to inject familiar genres and routines into new and unfamiliar information environments” (2013: 13).

Habermas' public sphere is realised in social spaces where two main principles held a central role: publicity, in the sense of openness and access where the *public* is considered as the sovereign body of citizens (Peters 1993: 544), and *Räsonnement*: people's public use of their reason (Habermas 1989). These principles offer an opportunity for perhaps a bold parallel in order to highlight the underlying democratic ideas that are fomented into Habermas' theory and first appeared in the Athenian Democracy. In this parallel *Räsonnement* could be considered as another form of Plato's dialectics (2006): a form of dialogue where through the opposition of different ideas one could reach the truth. Both these practices are based in dialogue, which is considered as the ultimate form of political expression, as well as the ultimate form of participation in decision-making processes. Following this rationale, 19<sup>th</sup> century's coffeehouses could be considered as a version of Agora, the place where political deliberation took place in ancient Athens (Camp 2004). Moving this argumentation further, supportive to this is also Aristotle's perception of the man as a *political animal* in the sense that the *political* is in humans' nature. In this nature is also their ability to organise themselves and function as citizens in political communities (Politics 2006). This opinion is indirectly captured by Habermas' theory, as he regards the public sphere as the political core of the communities of societies he refers to. It should be underlined that analogies usually involve risks, and different historical conditions form different societies. Although, by bearing in mind this precaution and that analogous does not necessarily mean identical but similar, these parallels provides a comprehensive image of how the public sphere is connected with democratic ideas. Besides, democracy is not just a political system of governance but also a guarantee of equality and freedom that offers the possibility of civic virtue (Papacharissi 2010: 4). Furthermore, these parallels underscore conceptual questions of the thesis that complement the research ones. These are concerned with the contemporary *equal* in these parallels: What is the respective Agora in our digital epoch? Is it possible to locate a contemporary analogy for coffeehouses? How are these spaces adjusted and influenced by the contemporary social conditions? If these arenas exist, what are the principles that they are built on?

The conceptual inquiries led to the two key research questions of this thesis and their sub-questions, which are:

R.Q.1. How do journalists use social media to cover the elections?

*R.Q.1.1. How do journalists manage Twitter as a journalistic platform to cover or discuss elections?*

*R.Q.1.2. Can changes in journalistic practices be observed on Twitter?*

*R.Q.1.3. On Twitter, is there apparent dialogue between journalists and the audience?*

R.Q.2. Does Twitter provide a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere?

*R.Q.2.1. Does the activity on this platform meet Habermas' prerequisites?*

*R.Q.2.2. Does the empirical data support the optimistic or pessimistic views on Digital Public Sphere?*

For the research purposes, these questions are contextualised by the General Elections in United Kingdom, that took place on 7 May 2015. Methodologically these inquiries are approached by a mixed methods model consisting of Twitter research and interviews for a timeframe that starts with the dissolution of the Parliament on 30 March 2015, and ends 24 days after the elections, on 31 May 2015, to also capture their aftermath. While the political framing of the topic is evidenced across the thesis, the choice of the elections as the appropriate research background is further explained in Section 3.2, where the research questions are analysed.

## **1.2. The structure of the thesis**

Habermas' book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), is one of the central axes that this thesis' argumentation is based on, thus the literature review [Chapter 2] begins with an in-depth and holistic analysis of the public sphere. This first section is divided in two parts, following Habermas' rationale in his division of his book. Part one discusses the meaning and the theoretical substance of the concept, while the second refers to its decline, its transformation, its reconstruction, as well as to the debates that concern its different incarnations. After a brief introduction of the concept [2.1.1] and of Habermas' influential work [2.1.2], a definition of the concept is attempted; in other words, the discussion concerns

how the original German *Öffentlichkeit* was translated and which are the implications for the related terms: public and publicity. Moving on, the bourgeois public sphere of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is studied to not only underline the basic principles of the Habermasian theory, but also to present a comprehensive image of how Habermas visualised the public sphere [2.1.4]. Subsection 2.1.5 refers to the political public sphere that first appeared in United Kingdom, as this was a decisive turn for the meaning of the bourgeois public sphere which at this point gained its political tone. The theoretical framework that influenced Habermas is explored in the next subsection: the idea and ideology that encompass his concept, from his professors at the Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkeheimer, to Immanuel Kant and to other theorists that affected his thought either directly or indirectly [2.1.6].

The second part begins with the transformation of the public sphere, which occurred in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the appearance of mass media that, according to Habermas, managed to provoke deep changes at the core of the concept [2.1.7]. What is more, it triggered lively discussions about its dynamic as a concept which despite its flaws is rather significant for media and for democratic theory. Theorists from a broad range of disciplines studied Habermas' concept and provided their critique and suggestions, with which Habermas engaged in an ongoing dialogue [2.1.8]. The next subsection is dedicated to the relationship between media and the public sphere: from the central role that the press plays in the rise of the bourgeois public sphere to the key role that mass media played in its disintegration and from this point to the contemporary discussions about new media's impact [2.1.9]. Particularly important is the last subsection that details the polarization in discussions on digital challenges and opportunities for the public sphere, first with the emergence of the Internet and lately, with the rapid growth of social media platforms [2.1.10], providing this way the basis for the expansion of the dialogue in the research part. In this subsection, the democratizing dynamic of the Internet is also addressed in a discussion linked to the one on the existence of the digital public sphere. The thorough analysis of the Habermasian theory provides an understanding of its different parameters and implications, and specifically highlights the central role of the media. As it is further explained in the discussion chapter of the work, journalism - or the *press* in Habermas' words - is one of the key factors that affect the current structural transformation of the public sphere. What is more, the last subsection adds to the current academic literature by collecting and systematically categorizing the polarization that accompanies the discussion about the public sphere in a digital era.

The second thematic category, also highlighted by the research questions, is journalism. After a brief contextualization of the concept [2.2.1], the historical perspective and the line of continuity are introduced [2.2.2], at the end of which, is online journalism. The section focuses on the relationship of journalism with the Internet, as this could be seen through three distinctive phases [2.2.3]: the first years, those of the realization of online journalism, and the social media era. The last part is explored in more detail, along with the analysis of the key platform of this work, Twitter. The journalistic use of Twitter by different media actors is one of the prominent factors that affect the formation of political arena(s) and of the pragmatic public sphere in the network.

The last section of the literature review studies the public sphere, democracy and journalism as three interdependent concepts. The central point here is Andrew Chadwick's work and more specifically his theory of the hybrid media system (2013), where the new political information cycles are analysed [2.3.1]. The importance of his theory for the current research lies in the fact that he discusses the new era that political communication has entered and the complexity that characterises it. Furthermore, he manages to show that old media are not separate from new media, but that there is a connection and a co-effect between them. He also questions what counts as effective and worthwhile political action, and he emphasises the need to reconsider how the public manages to engage in political dialogue. His theory along with a reference on journalism's systemic relationship with politics, offers a solid basis and the context for the main theme of this section: the role of participation in these three concepts [2.3.2]. The chapter ends with a discussion on participation in political dialogue in social media environments [2.3.3]. By focusing on participation, this section contextualises the importance of engagement on social media platforms and sets the basis for the later proposal of the thesis for its expanded definition.

While the literature review frames the work theoretically, the research part frames it empirically. The starting point towards this direction is the choice of a proper methodology as well as the designing of a fitting methodological plan [3.1]. Starting from the research questions [3.2], the appropriateness of the mixed methods approach is justified [3.3] along with its reliance on digital ethnography [3.4]. The reasoning on the method and its different elements is followed by an explanation of the adaptation of the current hybrid model on the method [3.5]. Moving on, the chapter underscores how this model is applicable to Twitter

specifically, by detailing also the chosen case study, the selection of the participants and the processes of data collection and the data analysis. Lastly, the limitations posed by the framework of the study are presented [3.6].

The empirical part starts with the findings section [4.0] and the development of the conceptual hypothesis of the work [4.1]. The thesis proposes a reconstruction of the public sphere theory by adjusting it to the current societal needs and contemporary digital affordances, which form new political arenas of dialogue. Towards this aim, it suggests a new definitional approach of the Habermasian concept adapted to digital environments, the digital public sphere. By combining three prominent works on the topic - Habermas' original work (1989), Chadwick's theorization of new political information cycles (2013) and Theocharis' notion of digital network participation (2015) - the formation of the new definition is portrayed. The new definitional approach is considered as highly significant to perceive as much the normative as the pragmatic essence of the public sphere in the digital epoch. Unpacking the hypothesis, the criteria for its testing on Twitter are unfolded [4.1]. The findings chapter continues with the framing of the analysis [4.2], the results from two of the platform's communicative layers (meso and macro) [4.3, 4.4] and their juxtaposition with journalists' perception of Twitter, offered by the interviews [4.5]. An initial discussion in relation to the theories of normalization (Singer 2005) and ambient journalism (Hermida 2014) is presented at the end of the chapter, providing also the point of departure for their deeper analysis.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to the discussion of presented findings along with related academic literature. After setting the scene and delineating the framework and the analytical process [5.1.5.2], the public sphere is examined through its consisting elements: the public and the sphere(s) of deliberation [5.3]. This discussion highlights the need to reassess the notion of participation, but it also leads to the dual perception of Habermas' theory: in normative and in pragmatic terms. While the first points to the idealistic critique on Habermas' work [5.4.1], the second posits his concept in complex contemporary societies [5.4.2]. To understand how the pragmatic sphere is formed, two impact factors are analysed: the journalistic use of Twitter, through the perceptions, the self-perceptions and the real journalistic actions on the platform [5.4.2.1] and the political and financial setting [5.4.2.2]. By presenting the current pragmatic model and building a dialogue between the normative and the pragmatic perceptions, it is shown how the public sphere concept is affected by the digital modalities and how it is



adjusted on Twitter. Lastly, the chapter questions the sufficiency and the sustainability of the theory, pointing to its reconceptualization.

The thesis conclusion is built across three axes: (a) the normative questions that led to the redefinition of the public sphere and the conceptual hypothesis; [6.1] (b) the deep interrelation of the three essentially contested concepts that underline the need to confront the Habermasian theory through a different prism, that of its duality; [6.2] and (c) the emerging discussion for its reconceptualization, that also sets the scene for future research [6.3]. Overall, the structure of the thesis builds a narrative that starts from the theoretical framework which draws on the public sphere, journalism and their interconnection with democracy [Chapter 2], then moves to the empirical research by researching the role of journalism within Twitter, as a new political public arena [Chapters 3 and 4], and by relying on the theoretical discussions and the empirical material, it develops the argument for the reconceptualization of the public sphere concept in the digital era [Chapter 5].

## 2.0. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Public Sphere

This section focuses on the public sphere. Being at the core of this thesis, a holistic approach to its different aspects is attempted. After introducing the concept, and Habermas' seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), a definitional approach to the concept is presented. The next subsection discusses the bourgeois model of the public sphere, and the chapter continues with the delineation of the political public sphere and the idea/ideology that the concept relies on. Moving on, at the centre of attention is the public sphere's structural transformation, and the debates, critical interrogation and suggestions for the reconstruction of Habermas' theory. In Subsection 2.1.9 the relationship between media and the public sphere is analysed. In the last two parts of the chapter, the discussion about the public sphere is placed within new media environments and is regarded through the lens of the polarised perceptions of its newer manifestations.

#### 2.1.1. Public Sphere: An Introduction to the Concept

The public sphere concept is the core of Jürgen Habermas' first major work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1989). The definition by which he describes this notion is:

By the 'public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. (Habermas 1974: 49)

The first edition of his book was published in 1962 in Germany<sup>3</sup> (Finlayson 2005) and became widely popular after 1989, when it was translated in English<sup>4</sup>. As Douglas Kellner underlines, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* has been an immensely influential book that had a major impact in a variety of disciplines. It has also received detailed critique and generated extremely productive discussions as much about key terms like civil society, as for

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<sup>3</sup> The German title of Habermas' original work is "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft", Hermann editions, Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt and Neuwied, Federal Republic of Germany.

<sup>4</sup> In the present text, all the references referred to the English edition, translated by Thomas Burger and published by Polity Press (1989).

issues like the public life and social changes that occurred in the twentieth century (2000: 1). Civil society is a key term in Habermas' work and as Karen Sanders notes it is marked by a distinction between the state and the individual, between the public and the private and was often used as "a counterpoint to the notion of the state" (2009: 146). She also adds that the concept of civil society is characterised by "a plurality of forms of social life and by publicity in forms of culture and communication and also by degrees of privacy and legal frameworks" (2009: 146).

While it has been contested by many scholars, as presented in Section 2.1.8, Habermas' theory has been widely considered as a central concept for democratic theory and practice (Benhabib 1997). Given that an informed electorate is a premise for any meaningful democracy (Papathanassopoulos 2011), it could be argued that a strong democracy requires a public sphere of informal citizen deliberation<sup>5</sup> enabling the formation of rational public ideas that can critically guide political systems (Dahlberg 2005). Moreover, Calhoun (1992) highlights that the reason that the public sphere is a significant theory lies also in its potential as a mode of societal integration. In accordance, Ronald Jacobs and Eleanor Townsley point out that the emergence of the public sphere could be considered as one of the keys in the development of modern democracies "since public discussions produced an emboldened collective sense of a public opinion" (2011: 6).

Milioni highlights another key point:

It [the public sphere] highlights the inextricable link between the institutions and practices of public communication and the institutions and practices of democratic politics, thus proving that the central challenge of the dialectic of public communication is the essence of democracy. At the core of this dialectic is the notion of a sovereign rational public who is involved in a dispute of arguments, through which it is lead to formulate the public opinion. (Milioni 2006: 24)

What makes this argument important is that it underscores the connection between democracy and the public sphere. Underlining the term *dialectic*, this may be seen as an emphasised version of the term *dialogue*. Origins of the word are traced back to ancient Greek, where the dialectic process was considered as a form of art - through the clash of different opinions one

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<sup>5</sup>The concept of deliberation as well as the model of democracy that emerges by the embracement of it - that of deliberative democracy - are explored in depth in the next section.

could reach the truth, which underlines a clear distinction with the meaning of the term *dialogue* (Plato 2006).

The English translation brought the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in the spotlight and as Kellner (2000) notes, only few books have been so seriously discussed in so many different academic disciplines and continue to trigger productive controversy and insight, even almost forty years after its initial publication in 1962. In agreement, Gestrich considers that with its translation, Habermas' theory has not only managed to make a remarkable come-back and to gain the status of a global classic, but it also "unleashed an astonishingly lively and long-lasting new debate amongst historians on his theory of the historical development of political public spheres in western European societies" (2006: 413).

The discussion about the Public Sphere remains vigorous even today. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s there was a growing academic interest in the public sphere and a variety of theoretical approaches, which either postulated the imminent demise of the public sphere in the late modern democracies, or related the evident crisis of the national public spheres to the emergence of transnational media production and reception (Wodak & Koller 2010). Luke Goode suggested that *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is a work that still resonates with some of the urgent questions that the 'democratic project' faces today (2005: 3), adding that Habermas' book "invites us to reflect closely on the nature of public deliberation and the democratic process at a time when the rhetoric of 'citizenship' has become such common currency" (2005: 3). Even though Habermas' ideas have been strongly criticised, his work remains central (Crossley & Roberts 2004).

Currently, Habermas' work on the Public Sphere is seen through a new dimension due to the recent technological advancements. The reason for this renewed interest lies in the extended discussion of the political impact of new communication and information technologies, pointing to a rekindling of the debate that questions whether there is a new digital public sphere (Miloni 2006). This rekindling is partly connected with a need to fill an institutional gap caused by the weakness of legacy media to perform their role, but also by the relocation of this role to the new digital media. The claims about the potential of the Internet to be a digital version of the public sphere, which are reinforced by the advent of social media (Papacharissi 2010), have been through several phases: from early enthusiasm to pessimistic reaction and

then to the recent, more balanced and empirically driven approaches of the post-dotcom era (Chadwick 2009) - reactions that cemented a polarization among theorists, which could be summed up in Papacharissi's argument that:

Conversations on the democratizing potential of online convergent technologies are usually evocative of the mythos surrounding the new, and thus fuelled by utopian euphoria on the transformative potential of newer technologies, as well as dystopic apprehension. (2010: 119)

With the usage of the word *mythos* Papacharissi points to a perception that encompasses nostalgia and dissatisfaction with the past and which is projected to an anticipation of the future (2010: 16). Accordingly, "utopian euphoria" and "dystopic apprehension" are the tendencies that respectively represent the hopes and fears that follow the appearance of new technologies (2010: 3). These could be explained by adding that "Those more optimistic perceive them as democratizing forces, while moderates emphasise the pluralizing effect of online technologies", and sceptics question the impact of these technologies on civic deliberation (Papacharissi 2010: 119-120). Both the optimistic and pessimistic sides of this potential, as well as the dialogue about the democratic potential of the Internet are presented in the last Subsection [2.1.10].

Before outlining the public sphere concept in contemporary societies and presenting the ongoing dialogue concerning whether social media could possibly be regarded as a *new* public sphere or even as an evolution of the existent one, it is crucial to explore the concept from multiple perspectives: focusing specifically in this thesis on the journalistic one, it becomes obvious that it is still unclear how journalism as an interposed institution could possibly have the power to overcome certain limitations and help enhancing democracy by allowing the flow of information across its channels, especially in the digital epoch. What is more, it remains open for discussion how the public sphere as a concept, placed in the context of contemporary societies, highlights issues of how and to what extent mass media, by performing their journalistic role, can inform citizens adequately, put their responses into public debate, and encourage them to reach informed decisions about what courses of action to adopt (Dahlgren 1991: 1).

### 2.1.2. Jürgen Habermas and the “Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere”

Habermas developed his study, along with his other 1960s works, firmly within the tradition and concerns of the Institute for Social Research. There, scholars from the Frankfurt school - among them Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno with whom Habermas studied - formed their theories on social theory and philosophy. Habermas’ first works and critical positions on consumerism, rationalization and political opinion depict this impact, which is also evident in the contextualization of his theories, offered by the institutional analysis of the transition from the stage of liberal market capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the stage of state and monopoly organised capitalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, developed by the Frankfurt School (Kellner 2000). Furthermore, these initial works show his interest in theories of democratization and political participation (Kellner 2000)<sup>6</sup>.

Habermas conceived the study about the public sphere in his *Habilitationsschrift* (his post-doctorate dissertation required for his ascension to Professorship) and submitted it to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. His thesis was rejected as it was considered:

at once insufficiently critical of the illusions and dangerous tendencies of an Enlightenment conception of democratic public life, especially in mass society, and too radical in its politically focused call for an attempt to go beyond liberal constitutional protections in pursuit of truer democracy. (Calhoun 1992: 4)

However, Habermas then successfully submitted it to Wolfgang Abendroth and received a professorship in Heidelberg in 1962. He returned to Frankfurt in 1964, when, with Adorno’s support, he managed to take over Horkheimer’s chair in philosophy and sociology (Kellner 2000). Critical engagement with Habermas’ scholarship shows that he does not agree completely with the general pessimism that characterises Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s work and that he appreciates more the positive aspects of the political thought of the Enlightenment (Holub 1991: 8). Likewise, Finlayson writes that Habermas in his own work “attempts to rescue the original idea of critical theory by combining a more nuanced and justifiable history of the Enlightenment with a more coherent model of social theory” (2005: 10).

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<sup>6</sup>Kellner refers to one of Habermas’ first works with the Institute of Social Research, entitled “Student and Politik” which was published in 1961 and was concerned with studies of political opinion and potential of students (2000: 1).

Drawing on this disagreement, the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is a constructively critical response to Horkheimer's and Adorno's concept of critical theory (Finlayson 2005). The analysis presents the appearance of a bourgeois public sphere simultaneously in two registers: on the one side "as the emergence of a normative ideal of rational public discussion from within the distinctive social formation of bourgeois civil society" (Baker 1992: 183) and on the other side "as the realization, or rather the fleeting partial realization, of this ideal within that society" (Baker 1992: 183). Aiming to "locate the progressive, rational aspects of modern society and to differentiate them from the regressive, irrational ones", the work also employs the method of immanent criticism, the one that we could also be called internal<sup>7</sup> (Finlayson 2005).

What *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* does is to ask when and under what conditions the arguments of participants in public debate could become authoritative bases for political action, pointing to a crucial question for democratic theory (Calhoun 1992). Habermas also asks about the social conditions that allow private persons to conduct a rational-critical debate about public issues, where arguments and not statuses determine decisions, and he tries to answer this critical inquiry by focusing on bourgeois political life of the 18<sup>th</sup> through to the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the historical context, he aims to reach beyond the flawed realities of historical framework to recover an institutional location of continuing normative importance for formal democracy (Calhoun 1992).

This argument offers a starting point for the discussion on the existence of a public sphere into different, still democratic, public spaces. It also generates questions on whether the changed social conditions could provide the required environment for the public sphere to exist. It is in the purposes of this work to explore the normative criteria in a democracy that define the role of the public sphere and to investigate whether these criteria are met in new digital spaces.

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<sup>7</sup> Immanent Criticism: The critical theorists aim to criticise an object – a concept of society or a work of philosophy – on its own terms, and not on the basis of values or standards that transcend it, in order to bring its untruth to light. As Finlayson (2005) supports, in this case, the ideals of the historical Enlightenment – liberty, solidarity and equality – are implicit in the concept of the public sphere and provide the standard of immanent criticism.

### 2.1.3. Public Sphere: Definitional Approach

Several definitions of the concept of the public sphere have appeared in academic scholarship over the years to complement Habermas', allowing for a more comprehensive view on his theory. Fraser (1990), whose approach is embraced by this thesis, especially as a basis for the research questions, describes the public sphere as a place where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society and where political opinion can be formed. McKee suggests that the public sphere has a twofold nature: metaphorically, it is "the way that information and ideas circulate in large societies" and at the same time, it has a more precise meaning in academic writing where it is a central and well-developed concept for thinking about how democratic culture should work (2005: 4-5). Wodak and Koller offer a different view: "For many the public sphere is a political one, which enables citizens to participate in democratic dialogue. For others, the public sphere is found in the media" (2010: 1).

The meaning of the term *public* and the forms it took over the years, become central for this discussion. The word and its interpretation have their origins in the Athenian democracy and the division of the public (*polis*) and private (*oikos*)<sup>8</sup>. Habermas in its original German text uses the word *Öffentlichkeit*, which was translated as the *public sphere* but it literally means *publicness*. Peters underlines that in current German the term equals with the English translation of the term public, namely "a sociological aggregate of viewers, readers or citizens, that excludes no one a priori and is endowed with key political and critical powers" (1993: 543). Regardless of its different interpretations<sup>9</sup>, researchers in their majority accept the English equivalent *publicity*.

The word once meant the condition of being public but then it incapacitated for political or theoretical usage and it reached a point to suggest only public relations. This process captures Habermas' argument, as Peters underscores: "the semantic change of publicity thus mirrors Habermas' thesis about a structural transformation from critical participation to consumerist manipulation" (1993: 543). In a similar vein, Milioni (2006) considers that Habermas' purpose in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* is to recount the changes that publicity

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<sup>8</sup> In the Greek city state *polis* was strictly separated from the private *oikos*, which was related with the family. The public life went on the market place (*agora*). The public sphere was constituted in discussion (*lexis*) and the common action (*praxis*). (Habermas 1989).

<sup>9</sup> "Öffentlichkeit" can also be rendered as 'openness' as found in Kennedy's translation of Carl Schmitt's "Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy" (1985) (cited in Peters 1993).



(Öffentlichkeit) has been subject to, from feudal societies of medieval authorities until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Peters (1993) regards publicity as a more abstract concept and supports that the translation of Öffentlichkeit as “public sphere” provides the term with a more concrete sense. It also encourages avoiding “thinking of ‘public’ too exclusively as a body of people; it usefully calls attention to the larger political and institutional requirements for such a ‘sphere’” (1993: 543). Peters (1993) however questions the authenticity of Habermas’ concept, suggesting that the term is a neither exotic nor a new concept from critical theory and that his originality grows in translation<sup>10</sup>. By underlying how Öffentlichkeit combines two of the most ordinary and fundamental political terms of the Anglo-American tradition – “publicity” in the sense of openness and access, and “the public” as the sovereign body of citizens, he then claims that Habermas has managed rather effectively to reconstruct a largely forgotten concept that still lies, officially, at the foundation of constitutional government: “the idea of a sovereign reasonable public, nourished by the critical reporting of the press and engaged in the mutually enlightening clash of arguments” (1993: 544).

People’s public use of their reason (Räsonnement) was the medium of the public sphere, as conceived by Habermas<sup>11</sup>, and it was peculiar and without historical precedent (Habermas 1989). This reasoning public is a presupposition for the existence of public opinion, a term that refers to “the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally – and, in periodic elections, formally as well – practices vis-à-vis the ruling structure organised in the form of a state” (Habermas 1974). Taking all these into consideration, it is understandable that the public, as bearer of public opinion, organises itself into a sphere which mediates between the state and society. In this sphere, the public accords with its principle – that principle of public information “which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities” (Habermas 1974: 50). *Principle* points to a model of norms and modes of behaviour, in which the very functioning of public opinion could be guaranteed for the first time. Habermas underlines that these norms and modes include: a) general

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<sup>10</sup> Peters (1993) supports that “in German Habermas reads more clearly as trying to understand a traditional legal principle – one that appeared in the Grundgesetz of 1949, the constitution of the late Federal Republic of Germany – the “Öffentlichkeit” of parliament and trials is guaranteed in article 42.

<sup>11</sup> Habermas wrote that the (bourgeois) public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public (Habermas 1989)

accessibility, b) elimination of all privileges, and c) discovery of general norms and rational legitimations (1974: 50).

The linguistic point of view acts supportively: the history of the words (like “public” or “public opinion”) reflects the evolution that took place and created the appropriate conditions for the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. In Britain, the term “public” first appears in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a synonym to the words “mankind” or “world”, while in France, the term “le public” appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as an equivalent to its contemporary German term “Publikum”, and it was in the same century when the term “public opinion” appeared in Germany and Britain (Habermas 1997: 82)<sup>12</sup>.

#### **2.1.4. The Bourgeois Public Sphere**

“The bourgeois public sphere is one of the great historical advances in rationality” writes Gouldner (1976, cited in Robins & Webster 1999). Public sphere was a direct consequence of the emergence of radical new ideas that happened during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a time when Western societies began to enter the period that historians call “modernity”, and which is characterised by Enlightenment values of equality, freedom and justice that came to replace feudal values of hierarchy, tradition and respect for authority (McKee 2005). The public sphere comes into existence with the maturation of capitalism in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Edgar 2006), when the development of early finance and trade capitalism, led the elements of a new social order to take shape. The years of early capitalism could be considered as rather conservative not only regarding how people perceive economy but also with regards to politics. On the one hand, this form of capitalism stabilised the power structure of a society organised in estates, but on the other hand “it unleashed the very elements within which this power structure would one day dissolve” (Habermas 1989: 15). These defined new commercial relationships that led to the traffic of news. However, the revolutionary power of these elements of early capitalism manifested only in the next phase of capitalism: the mercantilist.

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<sup>12</sup> The conversation around the definition of the word “public” in Habermas’ work acquires a whole new perspective when it concerns the media and its implications with the term “audience”. For that reason, there will be a further discussion on the matter in a later chapter, when the relationship between media and public sphere will be analysed.

Therefore, it was during the mercantilist phase of capitalism that political and social order transformed. “Civil society came into existence as the corollary of a depersonalised state authority” (Habermas 1989: 19), a process that had two key sides: one was the privatization of the process of economic reproduction<sup>13</sup> and the other was the press<sup>14</sup>, which developed a unique explosive power (Habermas 1989). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century feudal authorities (e.g. the church, princes, nobility) had broken apart into both private and public elements (Habermas 1974). As Habermas underlined “the medieval public sphere, if it even deserves this designation, is tied to the personal<sup>15</sup>. The feudal lord and estates create the public sphere by means of their very presence (1974: 51). But in this new phase, “‘public’ no longer referred to the ‘representative’ court of a prince endowed with authority but rather to an institution endowed with the monopoly of legal exertion of authority” (Habermas 1974).

In this bourgeois public sphere – conceived of as an assemblage of private individuals who formed a public body – a new stratum of *bourgeois* people arose and occupied a central position within the “public”. At its core, it consisted mostly of officers and rulers’ administrators. Since its appearance, it was a “reading public” (Miloni 2006). A distinct characteristic of the new situation that was formed is what Habermas notes in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*: that there was a public sphere of civil society which “developed to the extent to which the public concern regarding the private sphere of civil society was no longer confined to the authorities but was considered by the subjects as one that was properly theirs” (1989: 22). In this sphere, the relationship between the authorities and the subjects “assumed the peculiar ambivalence of public regulation and private initiative” (Habermas 1996: 81). In other words, the most critical evolution, which was the pedestal of the public sphere, was the process of transformation from the “subjectum” (in a way, the subordinate) into “subject” – from the recipient of commands to the contracting opponent (Habermas 1996: 81).

This transformation of the public happened in the middle of specific social, financial and cultural changes. The two newly formed and distinct spaces of the private sphere, economy and family, formulated the dual existence of the new identity of the citizen: as a human *homme* being among others and as a property owner (bourgeois). This was the basis of his autonomy

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<sup>13</sup> Economic activity had become private and had to be oriented toward a commodity market that had expanded under public direction and supervision. That is to say that, for the first time economic conditions were of general interest (Habermas 1989)

<sup>14</sup> During this phase, the traffic in news developed not only in connection with the need of commerce, the news itself became a commodity (Habermas 1989)

<sup>15</sup> The expression “represent” is used in a very specific sense, namely “to present oneself” (Habermas 1964: 51)

(Miloni 2006). This new “private existence” did not assume political functions right away – critical reasoning of private people appeared not on political issues but in a public sphere which had an apolitical form, the literary precursor of the political public sphere. This “provided the training ground for a critical public reflection still preoccupied with itself” and it was “a process of self-clarification of private people focusing on the genuine experiences of their novel privateness” (Habermas 1989: 29).

What Habermas called “the bourgeois public sphere” consisted of social spaces where individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organise against the state power. These organs of information and public debate were newspapers and journals but they were also institutions like political clubs, theatres, museums, meeting halls and mostly pubs, coffeehouses and literary saloons (Kellner 2000) where a wider public gained access to the cultural products. As Kellner highlights “for the first time in history, individuals and groups could shape public opinion, giving direct expression to their needs and interests while influencing political practice” (2000: 3). In a sense, philosophical and literary works succumbed to the laws of the market and this fact assigned the privilege of access to a less restricted audience. At the same time, critical discussion around them had two impacts: it enhanced familiarization with the cultural products and institutionalised the opinion of the non-expert, in a way that any member of the audience had right of opinion (Miloni 2006). This commodification of culture had for Habermas a democratizing influence (Manning 2001), but it differentiated him from the representatives of the Frankfurt School, like Adorno and Horkheimer, who “took the colonization of culture by the market in a monochromatically bleak way” (Peters 1993: 553).

The institutions that constituted this public sphere varied in many ways: size, the composition of their participants, the ways that they conducted their proceedings, and the climate of their debates. They, however, had in common the most crucial characteristic: they were all organised around ongoing discussions among private people. For that reason, they shared some institutional criteria. For instance, they preserved a kind of social intercourse that, “far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status at all” (Habermas 1989: 36-37). This was not fully realised but as Calhoun (1992: 12) notes “the idea had an importance of its own”. They were also based on the premise that “the sole arbiter of any issue was the rational argument” (Calhoun 1992: 13). The better argument replaced any social hierarchy and in these

institutions power and prestige were held in suspense while economic dependencies had no influence (Habermas 1989: 36-37). What is more, all sorts of topics were opened to discussion as these institutions allowed the “problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned” (Habermas 1989: 36-37). Lastly, the issues discussed became *general* in terms of accessibility, as everyone was able to participate. The public had the sense that it was part of a larger public and it was conscious of its potential as a “publicist body”, as its discussions could possibly be directed to the outside world.

Webster (2006) summarises the key features of the bourgeois public sphere as following: open debate, critical scrutiny, full reportage, increased accessibility, independence of actors from economic interest and state control. He also refers to three central struggles of this era: the struggle for a free press, the struggle for political reform and the struggle for greater representation. McKee (2005) adds that the concept of the public sphere could prove useful in the understanding of certain conditions, like how societies are organised in this historical period (modernity) or how ‘liberal’ societies function.

### **2.1.5. Political Public Sphere**

In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a public sphere that functioned in the formal political realm arose in Great Britain. At this time, the influx of rational-critical arguments into the press allowed the latter to evolve as a critical instrument of public’s political consciousness (Milioni 2006). There are a series of reasons why “Britain serves Habermas as the model case of the development of the public sphere” (Calhoun 1992: 14). To begin with, the founding of the Bank of England signalled a new stage in the development of capitalism. What is more,

(...) social relationships assumed the form of exchange relationships. With the expansion and liberation of this sphere of market, commodity owners gained private autonomy; the positive meaning of ‘private’ emerged precisely in reference to the concept of free power of control over property that functioned in capitalist fashion. (Habermas 1989: 74)

That is to say that the institutionalization of privacy as free control of productive property was a highly important contribution of capitalism to the political public sphere (Calhoun 1992).

Another factor that had great impact on the development of the political public sphere in Britain were the social conditions that allowed the press a chance to present information

before the new forum of the public – not the general public but the one that met the criteria to participate in political decisions – and give them the opportunity to arrive at a considered opinion. The appearance of large daily newspapers like the *Times* (1785) that reflected critically on political issues as well as the formation of political associations (Habermas 1989: 64) were a significant contributions towards this direction. Furthermore, according to Habermas, in that era of British history was made the first step toward the parliamentarization of state authority that led the public to become active in the political realm and gradually establish itself as an organ of the state (Habermas 1989: 64-65).

Despite its political functions, the public sphere in this era remained rooted in the world of letters (Calhoun 1992) and had two key features. First, publicness became the organizational principle, “the essential conditional for rational discussion that opposed to the secrecy surrounding the mysteries of absolute sovereignty” (Baker 1992: 184). Second, publicness was the distinct feature of the public sphere of the civil society, and at the same time the guarantee for the so-called “free and equal access to all”, pointing at the implied irony of this argument, as there were two criteria for admission: education and property ownership. Milioni (2006) highlights that in these socio-economic conditions the public sphere reached its peak, as a social space that was free from any state control.

### **2.1.6. Idea and Ideology**

The concept of the public sphere is, according to Habermas, both an idea and an ideology. While it seems that Habermas accepts Adorno’s definition of ideology, as a “socially necessary illusion” or “socially necessary false-consciousness” which suggested a functional spread of false beliefs that are socially necessary (Finlayson 2005: 11) - the critical point of his approach is to show that the idea of the public sphere is “more than a mere illusion, for it was in principle open (...) no one was excluded in principle from participation in the public sphere, though many were in practice” (Finlayson 2005: 12). In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas dedicates a whole chapter to discuss the ideology the public sphere relies on, as a reaction to ideas of the greatest thinkers of that time, like Immanuel Kant. The central topic is the development and critique of the concept of public opinion as a reasoned form of access to truth (Calhoun 1992). Besides, in *public opinion* was crystallised the self-interpretation of the

function of the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1989). Public opinion gains a whole new meaning as it refers no more to the “mere opinion” of isolated individuals or to dispersed opinions, but more positively, to what participants in rational-critical debates supported (Calhoun 1992). As such, it moved away significantly from the meaning of a “not fully demonstrated judgment”. This move was not a straightforward evolution, but a process. This section underscores this evolution of the concept in liaison with theorists’ thinking on the topic, as this was perceived by Habermas in his book. While every theory could be regarded through their primary source, it is in the aims of this work to point to Habermas’ reasoning and thus, to highlight relevant ideological perceptions within his scope.

Therefore, according to Habermas, John Locke first freed opinion from its devalued association with pure prejudice, while the physio-crats took this a step further by separating critique from opinion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other side, linked public opinion with the general will and un-reflected opinion – the opinion that was publicly known (1989: 96). Habermas (1989: 97) points out that Rousseau supported the notion that “common sense” was all that is needed to perceive common welfare, and that in general was more a consensus of hearts than of arguments. Rousseau’s democracy of un-public opinion ultimately postulated the manipulative exercise of power as he wanted a democracy without public debate.

Rousseau’s perception of public opinion was soon weakened by Immanuel Kant’s theory which, even though it follows Rousseau’s idea of the general will, it enhances it by focusing on critical reason<sup>16</sup> as the most important ingredient of public discourse. What makes his argument distinct is his support of the idea that the principle of popular sovereignty could be realised only under the precondition of the public use of reason. Habermas underlined the great role that publicity has in Kantian theory as Kant “made the public nature of critical debate the touchstone of truth that put everything proclaimed as true to the test of whether its validity could be upheld before any rational human being” (1989: 118). The Habermasian theory falls into the Kantian tradition, justifying the reason why Kant’s theory occupies a central place in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Calhoun writes that “his was the most fully developed philosophy of the bourgeois public sphere” as he offered the fullest articulation of the idea of the public sphere (1992: 18, Benhabib 1997). Kant developed the specific sociological conditions for a public sphere to exist as an element in the political realm,

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<sup>16</sup> In this, Kant followed the Enlightenment thinkers (Calhoun 1992)

and by these he defined the context of a functioning political public sphere. These three fundamental conditions were universality, cosmopolitanism<sup>17</sup> and the dependence on social relationships among freely competing commodity owners<sup>18</sup>, as the preserve of their private autonomy. Besides, private economy was, for Kant, a natural order. (Calhoun 1992, Milioni 2006).

Universality, cosmopolitanism and the dependence on social relationships among freely competing commodity owners were also the basis of objections to the public sphere. While Kant was the one that offered the first full theory around the public sphere, Hegel offered the first critique. According to Habermas, Hegel denounced the public of civil society as an ideology, and Habermas writes for him:

Hegel took the teeth out of the idea of the public sphere of civil society; for anarchic and antagonistic civil society did not constitute the sphere, emancipated for domination and insulated from the interference of power, in which autonomous private people related to one another. (1989: 122)

However, he later notes that “to the extent to which it (the public sphere) naturally tended toward disorganization, it had a special need for integration by political force” (1989: 122). Habermas notes that Karl Marx denounced public opinion as a mask for bourgeois class interests (1989: 124). He supported that the bourgeois public sphere contradicted its own principle of universal accessibility and also expressed his view against the division of the public sphere in private and public as it could result in

an alienating division of the person into public and private, while, at the same time, the equivalence between people and property owners was untenable and cancelled the general principle of the public sphere for political equality. (Milioni 2006: 27)

Calhoun (1992: 19) argues that behind Marx’s vision, there was still the idea of a natural order and his main disagreement was not with the general idea but mostly with the notion that the bourgeois civil society constituted the natural order that would bring harmony to human relationships.

The model of the public sphere in the political realm, by the convergence of public opinion with reason, aimed to keep conflicts of interest and bureaucratic decisions to a minimum and

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<sup>17</sup> Kant employed the construct of a cosmopolitan order that issued from both natural necessity and moral politics (Habermas 1989: 115)

<sup>18</sup> Only property-owning private people were admitted into a public engaged in critical political debate (Habermas 1989: 115)



to subject them to reliable criteria of public evaluation, if these could not be completely avoided. Habermas continues this chapter of his book by juxtaposing socialists' and liberals' positions, suggesting that the socialists supported the view that the bourgeois public sphere did not meet these preconditions and needed to reset. At the same time the liberals doubted the natural basis upon which the idea of the political public sphere rested and argued in favour of a revitalised form of the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas 1989: 133). Theorists like John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville oriented their questioning in different directions: the dangers for the public sphere were hiding in its increased size and its changed composition (Habermas 1989: 133). Therefore, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century debates were no longer about the principle of publicity<sup>19</sup>, as they were in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but over electoral reform and the enlargement of the public. Both Mill and Tocqueville devalued the public sphere's consequences (Habermas 1989: 130). Mill (1859) thought that the inclusion of the majority could lead to a new kind of social oppression which lay in the "dead weight of the public opinion"<sup>20</sup>. Habermas regarded that both these two theorists shared the feeling that "public opinion determined by the passions of the masses was in need of purification by means of the authoritative insights of materially independent citizens" and supported a representative publicity in order to save the principle of publicity against the tyranny of an unenlightened public opinion itself (Habermas 1989: 136).

### 2.1.7. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

In the second part of the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas analyses the disintegration and decline of the public sphere. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, neo-mercantilist policy imposed a whole new reality for western societies. As capitalism grew in strength and influence, there was a move from the call for reform of the established state towards its takeover (Webster 2006). The increasing case of interventionism in commerce led to the undermining of the foundations of the public sphere. State and society, once distinct, now became interlocked while, at the same time, boundaries between the public and private were becoming blurred. Capitalism removed from the public sphere its former basis, without

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<sup>19</sup> The "principle of publicity" is a reference to Kant's perception of the principle as a transcendental principle of politics (Davis 1991), which in the course of history obtained two meanings "one refers to the individual's freedom (or right) to form, express and publish opinions; the other denotes the social need to prevent or hinder abuses of power" (Splichal 2002).

<sup>20</sup> This opinion, supported by Mill (1859), is described as the "tyranny of the majority".

supplying a new one. As Habermas notes, (1989) the powers of society assumed functions of public authority and this policy went hand in hand with the *refeudalization* of the society, reminiscent of the 18<sup>th</sup> century's "feudalism of the society", that then led to the formation of the bourgeois public sphere. Rational-critical debate gave its position to cultural consumption and developed solely in mass media environments. The commodification of cultural products is not new - previous reference suggests that it existed in the bourgeois public sphere too. Habermas, however, identifies the distinction here in the commodification of the content itself, as it standardised and encoded in terms of being a spectacle (Miloni 2006). In addition, "the institutions that until then had ensured the coherence of the public as a critically debated entity have been weakened" (Habermas 1989: 162). Refeudalization describes the process in which communication and exchange of ideas became dependent on new powers. Manning (2001) argues that capitalism came to replace old feudal powers, pointing to a replacement of monarchies, feudal monarchs and church by advertisement, public relations and the commercial sponsorship of mass communication. Habermas however does not suggest that the current trends meant a straightforward return to a previous epoch (Webster 2006).

The key point that led to the refeudalization of the public sphere is the acquisition of control of media by private owners and their relationship with the political class. On one hand, they became a portal for private privileged interests which directly affected publicity. On the other hand, the commercialisation logic led to a de-politicization of the content which in turn led to a one-way flow of information that removed from communication its interactive characteristics (Miloni 2006). Moreover, the press that brought political issues to critical discussion gradually lost its influence as political issues were not anymore central (Habermas 1989: 166). As such, Habermas' aim was dual: to chart the de-politicization of the public sphere and its simultaneous impoverishment by the removal of critical discourse. This transformation involves a literal disintegration: "With the loss of a notion of a general interest and the rise of a consumption orientation, the members of the public lose their common ground" (Callhoun 1992: 25). In other words, refeudalization led to the transformation of the public as well: the conscience of (the previous) citizen became a conscience of a consumer (Miloni 2006).

Several other processes took place at the same time, that support this thinking. Firstly, according to Habermas, the public sphere was becoming more of an advertising space rather than one that rational-critical debate occurred, in a way that rational-critical debate tended to

be replaced by consumption (Habermas 1989: 161). Given that the public sphere assumed advertising functions, “the more it can be deployed as a vehicle for political and economic propaganda, the more it becomes unpolitical as a whole and pseudo-privatized” (1989: 175). The public more and more turned into a manageable mass that can easily provide them with the necessary consensus (Miloni 2006), which responds to “a ‘democratic’ broadening of the constituency of the public, but at the cost of its internally democratic functioning” (1992: 27), pointing to citizens that became consumers dedicating themselves more to passive consumption or to the promotion of their very own interests, rather than to issues of common good or democratic participation. Habermas is more acrimonious in his criticism

Originally publicity guaranteed the connection between rational-critical public debate and the legislative foundation of domination, including the critical supervision of its exercise. Now it makes possible the peculiar ambivalence of a domination exercised through the domination of non-public opinion: it serves the manipulation of the public as much as legitimation before it. Critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity. (1989: 177-178)

### **2.1.8. Debates, Critical Interrogation and Reconstruction of the Public Sphere**

Habermas’ theory of the public sphere is a work that has been the subject of intense criticism, leading to revisions in his later writings<sup>21</sup>. Some of the initial reactions came from young leftists who “attacked it for focusing on the bourgeois public sphere to the exclusion of the proletarian one, for an inadequate grasp of everyday life in advanced capitalism, and for exaggerating the emancipatory potential in the idealized bourgeois public sphere” (Calhoun 1992: 5).

Peters points to critics that draw inspiration from Foucault “the core of the debate is whether modern ideas of publicity and public life (...) are a rational ideal of political participation or a subtly vicious form of control” (1993: 551). Manning (2001) agrees with this argument, as he underlines that, based on Foucault, critics doubt the allegation that “rational argumentation” is possible when all power relations govern all human relations, contacts and ways that knowledge or communication is produced. He also identifies a vital epistemological difference that could be found between Foucault and Habermas: For Foucault, forms of public communication

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<sup>21</sup> Habermas revisited his concept of the public sphere several times: His article “Further reflections on the public sphere” (1992) is indicative. He also refers to it in his later book “Between Facts and Norms” (1997)

occurring during the Enlightenment are best understood as disciplinary tools or as mechanisms that help to achieve control and surveillance. For Habermas, on the contrary, the public rational-critical debate, which incorporates the Enlightenment ideals, has a fundamental meaning and it's the sole criterion, upon which the whole communication behaviour is based (2001: 26).

Benhabib (1997) referred to two traditions of political thought that make up the public sphere at its central place: the republican virtue tradition, as resuscitated by Hannah Arendt<sup>22</sup>, and the Kantian liberal tradition which began with Kant's argument on "public use of reason" and followed by the Habermasian theory on the public sphere. In her article, *The embattled Public Sphere* (1997) Benhabib describes the move from the Arendtian concept of the "public space" to the Habermasian model of the "public sphere" and quotes their three key differences that were the core of their debate (1997: 7):

- Whereas Arendt sees a decline of the public sphere under conditions of modernity, Habermas notes the emergence of a new form of publicity in the Enlightenment.
- Whereas the Arendtian concept of the public is "bound to topographical and spatial metaphors", Habermas focuses on the transformations that the public's identity is subjected to by the rise of mass media.
- Whereas in Arendt's conception the "public space" is a space within which a community of equals speak and act together, in Habermas' model "the public sphere" is not an arena of action but "an impersonal medium of communication, information and opinion-formation".

One of the most prominent works that criticised Habermas' concept was Nancy Fraser's *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*, which was published in 1990, right after the English translation of Habermas' work. She argues that Habermas' analysis needs to undergo further critical interrogation and reconstruction. Fraser suggests that "Habermas' idea of the public sphere is indispensable to critical social theory and to democratic political practice" although, she argues that "the specific form in which Habermas has elaborated this idea is not wholly satisfactory" (1990: 57). Fraser further takes issue with the way Habermas idealises liberal public sphere by excluding several parts of the

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<sup>22</sup> Benhabib here based in Hannah Arendt's book "The Human Condition" (1958)

general public and subsequently that he fails to examine the non-bourgeois public spheres to describe the resulting conflicting relationships between their publics. She also notes that Habermas does not develop a post-bourgeois model of the public sphere, a conception that would be useful for critical theory today (Fraser 1992: 136).

Finlayson (2005) points out that although, as ideas, the basic principles of the Habermasian concept - openness, inclusiveness, equality, freedom - were beyond reproach, in reality they were simply illusions or ideologies. Furthermore, he suggests that the idea of the public sphere remained “merely Utopian, an inclusive and egalitarian vision of society worthy of pursuit, but never fully realised. The concept of bourgeois public sphere remained ideological in that sense too” (2005: 12). On the idealistic presentation from Habermas’ side, Susen suggests that “Habermas tends to overestimate the significance of the emancipatory features of modern public life and therefore underestimate the influences of its repressive elements” (2011: 53) and he adds that

To idealize the public sphere as a communicative realm of rational-critical intersubjectivity means to underestimate the substantive impact of interest-laden hierarchies on the constitution of communicative interactions in stratified societies. (Susen 2011: 53)

Milioni (2006) notes that there is a deep contradiction in the Habermasian description of the public sphere, as on the one side it is presented as the normative ideal of the rational public debate and on the other side as an only partial realization of this ideal. She adds that the most important critiques on this subject concern Habermas’ weakness to approach critically the bourgeois public sphere as an ideology - the idealization of the public sphere on this point lies in the omission of the ways that elitism consciously contributed to the exclusion of certain social groups. On that notion, Fraser is rather assertive “we can no longer assume that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule” (1990: 62).

Kellner aligns with that argument: he underlines that even though the public sphere assumes “a liberal and populist celebration of diversity, tolerance, debate and, consensus, in actuality, the bourgeois public sphere was dominated by white, property-owning males” (2000: 5). He also adds that it is more productive to theorise a multiplicity of public spheres, rather than conceiving one liberal or democratic public sphere. In agreement Susen (2011) furthers this

argument by noting that an analysis that is limited to the study of the bourgeois public sphere not only excludes other, equally important, public spheres from the picture but also underestimates the sociological significance of the alternative. Additionally, Milioni argues that given that women and non-bourgeois citizens were not allowed to participate in rational-critical debate where public opinion was formed, that automatically meant that the “public sphere came into conflict with the essential requirement of its self-perception” as it violates in a way the basic principle of the public sphere, that of general accessibility - acting in a way in a self-refuting manner. She later divides exclusion in three categories: a) class exclusion b) exclusion of other forms of expression and c) gender exclusion (2006: 32).

In terms of class exclusion, Geoff Eley and Nancy Fraser both agree on the existence of other publics (competing publics, counter publics) not only in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century as Habermas supports, but since the appearance of the bourgeois public sphere. Garnham supports that the “plebeian public sphere” developed in parallel with the bourgeois public sphere and had different organizational norms as well as different values. Habermas also excludes from his analysis the alternative (radical) media that appeared during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1992, cited in Milioni 2006). Curran (1991) considers that the fact that Habermas rejects radical media as a carrier of “ideological contamination” is indicative of the problematic nature of the Habermasian perception of rational argumentation.

As for the second form of exclusion, Milioni refers to the exclusion of the cultural public sphere from the strict political field, where other forms of expression instead of rational argumentation occur, like images or symbols. The cultural public sphere seems to exist only in the form of literary public sphere and only as a precursor to the political public sphere. After the appearance of the latter, the former is absent (2006: 34). Susen emphasises this by noting that Habermas’ analysis is based on “overly rationalistic assumptions” (2011: 54). Without underestimating that rationality can be a crucial source of social emancipation, it is important to recognize the social complexity that forms of inter-subjectivity offer - “various cultural forms derive their emancipatory potential from their ability to rise above seemingly disembodied realm of reason” (Susen 2011: 54).

The most cited challenge to Habermas’ work however, comes from feminist scholarship and concerns gender exclusion (Peters 1993). Susen (2011: 53) characterises Habermas’ account of the public sphere as “largely gender blind”, while Allen (2012: 822) shares the same view that

“one can’t help but be struck by the work’s blindness to the gendered dimensions of the bourgeois public sphere”. Allen also identifies the ideological notion of this exclusion which she believes “is not accidental or contingent but rather constitutive of that space” and that the very fact that led feminists to implicitly appeal to the core ideals is that the bourgeois public sphere was based on inclusion and equal participation. The exclusion of women is not just a political omission or moral blind spot but, according to Benhabib (1997), an “epistemological deficit” too.

What is more, critics wondered about the adequacy of the historiography Habermas deploys in his work (Hohendahl 1999, Gestrich 2006). In this point, Holub referred to the “oscillation between normative concepts and historical accounts” (1991: 6) and highlights the fact that “sometimes it appears that Habermas wants to merge history and theory in the notion of the bourgeois public sphere” (1991: 6). Papathanassopoulos (2011) raises two other questions: whether one could presume that it is worthy for citizens to be engaged in public dialogue and whether institutions of the public sphere were capable of producing the best possible information to nurture democracy.

Another issue that occupied much space in the critique was the public/private dichotomy that had a fundamental significance in the understanding of the public sphere. Fraser notes, that “in general, critical theory needs to take a harder, more critical look at the terms private and public” (1992: 131). These terms, after all, are not simply straightforward designations of societal spheres. An interesting point is also made by Dahlgren who argues that “in Habermas’ book there seems to be an implicit understanding of how people carry on conversation and arrive at political opinions which seems strangely abstract and formalistic” (1991: 6).

All these criticisms do not argue that the ideal of the public sphere should be rejected in its whole. Rather, as Fraser points out, most of them argue that it is preferable to reformulate Habermas’ bourgeois model and develop an alternative post-bourgeois conception (Allen 2012). Fraser distinguishes four essential assumptions that are central to the Habermasian theory, and after their thorough analysis, she suggests some points that could lead to the reconstruction of the public sphere and its formation as a more flexible concept. Starting from the first, she notes that the bourgeois model assumes incorrectly that it is possible for people to bracket existing status hierarchies and to participate as if they were equals in public debate, highlighting the need to eliminate social inequalities. The second point Fraser makes is that to

the Habermasian “single overarching universal public sphere that is necessary for a well-functioning democracy”, a multiplicity of counter public spheres should be opposed (1992: 127-128). Additionally, her third point concerns Habermas’ argument that private issues are always undesirable in the discourse that occurs in the public sphere, and she proposes that the boundaries between public and private should be open to discursive debate. At last, Habermas’ theory assumes that a “functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation between civil society and the state” but Fraser believes that “we need to make a distinction between weak and strong publics - the former being the site of opinion and will formation and the latter being the locus of political decision making—and theorize their interrelation” (Allen 2012: 824).

Three are the main trends in the public sphere research that are resulted from criticism of Habermas, according to Wodak and Koller (2010). The first is the late modern school, which accepts Habermas’ prerequisites and the normative foundations of the public sphere, and introduces a critical division of social concepts “system” and “lifeworld” where the modern world falls into these categories and the public sphere. The next one is the post-modern school. This school opens up the public sphere to plurality and suggests the existence of parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinate social groups circulate counter-discussion. The last one is the relational or institutional school, which underscores that public sphere manifests itself in history as well as within wider social relations. That is to say that the public sphere is one of the relational or institutional arenas. Somers identifies its settings as “a patterned matrix of institutional relationships among cultural, economic, social and political practices” (1993: 4, cited in Wodak & Koller 2010).

What characterises Habermas’ work though, and also Habermas as a theorist is that he engages in dialogue with his critics, reformulating his ideas in response to them. His article entitled *Further reflections on the public sphere* (1992) could be considered as an important step towards this direction. In this, thirty years after the first publication of his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas attempts to refute many of his critics. Two of his responses stand out: on the issue of idealization of the public sphere, Habermas notes that “he should have made it clearer that he was establishing an ‘ideal type’ and not a normative ideal” (Habermas 1992: 422) and thus accepting that indeed his original (bourgeois) model of the public sphere was idealizing the concept of participation. On exclusion, he underlines that “from the beginning a



dominant bourgeois public collides with a plebeian one” and that “he underestimated the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois public spheres” (1992: 430). It is worth noting, though, that there is evidence of an anticipatory reaction by Habermas in the introductory chapter of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, where he notes: “we conceive bourgeois public sphere as a category that is typical of an epoch (...) our investigation is limited to the structure and function of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation” (1989: xvii) and he continues “our investigation presents a stylized picture of the liberal elements of the bourgeois public sphere and of their transformation in the social-welfare state”. Interestingly, in contrast to the exclusion in general, Habermas considers the exclusion of women as an ingredient that had structural importance – “public sphere was not occasionally dominated by men but adopted their characteristics in the structure itself and its relationship with the private sphere” (1989: xvii). As a result, the structural transformation of the political public sphere happened “without undermining the patriarchal character of society” (Habermas 1997, cited in Milioni 2006).

Criticisms offer another perspective on the theoretical grounding, allow for a more critical engagement with public sphere theory, provide the opportunity to have a more comprehensive approach to the concept, and highlight some of the areas that Habermas’ concept could be subject to revision. However, any revision should be taken into consideration with caution, as there is a chance to alter the crux of the original concept. By having this as a premise, it could be suggested that Habermas’ original idea could act as the basis for a renewed version of his theory, adjusted to current societal needs and affordances. This could become possible through the re-conceptualization of its vital elements and a reconstruction of the concept, and that could eventually add to its diachronic value – pointing to the main aim of the thesis.

### **2.1.9. Public Sphere and the Media**

The principle of publicity has been fundamental for the public sphere, since its emergence, but it has also been an organizational principle for the political order (Habermas 1989). The press was a catalyst for the circulation of information - Habermas himself referred to it as the “most eminent institution of the public sphere” (Peters 1993). Besides, it was press’ “unique explosive power” in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century that helped towards a transition from the early

capitalist phase to the mercantilist one (Habermas 1989: 17-18). During the phase of early capitalism, the publisher was interested in his enterprise purely as business and his activity was confined essentially to the flow of news, while in the late years of early capitalism literary journalism<sup>23</sup> was predominant. The crucial turnabout, marking the entry into mercantilist capitalism, began with “scholarly journals”, when the press evolved from a business to “pure reporting” that involved ideologies and viewpoints (Habermas 1989: 179). Habermas also underlines that without the presence of a regular and accessible press the bourgeois public sphere would not have existed (Habermas 1989, Correia 2012).

A significant turn is observed in the *refeudalized* public sphere when the press, the preeminent institution of the public sphere, also transformed. In a way, it was its transformation that prompted a shift in publicity and subsequently, in the public sphere. In the refeudalized public sphere, media lost all characteristics of the previously established press. Through mass communication media, the public sphere was flooded by the masses, while the extended commodification of media resulted in “the adaptation of the speech at the lowest average perception and to the emphatic use of the image at the expense of the interactive media” (Miloni 2006: 41), in the sense that the image had a leading role and replaced in a way the level of analysis that the press offered. What is more, this meant not only a segmentation of the audience but also a transformation of the once intimate relationship between cultural producers and consumers.

Subsequently, the press became a profit-driven investment as through the upgrade of their technological apparatus, media managed to expand their capital basis and at the same time to increase their commercial risks. That led to a subordination of entrepreneurial policy to demands of business efficiency. As Habermas (1989: 185) noted, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the history of the big daily papers, it became understandable that the press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialised. He emphatically points out that “it became the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere” (Habermas 1989: 185). This had a direct impact on the relationships between the publisher and the editor as well as in the journalistic processes, like the selection of journalistic material. Furthermore, the evaluation of news became more important than the

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<sup>23</sup> Habermas (1989) here refers to the individual authors as well as to the appearance of a periodical press as a hearing for their critical-rational reflections that included pedagogical intent.

lead article (1989: 185), highlighting the direct link with the so called “agenda setting” of contemporary times (McCombs and Shaw 1972).

A series of events occurred as a consequence: emergence of a partisan press controlled by political organizations; appearance of a diffuse tendency toward concentration and centralization; homogenization of news services by a monopolistically organised press; followed by the editorial homogenization of smaller papers; and invasion of advertisement into the sphere of the public realm, which was expressed through the publication of papers, periodicals and booklets by advertising businesses (Habermas 1989). Habermas caustically comments: “Publicity once meant the exposure of political domination before the public use of reason; publicity now adds up the reactions of an uncommitted friendly disposition” and he later adds “publicity imitates the kind of aura proper to the personal prestige and supernatural authority once bestowed by the kind of publicity involved in representation” (1989: 195).

Moving this discussion to contemporary societies, Habermas’ perception of mass media has been criticised. Kellner (2000) refers to the inadequate theorization of the nature and social functions of contemporary media of communication and information, and notes that in Habermas’ theory, media are simply excluded from the realm of democracy and the possibility of democratic transformation. Furthermore, he adds that “Habermas does not theorize the media and the public sphere as part of a democratic constitutional order, but rather as a sphere of civil society that is a sounding board for problems that must be processed by the political system” (2000). In a similar vein, Calhoun (1992) also suggests that the public consequences of the mass media are not necessarily as uniformly negative as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* suggests, and there may be more room than Habermas realised for alternative democratic strategies.

Additionally, Milioni (2006) takes issues with Habermas’ perception of the public as singular – as a homogeneous and passive body that cannot react to the manipulative forces exercised by the opinion leaders. The discussion about the relationship between press and the public as well as the form public takes over the years, is not new, and further reflection on this argument and on elites’ role is provided in Chapter 5. Milioni underlines, though, that Habermas blunts this opinion by reconsidering his perception in the following years, and by recognising the critical capabilities of the mass audience that appears to be pluralistic and with a wider internal differentiation (2006: 42).

Curran (1991) presents the relation between media and the public sphere by discussing two different approaches, the liberal and the radical. The classical liberal theory posits the public sphere as a space between government and society, where the public has control over the state and where the media have a central role in this process: “the media are thus the principal institutions of the public sphere or, in the rhetoric of 19<sup>th</sup> century liberalism ‘the fourth estate of the realm’” (Curran 1991: 29). The radical democratic approach, on the other hand, insisted that the role of media goes beyond the predefined (by liberal theory) one, regarding media as “a battleground between contending forces” and underscoring their central role as “assisting the equitable negotiation or arbitration of competing interests through democratic processes” (Curran 1991: 29-30). By focusing on the public sphere, liberal critical theorists pose questions about the formation of public opinion, while at the same time, they explore the role news has in the creation and maintenance of the democratic principles. Bybee considers that these challenges are in the end a problem of civic participation, and argues that they are directly linked to the broader matter of “epistemological politics” - “the politics of what we know and how we act as citizens is linked to the politics of how we know” (1999: 30).

Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross (2010) divide the relation between media and the public sphere in three phases according to temporal terms. The first phase is bound by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup>. The press at this time was “an institution of the public itself, effective in the manner of a mediator and intensifier of public discussion” (Habermas 1989) and while it was neither an official messenger of the state nor merely a commercial product of consumption, it served as “a forum of self-referential discourse in which reflexive public subjectivity laid a foundation for public opinion” (Coleman & Ross 2010: 30). The second phase started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this phase, the press was commerce-oriented and marked by the emergence of the public service broadcasting. “This model of public sphere was defined by its limits, the industrial control of media production precluded untrammelled participation by all (Coleman & Ross 2010: 38). The third phase began at the end of the World War II, and media was a space where the public “can shape their own culture, without state power or economic inequality constraining their capacity to act”. This model was “based on Dewey’s conception of an intimate linkage between participation –and reciprocity” (Coleman & Ross 2010: 38)

The context offered by public sphere theory, highlights the powerful and arresting vision of the role of information in a democratic society. Curran furthers this argument by arguing that if by taking as a premise that “public opinion is to be formed in an arena of open debate”, then “the effectiveness of this will be profoundly shaped by the quality, the availability and the communication of information” (Curran 1991). Information is also at the core of the public sphere and the media are one of the most important contributors to its effective functioning (Webster 2006).

### **2.1.10. Public Sphere, the Internet and Social Media**

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas regards 20<sup>th</sup> century’s electronic media as responsible for the decay and degeneration of the public sphere. Kellner highlights the fact that many of Habermas’ critics noted that he tends “to idealize earlier print media and journalism within a democratic public sphere contrasted to an excessively negative sketch of later electronic media and consumption in a debased public sphere of contemporary capitalism” (2000: 10). It could be argued that Habermas’ perception of new media is captured in his 2006 keynote speech at the ICA conference in Dresden, where he discussed whether the public sphere concept can bring new insights and solutions to politics today (Rasmussen 2008). While Habermas referred to the dynamics of mass communication that “are driven by the power of the self-regulated system of the mass media to select, and shape (dramatize, simplify, polarize) information” and to the increasing influence of radio and TV as the reason behind the increasing ignorance, apathy and low-level trust in politics (2008: 73), he did not discuss the Internet, or its impact.

It is rather telling that even though this talk took place after the launch of the social networking sites and while blogging was at its peak, the Internet is only addressed in a footnote. In this, Habermas points out that “in democratic countries, the Internet serves only to fragment focused audiences ‘into a huge number of isolated issue publics” (2008: 74). Rasmussen attributes this to his prime interest in the public sphere from the point of view of political democracy and less from the point of view of media research, and she writes that “he is more interested in political deliberation than in democratic potentials in media research” (2008: 74). In agreement, Kellner also notes “Habermas (...) does not envisage how new media

and technology could lead to an expansion and revitalization of new and more democratic public spheres” (2000: 12).

Putting the discussion under the scope of technological advancements, these evoke massive changes in the ways that people are informed. Their reception by theorists, though, has been dual: they were seen either as innovations or as suspicious novelties. Either way, they were surrounded by the “mythology of the new”, which is “a vernacular that suggests new(er) media could revive old democracy” (Papacharissi 2011: 10), a tendency that becomes particularly obvious with regards to the Internet. However, the Internet was not the only technological advancement that caused such reactions. “Like the development of all previous new technologies, the appearance of the Internet brought about a discussion of its democratic and mobilizing power” writes Iosifidis (2011). Television and radio are two examples that highlight perfectly this tendency. Kellner writes that “Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin (1969) saw the revolutionary potential of new technologies like film and radio”, adding that they “urged radical intellectuals to seize these new forces of production, to ‘refunction’ them, and to turn them into instruments to democratize and revolutionize society” (2000: 12). Papacharissi reflects on these two examples, by underscoring that both these media “transformed and produce commercial, formulaic programming for the most part” (Papacharissi 2002: 19).

However, a critical point here is that both radio and television involved a rather small degree of participation, which is the distinctive characteristic of the Internet – the one that strengthens it with democratic potential (Eldridge 2015). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mass media underwent greater development, and conventional political systems embraced a media model where political communication was transmitted through elites within an “increasingly closed system” where the audience was largely a body of passive spectators (Bruns 2008: 73). This led the public to seek out new ways of expression that were meant to be found on the Internet. In its arenas citizen participation became the catalyst for the emergence of a vastly more multi-perspectival debate (Bruns 2008: 74). As Goldberg argues: “Media scholars’ interest in the public sphere is often articulated in opposition to political apathy, cynicism, disenfranchisement, consumerism, and increasing media concentration” (2010: 742). This opposition serves two purposes: it is descriptive of the corporatized conditions of media production, distribution, and consumption in which the Internet has come of age and which place on it the burden of democratic rescue, and it is a cautionary tale of the co-optation of

other communication technologies with unrealised democratic potential, particularly radio and television (2010: 742).

The Internet's revolutionary dynamic as a medium that has democratic impact was considered to be wide as it has caused major technological and social changes to the information society as well as to the existent public sphere (Miloni 2006). It has been even characterised as "the third industrial revolution" justified by the argument that "an industrial revolution is not just the development of another technology, but it is a fundamental reclassification in the production and the consumption (...)" (Ramonet 2000). Consisting or not an "industrial revolution" - as this could be considered as rather hyperbolic - the Internet has been approached in revolutionary terms and its revolutionary dynamic is highlighted as much by the technological transformations as by the political and social changes that followed its emergence. Supportive are also several characterizations that have been given to this phenomenon, "computer revolution", "information revolution", "network revolution" (Miloni 2006). Additionally, as Winner suggests, technological revolution connects directly with fundamental rearrangements encountered in political revolutions (Winner cited in Milioni 2006) and, in a way, it is perceived as an "Internet revolution", and it is political at its core (Miloni 2006).

A turning point, especially for its direct effect on mass media, was the appearance of the World Wide Web in 1993, which

Highlighted the decline and reconfiguration of the conventional public sphere itself: the slow, casual collapse of the one-to-many mass media of the industrial age, and their replacement with the many-to-many, user-led media of the networked age whose systemic features necessitate the development of vastly different models for the mediation of political processes. (Bruns 2008: 73)

In agreement, Simpson adds that "the press as an institution often did not promote a true public sphere as envisioned by Habermas, but rather serves to suppress it" (2010: 2).

The role of technology is a notable issue but scholars tend to overemphasise the dynamic of technology. Technological determinism is a trap that the rhetoric of this revolution has not managed to avoid effectively (Miloni 2006). It is not technology *per se* - it would be an oversimplification to argue that the Internet was the sole factor for the constitution of the "Information Society", a society dependent on information. This logic falls into technological determinism and it should be dismissed: the Internet caused far more changes than just

technological ones (Steensen 2011). Therefore, this thesis embraces the argument that technology should be confronted as architecture, in the sense that:

Technology as simple cause or consequence of human action becomes the deterministic and linear driving force or result of human action. By contrast, technology as architecture is integrated to the rhythms of everyday life, serving as the environment within which the individual becomes civically enabled. (Papacharissi 2011: 10).

Furthering this, Papacharissi (2009: 1) suggests that “it is not the nature of technologies themselves, but rather, the discourse that surrounds them, that guides how these technologies are appropriated by a society” while at the same time, referring to public sphere, she underlines that “it is important to avoid the deterministic viewpoint that online technologies are able to, on their own, ‘make or break’ a public sphere” and she adds that it is also necessary to understand that technologies frequently “embed assumptions about their potential uses, which can be traced back to the political, cultural, social and economic environment that brings them to life” (Papacharissi 2009: 1). The current political and financial background and its implications as impact factors on the contemporary models of the public sphere are further discussed in Chapter 5.

“The theme of the Internet as the public sphere has a permanent place on research agendas and in intellectual inquiry for the foreseeable future” writes Dahlgren (2005: 148). More recently, these discussions about the cyberspace concern its ability to provide spaces where rational-critical debate can take place, and where this debate could be autonomous as much from the state as from economic interests, in a way that it will ultimately allow the expansion of the public sphere at large (Dahlberg 2005: 1). For Dahlberg, Habermas offers “the most systematic critical theory presently available of democratic communications” (2005: 2). Likewise, Rasmussen writes that not surprisingly, media theory and Internet-research turned rather quickly to Habermas’ study of the early European bourgeois public sphere and to theories of deliberation as “theories of deliberation addressed precisely what the Internet seemed to offer: Possibilities for formation of productive enlightening and public opinion on a much broader scale than previously in history” (2008: 75).

Schematically, a model of the public sphere that is expected to be realised through new media is,



a functioning public sphere which is understood as a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulation of information, ideas, debates - ideally in an unfettered manner - and also the formation of political will (i.e., public opinion). These spaces, in which the mass media and now, more recently, the newer interactive media figure prominently, also serve to facilitate communicative links between citizens and the power holders of society. (Dahlgren 2005: 148)

The new concept, either as new construction or a transformation of the existent public sphere should meet a series of criteria, established by Habermas in his bourgeois public sphere theory. It should be a public space available to all, that includes topics of general concern, provides opportunities for feedback, and engages its participants in rational debate (Simpson 2010). These criteria could be regarded as generic and only as a context for the electronic version of the public sphere, even if they were the basis of the Habermasian theory. It is in the aims of this thesis to reframe these parameters, by expanding the theoretical framework related to the digital public sphere(s), by formatting a new definitional approach and by introducing a different angle, as detailed in Section 4.1.

Moving on to the democratic dynamic of the Internet, there are several approaches on how it is possible to evaluate it. Dahlgren (2005) suggests that the public sphere consists of three constitutive dimensions: structures, representation and interaction, and the proposal of its evaluation emerges from a comparison between the Internet's practices and the Habermasian model of the public sphere. Papacharissi, on the other hand, suggests examining this dynamic by dividing the research in three areas: information access, globalization of information (meaning the Internet's ability to bring together people from diverse backgrounds), and commercialization, as it is still a medium that "constructed in a capitalist era (is) susceptible to the same forces that originally transformed the public sphere" (2002: 18).

Certain precautions are highlighted in such an evaluation though: Papacharissi (2009) stresses the importance to avoid confusing the terms "public" and "private" (as social networks have blurred their borders even more) as well as the terms "public space" with "public sphere". Another crucial subject that is highlighted in the work of several theorists concerns the existence of more than one public sphere, an issue that Fraser (1990) noted long before the discussion on the existence of multiple digital public spheres (Miloni 2006, Bruns 2008, Rasmussen 2008, Papacharissi 2010). As Bruns writes about this issue:

A patchwork of overlapping public spheres centred around specific themes and communities which through their overlap nonetheless form a network of issue publics that is able to act as an effective substitute for the conventional, universal public sphere of the mass media age; the remnants of that mass-mediated public sphere itself, indeed, remain as just one among many other such public spheres, if for the moment continuing to be located in a particularly central position within the overall network. (Bruns 2008: 75).

Milioni connected the existence of multiple public spheres with the existence of different publics, which “are released from the condition of physical co-presence, require the use of different media and crystallised in communication networks between strangers who have highly complex ramifications” (2006: 73). A digital sphere, while loyal to the Habermasian tradition, should be based on some different conceptual premises, as discussed later, in Chapter 5. Papacharissi points out the bourgeois property holders today exist in the form of bourgeois computer holders: “In this virtual sphere, several special interest publics coexist and flaunt their collective identities of dissent, thus reflecting the social dynamics of the real world” and adds that this vision of the true virtual sphere “consists of several spheres of counter publics that have been excluded from mainstream political discourse, yet employ virtual communication to restructure the mainstream that ousted them” (2002: 21).

If there was a single word to describe the discussions on the public sphere and the Internet, this would be the word *polarization*, and notably, a polarization that draws on the Internet’s *potential* to meet certain hopes or/and fears. As such, one pole is established around a “utopic euphoria” while the other is established around a “dystopic apprehension” (Papacharissi 2002, 2010). In other words, on the one side lie its believers (the so-called e-optimists, optimists or cyber-utopians), while on the other side are its critics (the so-called e-pessimists, pessimists or cyber-realists).

On the pessimistic side, many researchers focus on the limitations of this new technology, in terms of limitation of access (restricted audience), of dominance of certain elite groups, of anonymity, and, most importantly, of fragmentation (Bohman 2004). Dahlgren (2005) also adds that “the uses of the Net for political purposes is clearly minor compared with other purposes to which it is put (...) democratic deliberation is completely overshadowed by consumerism, entertainment, non-political networking and chat and so forth” and he highlights the fact that the Internet has become an integrated element of global capitalism (Dahlgren 2005: 151). A similar point is that the Internet is integrated in the established

political system, although, it manages to challenge the power structures (Dahlgren 2005). Papacharissi agrees with Dahlgren's arguments – she mentions that mass media have succumbed to “the concentration of ownership and standardization of programming” while “the growing public cynicism about media coverage undermines the democratizing potential of mass media” and underlines that “for a vast majority of corporations the Internet is viewed as another mass enterprise” (2002: 19). What is more, as the author argues in her book *A private sphere* (2010) “the Internet is susceptible to the profit-making impulses of the market, which do not traditionally prioritise civic participation or democratization (...) while equipped with an open architecture that resists commercialization, it is not immune to commercial objectives” (2010: 123).

In addition, Iosifidis argues that the democratizing and empowering functions of the Internet and social media are being exaggerated and represent technological optimism for a number of reasons: The open participation of the Internet can turn chaotic; there is a problem of inclusiveness; censorship might be an issue; the Internet has become a major arena for corporate activity; the Internet's content is highly partisan; and above all, extensive dialogue and critical discussion (the very essence of the public sphere) is often absent on the Net (2011: 620). Likewise, Curran (1991) criticises the euphoric commentary on the Internet's potential to reinvent journalism by dethroning legacy media, and he underlines that old media persist as the rise of the Internet has not undermined leading news organizations.

Theorists on this pole extensively highlight the aspect of *fragmentation* caused by the diversity that dominates on the Internet. It could be argued that the issue of audience's fragmentation, organised around specific interests, is a severe challenge for the public sphere, it is however questioned in Chapter 5, and after the evaluation of the findings of the empirical research, whether fragmentation is exclusively negative or is an inevitable consequence of the plurality of choices in digital environments that could also have a positive side. On this topic, Beckett and Mansell (2008) argue that new forms of news media seem to encourage ever more fragmented communicative networks, while other obstacles have been identified: the growing colonization of the Internet by government or corporate interests, the lack of respectful listening of others and the fact that greater access does not guarantee greater political participation (Dahlberg 2001; Mc Coy 2004; Dahlgren 2005). In a similar vein, Papacharissi underlines that “merely greater access to information, enabled by online media” does not necessarily mean it “will

directly lead to increases in political participation, greater civic engagement, or trust in the political process” (2010: 120).

Additionally, Fenton (2010) argues that “claiming that everyone will be connected to everyone” or that “there will be a non-hierarchical network of voice with equal, open and global access” are far from truth, while Jodi Dean, who bases her disagreement on her argument that the Habermasian model never existed, suggests that “the Net be theorized as a ‘zero institution’”<sup>24</sup> (2003: 105). However, the non-positive function that the term signifies does not agree with the later evolution of the Internet, emergence of social media and recent advent of social networking sites – topics that the author herself analyses in her later works<sup>25</sup>. Dean’s argument relies on the consideration of the public sphere as an ideological construct that is to be subjected into ideological critique (2003: 101). Confronting this argument under the scope of Adorno’s perception of ideology as “socially necessary false consciousness” or as an illusion (Finlayson 2005: 11), it could be suggested that the public sphere concept is a normative approach that fails to acquire pragmatic substance, especially out of its bourgeois context, which is in alignment with previous critics, as presented in Section 2.1.6, but also in agreement with the thesis’ suggestion on the duality of the Habermasian theory. There are oppositions to this characterization of the public sphere as a merely ideological construct. Baker (1992) for instance supports that the public sphere could be understood either as a discursive category expressing a normative ideal or as an actually existing social reality, while Papathanassopoulos writes that the public sphere concept “is surely one of the most striking instances of the practical influence of a philosophical notion” (2011: 24). These two contradictive stances are posed in further discussion later, as they not only are at the core of the criticism towards the Habermasian concept, but they are also a significant argument when it comes to the realization of the theory in contemporary digital environments.

Focusing the discussion on the impact of social media specifically, Fuchs positions himself on the pessimistic side together with Jodi Dean, Evgeny Mozorov and Malcolm Gladwell who confronted the democratic potential of social media with scepticism. As Fuchs notes, Dean focuses on the fact that “the Internet has in the context of communicative capitalism become a technological fetish that advances post-politics” and regards the “political public sphere” as the

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<sup>24</sup>This term comes from Lévi-Strauss and explained by Slavoj Žižek. A “zero institution” is an empty signifier that has no determinate meaning but that signifies the presence of meaning. It is an institution with no positive function at all: all it does is signal the actuality of social institutions as opposed to pre-institutional chaos.

<sup>25</sup>See Dean 2010

“foreclosure of political proper” (2014: 187). Additionally, Mozorov argues that Twitter’s dynamic lies in a belief on cyber-utopianism (Fuchs 2014: 188). Shirky also points out that “there are two arguments against the idea that social media will make a difference in national politics. The first is that the tools are themselves ineffective, and the second is that they produce as much harm to democratization as good, because repressive governments are becoming better at using these tools to suppress dissent” and referred to Malcolm Gladwell (2002) who concentrates on examples of what has been termed “slacktivism,” whereby casual participants seek social change through low-cost activities. Shirky responds to that by saying that “the critique is correct but not central to the question of social media’s power” while in response to the other claim he posed an opinion that recent protest movements “have used social media not as a replacement for real-world action but as a way to coordinate it” (2011: 38). What is more, Sunstein has analysed recent technological developments, including social media, and suggests that “the Internet has acted to generate a multitude of ‘enclaves’ in which like-minded individuals engage in a largely insulated level of debate and discussion” (cited in Steel 2012).

Moving on to the optimistic pole, discussions in the 1990s about the poor health of democracy intensified and at the same time the Internet was “rapidly leading a media revolution”. That led theorists to connect these two phenomena in an optimistic way (Dahlgren 2005: 150). Dahlgren supports that the Internet helps to reduce “digital divide”, however this would never disappear. Additionally, he argues that the Internet offers viable possibilities for civic interaction, but he poses some very serious restrictions: this could happen only for citizens who live within already open, democratic societies and have access and political motivation. Theorists on this pole offer a more optimistic approach on the Internet’s potential as a new, electronic version of the Habermasian model as they argue that new media technologies could provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena and that they promise further democratization of the post-industrial society (Papacharissi 2002). The optimistic side supports the view that legacy media were incapable of corresponding to their role because they have let commercial interests interfere in their practices. As a result, their democratic obligations have been undermined and they have not only failed to promote the ideal of the public sphere but they have also managed to suppress it. Therefore, hopes have been expressed that new technologies would open the public sphere and allow unrestricted speech, but also that they would “overcome the traditional walls of commercial press”

(Simpson 2010). Moreover, it has been argued that democracy depends on an informed citizenry, and certainly the Internet could help in this direction (Pavlik 2001). This claim could be juxtaposed with the vast amount of information available on the Internet that may prove to be overwhelming for the public, an issue that has been mentioned by scholars on the pessimistic pole.

Kees Brants writes that “The Internet is often prescribed as the medicine for democracy in a midlife crisis and sometimes embraced as the new, electronic, ‘salon’” (2006: 144), highlighting these high expectations that accompanied the Internet since the early 1990s, when its global diffusion suggested that it “would assist the march to democracy” (Curran 2012: 49). It has also been argued that the rise of the World Wide Web has accelerated the meaningful information democratization - a term that could be defined as “the increasing involvement of private citizens in the creation, distribution, exhibition, and curation of civically relevant information” (Tewksbury & Rittenberg 2012: 147).

In a similar vein, Milioni lists some very “impressive similarities between the Internet and the ideal public sphere”: they share the universal, non-hierarchical, complex and demanding way of interaction which offers universal access, unobstructed communication, freedom of expression in terms of non-restriction in the choice of the subject of debate, opportunity to participate out of the boundaries of legacy media while it encourages the formation of public opinion and allows the constitution of individual identity through interactive processes (2006: 99). In terms of reciprocity, Papacharissi adds that the Internet succeeds in enhancing it, as “discussion, and, in particular, public sphere specific discourse, require reciprocity, in order to flourish” (2010: 122). Brants identifies further attributes of the Internet that justify techno-optimists’ enthusiasm, as its horizontal, open and user-friendly nature, the extended interactivity that allows for true dialogue and deliberation - the cornerstone of a well-functioning public sphere - and the hyper textuality, which is according to the author an “unlimited treasure of information and a potential for education” (2005: 144-145). These constitute two of the prerequisites for a rationally reasoning, enlightened public. Brants writes that “if the openness of the Internet could overcome the limits of elitist and dominating participation, then the Internet could be even better than the Athenian agora” - the epitome of democracy (2005: 144-145).

Drawing on these discussions, Papacharissi notes that “the value of the virtual sphere lies in the fact that it encompasses the hope, speculation and dreams of what could be” (2002: 23). This argument derives from the previous argumentation as well as by the related bibliography - it could be said that it is the rational conclusion one could reach and it could be argued that it encapsulates the reasoning of the optimistic side. Most importantly, though, and probably despite its aims, it also highlights why this reasoning could be considered as rather problematic. These perceptions, expressed by techno-optimists could be considered as over-optimistic, even romantic, as they encourage hopes about the Internet without providing solid ground that these hopes could be based upon. These claims are relying on the Internet’s *potential* to perform a democratic role rather than in its actual performance and reality. Furthermore, it is rather noticeable in the discussion above that theorists on the optimistic pole often include conjunctive phrases in their argumentation, to point to possible limitations on their hopes.

An additional factor is that the term democracy which Brants compares with the Athenian Democracy could take several forms. It is crucial, though, to specify the type of democracy one refers to, as different societies pose different challenges for democracy, have different expectations and different implications. As Strömbäck eloquently put it, it is:

only by specifying what kind of democracy we are referring to when using the term, and by specifying its normative implications for media and journalism, that we can fully understand how media and journalism affect democracy. (2005: 343)

At this point, two issues emerge. One is to explain thoroughly what is meant by *democracy* and whether this term should be re-conceptualised due to its probable limitations that consequently affect journalism (Steel 2016: 46). The other is to provide evidence that the Internet could revitalise democracy. While the first issue is discussed further in the discussion chapter of the thesis, the latter is presented in the form of a research question that the present work aims to respond to. The response, though, is not direct, but it is contextualised through the relevant inquiries on the public sphere theory.

Specifying previous discussions on social media, Loader and Mercea (2011) write that a “fresh wave of technological optimism has more recently accompanied” their advent, describing this way their emergence as the “second generation of Internet democracy”. Social media became an ally to those of the opinion that the Internet could raise the possibility of the realization of the public sphere into its arenas. Reese (2007) refers to the role blogs play and how they could

possibly add to the globalization of the contemporary public sphere, while McCoy Roth (2004) agrees by underlining that blogs have a democratic dynamic as through them people could interact virtually, exchange opinions and participate in the formulation of public opinion. Creeber and Martin (2009) focus on the role of Wikipedia and highlight that up until now there has been no single evidence to prove that legacy media enhanced dialogue between citizens, in the sense of a rational-critical debate that will ultimately lead them to reach a consensus, as has been described by Habermas. Social media, on the contrary, provide a series of tools to citizens that increase their ability to become more active in their participation in public discussions, as well as give them the possibility to be heard (Creeber & Martin 2009).

These expectations remain high, and Siapera argues that they are attributed to three main factors: due to new media's ability to *democratise* information both in its production and its dissemination aspects; due to the possibilities that new media offer for active participation, for forming interest groups and coalitions, and for mobilizing people; and due to the possibilities for online discussions and deliberations on significant issues that "breathe new life into the public sphere" (2012: 83). What is more, she identifies the ways that Web 2.0 could contribute to democratic politics, by suggesting that it may encourage direct communication between political actors, but also allow for "deliberation and communal thinking" (2012: 95).

In a similar vein, Shirky suggests that "the more promising way to think about social media is as long-term tools that can strengthen civil society and public sphere" (2011: 32), adding "as the communications landscape gets denser, more complex, and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action" (2011: 29). Fuchs, however, comments that "Shirky sees two sides of social media, but argues that the positive side over-determines the negative one and that in the last instance social media have positive effects on democracy" (2014: 189), pointing to the lack of evidence that these expectations could evolve into something more substantial than just expectations.

Focusing on Twitter, new terms emerged to portray its dynamic as a sphere of dialogue: *Twittersphere* appears in dictionaries even as an informal term to describe "postings made on the social media website Twitter, and considered collectively", and as a term comes out of a composition of 'Twitter', the proprietary name of the social media website, and the acronym - sphere. In this sense, Papacharissi underlines that "social media like Twitter would make the



private sphere a sphere of connection and not isolation, as it serves primarily to connect the personal to the political, and the self to the polity and society” (2010: 164), presupposing, though, that personal and political are separated. This could be considered a rather contestable point, as especially in contemporary democracies, the personal inhabits the political context and thus it is subconsciously affected by it, reminiscent of Aristotle’s notion of the human as a *political animal* (2006). This discussion however develops further in the last chapter, following the empirical analysis. It is understandable, though, that there are several aspects of new technologies that curtail or augment the Internet’s potential to revive the public sphere. By analysing closely Papacharissi’s article on the topic (2002) the following table (2a) emerges:

Augment (+)	Curtail (-)
Data storage and retrieval abilities infuse political discussion with information otherwise unavailable	Information access inequalities and new media literacy compromise the representativeness of a virtual sphere
Enable discussion between people on far sides of the globe (reciprocity)	Frequently fragmented political discourse
The Internet and related technologies have created a new public space for politically oriented conversation	Given the pattern of global capitalism, it is possible that Internet-based technologies will adapt themselves to the current political culture

Table 2a: The Internet’s potential to revive the public sphere (Papacharissi’s version)

Furthering this analysis by adding the arguments outlined above on how theorists from both poles regard the Internet’s democratic potential, this table (2b) takes a more complete form:

Augment (+)	Curtail (-)
Data storage and retrieval abilities infuse political discussion with information otherwise unavailable	Information access inequalities and new media literacy compromise the representativeness of a virtual sphere
Enables discussion between people on far sides of the globe (reciprocity) / Universal access	Frequently fragmented political discourse (small groups of likeminded people)
The Internet and related technologies have created a new public space for politically oriented conversation	Limited access for certain segments of the population
Space for unrestricted speech	Dominance of the elite groups
Opportunity to participate out of the boundaries	Minor use of the Internet for political reasons, censorship, surveillance
Challenges the current power structures	The Internet as an integrated element of global capitalism
Interactivity, hyper textuality, openness	Lack of respectful listening
Enhances hope, speculation and dreams of what it could be	Growing colonization by government or corporate interests
Reduces “digital divide”	It seems rather difficult that the “digital divide” will disappear

Table 2b: The Internet’s potential to revive the public sphere (full version)

An additional point to be taken into account is highlighted by the “normalization of the Internet” argument developed by Daniel Resnick (Resnick & Margolis 2000), who suggests that as more and more political actors move online, the Internet becomes dominated by the usual

offline interests, in the sense that neither cyber-utopia nor cyber-dystopia could describe effectively the present dissent. On the contrary *politics as usual*, transferred on the cyberspace, could be more appropriate (Siapera 2012b: 86). Siapera agrees with Resnick's argument in the sense that the Internet "becomes a facilitator of existing, formal politics rather than offering new opportunities. It is mainly used for efficiency rather than to add accountability, transparency and participation or, in other words, to broaden democracy" (2012b: 86). Although, she notes how this argument disregards some critical points: that new media offer direct access from politicians to citizens and vice versa and also that they facilitate access to all necessary information and thus, facilitate in a way the decision-making process (2012b: 88). Dahlgren on the other side argues that new media are not simply extending the possibility of "politics as usual" and notes that "(...) specific counter public spheres on the Internet are allowing engaged citizens to play a role in the development of new democratic politics" (2005: 160). Dahlgren, however, presupposes that the discussion concerns already engaged citizens.

Fenton breaks the Internet's claimed advantages in three broad categories, attempting to explore their meaning for democracy. The first concerns speed and space: Fenton notes that although the Internet managed to expand news platforms and to increase timeliness, at the same time it manages to increase pressure on a decreasing work force. With reference to its "multiplicity and polycentrality" aspects, even though the Internet brought diversity and challenged news organizations' dominance, the situation has not changed at all - she emphatically uses the phrase "more of the same". Lastly, in reference to the "interactivity and participation" on the Internet, she argues that even though it increased civic interaction through the prevalence of citizen journalism, these aspects do "not seem to be taking journalism to new heights" (2010: 10). With regards to the polarization that was delineated in this section, Fenton's concluding remarks in her book *New Media, Old News: Journalism & Democracy in the digital age* offer a new perspective, as she argues that both poles are wrong. On the one hand, techno-optimists' view of "a brave new world with everyone connected to everyone else, a non-hierarchical network of voices with equal, open and global access" is rather utopian as this view remains "firmly wedged in the starting blocks of potential" (2010: 14), pointing essentially to false hopes. On the other hand, according to Fenton, techno-pessimists have also missed the point, as they disregard that the Internet has modified things, often positively and productively: it provides a space for new voices to find expression, it has enabled established communities of interest to circulate more effectively their communication and information, it has offered a

voice to alternative interpretations of news and it works perfectly as a repository of information and knowledge (2010: 14). The significance of Fenton's analysis lies in its techno-centric approach that balances between optimism and pessimism - an argumentation that the thesis revisits after the empirical analysis, in Chapter 5.

An important point, though, here is that the dialogue on the democratic potential of social media focuses, almost exclusively on their impact and implication during protests and movements<sup>26</sup> and not in any other political use of them, as for instance during the elections. There is a brief reference on Papacharissi's work (2010) to Iranian elections, but the focus of the study is the protests that followed. More importantly, those studies largely do not focus on Western democratic societies. Papacharissi (2002, 2009) and Dahlberg (2005) underline the need for further research. The first writes:

We have successfully documented that political deliberation can indeed take place online; we now need to move forward and consider the greater impact of such political deliberation. Understanding and documenting the consequences of political uses of the Internet can help us determine whether this relatively new medium will manage to transcend from public space to a public, virtual sphere. (Papacharissi 2002: 24)

The second underscores the need for further exploration and development on the question of whether the Internet's deliberative promise could be realised (Dahlberg 2005). Moreover, in this new environment, which needs to be defined more clearly, there is another missing point: what is the role of journalism - the journalism that held a primary role in the press that Habermas considered as the most eminent institution of his bourgeois public sphere - in light of the argument that journalism is "in the process of redefining itself, adjusting to the disruptive forces surrounding it" (Bowman & Willis 2003). As Steel points out, "yet what has been missing from this discussion thus far is a critical analysis of the ways in which journalism has engaged with these technologies and the impact this has had on journalism and its democratic component" (2012: 72). Furthermore, it becomes significant not only to research journalism's contemporary role or its contemporary democratic obligations, but also its renewed normative expectations when placed in contemporary democracies, and due to the impact of digital modalities, like social media. Kunelius' argument points to this issue by noting that "understanding changes in the journalistic field is essential to understanding changes in the construction of the public sphere" (cited in Vos *et al.* 2010). The discussion on

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<sup>26</sup>Fuchs in his recent book "Social media: a critical introduction" (2014) dedicates a chapter called "Twitter and Democracy: A New public sphere", a great part of which includes examples of protests.

whether the Internet is or is not a new public sphere, either as a transformation of the bourgeois one or as a whole new digital version of it, and on its potential as an enhancement for democratic deliberation, is ongoing. The one side sees the prospect that many issues can be surpassed, while the other side considers these challenges not manageable. Reality may be neither on one side, nor the other but somewhere in the middle of the cyber-optimism and cyber-pessimism spectrum, and as such the thesis embraces Fenton's suggestion (2010: 10). Where the Internet, and notably social media, stand in this polarization depends on many factors: whether there is an overlap between various public spheres, whether it is possible or necessary to avoid further fragmentation of the political dialogue, whether the dominance of the elites is or will be reduced, whether citizens are able to gain greater access and greater control over political discussions and of course whether greater access leads to greater participation in a rational-critical debate. Even if the current public sphere deviates significantly from the Habermasian model, is crucial to have in mind what Dahlgren highlights:

While it is important to keep a clear perspective and not exaggerate the extent of the activities or their impact, it would also be foolish to underestimate what seems to be a major development in the contemporary history of Western democracy. The Internet is at the forefront of the evolving public sphere (...). (2005: 160).

## 2.2. Journalism

### 2.2.1. Introduction: Contextualizing the Discussion

This section focuses on journalism: by having as a starting point its historical background that highlights the role of continuity, a diachronic approach is adopted as the discussion moves on to the rise of online journalism and to the illustration of the complicated relationship between journalism and the Internet, which is divided into three distinctive phases: the first years, the realization of online journalism and one marked by the appearance of social media.

Scholars from different backgrounds tend to envision journalism in dramatically different ways (Hanitzsch 2011) as if a definition lies “in the eyes of the beholder”. In this thesis, journalism is approached as a profession, which sheds light on the notion of journalism as a “public-minded institution removed from politics and oriented toward the greater good to better serve democracy” (Waisbord 2013: 20). Professionalism carries a *conceptual weight*, or as Waisbord underlines, it is a normative ideal and should be approached as “a sociological category of analysis to study how journalism defines itself in society vis-à-vis other occupations, professions and areas of activity” (2013: 3-4). Interpretations of professionalism differ: it could be perceived as a job or an occupation, but also as encompassing a set of desirable virtues and principles, or as Wilensky put it “the traditional model of professionalization emphasises autonomous expertise and service ideal” (1964: 137). It is however the abstractness of the concept, that reveals a constant blending of occupational and normative definitions (Waisbord 2013: 3-4, 6) highlighting at the same time the prevalent ambiguity in aligning journalism with definitions of professionalism. In other words, journalists have pursued professionalism since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an era when journalism flourished, but there was a lack of consensus over the constitution of journalism as a profession, that led to a long-lasting debate. As Conboy underlines, even “during the 1960s and 1970s, a period which saw widespread professionalism in employment practices in Britain, an influential survey (Tunstall 1971) concluded that journalism still did not fulfil the majority of criteria which were widely considered as constituting a modern profession” (2013: 29-30). New theorizations on the concept, like the one provided by Aldridge and Evetts, argue that “the operational meaning of being ‘professional’ opened up spaces for radical change in what the job is, what it ought to be and how it is done” (2003: 562). Recent studies that further conceptualise journalism through

Bourdieu's field theory, explore its dimensions as a profession (Eldridge 2014; Siapera 2012; Hanitzsch 2011), demonstrating that an analysis through the lens of "professionalism" is meaningful as it highlights "the ability of a field or a practice to settle boundaries and avoid intrusion from external actors" (Waisbord 2013: 11) - especially at a time when external pressures, such as technological and economic developments, have changed the daily journalistic practices as well as the division of labour in media companies. According to Witschge and Nygren, current trends point to an antithesis: a process of de-professionalization along with a defence of the profession from within, which leads them to the suggestion that "the internal return to professional values" happens "when the profession is under pressure from the outside" - these are not oppositional, but they are more like "two sides of the same coin" (2009: 57). It is still an open question which side is more powerful.

An added aspect to professionalism is made by Siapera (2013: 4), who regards media as an ecology. She highlights the fact that:

the shift towards media as ecologies involves primarily a shift in perspective: from looking at a set of predetermined structures towards apprehending a dynamic plane of relations of various and multiple elements, including industries, producers, users, machines (tablets, mobile phones, PCs) and so on. (Siapera 2013: 4)

Siapera here suggests that it is not only critical to identify production as a function that combines multiple elements, it is equally important to identify how specific elements seek and acquire power over others, and the broader implications of the rebalance of power. This rebalance of power is definitive for the formation of relationships into these new arenas where both journalistic work and public discussion takes place. In addition, she stresses a crucial point that "this is especially important when we move from one media paradigm, namely broadcasting to another, namely social media, as new elements and new configurations emerge which usurp, upset or undermine previously congealed relations as those within journalism" (2013: 4). Drawing from this argument, the need to contextualise online, and especially social, media into a historical frame emerges, demonstrating the continuity as far as the impact of technology on journalism is concerned (Eldridge 2015).

### 2.2.2. Journalism: Historical Perspectives and Continuity

The discussion about the relationship between journalism and online media does not stand alone, and it is crucial to examine these issues in the light of history. To begin with, as it has been argued earlier in this thesis, the Internet has been described as the “vehicle” for an online or digital revolution. Either considered as the principal factor in the formation of the “Information Society” or as a medium with a high revolutionary dynamic, its emergence was followed by reactions that framed it “as either providing wholly new and exciting possibilities, or as unique challenges and even threats to established media” (Eldridge 2015: 528). Furthermore, it has been argued that the Internet was not the first or only medium that caused such reactions, or in Eldridge’s words “when set in the context of media history, the adoption of online media begins to reflect something familiar, resonant with both the enthusiasm and the trepidation that has accompanied past technological changes” (2015: 528). By adding to this argument on the dismissal of technological determinism, detailed in Section 2.1.10, it becomes apparent that the historical perspective is a valuable context that not only highlights significant parallels with contemporary issues, but also enhances the understanding that “online media’s emergence can be grounded not as surprisingly new, but as reflective of the media and technological changes that came before it” (Eldridge 2015: 529). As Conboy highlights:

Amidst the hurly-burly of contemporary technological innovations, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that technology brought journalism into existence and that journalism is very much defined by its continuing ability to react and adapt to changes in the technological environment. (Conboy 2013: 148)

Chalaby (1998: 32) places the appearance of journalism - its *invention* according to his homonymous book - in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and connects it with the commodification of news. He links journalistic discourse with the industrialization of the press that took place in the same period (Steel 2009: 585), while as Conboy underlines “news had always been a commodity but it was now a more streamlined and capitalised commodity” or, in other words, it was during this time that news became a “valuable product” (2004: 120). A fact of critical importance for all these developments is the removal of the Stamp Duty (Chalaby 1998: 11)<sup>27</sup>, highlighting the impact of the market on news as well as on the emergence of

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<sup>27</sup> Chalaby (1998:11) considers the taxes on the press, “the taxes on knowledge” as he calls them, responsible for the delay of the development of the press in England, as well as for the creation of an illegal press. He equally believes that the lift on these

journalism. As Chalaby notes, this time was marked by two significant transitions: the move from a public discourse to a journalistic one, and the shift from the commercialization of press to the commodification of its discourse (1998: 66).

Habermas' perspective agrees with this reasoning: he clearly attributes the traffic of news in the commercial relationships that developed during the mercantilist phase of capitalism. What is more, he considers the explosive power that press had during this era as one of the key factors that contributed as much to the transformation of the social and political order of those societies as to the formation of the civil society, as underscored in Section 2.1.4. While there are signs of journalistic work long before this century<sup>28</sup>, the attention in this section is focused on the recounting of journalistic history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, since it was at this time that the first signs of the relationship between journalism and the public sphere can be identified. Additionally, this time could also be considered as "the great era of consolidation for daily newspapers" (Conboy & Steel 2008: 652). Besides, it was at this time that due to the growing profitability and the establishment of a commercial status, journalism managed to gain increased social and political legitimacy which led to its consideration as the Fourth Estate (Hampton 2010).

In a similar vein, Conboy (2004: 50) discusses the significance of the *coffeehouse* for journalism, which as a phenomenon became prominent in the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere, even though it first appeared in the late 1650s. Coffeehouses were, in a literal sense, social spaces where social gatherings took place: a prominent institution for the bourgeois public sphere, and places where rational-critical debate occurred aiming at the formulation of public opinion. An essential addition is that they were also "one of the fundamental factors in the enhancement of news consciousness and the creation of a discourse of public opinion which would shape how journalism emerged" (Conboy 2004: 50). This view on 19<sup>th</sup> century journalism not only offers an insight on its role in the public sphere theory but it also demonstrates how journalism is defined, even in contemporary times. As Henrik Örnebring put it: "The patterns of journalism established in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century still influence how we think about journalism today, and how journalists think about themselves" (2010: 68).

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taxes and the decrease on the price of the press that followed, led to the enlargement of the market and he characteristically notes "from that point, newspaper owners and journalists have competed for shares in this market and through diverse mechanisms, these competitive struggles have created the journalistic field" (1998: 32).

<sup>28</sup> For instance, Conboy (2004:42) writes that "many identifiable features of journalism" can be seen during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while Steel (2009:586) highlights the role that information played in even earlier societies, like those of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century.



The historical context, however, is important for another reason. Through the historical lens, technology and innovation can be seen as a stage in the constant evolution of capitalist production relations (Conboy & Steel 2008: 655). Eldridge (2015) makes a significant addition to these arguments; by juxtaposing the effect of several technological advancements on journalism with that of online media he manages to show that the reactions that accompanied the emergence of online media are not unique in journalistic history. Apparently, “changes associated with online media reflect the bevy of factors that have textured the media-technology relationship through the past centuries” (Eldridge 2015: 536). Papacharissi characterises this as the “mythology of the new” in the sense that the new is greeted via “the discursive polarities of utopia and dystopia” as the theories around technology “reflect corresponding mythologies of our expectations of the new and our disillusionment with the old” (2010: 7-8). Relating this point to the discussion about the underlying democratic expectations that new technologies encourage, Papacharissi refers to a “mystical connection” between technology and democracy as “technologies that afford expressive capabilities (...) tend to trigger narratives of emancipation, autonomy, and freedom in the public imagination” and she highlights the fact that not all technologies are democratizing. Moreover, the framing of these discourses within utopian or dystopian polarities shows that hopes and fears are projected onto these new technologies (Papacharissi 2010: 3), and demonstrate that both the euphoric reactions as well as the opposite ones are a recurring phenomenon, which has also been noticed in the relationship between the Internet and the public sphere theory. Further questions are raised here about political debates that have been facilitated by the existence of new environments and new tools, and these issues are analysed in the next subsection.

### **2.2.3. Online Journalism: The Three Phases**

Drawing on Siapera’s argument (2012a: 156) that online journalism becomes more and more complex and more and more varied in its forms<sup>29</sup> it becomes apparent that a more in-depth and nuanced approach to assessing its role is needed. The relationship between legacy

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<sup>29</sup> Siapera uses the word “forms” here to refer to the various elements that are included in journalistic web sites and to the different ways in which they are arranged together. Her view relies on readings from the field of art (2012: 160-161).

journalism<sup>30</sup> and the Internet is analysed in three distinctive phases, according to Dimitrakopoulou & Siapera (2012: 30). The term *relationship* is rather inclusive, though, including not only the technological impact of the Internet on journalism, but also the social, political and economic transformations that followed. The distinction is the basis of the analysis; however, the third phase is at the centre of attention.

### 2.2.3.1. Phase One: The First Years

While the first journalistic website appeared in 1993, three years after the emergence of the World Wide Web, Pryor places the “meeting” between journalism and the Internet almost a decade earlier, in 1982, and suggests that this first phase came through two “waves”: the first from 1982 to 1992, and from 1992 until 2001 (Pryor 2002), including in these the very first electronic publishing experiments, like newsgroups (Deuze 2003: 204). The significant decade, though, was the one that followed. Online editions of print media made their appearance on the web, while their number increased quite rapidly. By the end of 1994, there were 78 newspapers online, and their number reached 855 in the next year (Deuze 1999: 375). These first journalistic websites, though, were mostly copies of the already published news in their print editions. Bardoel characterises this news offer as *parasitic*: he considers information on the Internet of a “parasitic nature”, referring to the fact that these sites were online versions of the print editions that included reproductions of the press agency news or references to other news sources via “deep-links” (2002: 503). This perception is linked directly to the so-called *shovelware*, a term that refers to the print content recycled for the web (Deuze 1999: 374). During this time, media organizations tried to find possible ways to exploit the web financially, although not as an attempt to gain autonomy but merely as support to their existent offline presence (Dimitrakopoulou & Siapera 2012: 31-32). It could be said that during this phase journalism sought to “impose its own norms and criteria on the new media” (Siapera & Veglis 2012: 4).

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<sup>30</sup> This thesis accepts the term “legacy media” as the one that has been exercised by mainstream media and notably the professional journalists that work for them. What is more, from this point on, by “online journalism” this thesis refers to journalism that is exercised by legacy media in their online outlets.

### 2.2.3.2. Phase Two: The Realization of Online Journalism

This phase lasts less than five years (2001 - 2004). During this short period, though, online journalism gained its online substantiality. New content was produced exclusively for online platforms, while news organizations tried to include aspects of interactivity, hyper textuality, multimodality and synchronicity in their practices online. The success of this form of journalism was dependent on the degree of integration of these characteristics in the journalistic work (Bardoel 2002: 504-505). Another key aspect of this phase was the appearance of the term *convergence*, which according to Dimitrakopoulou & Siapera (2012: 35-36) took four different forms: technological, financial convergence, social and cultural convergence. Pavlik (2001) sees that convergence as a possibility for a new media system, relying on its ability to embrace all forms of human communication in a digital format, which is free from the rules and the limitations of the analogue world.

Briefly, this phase was marked by the debate over what journalism is, who is or can be a journalist, the reasons why journalism cannot ignore the possibilities that the Internet had to offer and more importantly on the future of journalism, a debate that gained even more ground in the following years, with the appearance of social media. What brought the discussion of “who is a journalist” (Singer 2003) in the spotlight is the emergence of new media, and notably of blogs. The rather bold statement in reference to this emergence, that “we are all journalists now” (Gillmor 2004), reflects a euphoric tendency shared by many scholars at a time when “a dramatic blurring of the boundaries between journalism and the other forms of public communication, and between journalists and those formerly known as media audiences” (Shapiro 2014: 556, see also Singer 2003; Hermida 2011; Rosen 2006).

Scholars who discussed the future of journalism highlighted the changes that occurred in the journalistic work - Jane Singer for example acknowledged these changes in three key areas: in the exercise of control, in the journalistic practices and in the relationship structures (2011: 223-226). It was during this phase that journalists and academics began to perceive the dynamic of the Internet and attempted to understand its effect. Bowman and Willis discuss the fact that journalism during this phase entered the process of redefining itself and adjusting to disruptive forces that surround it. At the same time, they consider as the key characteristic of the 2000s the fact that everyone has access to robust tools for publishing and collaborating easily on the web (2003: 16-17).

The spotlight on the content, during the first phase, turned to the medium and its unique characteristics. But only for a while - in 2004 - it turned to the public and its enhanced participation in the journalistic processes.

### **2.2.3.3. Phase Three: Journalism in the Social Media (Twitter) era**

It was a combination of events that marked the beginning of this phase and it is rather difficult to point to a specific date that the transition between the second and the third period occurred. Siapera and Dimitrakopoulou (2012) recognize certain events - the launch of Facebook in 2004, the introduction of Web 2.0. in 2005, and the declaration of the *public* as the “Person of the Year” by *Time* magazine in 2006 - all having as a common characteristic the extended role of participation. Since the current work focuses on Twitter, its journalistic dynamic is explored in the following subsection.

Twitter belongs to social networking sites but is also a form of microblogging, the successor of blogging. In contrast with most social networking sites, it does not rely on bidirectional following (2013: 10). Its networking structure is based on two interdependent and overlapping networks: the one that it is formed by the relationship between followers-following and the other that emerges out of people that share common interests (Bruns & Burgess 2012). Twitter manifested itself, since its beginning, as a user-centred site and this concept is cemented in the idea of following (Van Dijck 2013: 71) - an idea that highlights Twitter’s dynamic as a *journalistic* medium.

Twitter was developed in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone in San Francisco. The first tweet<sup>31</sup> was posted by Jack Dorsey on 21 March (Honeycutt & Herring 2009). At its beginning, it was mostly an experiment for “internal consumption” for Obvious’ employees, a company that belonged to its developers (Honeycutt & Herring 2009). Its popularity, though, soon surpassed that of Jaiku, one of the first microblogging platforms (Ebner & Schiefner 2008) to a degree that led Anthony Mayfield to characterise Twitter as the “undisputed leader” among microblogging platforms (2008: 6) and Paul Farhi to refer to “Twitter explosion” (2009) especially in relation to its journalistic dynamic.

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<sup>31</sup> The first tweet was ‘just setting up my twttr’ - Source: [www.twitter.com/jack](http://www.twitter.com/jack)

Statistics on its popularity are equally supportive: In Twitter's short history, the number of tweets per day increased from 5,000 in 2007 to 500,000,000 tweets per day in 2013. Likewise, Twitter's official website<sup>32</sup> indicates that there are more than 302 million users per month and more than 500 million tweets posted per day. These numbers underline the level of Twitter's integration into the Internet's users' social networking toolkit, and they become even more important when regarded in journalistic terms. For instance, *Digital News Report for 2015* highlights the significance of social networking platforms as sources of news: Twitter is considered a useful source of news in its own right by the majority of the respondents, and quite interestingly, is populated by a relatively high proportion of *News Lovers*<sup>33</sup> (Newman *et al.* 2015: 82). In United Kingdom, which provides the case study of the thesis, Twitter users are much more likely to be actively checking their feed for what's new or clicking to view a professional news story (Newman *et al.* 2015: 83), and it is particularly interesting how these elements are translated in terms of participation: the report identifies several modes of engagement with a story, among which is the sharing of a story on a social networking platform and the commenting or posting of a picture on a social networking site, however it remains unclear in what ways users engage with Twitter specifically.

A short overview of Twitter's characteristics demonstrates how it can be used for journalistic purposes. Twitter has been organised across three axes: that of information sharing and reporting; that of information seeking; and that of daily chatter (Java *et al.* 2007). Its main functions are based on a rather simplistic platform: each user can set up a profile for free and can post messages that are limited to 140 characters - this element, however, requires users to express themselves laconically and to develop "short-hand expressions and discourse markers" in their communicative exchanges (Bruns 2012: 1). Twitter is a very open social networking space that enables every Internet user to track breaking news on any occasion (Bruns 2012: 2), as profiles can be public and unlocked, and accessible to anyone, registered or nonregistered (Huberman *et al.* 2008). Its central feature, which users see when they log into the platform, is a stream of tweets posted by the users they follow, listed in reverse chronological order (boyd<sup>34</sup> *et al.* 2010: 2). Soon after its emergence it employed three functions that enhanced its connectivity aspect: that of reply (@), that of retweet, and that of hashtag (#). These, labelled as

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<sup>32</sup>Twitter Company, available at: <https://about.twitter.com/company>, [Accessed May 3, 2016]

<sup>33</sup> News Lovers according to the report are people who have a strong interest in news and access it frequently (Newman 2015)

<sup>34</sup> The thesis follows the author's choice to not capitalise her name and surname.

*addressivity* markers (Honeycutt & Herring 2009), enabled users to connect, to initiate and to follow conversations worldwide (Van Dijck 2013: 73). Hashtags became prominent in these processes: they emerged organically as a way for users to organise their conversations thematically before those conventions were formally incorporated into Twitter’s infrastructure (Papacharissi 2014: 34).

A summary of these conversational markers is presented in the following table:

Addressivity Marker	Symbol	Meaning / Importance
Reply	@	With the “@” symbol before the username of the participant who is to be addressed, a Twitter user refers to another.
Retweet	MT, RT, via	Special form of reply. Users pass along messages they have received from the Twitter accounts they follow. Retweets increase the visibility of the original tweet. Manual retweets (MT) also provide commentary to the original tweet.
Hashtags  (Trending Topic)	#  TT	A brief keyword or abbreviation prefixed with the symbol “#”. It constitutes a user-generated tool for coordinating conversations on Twitter. They can be used as search tools for registered or non-registered users who wish to follow a discussion stream.  Trending topic is a popular topic which organised under a specific hashtag and manages to gather millions of tweets in its stream.

Table 2c: Twitter’s addressivity markers

These features had a great impact on the evolution of Twitter to its current form, that includes its journalistic dynamic - Papacharissi characterises them as “the socio-informatic backbone of Twitter” (2014: 36). This is based on the premise that their functionality extends from their obvious one. *Retweeting*, for instance, is not only a simplistic action of copying or disseminating a tweet, but it is also a way to comment on someone’s tweet, to publicly agree with their views, or a way to save tweets for future personal access. Actions like these suggest that the original tweet contains valuable information (Suh *et al.* 2010). Retweeting also “contributes to a conversational ecology in which conversations are composed of a public interplay of voices that give rise to an emotional sense of shared conversational context” (boyd *et al.* 2010: 1). Thus, it is not only about disseminating messages to new audiences, but also a way to validate and to engage with the ongoing dialogue, to participate in the diffuse conversation. Likewise, hashtags are an integral part of Twitter, as they manage to link conversations of strangers together, or as Murthy suggests “it is more of a stream, which is composed by a polyphony of voices all chiming in” (2013: 4). Especially, for news streams, that are generated through the organic use

of hashtags and combine input from a variety of actors, this introduces hybridity into news systems (Papacharissi 2014: 36). It could be even argued that it realises Bruns' term "produsage": the collaborative creation and extension of information that suggest the existence of blurring boundaries between audiences and journalists (Papacharissi 2014: 34). In addition, the constant improvements on these features signify that its developers realised their significance for the platform. Their importance is captured by Van Dijck who put it rather eloquently "Twitter's interface overhaul reflects an attempt to weave its idiosyncratic micro syntax into the fabric of sociality: hashtags, RTs, and @replies moved to the centre of each member's online experience" (2013: 72).

### **The Journalistic Use of Twitter**

Based on its open nature as a network, that does not rely on friendship ties that other social networks support (Bruns 2012: 1), as well as on its simplicity as a medium of information and communication, Twitter managed to emerge as a necessary addition to journalists' "toolkit" (Ahmad 2010) and it is used for a wide range of journalistic or para-journalistic activities (Kwak *et al.* 2010). The change in the perception of its possible journalistic uses is depicted in the alteration of the question which the 140 characters of each tweet responded to: the prompt "What are you doing?" was replaced by "What is happening?" in November 2009 (Dimitrakopoulou 2011; Hermida 2013: 298), suggesting an attempt to adjust to the contemporary use of the medium in which the centre of interest rolled over from the personal activity to the recording of the external environment and world. Statistics agree with this tendency - *Digital News Report* shows that Twitter is among the three basic social networking sites that are used for information purposes, along with Facebook and YouTube (Newman *et al.* 2015: 80) and among the top three social networks in a plethora of countries (Newman *et al.* 2015: 81). Furthermore, several recent examples show its dynamic as a medium of information. Dimitrakopoulou (2011) refers to a variety of them: earthquake in China (2008), fires in California (2008), earthquake in New Zealand (2011), presidential elections in United States (2008, 2012). These occasions constitute only a small proportion of the instances where Twitter was used as a medium for breaking news, either by users (citizen journalism) or by journalists themselves. The phenomenon of using Twitter during these types of events is the main theme of several works. Amanda Lee Hughes and Leysia Palen (2009) referred to its

dynamic during emergencies, Bibi Van Zee (2009) discussed its potential to “triumph” as a medium during protests, whereas Lev Grossman (2009) drawing on the Iranian Elections of 2009 underlines its substance in countries where censorship predominates.

A thought-provoking aspect is highlighted by Mills *et al.* (2007), who discuss the informative role of Twitter at the beginning of an event when it offers rapid dissemination of information to a wide network. What they have noticed is that Twitter provides an immediate response from the first moment an event occurs, whereas mainstream media online<sup>35</sup> seem to react after the first hour. Although, in terms of quality, information on Twitter remains static - a probable cause is the 140-character specificity that restricts extended news analysis. However, in the case of mainstream media online, a constant rise in quality is demonstrated (Figure 1). Overall, this study indicates that Twitter transcends mainstream journalism online during the first 24 hours, after which mainstream media have the leading role. Since this study was published, as much as Twitter as mainstream media online have evolved greatly, it could be argued that it manages to underline a question that remains rather essential: how and to what extent could the embracement of Twitter by media and journalists potentially enable them to practice journalistic work in digital environments differently?

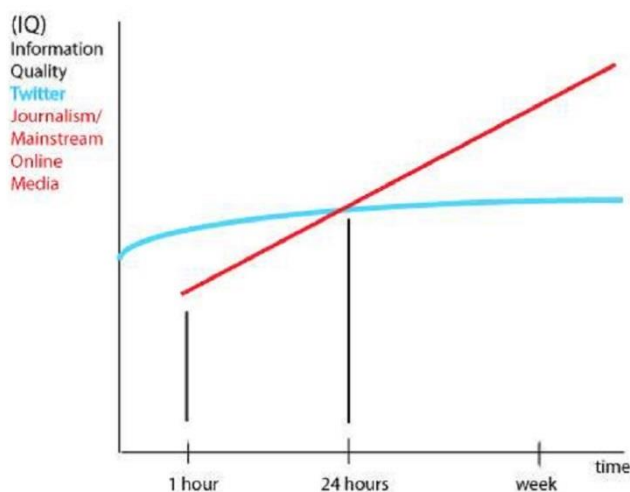


Figure 1, Response of Mainstream Online media and Twitter to breaking news events.

Source : Mills *et al.* 2007

This discussion highlights two key perspectives of Twitter research: its use during protests, breaking news and social movements; and its use by citizens that brought into the spotlight alternative forms of journalism, like citizen journalism. It also demonstrates a lack of empirical research on Twitter’s journalistic dynamic during political events with a longer time-frame (as

<sup>35</sup> The thesis embraces the term legacy media, however on this occasion uses the term that is provided by the Mills *et al.* study.



the elections), and how its use by professional journalists could highlight various aspects of its embracement.

Before proceeding with these issues, a parenthesis regarding the scepticism towards Twitter is necessary. Crawford points to the aspect of “following” and underlines that the selection of the people one follows on Twitter functions as a highly subjective filter that re-orders the news agenda (2010: 116). Mills *et al.* (2007) list its disadvantages too: the overwhelming number of tweets that discourages their filtering, the publicness of Twitter accounts which limits the privacy of its users, the spam tweets which are connected to certain accounts that attempt to increase traffic on their websites with the use of deceptive URLs, the extensive amount of fake accounts, and also issues of reliability or verification of the provided information. In addition to these, the addiction Twitter causes is a rather significant issue (Carlat 2011). As for the verification issue, which is particularly critical from a journalistic perspective, the only safety net is provided by the trust a user has in certain accounts, such as verified ones. These worries are not unjustified; however, it could be suggested that most of them could be confronted by regarding Twitter, as Mills’ *et al.* work (2007) proposes, as a medium of immediate information during breaking news which might be accompanied by further analyses by journalists at a second level, or as a platform to engage in dialogue about news.

### **Twitter as an Ambient News Environment & as a Global Marketplace**

Moving on to Twitter’s dynamic as a medium with journalistic impact, it could be argued that Twitter is a news environment in which news is always present (Murthy 2013: 51). Hermida (2010) describes Twitter as an *ambient* news environment: it is an arena that always contains news. Murthy further explains this by providing an analogy to oxygen and its significance for the physical ambient environment (2013: 53). What is more, ambient environment could be perceived as an “awareness system”<sup>36</sup> in which news information is received in the periphery of users’ awareness and do not require their cognitive attention (Hermida 2010: 301). Thus, Twitter not only facilitates the immediate dissemination and reception of short fragments of information from a variety of formal and informal sources, but it “creates social awareness

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<sup>36</sup>Hermida perceives awareness systems as computer-mediated communication systems that intend to “help people construct and maintain awareness of each other’s activities, context or status, even when participants are no co-located” (Markopoulos *et al.* 2009 cited in Hermida 2010:301).

streams that provide a constantly updated, live representation of the experiences, interests and opinions of users” (2014: 360). These uses can be considered, according to Hermida, as *ambient journalism* (2014: 361) and therefore Twitter provides a platform for this notion of journalism to flourish. The relevance of the platform as a social awareness system is also underscored by the use of addressivity markers which result in information sharing and its conversational uses by journalists, news organizations and individuals (Papacharissi 2014: 36). Importantly, in this system, awareness refers not only to news but also to others that exist in this environment.

The fact that Twitter has a global aspect - it facilitates the dissemination of news across the globe - could lead to the argument that “Twitter can be viewed as accelerating the reach of McLuhan’s global village<sup>37</sup>” (Murthy 2013: 20) as much in terms of connectedness as in terms of awareness of the others in the village. The contextualization of Twitter as a “global village” fosters a series of faults and limitations: from access restrictions to the corporate character of social networks as entities, that led Shah (2008) to suggest the employment of the term “global marketplace”. It however gives the sense of an inclusive space in which dialogue dominates. As Murthy put it “though Twitter as a global marketplace has unequally distributed influence, it has some resemblances to McLuhan’s global village in that even far-flung individuals are not only connected to an immense global network, but their voices can potentially be amplified exponentially” (2013: 21). An emerging paradox is underlined by Murthy here, that also points to some critical questions about what this perception implies for participation on Twitter, about journalistic voices and journalists’ role, and ultimately about what the existence of a global village suggests for the existence of a digital public sphere.

When it comes to Twitter’s use by different media actors, the platform encourages them to work in an arena that support co-creation of content, collaborative filtering and curating of news content as much by journalists as by audiences in a way that blurs the boundaries between their former and relatively distinct roles of producer and consumer (Papacharissi 2014: 34). But what does this adjustment mean for journalists? Are they adapting to new roles by redefining their previous ones or do they keep performing their traditional roles in these new public spaces? Do they encourage dialogue or are they continuously attempting to impose the previous one-dimensional flow of information? Do they consider the audience as part of the news process? How do they react to their contribution to it? More importantly, what do these

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<sup>37</sup>Marshall McLuhan argues that the process of “new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village” (1962: 31, Murthy 2013: 19).

new cycles mean for the formation of a digital public sphere? Are the responses to these questions the same when we discuss legacy media, net-native media or journalists as individuals? These questions constitute the basis for the empirical research of this work, although a brief theoretical contextualization is needed.

Twitter was embraced as much by media organizations as by journalists since its launch in 2006 (Farhi 2009). Its use by these actors has altered and evolved in its short life span. At the beginning, the adoption of Twitter into journalistic practices “has largely mirrored the path of earlier new media technologies such as blogging” (Hermida 2014: 362) - journalists just extended their established norms and routines onto these new platforms - an argument that is directly linked to Jane Singer’s concept of “normalizing”. In her 2005 work, by performing a content analysis of j-blogs, she studied how political journalistic bloggers attempted to fit blogging into their traditional professional norms and practices - in other words, how they attempted to “normalize” it. Her conclusion was rather revealing: they considered this whole process as a migration to online interactive environments where “the blog is being normalized as a component and, in some ways, an enhancement of traditional journalistic norms and practices” (2005: 193). Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, drawing on Singer’s work, performed an extensive content analysis on journalists’ tweets (j-tweeters) to examine whether the narrative of normalization was applicable to Twitter too, and concluded that the process of normalization in this arena is a two-way one: despite the fact that j-tweeters vary widely in the use of the platform, they appear to be normalizing microblogs to fit into their norms and practices, but, they simultaneously appear to be adjusting these norms and practices to Twitter’s evolving ones (2012: 31). This adherence to traditional norms is underscored by similar studies (Parmelee 2013: 303; Artwick 2013: 223; Canter 2014), and it is interesting what Hermida notes in relation to this: “(...) as journalists are shaping the application of Twitter, so is Twitter shaping the nature of journalism. Journalists seek to shape a new communicative space to fit within prescribed conventions while they are, themselves, shaped by its sociotechnical traits” (2013: 301). The narrative of normalization is particularly important for the thesis, as it acts as the framework for the findings of the empirical research in Chapter 4.

Hermida (2012) recognized the impact of Twitter on journalism in three areas: in the gathering, the reporting, and the recommendation of news. A significant difference however emerges when it is used by different media actors, meaning news organizations and journalists.

Canter (2014: 2) suggests that there are two distinct channels of communication which are evolving in social media: a traditional function for news organizations and a social function for journalists. Additionally, in their 2012 study about adoption and use of Twitter by legacy media in 2009 and 2010, Messner *et al.* observed that it was used like the World Wide Web during the early 1990s, with the predominance of shovelware. The studied Twitter accounts showed little evidence of personal interaction with their Twitter followers and it was mostly used as “a streaming RSS service for news stories that promotes and re-distributes previously published content” (2012: 20; An *et al.* 2011: 1) The most common practice was the use of the main institutional account only for tweeting articles’ headlines along with a link that led back to the website; an automatic process when an item was published (Palser 2009). Messner *et al.* suggest that while Twitter is fully adopted by media organizations, its potential for building communities or for engaging is widely disregarded (2012: 20). The rapid rhythm of evolution of the platform, though, highlights the need to further explore whether these practices have changed and to what extent.

A rather pressing question is whether journalists should participate in the “messy mixture of personal and professional in social media”, or if they should maintain their professional standards and use Twitter as simply another arena for publication (Rogstad 2014: 688). It could be argued that Twitter has much to offer to journalists – among others uses, it offers access to real-time information from a diversity of sources, links to data and documents, the retweeting function that expands the reach of their work, the capability to interact with others instantly (Hermida 2010: 1; Parmelee 2013: 292). What is more, Canter identifies another use beyond those of personal branding and promotion: Twitter is used as a tool that enables journalists to achieve greater transparency and accountability in their work (2014: 2).

Especially with regards to Twitter’s use by journalists, Ulrika Hedman and Monika Djerf-Pierre identify a new professional divide regarding the integration of social media in their daily work (2013: 381). They recognize three categories: the sceptical shunners who are the journalists that avoid having anything to do with social media and they constitute the minority; the pragmatic conformists who are journalists who regularly use social media but who are at the same time selective and judicious in their usage; and the enthusiastic activists as those who “fully lead a life online, being connected and twittering and blogging continuously” - an approach that is common among younger journalists. Interestingly, those belonging to the second category use

social media for information collection and ambient scanning of what is going on online, while those who fully embrace the social media life extend their use to networking, collaboration and personal branding (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre 2013: 381). The issue of personal branding is also central to Rogstad's work, who examines the ways political news journalists specifically engage in social media practices. This assesses how these practices challenge journalistic norms, especially by highlighting the degree to which they use social media as self-promoting tools. He identifies five clusters of journalists: sceptics, networkers, two-facers, opiners and sparks, revealing that the ways they incorporate social media into their work varies, mostly when it comes to self-promoting and opining (Rogstad 2014: 700). When it comes to ideals, though, the change is not so fundamental. Hedman and Djerf-Pierre underline that social media are indeed changing the journalistic profession in terms of how it relates to the public, but not in terms of how "it perceives its fundamental societal role as the fourth estate" (2013: 382) – this argument poses questions as much for the new relationship with the public as for the discussion about the redefinition of their role. There are myriad factors at play in the adaptation of the new technologies; the integration of social media in journalistic practices "is not determined by the technological innovation solely, but it is a social process of appropriation" (Gulyas 2013: 283). Agnes Gulyas' comparative study in four countries (Finland, Germany, Sweden and United Kingdom) highlights the specific national scope of the related studies, which underline the need to pose these questions in United Kingdom's environment. In support of this view, her findings show that journalists in the United Kingdom use social media more extensively and hold a more positive attitude towards these tools (Gulyas 2013: 283).

### **Twitter: An Ideal Network?**

An interesting element emerges from Mills *et al.* work (2007) who refer to the use of Twitter during crises and present a comparative table between the *ideal network* and Twitter, demonstrating to what extent Twitter responds to these. Drawing on their work an updated and more inclusive version of this table (2d) is presented below, by accepting its limitations in the level of analysis:

<b>Ideal Network</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
<b>Low Cost</b>	Twitter is a free platform
<b>Easy to use</b>	It is based on a simple platform on which messages are limited to 140 characters
<b>Mobile</b>	Twitter is accessible through a variety of devices that have internet access. There is also a diversity of applications, either web-based or designed for mobiles, that enable to exploit its characteristics
<b>Reliable</b>	Twitter is considered as a highly reliable platform
<b>Fast</b>	Messages are distributed in a few seconds
<b>Enables Conversation</b>	Through addressivity markers like retweeting
<b>Visualization Tools</b>	A range of applications is designed to provide instant visualization
<b>Search Tools</b>	The basic search tools are the hashtag and the ability of “tracking” information through its platform
<b>Modular</b>	There is no limitation in the number of followers/following in direct contrast with Facebook that allows only 5000 friends per person
<b>Popular</b>	It is one of the most popular social networking sites with more than 300 million users monthly - a characteristic that highlights the wideness its network
<b>Publicness / Open Network</b>	Profiles are public / non-registered users are allowed to track information
<b>Inclusion of Photograph</b>	It offers the possibility to include photographs in every tweet
<b>Verification of Information</b>	The “verified accounts” process assures users of the authenticity of the accounts they follow

*Table 2d: Comparison of Twitter with the “ideal network”*

These opportunities and challenges that emerge by using Twitter for journalistic purposes highlight another issue: that of the democratization of the dialogue. As Axel Maireder and Julian Ausserhofer argue “the open, transparent, and low-threshold exchange of information and ideas Twitter allows shows great promise for a reconfiguration of the structure of political discourses towards a broadening of public debate by facilitating social connectivity” (2014: 306). Their research on the networking of topics, media objects and actors in political discourses, indicate that they are “heavily entangled processes” that reorganise user’s experience of the political ,while at the same time pose participants within “a public social negotiation of the meaning of the political events” (Maireder & Ausserhofer 2014: 316) - highly critical points for the formation of new political information cycles into these new media spaces, a topic that is the main theme of the next section.

## 2.3. Public Sphere, Democracy and Journalism: Three interdependent concepts

### 2.3.1. Introduction: Framing the Discussion

Public sphere, democracy and journalism are three interdependent concepts. As it has been argued previously democracy and the public sphere are irrevocably connected. Likewise, journalism is also clearly connected with the public sphere concept - a connection that Habermas considered a strong and significant one<sup>38</sup> - or as John Nerone put it “public sphere is one of the key terms of thinking about press in the modern West” (1995: 154).

Putting at the epicentre the complex relationship between journalism and democracy here, this has taken different forms over centuries. It could be argued that journalism does exist outside democratic societies, more in the sense that democracy does not necessarily produce journalism nor vice versa (Schudson 2008: 12), although in these different contexts it may serve different functions “ranging from sustenance of the regime to misinformation and propaganda” (Siapera 2012b: 156). But it could also be argued that journalism only flourishes in a democratic society. Carey even argues, probably rather problematically, that “journalism is another name for democracy” (1997: 332). This may be a rather strong argument, even an exaggeration - Michael Schudson characterises it as romantic (2008: 11) - but it could be considered indicative of a tendency. For Schudson, who confronts their relationship with scepticism and considers it more complex than Carey, “journalism does not produce democracy where democracy does not exist, but can do more to help democracies thrive” if among other aspects, it “clarifies for journalists and the public the many gifts news contributes to democratic aspirations” (2008: 26).

Strömbäck views the link between democracy and media in terms of a social contract, highlighting their interconnection as a relationship of mutual dependence. He underlines that journalism requires democracy because it is the system of governance that respects freedom of speech, the need for expression and information, and the independent (from the state) role of the media. Equally, democracy requires a system that allows the flow of information that enhances public discussion and that functions, independently from the state too, mainly acting as a watchdog. Although, even in democratic states there are different normative approaches to

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<sup>38</sup> See: Section 1, Public Sphere and the media

what democracy should be, which in turn, pose different understandings and requirements for journalism (Siapera 2012b: 156).

A starting point for this discussion is the perception of their relationship as a *systemic* one - by regarding journalism as one of the elements that constitute political communication and by considering political communication as a system of dynamic interactions between political and media institutions and citizen publics, it becomes apparent that changes in each one of these elements affects directly this *systemic relationship*, as well as the performances of other actors, or as Voltmer argues “all these actors are constantly involved in a complex web of interactions and negotiations (...)” (2006: 6). What is more, given that this system responds to changes in the broader environment, issues about the possibilities that new technological advancements offer for the revitalization of democracy are raised and questions about journalism’s ability to serve its roles in a democratic society are highlighted. In Voltmer’s words “systems of political communication respond (also) to changes in broader environment in which they operate, which can be triggered by political and economic developments, repercussions of international crises, or the emergence of new communication technologies such as the Internet” (2006: 7).

To understand this systemic relationship in depth, but also how it is formed into new mediated arenas that challenges it further, there are two requirements: the first is to understand the roots and different aspects of these concepts, which is attempted in previous sections. The second is to develop the thinking on their common ground, which is *participation*. Furthering this reasoning, and posing participation into social media platforms, like Twitter, it becomes possible to chart its evolution. Towards this, the context of this discussion is given by Chadwick’s work on the hybrid media system and new political information cycles that are formed within this system. Among others, his work manages to underline new forms of political dialogue and the role of participation in it.

### **2.3.2. The Hybrid Media System and the New Political Information Cycles**

Drawing on the fundamental changes that occurred in the nature of political life due to the disruptive influence of digital communications, and bearing in mind that media systems in Britain and in other countries are in the middle of “a chaotic transition period induced by the



rise of digital media”, Chadwick refers to the existence of a hybrid media system, the understanding of which is based on the conceptual understanding of power (2013: 4).

The hybrid media system is building upon interactions among older and newer media logics, which, according to Chadwick, is a term that includes technologies, genres, norms, behaviours and organisational forms. By rejecting simple dichotomies, as ‘either/or’ and ‘not only/but also’ pattern of thoughts, hybrid thinking demonstrates how older and newer media logics in the reflexively connected areas of media and politics “blend, overlap, intermesh and co-evolve”, while at the same time political actors, publics and the media interact. As Chadwick notes “actors in this system are articulated by complex and ever-evolving relationships based upon adaptation and interdependence (...)” (2013: 4), highlighting that journalism is not formed independently from the other two elements: political actors and the public. Extending this view, social media are also formed in accordance with the societal needs and are affected by them. Therefore, by considering that contemporary society is not separated from its past but that it carries historical baggage, then it could be argued that social media are affected - even indirectly - by this history. In that sense, the relevance of Chadwick’s argument with this thesis lies mainly in the shared view that new and old are integrated and interdependent.

To understand this theory, it is essential to understand the terms that constitute the “hybrid media system”. The term hybrid or hybridity originates in Greek and means “something new that nevertheless has continuities with the old” (Chadwick 2013: 8). With regards to the Internet, hybridity could be translated as the encouragement of the audience to “inject familiar genres and routines into new and unfamiliar information environments” (2013: 13) in the sense that they can transfer their social background and culture into these new public spaces. Similarly, journalists in the process of adapting to new media environments simultaneously hybridise them with “their pre-existing routinized, professional practice” (2013: 13). As for the definition of “media system”, Chadwick accepts Denis McQuail’s (1992) definition of a media system as “simply all relevant media” (2013: 16). On the issue of “media logic”, which plays a rather significant role in his theory, Chadwick adopts a more expansive idea. By arguing that society and political life today is shaped by complex interactions between competing, overlapping and interdependent media logics of newer and older media, he bases his theory on the key question that relates to the understanding of the interactions that “determine the

construction of media content” as well as “how these interactions take place across and between different older and newer media” (2013: 16).

Central to this thesis, is Chadwick’s analysis of the new political information cycles, which he considers as an essential element of the hybrid media system and also “the systemic norm for the mediation of important political events” (2013: 62). Its basis is the term “news cycle” which means the predictable time-period between the latest and next issue of a newspaper - a time that includes the whole news process. The importance of the term lies, though, in the fact “that the construction of political news is a tightly controlled game” which involves interactions and interventions of a number of elites: politicians, officials, communication staff, professional news workers and even a small number of elite bloggers (2013: 62).

The new political information cycles, Chadwick suggests, are “complex assemblages<sup>39</sup> in which the logics (...) of supposedly ‘new’ online media are hybridized with those of supposedly ‘old’ broadcast and newspaper media” (2013: 62) - assemblages are defined as being “simultaneously a process and an event” (2013: 64). Chadwick notes that they “are composed of multiple, loosely coupled individuals, groups, sites, and temporal instances of interaction involving diverse yet highly interdependent news creators and media technologies that plug and unplug themselves from the news-making process, often in real time” (2013: 64). These cycles work on the basis of cross-platform iteration and recursion, meaning that legacy media integrate in their practices those of new media. As Chadwick put it, political news is shaped by “a range of new real-time genres, non-elite interventions and elite-activists’ interactions” (2013: 87). At this point it could be argued that Twitter is one of the new real-time platforms that feed with comments and reactions the coverage of political events - even when these are broadcasted on other platforms (as for instance happens with *dual* screening) (Vaccari *et al.* 2015). Additionally, it could also be argued that political dialogue and participation, the crux of this work, are taking place in the political cycles Chadwick describes.

These new cycles have three significant points. The first concerns the integration of non-elite actors, meaning the integration of information from the online realm. The second concerns the orchestration of real-time coverage, during and immediately after the event. Chadwick

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<sup>39</sup> Chadwick defines assemblages as to be “simultaneously a process and an event” and notes that they “are composed of multiple, loosely coupled individuals, groups, sites, and temporal instances of interaction involving diverse yet highly interdependent news creators and media technologies that plug and unplug themselves from the news-making process, often in real time” (2013: 64).

notes that “the idea of a ‘24-hour news cycle’ does not capture their multiplicity” in the sense that they “rest upon a subtle political economy of time” (2013: 88), meaning that the continuous attention and the ability to create and act on information promptly are critical. In other words, “those who recognize the importance of the time and the circulation of information (...) are more likely to be powerful” (2013: 88). The last rather crucial point is the implication of different actors in the production of news, showing that these new cycles offer opportunities for non-elites to affect news production through “timely interventions and sometimes direct, one-to-one, micro-level interactions with professional journalists” (2013: 89). Chadwick points to an “intra-elite competition” as a dominant feature of this environment as the majority of participants consist of political activists, whose behaviour is formed by the awareness that politicians and professional journalists play a great role in the mediation of news. Although, he notes that ordinary citizens are enabled, using digital technologies, to affect the meaning and flow of information (2013: 89).

Summarizing the reasons why Chadwick’s theory is essential for this thesis is that he highlights that political communication “has entered a new, more complex and unsettled era” and that his model of the new media hybrid system may indicate that “chaos, nonlinearity and disintegration” exist, but it also indicates that there are new patterns of integration (2013: 210). What is more, it shows that old media are not wholly separate from new media, that there is a connection between them (*hybridity*) and the one affects the other. Even though for practical reasons, the term “new media” is employed in this thesis, it embraces the continuity that is implied in this understanding. Chadwick’s work is valuable for the current work for another reason as well; it manages to pose a critical question: what counts as political action? Chadwick argues that “internet-driven norms of networking, flexibility, spontaneity and ad hoc organizing” have started to diffuse into politics and into media and these norms point to the need to reconsider how the public manages to engage in political dialogue. If the public participates effectively in political dialogue then the discussion around the new digital public sphere(s) could be based on more solid ground. In this context, Chadwick writes “we might ask whether the average citizen interested in influencing politics but without ambitions for high political office should join a party or create a Twitter account and start interacting with others in the diverse assemblages that now increasingly make political news and set the agenda” (2013: 209). With an interest in the latter aspect, Twitter participation and interaction as indicators of political participation will be further explored in the research part of the thesis. These

questions are not new; they have been posed in relation to the public sphere, but they are now taking a new turn with the existence of digital technologies.

### 2.3.3. Participation in Political Dialogue

Andrew Chadwick's political information cycles rely on three key elements, the new real-time platforms, non-elite interventions, and elite-activist interactions, highlights their common ground: participation. In his theory, he manages to describe

The move from a mass media 'news cycle' dominated by interactions between journalists and professional sources resulting in content subsequently disseminated in a one-way, centralized fashion to audiences, to a new mixed-media 'news-information cycle' in which ordinary people can use social media and other new internet tools to actively engage in commenting on, sharing and producing news in more interactive and decentred environment. (Kleis Nielsen & Schroder 2014: 474)

At the same time, he underscores the continuance between old and new media, in a way that shows that social media are at the end of this line of continuity and their use "increasingly supplement older and more established forms of media use" (Kleis Nielsen & Schroder 2014: 474) - aspects that form the context of the following discussion.

Participation, though, is not only the key element in Chadwick's work or the vital ingredient of social media platforms. It is also the common ground where the three concepts of this thesis meet. As much in the public sphere concept as in democracy and journalism, participation is highly significant for their existence: all these concepts build upon the notion of participation and even their definitional approaches, as presented in the previous sections, effectively demonstrate this significance. When it comes to journalism, it was historically crucial, but becomes even more essential in its new forms.

But, how has participation in political dialogue evolved? Which are the new forms of engagement? How are these two formed in the digital environments? How are these measured in political terms? More importantly, what do their evolved versions mean for democracy and for Habermas' concept of the public sphere? These are the questions that this section aims to respond to in order to set the basis for the research of their manifestations on Twitter.

“Participation is the elixir of life for democracy” writes Jan W. van Deth (2014) in agreement with Carole’s Pateman statement that “for a democratic polity to exist it is necessary for a participatory society to exist” (1970: 43) highlighting this way the significance of participation for democratic societies. Even the word itself etymologically encapsulates this sense as it broadly means “rule by the people”. As Anthony Birch put it, participation “is part of the definition of democracy” (2002: 106) and it is the engagement of the citizens that gives to this system of governance “its legitimacy as well as its vitality”, as without the minimum level of involvement from its citizens democracy may cease to function in a genuine way (Dahlgren 2009: 1, 12) or lack its guiding force (Dalton 2008: 76).

Participation is an activity, that of *taking part with others in some social process*, with the social dimension to be entirely essential to the term (Birch 2002: 104). Following this definition, *political participation* should consist of taking part in some “political action” (Parry 1972: 3). What becomes obvious, though, is not only that political actions vary, but that they can be seen through different perspectives: participatory acts can be both instrumental with the intention to produce a specific outcome, or symbolic with the intention to demonstrate an opinion (Whiteley 2013).

Defining political participation is a difficult task (Milbrath 1965; Parry 1972; Whiteley 2013; Hooghe *et al.* 2014; Theocharis 2015) as “any definition of political participation is inevitably tendentious and contestable” (Parry *et al.* 1992). Lester Milbrath suggests that the first task is “to find a way to think about political participation” by defining participation, specifying its various variables and keeping the subject to a manageable size (1956: 5). A starting point to this direction could be that every person participates, no matter how passively, in the political system they live in - Milbrath states a series of actions that prove that: the mere compliance that gives support to the “regime”, the obeying of law, the payment of taxes and so on (1956: 9). Supportively, there is a close connection between participation and the *very idea of political* as politics itself implies action in common for certain purposes and hence it presupposes some degree of participation (Parry 1972: 4). Although, in order to refer to political participation, it has been argued that a more direct relationship between the act and the outcome is required (Parry 1972: 3).

Political participation can be loosely defined as “citizens’ activities affecting politics” (van Deth 2014: 351), while Geraint Parry considers political participation as “taking part in the

formulation, passage or implementation of public policies” (1972: 5) and depends on different criteria: its mode, its intensity and its quality (1972: 6-11). Behavioural aspects as well as motivational ones have been added to the definitional attempts (Milbrath 1956, van Deth 2014). Parry *et al.* (1992: 4-5) draw attention also to the fact that different types of democracy have different implications for participation. Van Deth cites four points that are common among widely used definitions of political participation: participation is an activity, performed by people in their role as citizens, it is voluntary and not enforced by law or rules and deals with issues that concern the government, politics or state (Whiteley 2013; van Deth 2014: 351-352; Theocharis 2015: 6).

Focusing empirically on a specific mode of it, that of *participation in political dialogue* and how it differs from *political expression*, and in social media environments, the last subsection of the literature review refers to some aspects of political participation, attempting to set the tone of the discussion in Chapter 5.

#### **2.3.4. Participation in Political Dialogue: Social Media**

“Participation is a ‘portmanteau term’ and when unpacked it is seen to comprise a large number of activities” (Parry *et al.* 1992: 17), which recently include those that are present in online environments. This expansion of participation in political process fomented a dual issue: the dissent of whether a dichotomy between offline and online worlds exists and the polarization between theorists as to whether the Internet can lead to an expansion of participation and subsequently to the rejuvenation of democracy. Regarding the first part, online participation could be offline participation migrated online, in the sense that offline types of political engagement are re-emerging online (Anduiza *et al.* 2009; Gibson & Cantijoch 2013: 704, 714). It could also be online participation *per se*, without an offline counterpart (Hirzalla & Van Zoonen 2011). Either way, this thesis adopts the view that people act and react simultaneously in both worlds, which are intertwined, and for that reason it builds empirically on a mixed methods approach that highlights this non-dichotomy, as developed further in Chapter 3. Eventually, though, argumentation leads to the conclusive point that “many of the social, cultural, political and technological conditions for democracy are in transition” and thus, the ways that these are incorporated into the understanding of democracy too.

In this context, the formation of a “new type” of participation is observed: it is the “Digitally Networked Participation” (DNP) (Theocharis 2015: 6), which according to Theocharis, could be understood as:

A networked media-based personalized action that is carried out by individual citizens with the intent to display their own mobilization and activate their social networks in order to raise awareness about, or exert social and political pressures for the solution of, a social or political problem. (Theocharis 2015: 6)

The definition sets the boundaries of participation in digital environments, but also questions where forms of digital participation fit in the citizens’ existing participatory repertoire (Theocharis 2015: 11) Engagement through digitally networked acts is a new form of participation that is not only structurally similar to forms of offline participation, in the sense that it is an independent participatory act, but also in the sense that it potentially captures a different conception of citizenship (Theocharis 2015: 6; Dalton 2008). These aspects are also highlighted by the research and the supportive statistics that show that citizens are engaged in digitally networked acts even in political ways<sup>40</sup> (Boulianne 2009; Di Gennaro & Dutton 2009; Anduiza *et al.* 2012; Loader & Mercea 2012; Gibson & Cantijoch 2013).

Digital networked participation highlights the palette of activities, which when integrated in the online world, are much more diverse and extensive. Particularly interesting for this work is the participation in political dialogue during electoral periods, thus the research aims to spot how participation forms on Twitter, which are the most prominent actors and more importantly, which is media’s role in the encouragement and the facilitation of user’s participation. In direct relation to the research questions, the ways that journalists act and react in Twitter are essential to explain the forms of participation on it. The choice to focus mainly on media’s role (either by discussing legacy media, net-native media or journalists) is justified by their rapid evolution, a development that “inexorably impacts on political communication and democracy” (Dahlgren 2009: 3). In other words, media, as a complex set of diverse institutions, are shaped as much by internal organizational, economic and technical features as by external societal conditions and, consequently, their character and their role in democracy are in transition (Dahlgren 2009: 3). Thus, media, both as an integral part of the reality and as a major historical force, are critical factors of change in democratic societies, but they are also essential to “help maintain continuity by providing stability via the established ways of covering

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<sup>40</sup> Social media & political engagement report, Pew Research Center 2012.

politics” (Dahlgren 2009: 3). Placing media at the centre of this research is a way not only to explore whether this continuity stands, but also to identify the changes that have occurred and to see how these changes affect as much the audiences’ reactions as their participation. Taking this a step further, also to delineate the formation of the political arenas, where political dialogue is conducted.

Social media facilitated the expansion of the aims of participation but also “broadened their territorial scope and enabled coordination and political influence on a transnational scale to occur with ease” which was unknown even some years ago (Anduiza *et al.* 2009). It becomes apparent that their use “enhances the democratic participation” through their “potential global connectivity” (Lutz & Du Toit 2014: 3). Regarding participation in political dialogue on social media, De Zuniga *et al.* argue that social media use, even for different reasons than that of political interaction, may lead people to express themselves politically, “thereby putting them on a pathway to participation” (2014: 613). Furthermore, based on the premise that democracy needs an informed electorate, they consider political knowledge and information as an opportunity for media to reflect and elaborate among the audience and thus as the key to more extensive participation (2014: 614). Based on Kushin and Yamamoto’s (2010) argument that on social media people are more likely to be exposed to political news and therefore they are given more chances to express themselves politically, as well as Geoff’s *et al.* (2012) argument that social media cultivate its users’ political consciousness in their daily practice, the authors argue that more exposure leads to more participation (de Zuniga *et al.* 2014: 614). In accordance with this view is also Effing’s *et al.* point that online participation on social media can be divided into three stages: the e-enabling, the e-engaging and the e-empowering. The first stage, which is similar with previous argumentation, concerns the process of giving access and information to users while the second one refers to when people start interacting. During the third stage users work with others and they may even build communities (2011: 29).

It could also be argued that social media platforms offer the opportunity for a “participatory culture” to be developed, as it has been described by Henry Jenkins “a participatory culture is (...) one in which members believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another” (2016:11). This term also suggests that if technologies are embraced and deployed by people who are operating in their social and cultural contexts (2016: 11) – highlighting the fact that the environment has its own norms and rules that affect



the manifestations of participation in it – users on Twitter are affected also by the idiosyncratic rules of the platform. It is only supportive of the previous rationale the fact that Twitter is now considered as an increasingly integral element of new media information cycles (Kleis Nielsen & Schroder 2014: 485), as well as the fact that tweets as “opinion-rich sources” may not yet represent the fullness of society, but they give a glimpse of a specific influential sector of society (Lutz & du Toit 2014: 50).

Cathy Cohen and Joseph Kahne’s view on participatory politics on social media platforms add a further argument from the previous discussion. They describe participatory politics as “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern”, which can take several forms: sharing information through social media, engaging in online conversations through digital forums, creating original content in the form of online videos to comment on a current issue, building databases in order to investigate an ongoing concern and using Twitter and other microblogging tools for participating in political dialogue (cited in Jenkins *et al.* 2016: 155).

Participation is also at the heart of Habermas’ concept of the public sphere and it is the most essential ingredient of a democracy. With reference to the Athenian democracy, Haemon’s quote effectively describes this significance “it is no polis if it takes orders from one voice” (Sophocles). But how are new elements affecting it and how is this polyphony expressed? Do the Internet’s characteristics encourage participation? It could be argued that it may offer vast communicative spaces or, as Dahlgren put it, its hypertext nature and the linking allow for very extensive capacity to move freely between different communicative spaces (2001: 50). But how are these translated in terms of engagement? Do space and free access ensure participation? Does the opportunity to access the dialogue necessarily mean that it also encourages participation in it? Dahlgren holds the view that the Internet offers opportunities for the motivated and notes that “it is questionable to assume that the availability of the technology itself will have significant impact on the overall patterns of political engagement” (2001: 51, 53). Siapera supports that “political involvement is not a function of new media technologies, but a function of able and interested citizens” (2012b: 102). If that is the case, in what way does media use encourage citizens’ ability and interest? Does the use of social media enhance this encouragement - and to what extent? And more importantly, how are journalists involved in these processes and how are their practices formed? The discussion of these questions follows

the empirical research and the findings, which are presented in the following chapters [Chapters 3 and 4].

## 2.4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter tells the story of the public sphere theory – however, a theory that does not stand alone: it is developed and highlighted through its strong interdependence as much with democracy as with journalism. Therefore, these three axes are those upon which the literature review is based. Starting from the public sphere, and aiming towards its conceptualization in the digital era, the chapter discusses in depth its different parameters: its definition, its historical baggage, its political and ideological groundings, its structural transformation, the debates and the criticism it generated. It also looks into its relationship with the media - old and notably, new. What is more, and placing the concept into digital environments, the chapter points to the academic polarization that defined the discussion on the existence of digital manifestations of the public sphere, and at the same time, it raises inquiries in relation to its functionality and to its current structural shift, that showcase the connection with the thesis's research part.

Following this path, the discussion of journalism comes next. After its contextualization within the reasoning of the present work and within the essence of continuity between its different forms, the focus is on online journalism: the first years, the years of its realization, and its presence in the social media era. In the latter, the journalistic use of Twitter is examined in detail. Being at the research's epicentre, Twitter is confronted as a platform with high journalistic dynamic that offers a contemporary arena where political dialogue takes place, but also as one of the spaces that has the *potential* to be regarded as a digital equivalent of the Habermasian coffeehouse.

The last section of the chapter discusses the relationship of the public sphere, democracy and journalism, but also their common ground: the notion of participation. Framing the discussion with Chadwick's work on the hybrid media system and new political information cycles, participation becomes particularly important to understand the interconnection of the concepts as well as their *systemic relationship* and how this is affected by the digital affordances.

The chapter sets the analytical ground for the development of the research questions and the designing of the empirical research in Chapter 3; for the unfolding of the conceptual inquiries and the comparison of the findings with the theoretical argumentation in Chapter 4; and ultimately, for the reflective engagement and discussion in Chapter 5.

## 3.0. Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter delineates the methodological plan of the thesis. It highlights the methodological choices that are considered as the most appropriate to respond to the research questions that have been posed in this work. By framing them with the conceptual inquiries that add to their theoretical gravity, the literature review managed to underline that these research questions remain without response. In the first part of this chapter, the research questions are explained further. Moving forward, the methodological design of the research is unfolded: drawing on digital ethnography, a hybrid model of mixed methods approach for Twitter research is presented. Further discussion about the specifics of the empirical approach, the data collection and the data analysis processes, takes place in the last subsection. While the literature review chapter framed the concepts theoretically, this chapter frames them empirically.

### 3.2. Research Questions

The first research question asks how journalists use social media in political dialogue. To narrow the broadness of the notion of *political dialogue*, a specific political event has been chosen for the purposes of the research: the last elections in United Kingdom that took place on 7 May 2015. Electoral periods are not only periods with high political interest, especially from a journalistic perspective, but in contemporary societies where representative democracies prevail they can also be considered the epitome of democracy; they are those specific occasions that offer the opportunity for *participation* in democratic processes. It could be argued that a different model of democracy, such as deliberative, could offer more possibilities for more extended participation in a democratic society, however, decision-making processes today lie in the hand of representatives that are chosen through elective processes. Following this rationale, the research questions that emerge are:

R.Q.1. How do journalists use social media to cover the elections?

*R.Q.1.1. How do journalists manage Twitter as a journalistic platform to cover or discuss elections?*

*R.Q.1.2. Can changes in journalistic practices be observed on Twitter?*

*R.Q.1.3. On Twitter, is there apparent dialogue between journalists and the audience?*

R.Q.2. Does Twitter provide a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere?

*R.Q.2.1. Does activity on this platform meet Habermas' prerequisites?*

*R.Q.2.2. Does the empirical data support the optimistic or pessimistic views on Digital Public Sphere?*

The academic discussion on this matter, highlighted in the discussion of the democratizing potential of newer technologies in Section 2.1.10, demonstrates an implied ability regarding the second research question: it stresses the dynamic and the euphoric perception that social media (including Twitter) might encourage further democratization. This potentiality, though, reveals the non-solid ground upon which these arguments are based. Therefore, the empirical research provides a way to move the discussion from potentiality to at least a certain degree of certainty.

### **3.3. Research Methodology**

The choice of a research methodology is a crucial decision: it not only defines the ways that the research is approached, but it also highlights which aspects of the discussed issues are the critical ones and why they need to be unfolded. This choice “depends upon the questions that are asked” (Nelson *et al.* 1992: 2) but also on how these questions are asked (Wimmer & Dominick 2006: 113). Broadly, this choice shows whether a quantitative or a qualitative approach is the most appropriate. Appropriateness is a factor that Uwe Flick names as the “guiding principle” in the process of spotting the “right method” (2007: 4). Quantitative methods emphasise measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 8) and seek to trace which are the overarching trends which relate to macro-level perspectives (Page *et al.* 2014: 51). On the contrary, qualitative methods imply an

emphasis on processes and meanings (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 8) and aim to provide an understanding of the perspectives of the research participants (Page *et al.* 2014: 52) or as Jennifer Mason put it: “it (the qualitative approach) is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced, produced or constituted” (2002: 3).

Therefore, based on the research questions posed above, it becomes apparent that this research employs mainly a qualitative approach, as it is interested in the analysis and explanation of a social phenomenon. A generic definition of qualitative methods reinforces the justification of its appropriateness: “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 3). However, the plethora of dimensions the research questions entail is not met by a single qualitative method that could be considered as the single, appropriate choice. Furthermore, while the qualitative approach is the basis, quantitative elements need to be added, to underline the different scopes of the journalistic use of Twitter. As such, a mixed method approach has been chosen, the *hybridity* of which lies in the interconnection of the studied worlds (the online and the offline), as it is explained further in the next section. The mixed method approach draws on Johnson *et al.*, who defined it as:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (Johnson *et al.* 2007: 123)

Rather simplistically, it could be argued that this approach could be regarded as “multiple ways of seeing” (Creswell & Plano 2007: 5), translating in a mixing of methods as much in the collection as in the analysis of the empirical material, both aiming to enhance the understanding of the research problems. However, apart from the pure methodological, in a sense *practical*, considerations of this type of research, methodological plans involve philosophical assumptions as well (Creswell & Plano 2007: 5). Epistemologically, the current research relies on digital ethnography, a method that draws heavily on traditional ethnography. Since this research seeks to explore the actions and the behaviour of journalists into the social media arenas along with the interpretation of those, the present method is considered as the most pertinent. Incorporating ethnographic elements means that it involves its theoretical grounding which is “based on the understanding of behaviour” and “gives access to the

meanings that guide behaviour” (Punch 2005: 151). Therefore, before unpacking the various aspects of the present mixed methods model, the reasoning upon which the model is based is briefly presented.

### 3.4. Digital Ethnography

The emergence of digital technologies, which cultivated new conceptual frameworks of how we perceive space and time, affected ethnography, which has changed significantly since it first appeared as the method that the anthropologists were using to develop an understanding of distant cultures and civilizations (Hine 2000: 41). A direct effect concerns the online spaces that have been bolstered as another level or site where people live (Halletti & Barber 2014: 307). Halletti and Barber underline that with the proliferation of the Internet and new media “people now occupy online as well as physical ‘habitats’, and these spaces have become important for the creation and reproduction of relationships, identities, and social locations” (2014: 307). Virtual ethnography developed as a method to study these environments. Whether presented using this term (Hine 2000), as *cyber-ethnography* (Halletti & Barber 2014; Robinson & Schultz 2009), as *netnography* (Kozinets 2012) or as *digital ethnography* (Murthy 2008), the meaning of this form is that it manages to encompass the classic term with an *online essence*. In other words, traditional ethnography could be used “to develop an enriched sense of the meanings of the technology and which enabled it and are enabled by it” (Hine 2000: 8).

Employing the term digital ethnography in this research<sup>41</sup>, a rather simplistic definition of the method could be that it is “a research approach for exploring the social interactions that take place in virtual environments” (Given 2008: 922). It builds on the existing principles of ethnographic research, which is adapted to the digital spaces (Given 2008: 922). For Robert Kozinets, who introduced the term netnography, this is more of a participant-observational research based on online fieldwork which uses “computer mediated communications as source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding” (2012: 102). Digital ethnography should not be regarded as “a static achievement” but rather as “an ongoing reflective methodological

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<sup>41</sup> Digital ethnography has been chosen instead of virtual ethnography, due to the definition of the term virtual, which encompasses a “less real” or “less pragmatic” sense.

advance that keeping pace with rapidly changing computer-mediated communication” (Robinson & Schultz 2009: 686).

This flexibility along with the transition to digital research planning resembles the perception of the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur*: the researcher deploys whatever strategies, methods, or empirical material that are at hand, and “if new tools have to be invented, or piece together, then the researcher will do this” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 3). This argument is closely connected with the mixed methods approach employed here, which could be considered as another form of *bricolage*.

A significant issue, emerging from this discussion in the form of a dilemma, and which is also an accurate depiction of this thesis’ reasoning, concerns the distinction between the offline and online world. Are they actually two separate worlds or does the one define the other? Halletti and Barber argue that the study of a group in their “natural habitat” should also include their “online habitat” (2014: 308) given that people, especially on social media platforms, exist simultaneously in both worlds. Garcia *et al.* highlight that “virtual reality is not a reality separate from other aspects of human action and experience, but rather a part of it” (2009: 54), underscoring that online reality is integrated in the offline reality and that people act and react simultaneously in both worlds. This argument further justifies the reason why digital ethnography is the basis for the development of the current research model. A view on statistics that act as a significant indication of the degree of the Internet’s incorporation into everyday life, further supports this thinking, as 40% of the world’s population has an Internet connection (a number that presents a constant raise since the mid-1990s), whereas in the United Kingdom, which provides the case study of this research, this number reaches 89.9% in 2014<sup>42</sup>.

For researchers, to be able to study both online and offline contexts, demands regarding the Internet as both a culture and cultural artefact (Hine 2000). While the first view regards the Internet as a space where culture is formed and reformed, the second underlines its presence as a product of culture: a technology that may be produced with contextually situated aims and priorities but which it is shaped by the ways in which it is marketed, used and taught (Hine 2000: 10), suggesting that users are “dually involved in the construction of technology: through

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<sup>42</sup>Internet Live Stats 2015



the practices by which they understand it and through the content they produce” (Hine 2000: 38), pointing also to the interactive and participatory promises of digital modalities.

Central for the designing of the present model is the transformation of the offline methods to appropriate tools not only to explore the new interactive spaces but also to redefine classic ethnographic parameters as the “field site”, “participant observation” and “interaction” (Robinson & Schultz 2009: 690). For instance, instead of the previous physical field site, digital environments now provide the ground to observe social relationships (Given 2008: 922). Likewise, face-to-face meetings with the participants have been replaced with a variety of Internet-mediated methods like online or phone interviews, textual analysis or social network analysis (Given 2008: 922) or as Hine put it “technology enables these relationships to be fleeting or sustained and to be carried out across temporal and spatial divides” (2000: 65). Given emphasises on the “asynchronous” aspect of the Internet that provides the ability to conduct the research periodically (2008: 922), which among other things, changes the nature of observation. As Garcia *et al.* (2009) underline, text-based phenomena are privileged at the expense of visual phenomena (2009: 57-58). This simplistically points to researcher’s observation of texts and images on a screen rather than people in offline settings - a process, though, that does not reduce a researcher’s ability to understand the social world, as “participants in that setting communicate through online behaviour” (Garcia *et al.* 2009: 58). With regards to observation, what differs in online contexts is the level of participation. In the offline world observation is diverse, from participant observation to non-participant observation, but, in any case, it requires minimal participation. In online settings this is not necessary, as they allow for completely unobtrusive observation, even “observation by lurking” (Garcia *et al.* 2009: 58). This is a rather attractive aspect for its possibility to study a setting without any external disturbance, either with interventions or just the mere presence of the researcher.

Summarizing how digital ethnography is adapted from traditional ethnography (Table 3a):

	Ethnography	Digital Ethnography
<b>Field</b>	Natural setting	The virtual environment
<b>Data Collection Process</b>	Includes various techniques: face-to-face interviews, recordings, field-notes and documents such as diaries	Includes various techniques: online interviews, textual analysis, and social network analysis
<b>Observation</b>	The researcher observes mainly people	The nature of observation changes: the researcher observes mainly texts
<b>Level of participation</b>	Diverse (from participant to non-participant) although a minimal presence of the researcher is required	Diverse - no minimal presence is required, unobtrusive observation is possible
<b>Time</b>	Synchronous	Asynchronous
<b>Setting</b>	Single setting, small scale research, case study	More than one “setting”, small scale research, case study
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Interpretation of meanings	While it is easier to produce quantitative data, the primary aim is to interpret social phenomena
<b>Mode</b>	Flexible and unstructured	Flexible and unstructured
<b>Focus</b>	Offline world	Both offline and online worlds

Table 3a: Adaptation of Digital Ethnography to Ethnography

Critiques of digital ethnography concern the potential issues of verification, of authenticity and of anonymity, which according to Garcia *et al.* are typical online (2009: 68). However, the study of Twitter in the present research is facilitated by the verification process that Twitter encourages<sup>43</sup>, but also by the choice of specific media and the journalistic accounts. More importantly, when it comes to criticizing a methodological approach, Kozinets stresses that the need to understand various new social phenomena creates the need for a new construction of the meanings of methodological terms, and the sufficiency of the employed method lies only in the research focus and the research questions the researcher poses (2012: 106).

However, there are critical ethical questions raised when carrying out a digital study, as it falls under the category of Internet-mediated research (IMR). Rebecca Eynon underlines that the basic difference in conducting Internet-based research is that the research object is no longer clearly delineated by national boundaries and as such not protected by national research governance (2008: 38). What is more, there is no established set of correct procedures and techniques for making sure that ethical requirements are met in IMR and thus further

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<sup>43</sup>Twitter.com, Verified Accounts

clarification of the ethics of IMR is needed (Hewson & Laurent 2008: 71). A step toward this direction has been made by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR); their report provides some guidelines for Internet Researchers, which, despite its generic approach, offers a basis for further consideration of the ethical parameters (2012: 4).

The main issues of Internet ethics could be summarised as being concerned with how to properly obtain informed consent, debrief participants, implement effective and transparent withdrawal procedures, maintain anonymity (where required), and ensure confidentiality of responses (Hewson & Laurent 2008: 71). Eynon *et al.* (2008) also highlight that the ethical concepts are “at the core of institutional and professional research governance based on the ‘human subjects model’: confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent” (2008: 24). Another aspect concerns the level of participation, as online “lurking” allows researchers to remain invisible, meaning that the participants may not be aware that they are under observation (Robinson & Schultz 2009: 693). Lastly, a key issue concerns the distinction between the private and public domains in the online world, leading Garcia *et al.* to refer to the blurred lines between these two sectors (2009: 73). However, this particularly important issue is also addressed, at least to some extent, by Twitter, which offers to its users the choice between a public and a protected account<sup>44</sup> and therefore, attempts to make a clear distinction between what is public and what is private. It could be argued, though, that the unobtrusive observation, the main method that this research employs, could be conducted on public accounts. Axel Bruns *et al.* (2012) highlight that

On Facebook, complex layers of privateness and publicness must be negotiated at every turn, (in contrast) publicly visible Twitter messages are guaranteed to have been published to the Internet at large, at least technically, and archiving them in the course of research activities is therefore substantially less problematic, especially where hashtagged conversations about major public events are concerned. (Bruns 2012: 13).

Digital ethnographic practices are a pragmatic need, a necessary addition to the traditional forms. The importance of online spaces in the lived experience could be overlooked, resulting in missing data that would enhance the understanding of current societies (Halletti & Barber 2014: 307), or as Dhiraj Murthy argues “social researchers cannot afford to continue this overall trend of sidestepping digital methods” (2008: 838). Ethnographic research, in its broad sense, is about telling stories. The introduction of new technologies shows that these stories

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<sup>44</sup>Twitter.com, Public and protected tweets

remain vivid and need to be told - only the ways they are told have changed (Murthy 2008: 838).

### **3.5. Hybrid Model of Mixed Methods Approach: Digital Ethnography *adapted for* Twitter**

Elements of digital ethnography are particularly important for the present research, starting from the most significant: the non-dichotomy argument that highlights the integration of the online reality in the offline, and the simultaneous actions and reactions of people in both worlds. Additionally, the asynchronous aspect of the Internet, the notion of *bricoleur*, and even the definition of the method itself, as the appropriate one to research social interactions that take place in digital environments (Given 2008: 922), highlight how digital ethnography captures the crux of the reasoning for the designing of the methodological plan for this study.

The starting point for designing the mixed methods model is that observation is not the accurate term to describe the research process, and neither is content analysis. The reason is that while participants' reactions are central, they are not the only factor. The space, where participants act and react, that has its own norms and rules, directly affects these actions and reactions, and should also be taken into account. Therefore, the needed method should have a broader scope: to the environment and its uniqueness, to the participants and their interactions, to the formed relationships in these bounded places.

The first part of this subsection discusses how digital ethnography is adapted *for* Twitter, while the second details the specifics of the present empirical study, by explaining how both the Twitter research and the Interviews are conducted and analysed.

### 3.5.1. Research Framework & Design

#### Digital Ethnography adapted *for* Twitter

Twitter has a significant journalistic dynamic, as it has been detailed in Section 2.2.3.3. Marwick argues that it should be understood as part of the media-scape which includes other forms of social media, but also as a part of an ecosystem of communicative options (2013: 115). The research aims to understand the actions of the journalistic and media actors, but also the reasoning and the perception of these actions, and for this reason, its designing draws on Marwick's argument that Twitter research should be framed as a field site, to avoid losing focus due to its extensive nature. Furthering this, she suggests two ways to proceed: either by *following* a set number of previously identified subjects and by tracking their actions and interactions; or by tracking the use of hashtags (Marwick 2013: 116).

In a similar vein, Axel Bruns and Hallvard Moe (2014) suggest a conceptual model of Twitter as a multi-layered communicative tool, according to which, the platform could be considered as a combination of *micro*, *meso* and *macro* layers, revealing the different communicative strategies that are employed by different users. *Meso* layer is delimited by the *follower - followee* networks, *macro* layer by the *hashtagged exchanges*, and the *micro* layer by the *reply* function that includes personal exchanges (2014: 16-20). The distinction between these types is essential, as it indicates different communicative approaches that different users adopt; meaning that they could be divided into those who take a largely annunciative approach and post mainly original tweets, those who take a conversational approach by posting mainly replies and those who adopt a disseminative one, by retweeting (Einspanner *et al.* 2013). With regards to the research approach, it highlights that Twitter could be considered as a synthesis of layers - the word *synthesis* implies that these layers do not exist in isolation from one another, and there is a constant movement across them, as many users actively and deliberately transition between the layers (2014: 21). Combining Bruns and Moe's framework with Marwick's approach, the methodological choices of this research are highlighted: it focuses on the *meso* and the *macro* layer, by examining the accounts of a number of previously identified subjects, and by tracking streams delimited by specific hashtags.

The main reason for choosing these two layers is that both the *meso* and *macro* layer constitute elements of the public dialogue, or as Bruns and Moe note as much the *meso* as the *macro*

layer encompass a certain degree of *publicness* (2014: 16-20). In the meso layer there is a primary intended audience, which on some occasions can be too large to be known. The use of hashtags in the macro layer, though, can “aid the rapid assembly of *ad hoc* issue publics” (2014: 18), especially when tweets are marked by a topical hashtag, as “tweeting to a topical hashtag resembles a speech at a public gathering (...) of participants who do not necessarily know each other, but have been brought together by a shared theme, interest or concern” (Bruns & Moe 2014: 18), pointing in a way to other equivalents of such gatherings, as the coffeehouses. With regards to the publicness, the micro layer resembles interpersonal communication, in which the “distinction between explicit interpellation and simple reference is far from clear” (Bruns & Moe 2014: 20). Furthermore, it could be argued that the micro layer, consisting mainly of replies and mentions among users, is a “publicly visible private space”, where personal dialogic exchanges are occurring and thus it is differentiated by purely public spaces.

Supportive to this combinatory methodological choice is the need for a qualitative approach that exceeds the analysis of the hashtags, underscored by the related academic scholarship. The current bibliography of research on Twitter (boyd 2013), or the *topology* of Twitter, in the words of Zimmer and Proferes (2014: 251), highlights that the majority of the research focuses on analysis of the macro layer to explore different perspectives across different disciplines, revealing at the same time a tendency towards quantitative methods, which are prevalent up to 2013. Identifying large scale patterns is important, however qualitative research on the medium enhances the understanding of the meaning-making and places technology use into specific social contexts, places and times (2013: 119), echoing the need for a more comprehensive approach.

In this field site, that consists of two subfields or two layers, the research material is the *tweet*, which is regarded as a single sampling unit that follows a clear-cut formal (syntax): it is a posting, restricted to 140 characters, sent by a unique user at a particular moment (Einspanner *et al.* 2013). This, along with the associated metadata, that are described later and that are also part of the idiosyncratic nature of the platform, are examined in detail.

The field is approached through a variety of methods - the hybrid mixed model designed for this work builds on digital ethnography’s reasoning, and showcases how the method is adapted for Twitter. A summary of its different aspects is presented in the table below (3b), and are detailed in the next subsection.

	<b>Digital Ethnography</b>	<b>Digital Ethnography on Twitter / Specifics of this study</b>
<b>Field</b>	The virtual environment	Twitter platform
<b>Data Collection Process</b>	Includes various techniques: online interviews, textual analysis, and social network analysis	Includes three techniques: Non-participant observation on Twitter (through NVivo10 software), non-participant observation of conversations (through Tags 6.0) and phone interviews.
<b>Nature of Observation</b>	The researcher observes mainly texts	The researcher observes mainly texts and more specifically tweets
<b>Level of Participation</b>	Diverse - no minimal presence is required, unobtrusive observation is possible	Non-participant
<b>Time</b>	Asynchronous	Asynchronous / Timeframe: From 30 March 2015 to 24 May 2015
<b>Setting</b>	More than one “setting”, small scale research, case study	One setting, small scale research  Case study: UK General Elections 2015
<b>Data Analysis</b>	While it is easier to produce quantitative data, the primary aim is to interpret social phenomena	Textual analysis, comparative analysis, and further analysis in terms of interactivity
<b>Mode</b>	Flexible and unstructured	Flexible but structured
<b>Focus</b>	Both offline and online worlds	Both offline and online worlds

*Table 3b: Digital Ethnography and Digital Ethnography adapted for Twitter*

### **Case study, Participants and Data Collection**

Starting with the premise that the design of the research is “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusion”, and given that the specific research questions concern political dialogue and more specifically electoral periods, the chosen case study of this research is that of the General Elections in United Kingdom that took place on 7 May 2015. Case studies are defined by the focus of the instance, not by the method used to study it, or as Robert Stake notes a “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of object to be studied” (1998: 86). The selection of the particular case is based on the place that this research is conducted, which not only allows for immersion into the political climate but introduces a timetable that defines the research

boundaries. In other words, it helps to frame the research temporally and “spatially”. Aiming at a broader scope, research includes also the pre-election period as well as the aftermath of the elections. Therefore, the starting date is the dissolution of the Parliament<sup>45</sup>, on 30 March 2015, whereas the completion date is 31 May 2015, 24 days after the elections. What is more, its selection points to the rationale that a single case should be chosen when it represents “a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory” (Yin 2003: 40). The research plan consists of two parts. The first part is that of Twitter research, while the second is that of interviews with the journalists whose output was studied.

### 3.5.2. Twitter Research

Twitter research is divided into two parts, according to the previous description of the platform as a synthesis of communicative layers (Bruns & Moe 2013). The first part is the *Accounts Research (meso layer)*. In this, Twitter accounts of specific media organizations, net-native media and journalists are examined. By covering these three basic categories of media participants on Twitter, the main goal is to respond to the first research question of how journalists use Twitter to cover and discuss the elections. During the precise time period, all tweets sent by those accounts are collected. The criteria that led to the choice of the specific accounts are the popularity of their websites<sup>46</sup> and the popularity of their Twitter account, which is defined by the number of their followers. Likewise, the criteria of choosing specific journalists from each medium are their active presence on the website they work for (in the *Politics* section of each site), the popularity of their Twitter accounts defined by the number of their followers and their active presence on Twitter, which is defined by the number of tweets they send. Similar is the case for the net-native accounts and their journalists. However, there is specificity in this case: the contributors in Huffington Post, which is one of the chosen media in the category of the net-native media, are not journalists and thus, only the medium’s account is examined. More specifically, the studied accounts are (Tables 3c, 3d, 3e and 3f):

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<sup>45</sup> Parliament.uk, Election “purdah” (2015)

<sup>46</sup>Alexa 2015



a) News Organizations

News Organization	Twitter Account	Link
BBC Politics	@BBCPolitics	<a href="https://twitter.com/BBCPolitics">https://twitter.com/BBCPolitics</a>
BBC News UK	@BBCNews	<a href="https://twitter.com/BBCNews">https://twitter.com/BBCNews</a>
BBC Breaking News	@BBCBreaking	<a href="https://twitter.com/BBCBreaking">https://twitter.com/BBCBreaking</a>
The Guardian	@guardian	<a href="https://twitter.com/guardian">https://twitter.com/guardian</a>
The Guardian Politics	@GdnPolitics	<a href="https://twitter.com/GdnPolitics">https://twitter.com/GdnPolitics</a>
The Guardian News	@guardiannews	<a href="https://twitter.com/guardiannews">https://twitter.com/guardiannews</a>
Daily Mail Online	@MailOnline	<a href="https://twitter.com/MailOnline">https://twitter.com/MailOnline</a>
Daily Mail UK	@DailyMailUK	<a href="https://twitter.com/DailyMailUK">https://twitter.com/DailyMailUK</a>
Telegraph Politics	@TelePolitics	<a href="https://twitter.com/TelePolitics">https://twitter.com/TelePolitics</a>
The Telegraph	@Telegraph	<a href="https://twitter.com/Telegraph">https://twitter.com/Telegraph</a>
Telegraph News	@TelegraphNews	<a href="https://twitter.com/TelegraphNews">https://twitter.com/TelegraphNews</a>

Table 3c: Legacy media accounts

b) Net-Native Media

News Organization	Twitter Account	Link
BuzzFeed UK Politics	@BuzzFeedUKPol	<a href="https://twitter.com/BuzzFeedUKPol">https://twitter.com/BuzzFeedUKPol</a>
HuffPost UK Politics	@HuffPostUKPol	<a href="https://twitter.com/HuffPostUKPol">https://twitter.com/HuffPostUKPol</a>

Table 3d: Net-native media accounts

c) Journalists - Legacy Media

Journalist	Medium	Twitter Account	Link
Nick Robinson	BBC	@bbcnickrobinson	<a href="https://twitter.com/bbcnickrobinson">https://twitter.com/bbcnickrobinson</a>
Laura Kuenssberg	BBC	@bbclaurak	<a href="https://twitter.com/bbclaurak">https://twitter.com/bbclaurak</a>
James Landale	BBC	@BBCJLandale	<a href="https://twitter.com/BBCJLandale">https://twitter.com/BBCJLandale</a>
Andrew Rawnsley	The Guardian	@andrewrawnsley	<a href="https://twitter.com/andrewrawnsley">https://twitter.com/andrewrawnsley</a>
Polly Toynbee	The Guardian	@pollytoynbee	<a href="https://twitter.com/pollytoynbee">https://twitter.com/pollytoynbee</a>
Andrew Sparrow	The Guardian	@AndrewSparrow	<a href="https://twitter.com/AndrewSparrow">https://twitter.com/AndrewSparrow</a>

<b>James Chapman</b>	Daily Mail Online	@jameschappers	<a href="https://twitter.com/jameschappers">https://twitter.com/jameschappers</a>
<b>Matt Chorley</b>	Daily Mail Online	@MattChorley	<a href="https://twitter.com/MattChorley">https://twitter.com/MattChorley</a>
<b>Tony Gallagher</b>	Daily Mail Online	@gallaghereditor	<a href="https://twitter.com/gallaghereditor">https://twitter.com/gallaghereditor</a>
<b>James Kirkup</b>	The Telegraph	@jameskirkup	<a href="https://twitter.com/jameskirkup">https://twitter.com/jameskirkup</a>
<b>Iain Martin</b>	The Telegraph	@iainmartin1	<a href="https://twitter.com/iainmartin1">https://twitter.com/iainmartin1</a>
<b>Dan Hodges</b>	The Telegraph	@DPJHodges	<a href="https://twitter.com/dpjhodges">https://twitter.com/dpjhodges</a>

Table 3e: Journalists' accounts (legacy media)

### Journalists - Net-Native Media

Journalist	Medium	Twitter Account	Link
<b>Jim Waterson</b>	BuzzFeed UK Politics	@jimwaterson	<a href="https://twitter.com/jimwaterson">https://twitter.com/jimwaterson</a>
<b>Emily Ashton</b>	BuzzFeed UK Politics	@elashton	<a href="https://twitter.com/elashton">https://twitter.com/elashton</a>
<b>Jamie Ross</b>	BuzzFeed UK Politics	@JamieRoss7	<a href="https://twitter.com/JamieRoss7">https://twitter.com/JamieRoss7</a>
<b>Siraj Datto</b>	BuzzFeed UK Politics	@dats	<a href="https://twitter.com/dats">https://twitter.com/dats</a>

Table 3f: Journalists' accounts (net-native media)

The second part of the Twitter research examines the two most popular hashtags during the electoral period and on the day of the elections (*Hashtags Research, macro layer*) for the same timetable, namely #GE2015 and #GE15<sup>47</sup>. Hashtags offer a more immediately achievable direction for research on news and current events (Bruns & Burgess 2012: 804) and they do not only provide a diachronic perspective, in the sense that allows the study of activity patterns over time, but they are also useful for identifying key participants in a discussion (Bruns & Burgess 2012: 805-806).

The data collection process of Twitter activity was conducted through the web extension of NVivo10, NCapture, and through extended unobtrusive observation of the chosen Twitter accounts and mentions on the platform. Likewise, the hashtag collection process was conducted through Tags 6.0 software. These software programs manage to gain access to

<sup>47</sup>Hanovercomms 2015

Twitter data through its Application Programming Interface (API), as this interface can be used for tracking current activity by users or of specific keywords (Bruns & Burgess 2012: 804). The authors point to substantial limitations to what is available directly through the API (2012: 804). The excessive number of collected tweets led to the use of stratified sampling - a method that involves dividing data into groupings, or strata, of relatively homogeneous characteristics and selecting a random sample independently within each group (Harter 2008). The key is that data belong to one and only one stratum (in this case to one account or one hashtag) and that the selected sample from each stratum is identified by simple random sampling (Chow 2010). In random sampling, the sample is drawn according to pre-specified chances from the whole, and thus it is also called probability sampling (Chow 2010). In other words, stratification is the generation of a representative sample (Papacharissi 2014).

### **3.5.3. Interviews**

Journalists' insight is considered as particularly significant research material for the aims of the thesis, as it not only provides in-depth understanding of the existing findings, but it also adds another layer to the research, suggesting this way a mixing of methods. This triangulation attempts to "integrate the methods" by taking into account multiple methodological datasets that contribute to answering the research questions in their own paradigmatic terms (Edwards & Holland 2013). The current hybrid methodological approach is contextualised by the theoretical elements of previous ethnographical concepts (digital and non-digital) but at the same time it presents an approach that is rationalised by Mason's argument that the theoretical thinking of the study involves "multi-dimensional research strategies that transcend or subvert the qualitative - quantitative divide" (2006: 9).

Interviews are a tool of great flexibility that can be adapted to suit a wide variety of research projects (Punch 2005: 170). While they can stand alone as a qualitative research method, they could also be part of a wider work that incorporates them as "one of the several methods to explore the research questions" (Mason 2002: 66). With reference to the latter, interviews in this research are part of the methodological triangulation that aims to add an additional angle that allows for exploring the posed "intellectual puzzles in a rounded and multifaceted way" (Mason 2002: 190). Additionally, interviews as a method could strengthen other modes of research or as McKechnie notes "observation is particularly powerful when combined with

other methods such as interviewing” (2008: 575). Mason suggests that the employment of interviews as part of research is crucial when the researcher is interested in the perceptions of participants in the study or when the research wants to emphasise depth, nuance, complexity and roundness in data that concern the construction of social explanations and arguments (2002: 63), pointing directly to this thesis’ research questions. What is more, they are particularly useful in order to add additional dimensions from previous research and also to investigate normative assumptions about technology (Marwick 2013: 113) - two aspects that are also applicable in the case of this thesis.

The conducted interviews, as part of this plan, are semi-structured, in the sense that they are characterised by increasing levels of flexibility and lack of structure (Edwards & Holland 2013). Mason (2002: 1) lists some of the aims of this type of interviewing, including those presented in this section, which are: the exploration of the understandings and experiences of research participants, the analysis of how specific social processes, institutions and relationships work and more importantly, the underlining of the significance of meanings they generate. In a general sense, and as part of the challenges of the elite interviewing in this thesis, interviews with the research participants are confronted as *conversations* with them, following the literal sense of the term provided by the translation of its original Latin meaning: “wandering together with” (Kvale 1996). Likewise, the whole process follows Kvale’s design (1996: 88), which proposes that, like Shakespeare’s *man*, interviewing has seven stages: thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying, and reporting.

Research interviews have a specific theme (in the sense of *thematizing*), the *use* of Twitter by journalists. For this reason, they all started with an open question (*Could you please describe your Twitter use?*). The goal was to enhance the conversational mode and to leave space for the interviewees to mentally navigate to the different meanings that the open term *use* may have. In other words, and drawing on ethnographic approaches, interviewees are empowered to shape the questions being asked, according to their own worldviews and meanings, and reflexivity (Heyl 2001). The loose nature of the semi-structured interviews allows, however, the researcher to frame the discussion by pointing to specific points of interest: in this instance, the political and journalistic aspects of Twitter’s use, as well as its effect on political dialogue. In the interpretation of the generated data, has also be taken into account the context of the interview, how the interviewees understand the topics under discussion and what they want to

convey to the interviewer (Edwards & Holland 2013). It could be argued that the epistemology of the qualitative interview tends to be more constructionist than positivist (Warren 2011: 83); meaning that “interview participants are more likely to be viewed as meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers”, while “the purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk” (Warren 2011: 83).

The choice of individuals is based on participants with specific purview over facts related to the research topic, that are approached for their perspectives (Flick 2014), and as such in the empirical research the six interviewees are part of the 18 journalists whose accounts on Twitter has been studied. It is particularly important that the social exploration and the non-participant observation of the digital field (the site of the study) precedes the interviewing of the participants, as it also happens in the non-digital ethnographic methods (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994), and it aims to *fill in* the meanings of observed interactions (Spradley and Mann 1975 cited in Warren 2011: 86).

Practically, the interviews were designed to last between thirty and forty minutes, taking into account journalists’ time limitations. For the same reason the interviews have conducted through phone - the method has been considered as the most convenient by journalists themselves. In order to reach richer results and to fully exploit the offered interview time, a semi-structured questionnaire has been used as a template<sup>48</sup>.

### **3.5.4. Data Analysis Process**

#### **Accounts Research**

The data analysis is based on different techniques, which are posed by the requirements of the different parts of the research. To begin with the first part of Twitter Research, Accounts Research, textual analysis is employed. Texts of all kinds are a significant part of everyday life (Travers 2001: 5). Following digital ethnography’s reasoning, the Internet could be regarded as “a collection of texts” and using it for research purposes means that the “ethnographer’s job is to develop an understanding of the meanings which underlie and are enacted through textual

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<sup>48</sup> The questionnaire is available in full in Appendix B.

practices” (2000: 50) - as such, the method is based on observation of texts - among which tweets are included. Additionally, Robinson and Schultz argue that texts are the primary source of interaction in cyber-ethnography: participants have the opportunity to translate their experiences through words (2009: 691).

The sample of tweets, collected for the purpose of this work, is analysed textually in order to process how language is used by each participant. Language is not only a way to communicate, but can also be perceived contextually (Page *et al.* 2014), and it is interesting to find out how the tweets of each account are formed and expressed and what communicative techniques each one of them uses. The basic focus of interest, however, is their content, thus this textual analysis partly includes thematic analysis. Drawing on Mason (2002) who suggested that the choice of documents is based on an acceptance of the fact that they are meaningful constituents of the social world, this research adjusts this claim to the Twitter platform.

The first step is filtering the tweets and categorizing them in: original content, mentions, manual retweets, automated retweets and replies (Vis 213). Then accounts’ tweets are measured according to certain criteria (Table 3g). Starting from the activity of the account - this mostly quantitative criterion enhances our understanding of the level of engagement with Twitter in the first instance - the analysis moves to thematic and textual characteristics, such as the formatting of tweets along with each account’s linguistic choices. All of these aspects are aiming to respond to the first research question(s), while for responding to the second one(s), the participatory elements of Twitter are measured, through the analysis of the use of retweets, mentions and links. Regarding the integration of dialogue, the degree to which accounts mention other account or engage in dialogue with them, has been taken into account.

Term	Measurable quality
<b>Active account</b>	Timetable / initial level of engagement with Twitter
<b>Thematic analysis</b>	Filtering of tweets that refer to the elections
<b>Formatting of tweets</b>	Textual characteristics
<b>Textual analysis</b>	Textual and linguistic choices, such as use of specific tone, level of formality, use of emotionally charged words
<b>Participatory elements</b>	Analysis of the use of hashtags, retweets and mentions

Table 3g: Studied parameters transformed into measurable qualities

## **Hashtags Research**

Frequency analysis is employed so as to identify and describe prominent trends and actors in the stream (Papacharissi 2014). Frequency analysis is a quantitative method that enhances the ability to highlight which actors and terms dominate the dialogue (Papacharissi 2014). Triangulation of the results provides a comprehensive approach to the dialogue that took place on Twitter during the electoral period in United Kingdom. An important aspect here is that through additional coding of addressivity markers (like mentions and hashtags) it becomes possible to determine which actors are more vocal on the stream and when they tend to become most vocal (Papacharissi 2014). Along with the quantitative approach, tweets of this research part are also studied qualitatively, firstly by organising them according to Tamara Small's (2011) categorization of tweets, into: information, commentary, conversations, not relevant, reporting, status updates. Further thematic analysis on each hashtag delineates the discussed topics, facilitates the aggregation of reactions related to the elections, and allows for mapping respective Twitter arenas and their characteristics.

## **Twitter Research & Interviews**

A significant part of the analysis is the multileveled comparative analysis. After the study of each account, all accounts are compared to each other so as to highlight similarities and differences in the use of Twitter among legacy media accounts, net-native accounts and journalists according to the criteria that are cited above (Table 3g). Subsequently, the results of the two parts of the Twitter analysis are juxtaposed, aiming to confront the different communicative layers not only separately but also in synthesis. Additionally, the findings of the Twitter research are compared to those that emerge from the interviews, to enhance understanding of the perceptions and self-perceptions of the platform. Schematically, a step-by-step synopsis of the methodological path is described below (Table 3h):

Method	Steps	Process
Twitter Research	Data Collection	Collection of tweets via NVivo10 (NCCapture extension) and Tags 6.0.
Twitter Research	Data Coding & Filtering	Sampling, Categorizing of tweets and Coding
Twitter Research	Pilot Study <sup>49</sup>	Initial Analysis to test the Mixed Methods approach
Twitter Research	Data Analysis	<i>Accounts Research</i> : Textual and Thematic Analysis
Twitter Research	Data Analysis	<i>Hashtags Research</i> : Textual, Thematic and Frequency Analysis (via SPSS and Discovery Text)
Interviews	Data Collection	Semi-structured Interviews
Interviews	Data Analysis	Coding & Analysis of the Interview responses
Twitter Research & Interviews	Data Analysis	Comparative Analysis

Table 3h: Empirical research: the step-by-step process

Through the analysis of this data, the dialogue about Twitter, its journalistic dynamic and the effect it has on journalism is clarified. What is more, empirical research of Twitter allows for revisiting the discussion about the public sphere, whether or not a digital form of the Habermasian concept exists on Twitter and how Twitter is formed as an arena of public dialogue. It also allows for reconsidering whether Twitter has a positive impact on the rejuvenation of democracy. Lastly, the analysis and the generation of data offer a view on whether Twitter provides a platform for the existence of new political information cycles, as detailed in the literature review.

### 3.6. Methodological Limitations

The basic limitation of the applied methodology concerns data collection. While tweets were gathered daily, this collection took place asynchronously which means that deleted tweets may be excluded. In addition, Twitter API restrictions set a strict limit for gathering of tweets, as these can only be collected in a short time frame with extra daily limitations, which cannot be

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<sup>49</sup> The Pilot Study is not included in the final text, its expansion, though, is presented in the Findings Chapter.



surpassed even by third-party companies, and also have limited access to the Twitter archive<sup>50</sup> (Gaffney & Puschmann 2013; Tao *et al.* 2013).

In terms of its internal validity, meaning the consistency of the research, this can only be proven with further repetition of the research during specific time frames, whereas in terms of the generalization of results, in other words, its external validity, the research is based on a specific case study and it is affected by the context that this case study is placed into. However, since the aim is not to chart a general tendency, but to respond to specific questions posed to gain a deeper understanding, this limitation is undermined. What is more, as with every qualitative researcher, the research is interpretative, which means that researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological premises affect to some extent this interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: 23, 26). In this research however, partial employment of non-participant observation attempted to control the researcher's impact.

Lastly, it could be argued that Twitter is used by a relatively small number of people and excludes those who do not have Internet access (Marwick 2013: 119). This however is partly applicable to this research: it does not pose any restrictions in the choice of a representative sample of participants as most organizations and journalists have Twitter accounts (meso layer), but it poses some limitations in the audience that participate in hashtags research (macro layer). Although, the current numbers of Twitter participants in UK seem to oppose that argument<sup>51</sup>. What is more, the habitual use of Twitter by politically interested *News Lovers* (Newman 2015), emphasises the close connection of the research with the Habermasian coffeehouses: both aim to attract people that are conscious of their role as citizens. It should be mentioned, though, that having a Twitter account is not a guarantee for active participation in the medium. As Bruns and Burgess argue about the participation in hashtag conversations, "the data must be understood as a reasonably representative sample rather than a comprehensive dataset of activities (...) datasets in particular are weighted considerably towards the most engaged subset of Twitter users" (2012: 804). Thus, one point of reflection concerns the employment of hashtags by users when participating in a discussion, however, it cannot be assumed that even users that use this marker follow the full feed of tweets containing the hashtag (Bruns & Moe 2013: 18). Even though, as the authors mention "if all users were to use the hashtag simply to mark their own tweets, but did not themselves follow other users' hashtagged tweets, the

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<sup>50</sup> For the purposes of this research access to the Twitter has been attempted via Twitonomy and DiscoverText.

<sup>51</sup> Twitter.com, Tony Wang

primary utility of hashtagging would be negating” (2013: 18), underlining this way also the importance of the topical hashtags, those that are posted in relation to a specific theme or event.

### **3.7. Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter illustrated the empirical framework of the thesis and described in detail the methodological plan, which has been based on principles of digital ethnography. Starting with the research questions, these guided the designing of the hybrid mixed methods model, which consists of two parts: Twitter research and interviews. The first is further divided into two subparts: accounts research which explores Twitter’s meso communicative layer and more specifically the tweets posted by the chosen media actors; and hashtags research which focuses on Twitter’s macro communicative layer, by examining Twitter streams that were delimited by specific hashtags during the General Elections of 2015 in United Kingdom. The chapter also underlines the processes of data collection and analysis for both parts, especially by underscoring the reasoning these processes and the analytical framework relied on, setting the scene for the presentation of findings in the next chapter.

## 4.0. Findings

### 4.1. Towards the Conceptual Hypothesis

The series of topics that have been raised so far lead to the pivotal point of this thesis: the research of the manifestations of the public sphere in digital environments, which aims not only to enhance our understanding of whether a digital public sphere (DPS) exists and to perceive which are the implications for democratic societies, but also to map these arenas by highlighting them from different perspectives. At this point, the need to define the “digital public sphere” emerges. What is more, this definition also comprises the basis for the development of the later tested conceptual hypothesis.

The starting point for defining this concept is, by bearing in mind Chadwick’s theory of political information cycles (2013), to juxtapose Habermas’ original definition of the Public Sphere (1989) with that of Digital Networked Participation (Theocharis 2015).

“By the ‘public sphere’ we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body”.

(Habermas 1974: 49)

“A networked media-based personalized action that is carried out by individual citizens with the intent to display their own mobilization and activate their social networks in order to raise awareness about, or exert social and political pressures for the solution of, a social or political problem”

(Theocharis 2015: 6)

The rationale is that these three theories set the boundaries of the Digital Public Sphere, conceptually and empirically. At the heart of the new definitional approach lies Habermas’ definition of the public sphere and upon this the digital elements are incorporated. Therefore, the Digital Public Sphere could be understood as:

Digital Public Sphere: One or more digital open-access arenas where individual citizens assemble by engaging in public conversation and debate to form a public body. Through interaction, the display of participation, and the raising of awareness within social networks, public opinion can be formed and socio-political issues can be addressed.

For a Digital Public Sphere to be formed certain criteria should be met. These emerge from Habermas’ analysis, which are adapted to digital reality. For purposes of this thesis, they are further adapted on Twitter. Drawing on the literature presented in the first chapter, a summary of these is (Table 4a):

Criterion	Explanation
Open network	The social networking platform should be open to all citizens, without technological limitations
Impact	The dialogue taking place in this arena should have social or political impact
Rational Debate	Debate should be taking a conversational form
Formation of arenas	The structure of the social gatherings into the social networking platforms should be formatted like the ‘coffeehouse’ equivalents
Topics of general concern	No restrictions in the choice of the discussed topics
Diffusion of Information	Circulation of information and ideas should take place in these arenas
Participants, Dominance of elites	No prominent elite actors, non-hierarchical way of interaction
Enhanced role of media	Media should have a crucial role by giving opportunity for feedback and encouraging the dialogue
Overcome traditional limitations [media]	Media should not obey restrictions posed by external factors (e.g. consumerism)
Address scepticism	Offer alternatives to confront the scepticism regarding anonymity and fragmentation

Table 4a: Habermas’ criteria for the existence of a public sphere

These criteria contextualise the research and offer the ground for the development of the hypothesis of the thesis, further analysed later in the chapter, and which could be summarised as: “If Digital Networked Participation can be traced on Twitter and if certain criteria are met, then a Digital Public Sphere can be formed” [4.3.2.1].

## 4.2. Framing the Findings

The empirical findings of this study are presented in this chapter, guided by the research questions. The first research question “How do journalists use social media to cover the elections?” draws attention to the journalistic use of Twitter, both by news organizations and journalists, and raises several sub-questions: “What, if any, are the changes in journalistic practices on Twitter?” and “Is there an existent form of evident dialogue between journalists and the audience?”. Research questions along with the following analysis address the need for further exploration of how

journalism and journalists are affected by digital modalities like Twitter, especially with regards to how this effect is perceived within the current journalistic conventions (Lasorsa 2012: 20).

The discussion of the findings related to these enquiries is contextualised by two key theories: the notion of *ambient journalism* (Hermida 2014: 361) and the narrative of *normalization* (Singer 2005) as detailed in Section 2.2.3.3. The first could be regarded as an “emerging analytical framework for journalists” that highlights the need to observe and evaluate their immediate context along with the provision of novel information (Bruns 2011: 7). As for the second, by having Singer’s work (2005) as a paradigm, and Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton’s extended research of journalists on Twitter (j-tweeters) as a continuance, it is questioned whether the process of normalization is a two-way one (2012: 31) with a co-shaping of norms and practices. This underlines the need to assess journalistic norms and challenges they have been exposed to after journalism’s migration to interactive environments (Singer 2005), especially with regards to political dialogue.

The participatory nature of these new platforms and their use by the respective journalistic actors along with the form that the dialogue takes into these environments, are aspects that are encapsulated by the second research question, which enquires as to whether *Twitter provides a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere*. In other words, it questions whether the activity on this platform meets Habermas’ prerequisites of the public sphere and whether the empirical data support the optimistic or pessimistic views of a digital public sphere, aiming to test the hypothesis of the thesis that “*If Digital Networked Participation can be traced on Twitter and if certain criteria are met, then a Digital Public Sphere can be formed*”. The complexity of the contemporary media environment however leads to a diverse, complex and even confusing media ecology (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 101) which underlines the necessity to move beyond the “orthodox model of the public sphere to a more dynamic and complex conceptual framework that provides the opportunity to more clearly recognize the varying forms that public communication could take, especially online” (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 98). Therefore, it simultaneously highlights the reasoning of mapping Twitter further; as a synthesis of dialogic arenas, that allows to understand the factors that form these arenas: the different dynamics, the diffusion of power to a variety of actors, and the co-existence of different logics - a networked logic along with the legacy media one.

The chapter starts with the analysis of the meso-layer, data collected from the chosen accounts were firstly filtered in order to track tendencies and chart generic properties, followed by further qualitative analysis of the tweets referring to the General Elections. Using Carvalho's (2000) analytical model as a basis, the activity of the accounts is measured and their thematic and textual characteristics are qualitatively studied. Moving on, the analysis of the participatory characteristics of the accounts is presented, leading to a taxonomy table of the participatory actions that the medium encourages. This subsection partially sets the framework towards the tracing of public sphere manifestations on Twitter, which is complemented by the macro-layer analysis, where tweets posted under the elections' theme and delimited by use of the related addressivity markers (hashtags #GE15 and #GE2015) are examined, leading to the mapping of the various dialogic arenas and setting the basis for the discussion of the findings. In the last section, the analysis is enriched with insights from the six interviewees, whose accounts are studied in the context of the Twitter research, adding an in-depth perspective on the reasons for the journalistic use of Twitter.

### **4.3. *Meso* Layer Findings: Media & Journalists' accounts**

#### **4.3.1. The journalistic use of Twitter: Addressing Research Question One**

Twitter's appeal as a medium used widely for news and its popularity among users who have considered it as one of the three top networking sites for information purposes (Newman *et al.* 2015) especially for those who are more politically interested (Gottfried 2014) contribute to its journalistic dynamic. The theoretical background, discussed extensively in Section 2.2.3.3 points to its perception as a "networked, hybrid media space" (Hermida 2016) and raises questions not only about the level of its integration in media and journalists' everyday practices, but also about the qualitative characteristics of its use. Both media organizations as entities and journalists as individuals employ Twitter in their work. As organizations, media manage official accounts on multiple social media platforms for a variety of reasons - to disseminate their work, to break news, to strengthen their brand awareness, to expand their reach, to engage with their audiences (Hermida *et al.* 2014). As individuals, survey data show that a great number of journalists use the service, especially in the UK where this number

reaches 75% (Cision 2015 in Hermida 2016). By unpacking both organizational and individual practices, a more thorough approach is provided.

The first point to be responded to by the present analysis is “*How do journalists use Twitter as a journalistic platform to cover or discuss elections?*”. The point of reference here is the word *use*, a rather open term. For the purpose of this work, *use* is confronted as a mixture of qualitative and quantitative components that focuses on specific areas, including: how often media and journalists post on Twitter (the activity of the account); how they choose to format their tweets along with specific linguistic choices to highlight the emerging expressive tendencies; what is the extent of the opinionated posts; and which are the thematic areas that they tweet about. Building a connection with the second research question, on the involvement of other users and the possible interactions, this *use* also refers to the participatory elements that are employed.

#### **4.3.1.1. The Activity of the accounts & Their Thematic Approach: Is Twitter an “ambient news environment”?**

The activity of each account reflects a tendency towards integration of the platform in media and journalists’ work routine. In other words, it indicates to what extent Twitter is part of their everyday journalistic practices. Within the studied period, legacy media incorporate the platform more in their everyday routine than net-native media, or journalists - the highest number of tweets for the first is 15405 tweets (@Guardian), whereas for online media 1712 (@HuffPostUK) and for journalists 2622 (@IainMartin). Among the accounts belonging to the same category, there are also significant differences - the principal account of each medium has more activity than the specific one, although differences are dependent on the medium. For instance, @Guardian posted 15405 tweets during the examined period, while @GdnPolitics posted 2154. From legacy media, @Guardian shows the highest level of use of the platform, with almost 245 tweets per day, while @BBCBreaking the lowest with less than 10 tweets per day, presenting similar numbers with the journalistic accounts [Figures 4a, 4b]. Data show that there is no correlation between the activity of the account and the size or nature (legacy or net-native) of the medium. This is however, a noticeable difference from what could be anticipated from previous research: Messner’s *et al.* research (2011) into news organizations’ accounts in

2010 showed no regular use of the platform; however, the average number of tweets over the lifetime of the accounts they studied shows great overall activity (2011: 18). The latter is reflected in the current findings.

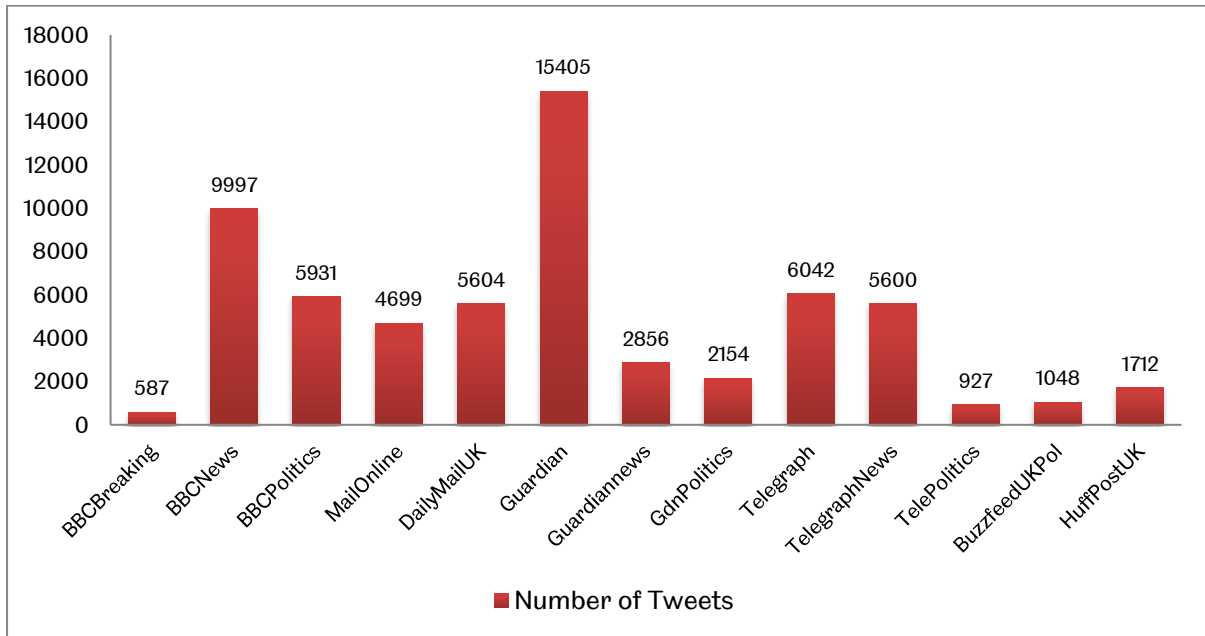


Figure 4a: The activity of the accounts (media organizations) during the examined period

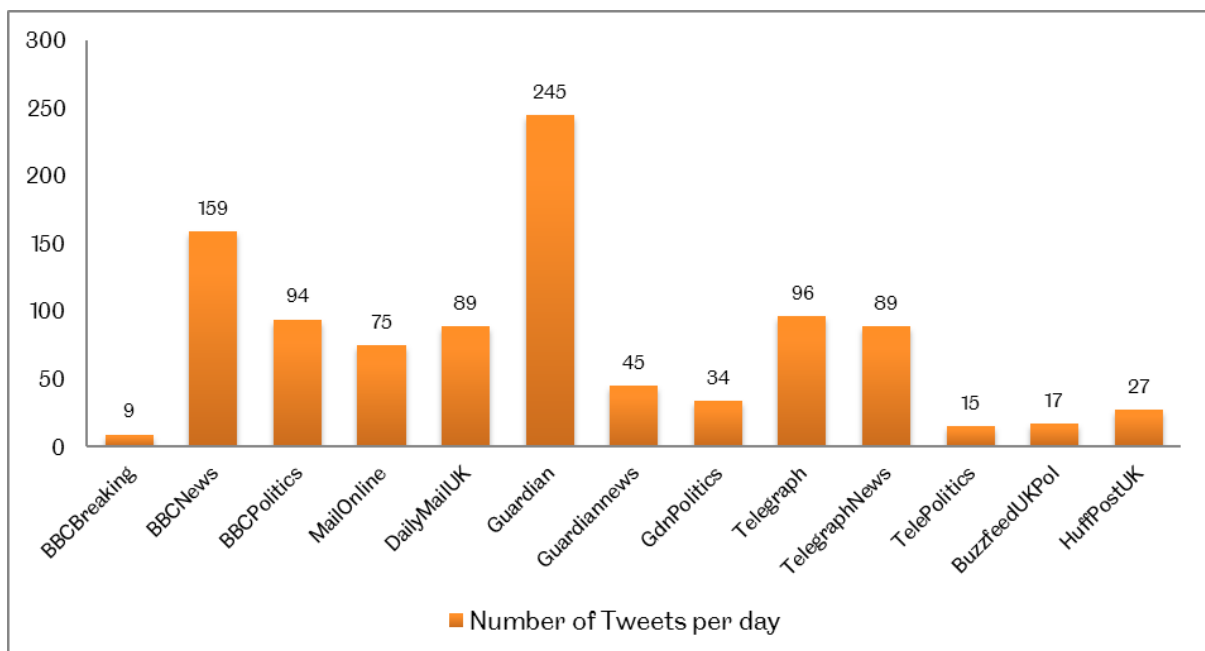


Figure 4b: The activity of the accounts per day (media organizations) during the examined period

Journalists use Twitter less often than the organizational accounts, although there is no specific pattern - the level of use appears to be an individual choice, with no significant differences between journalists from different media [Figures 4c, 4d]. It remains, however, the only social



medium that all journalists use almost exclusively in their professional capacity and not for personal reasons.

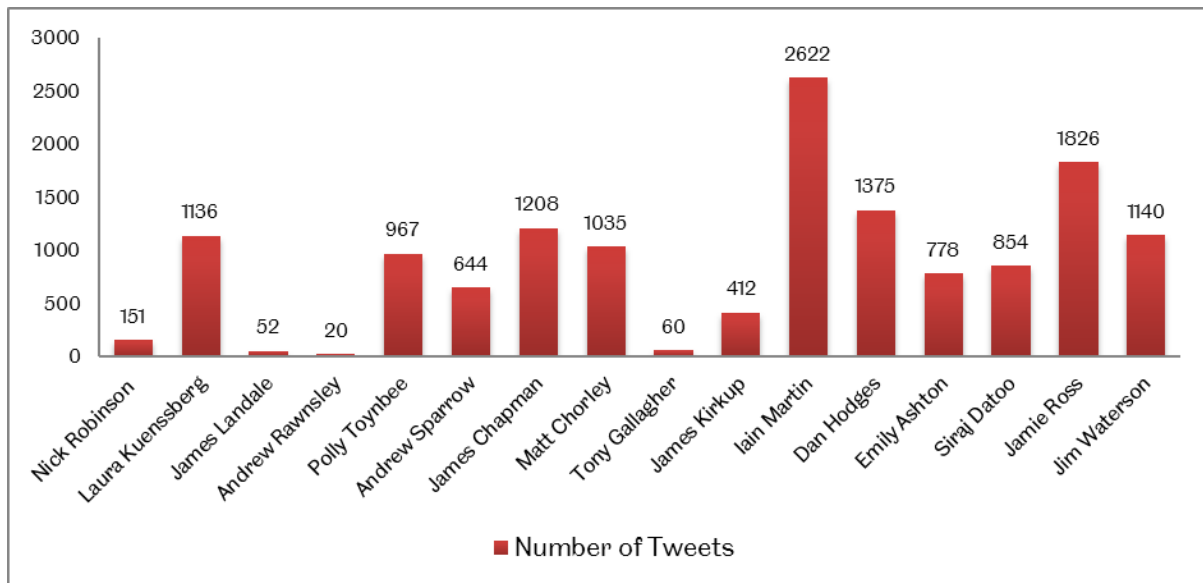


Figure 4c: The activity of the accounts (journalists) during the examined period

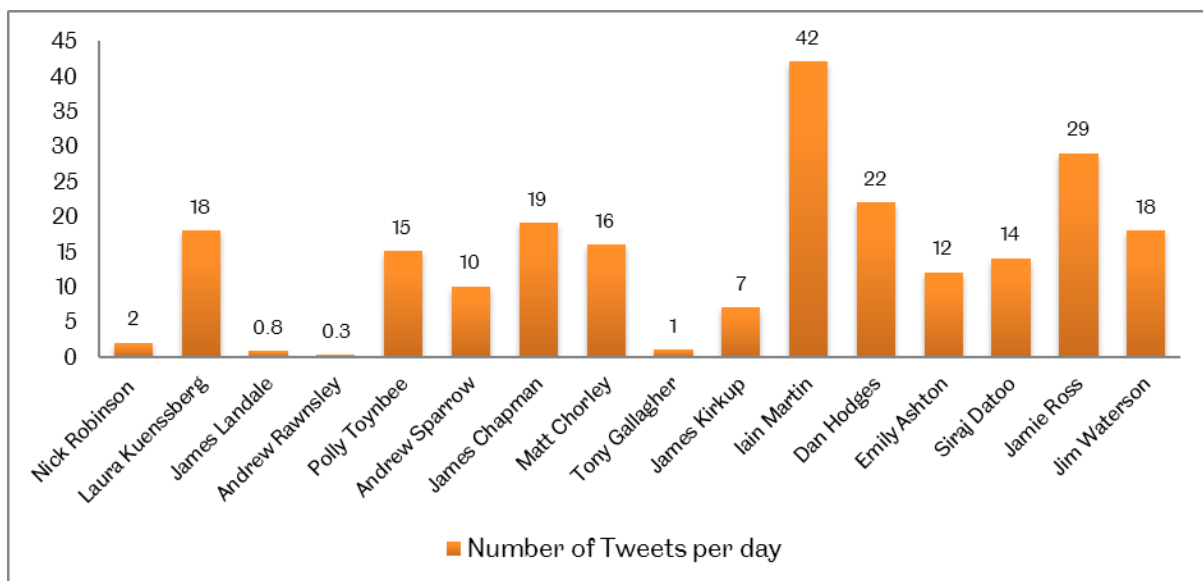


Figure 4d: The activity of the accounts per day (journalists) during the examined period

A point that emerges here concerns the criteria of following a journalist on Twitter. While a recent Pew Research report shows that almost half (46%) of the users tend to follow reporters and commentators on Twitter (Gottfried 2014), the variable of their popularity is seemingly unrelated to the frequency of their posts. Drawing on the studied accounts, the most popular among the journalistic ones, Nick Robinson's and Andrew Rawnsley's, present the lowest level of activity, indicating that the choice to follow a journalistic actor on Twitter lies also in their non-digital reputation and branding [Figures 4e, 4f]. This argument highlights this work's

perception of digital and non-digital worlds as interrelated: the non-dichotomy between them and the co-existence of users in both, not only affect the decisions users make in both instances, but also constant effect among these worlds. It also underscores journalists' dual existence as professionals whose work has an impact on both environments and as such, their practices should be developed accordingly, to depict the existing dialogue among platforms.

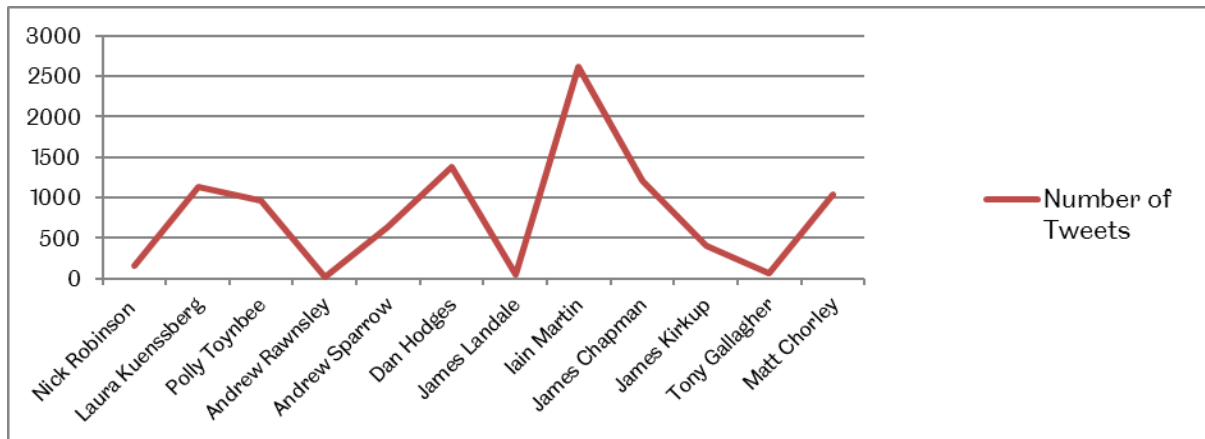


Figure 4e: The activity of journalists' accounts

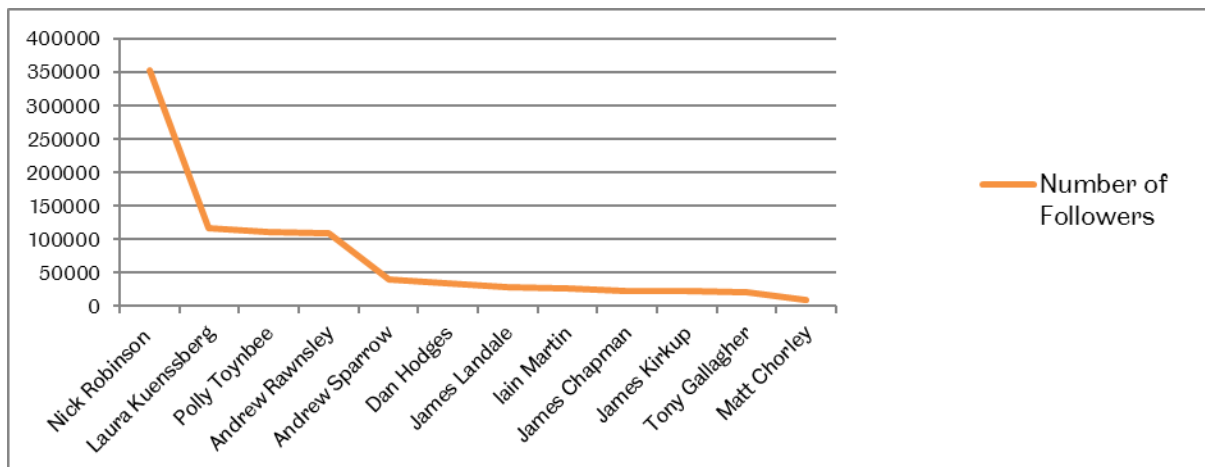


Figure 4f: The number of journalists' followers

The activity of the accounts does not depict their thematic relevance with the General Elections. For instance, by examining a 10% sample of the research material, tweets about elections on the @Guardian account constituted about 3.37%, whereas on @GdnPolitics, this percentage reaches 57.67%. Therefore, the analysed sample was further filtered to find to what extent the chosen journalistic accounts have discussed elections during the time-frame (63 days). This not only sheds further light on the use of Twitter as a news source but points to a use that extends beyond that of a breaking-news tool. These findings also pose questions of

whether Twitter is of value in covering news in the occurrence of a major political event beyond its first moments.

Thematically, legacy media accounts adopt a generic mode: they cover a great diversity of news, with no thematic or topical homogeneity, while, apart from @DailyMail, they set a specific account to discuss political matters, and the elections. Similarly, net-native media separate their accounts thematically: both @BuzzfeedUKPol and @HuffPostUK are dedicated exclusively to UK Politics<sup>52</sup>. A rather interesting finding with regards to the thematic analysis concerns the internal references to Twitter: apart from triggering news, tweets are also being used to “add flavour to background stories or analyses” (Broersma & Graham 2012), revealing in a way a dialogue between platforms, by including Twitter-mediated material into the reporting of an event. This is evident in the use of related headlines “*Who does Twitter think is winning?*” (Telegraph<sup>53</sup>) or “*And here on Twitter - which of the debaters are you talking about most?*” (GdnPolitics<sup>54</sup>) [Figure 4g]. Journalists across legacy and net-native media were more likely to discuss General Elections, and did so at higher rate than organizational accounts [Figure 4h]. Both the activity of the accounts and the thematic analysis confirm that Twitter could be regarded as an *ambient news environment* with the constant existence of news in its various streams and layers. Especially in the case of journalists, and during the elections, their followers can continuously encounter news material in their Twitter streams.

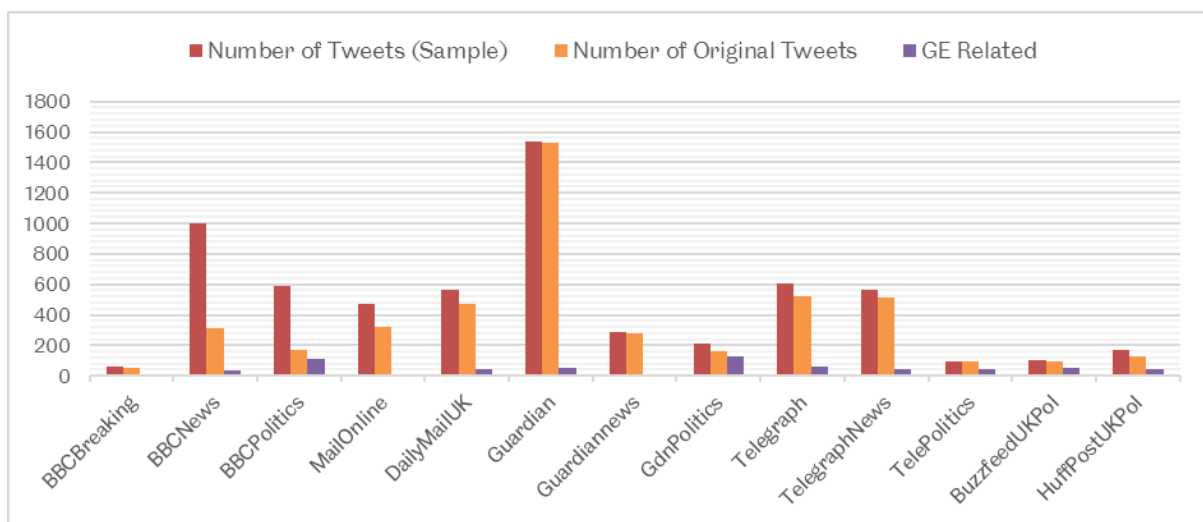


Figure 4g: Tweets related to General Elections 2015 (media organizations)

<sup>52</sup> As *Original Tweets* have been counted those which are not Retweets. *GE related* are the tweets that are referring to General Elections. In all cases, only tweets with direct references to General Elections have been counted.

<sup>53</sup> Telegraph Twitter feed: <http://t.co/LXLgyWYMyr> and <http://t.co/FPyMK0o4mk>

<sup>54</sup> Gdn Twitter feed: <http://t.co/4p8jYSGHsz>

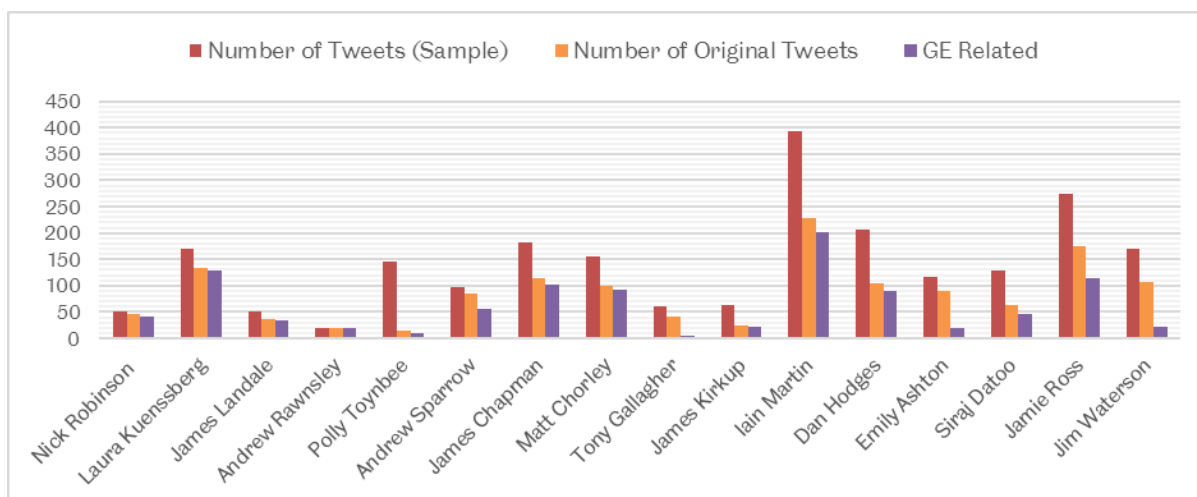


Figure 4h: Tweets related to General Elections 2015 (journalists)

#### 4.3.1.2. The Formatting of the Tweets: Priorities, Shovelware, and New Practices

The formatting of the tweets, along with their textual analysis which is adapted to what Carvalho in her model describes as “surface descriptors and structural organization” (2000: 21), are the aspects that highlight how media organizations and journalists actually use the platform. Drawing on earlier research, Twitter has been used extensively as a form of streaming RSS service for news stories in a way that previously published news content is re-distributed (Messner *et al.* 2011). Is distribution, though, the main journalistic purpose of its use? Is the main focus of media organizations on distribution rather than on gathering and producing news? While the presence of news on the platform *per se* is highlighted by the quantitative research, the texture of this news is equally important. Findings show that legacy media accounts, in their majority, adopt the *Headline + Link* structure, to disseminate articles previously posted on their website, confirming that *shovelware* is still apparent (Deuze 1999). Bardoel (2002) with regards to early online versions of printed newspapers and the recycled content they posted, refers to a *parasitic* news offer. The analogy with the current news offer on Twitter by media organizations, is telling. Furthering this argument, it could be regarded as an exaggeration to consider news offer on Twitter as *parasitic*, however the significance of this news offer could be contested: the purpose of its existence is seemingly narrowed to a refined version of *clickbait*<sup>55</sup>. What is more, the fact that other formats are less popular enhances this argument. For instance, BBC accounts include the ‘Quote’ + Name (usually an official source) +

<sup>55</sup> The term refers to web content whose main purpose is to attract attention and draw visitors to a particular web page.

Verb (e.g. 'says', 'reports', etc.) structure. BBC News enriches its Twitter stream with tweets that act as suggestions, with tweets that address (mostly) rhetorical questions to other users, and with references to other media in the form: *Media name + title of the article + link*, but without employing the usual Twitter markers. A different type that appeared on BBC Politics account is the *truncated tweet*, a text that does not conform to Twitter's nature of 140 characters. This kind more typically appeared during the first years of Twitter's use, when there was widespread confusion about how the platform could be used.

While Daily Mail's tweets, as well as those posted by net-native media do not present any diversifications, the Guardian's posts present a greater variety. On the main Guardian account there are questions followed by a link, and tweets that refer more clearly to the elections with specific opening words, such as *Election 2015*, *Election morning briefing*, *Vote notes* or *Three-minute election*. @GuardianNews tweets also the Guardian's or the Observer's front page and includes tweets that have direct reference to the journalist-author of a specific article in the form *Title | Name of Journalist + Link*. Guardian Politics, furthers this diversity by posting tweets that have the form *Quote + Hashtag*, especially when there is live coverage of an event, adding a conversational aspect to their tweets with more direct questions than the other Guardian accounts.

The most interesting case is that of Telegraph accounts, as both Telegraph and Telegraph News restate and adapt the headlines to Twitter's norms and with the employment of addressivity markers, showing a two-way normalization of the platform. For example, the website headline "Nigel Farage says we want our country back, Ukip manifesto launch: as it happened" is presented as "The #LibDems manifesto is almost the same length as the #Labour and #Conservative manifestos combined", using hashtags to highlight selected keywords. This leads to greater dissemination, as the headline and the link of the website will appear in Twitter's stream when users search these terms. This specific use could be called *reverse normalization*, with the adjustment of journalistic norms to those of the platform, pointing to Lasorsa's *et al.* argument that the process of normalization is a two-way one: journalistic norms are also being adjusted to Twitter's evolving ones (2012: 13), which could be indicated as a way to exceed the simplistic use of the platform.

An overview of the formatting of the tweets by media can be seen below [Table 4b]:

Tweet Type	Example
<b>Headline &amp; Link</b>	PM arrives at Buckingham Palace to inform Queen that UK parliament has been dissolved <a href="http://t.co/nONLSRJTD0">http://t.co/nONLSRJTD0</a> #GE2015 Election morning briefing: attack fatigue as Miliband tries to swing back to policy <a href="http://t.co/mqCByfjrzz">http://t.co/mqCByfjrzz</a>
<b>Quoting</b>	Britain "back on her feet again" & needs "strong leadership", David Cameron says, as #GE2015 campaign begins <a href="http://t.co/qwrgPY01Rt">http://t.co/qwrgPY01Rt</a>
<b>Suggestions</b>	Watch live as Ed Miliband sets out Labour's #nondom policy <a href="http://t.co/UIOhGtXOMz">http://t.co/UIOhGtXOMz</a> #GE2015
<b>Questions</b>	Which #GE2015 leader is promising a £150m support package for carers? <a href="http://t.co/EuHSceOjVa">http://t.co/EuHSceOjVa</a> <a href="http://t.co/d7P0oakcVo">http://t.co/d7P0oakcVo</a> Which TV channel covered the general election best of all? <a href="http://t.co/d15iVZb2fo">http://t.co/d15iVZb2fo</a>
<b>References to other internal / external media accounts</b>	Who are the #GE2015 candidates? We've crunched the numbers <a href="http://t.co/AZGJaAd66S">http://t.co/AZGJaAd66S</a> #BBCGoFigure (via @NickEardley) <a href="http://t.co/W1MkLaZfW1">http://t.co/W1MkLaZfW1</a>
<b>Truncated tweets</b>	RT @davidcharlesbow: @GdnPolitics It's basically a graduate tax that's only paid once one earns over 21,000 and is written off eventually. ...
<b>Statements</b>	David Cameron has just come close to promising another Conservative-Lib Dem coalition.
<b>Invitations for alternative platforms</b>	Be great if you could join us for The Observer Election Countdown this Thursday. <a href="http://t.co/gbf9U8ln1v">http://t.co/gbf9U8ln1v</a> #election #GE2015 #guardianlive
<b>Comments / Personal Opinion</b>	"Cameron: strong Miliband: stumbling Clegg: side-lined Audience: savage #bbcqt"

Table 4b: Overview of the formatting of the tweets

In terms of popularity, either referring to legacy or to net-native media, the most frequent type is the *Headline +Link* type, signifying the reasons why media organizations incorporate Twitter into their everyday journalistic routines, and also raising questions about the aims of this use, leading back to the discussion about parasitic news offer. This self-referential, merely disseminative use is highlighted also by Malik and Pfeffer (2016) in their macroscopic analysis of Twitter but is also in accordance with previous studies; news organizations use this structure extensively with the intention to drive traffic to their news sites, resembling an automated news feed without changing these pattern since 2010 (Messner *et al.* 2011; Broersma & Graham 2012; Engesser & Humprecht 2015). This also points to a one-way form of communication, which Broersma and Graham suggest indicates the use of linkbots (2012: 404), pieces of “more or less automated computer software that are programmed to mimic the behaviour of human internet users” (Larsson & Moe 2015: 362). In this case, they act as a pseudo-RSS feed with the sole purpose of enhancing the traffic in media’s webpages. It is however clear that media streams are filled with news, pointing towards the notion of the ambient news environment, where news are always present, and in the periphery of users’ attention (Murthy 2013).

The analysis of individuals' journalistic accounts shows that their Twitter use is more heterogeneous compared to the media accounts. These reflect journalists' personality and could be linked with their individual variations regarding its use. Canter (2014) suggests that there are two generic types of journalists related to the use of the platform: those who solely promote their platform by driving traffic to their company's website and those who expand its use, by sharing external material, collaborating with the public and engaging with the audience. She also refers to the crossing of the "historic line between the professional and the personal" (Canter 2014: 3). This distinction is agreed to by Hedman (2016), who distinguishes two separate approaches among journalists on Twitter, the "sceptical tweeters" who have a "professional only" account, tweet moderately and are more likely than others to tweet about work related issues, and those who can be seen as "enthusiastic tweeters" and are considerably more active, do not distinguish private and professional tweeting and blur the boundaries between the professional and private sphere. While categorizations are helpful in order to spot possible differences, it could be argued that the issue of the use of a platform is not univariate, static and inclusive: a journalist, for instance, could use Twitter only professionally but at the same time the overall attitude towards the medium could be categorised as "enthusiastic".

What is more, the very definition of *personal* is a contested one, as the boundaries, especially on social networking sites, are not strictly delineated - in the researched material, there are tweets that are not professional, but it is unclear whether they are personal too. Even though most of the studied tweets are professional, this tendency is depicted in the following examples, which show an attempt on journalists' behalf to surpass the professional boundaries, while maintaining a non-personal use:

A new dawn has broken, has it not? [photograph of the dawn] <http://t.co/W2CLobbulO> - (@BBCJLendale)

Abe Lincoln was very nice by the way. Said to me "Hah! Call that a People's Army?"... - (@DPJHodges)

The difficulty in the distinction between personal and professional is a crucial point, also connected with two key discussions. The first concerns the impact social media has had on journalism. One of the ways social media has challenged journalism is by blurring the boundaries between professional and personal (Hermida 2012), redefining simultaneously the relationship between different media actors and the public. This evolving relationship challenges also the media hegemony and power relations (Bowman & Willis 2003) as much in

the production as in the distribution of news. Thus, the implied *democratization* (only in the sense of openness here) of the processes reveals *changes in journalistic practices* that can be traced in the collaboration of journalism and the public, or in the words of Papacharissi, in the fact that the private sphere becomes more public: “Social media like Twitter would make the private sphere a sphere of connection and not isolation, as it serves primarily to connect the personal to the political, and the self to the polity and society” (2010: 164).

The second discussion points to the Habermasian idea of the political public sphere. Habermas (1989) attempts to recount the changes that publicity has been subject to: from the feudal society of medieval authorities until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Miloni 2006) and the most critical evolution, which was the pedestal of the public sphere, and was the process of the transformation of the public from the *subjectum* (in a way, the subordinate) into *subject* – from the recipient of commands to the contracting opponent in a rational debate (Habermas 1996: 81). Reflecting on this, the changing role of the public, the invitation to participate in the journalistic processes as a result, and of the previously mentioned blurred boundaries, along with its subsequent involvement as *active recipients* (Hermida 2012: 313) demonstrate changes in the journalistic profession that cannot remain the same. The new personal, the new professional, the networked journalistic forms that led to (Van der Haak *et al.* 2012), show that the transformative changes in the public sphere that Habermas discussed did not stop in the early 1900s; they are still occurring, even though in a different way or form, and they keep transforming the meaning of publicity, of the public, of the role of the *press* - in that, or a reverse order. These transformations, along with their impact, are discussed further in Chapter 5.

Moving back to the format, the medium journalists work for does not affect their use of Twitter. While the *Headline + Link* pattern is a popular format, the provision of links is rarer than in the media accounts. Exceptions to this format are Dan Hodges’ tweets, who follows the form *Headline > Telegraph > Link* when he shares an article. The most common type, in these accounts is the *Comment + Link* or simply *Comment*, which indicates a further engagement with the platform by adding a personal tone. Commentary, and notably political commentary, is rather extensive and refers to the content of the articles they choose to share (Type 1) but it can also refer to the work of the author of the article (Type 2) [Table 4c]. Andrew Sparrow’s tweets differ, for the most part, from the rest of the tweets in terms of syntax as he follows the form



*Link + Comment*. Another format that resembles this one is the *Comment + Photo* which is typical for Jamie Ross and Jim Waterson, both working for BuzzFeed, showing a tendency to invest in multimedia material. Personal tweets are few, showing a rather professional use of the medium by almost all journalists. Iain Martin’s, James Chapman’s and Emily Ashton’s accounts each include replies to other users, adopting a more conversational format. A final format category of tweets observed here are tweets that act as invitations to join the journalist in an alternative medium, not exclusively online; a practice that studies have shown to be quite common among journalists in different national contexts as well (Dagoula 2012).

Tweet Type	Example
Political Commentary (Type 1)	This is v good - Never has George Osborne down as an Elizabeth Gaskell fan <a href="https://t.co/UUF08bHnc0">https://t.co/UUF08bHnc0</a> - Andrew Sparrow
Political Commentary (Type 2)	Marvellous detective work - but no clear answer. Who lies behind these 3 new pro-Tory blogs <a href="http://t.co/9ZafDsp5J6">http://t.co/9ZafDsp5J6</a> via @spectator_ch” - Tony Gallagher
Invitations	Join me on @BBCRadio4 at 8 tonight for a special election edition of Leader Conference. #r4leader” - Andrew Rawnsley

Table 4c: Formatting of journalists’ tweets

The significance of the formatting of the tweets, underlining the popularity of the disseminative format (*Headline + Link*), is that it further points to “a shifting ecology of news provision” (Picard 2014: 276), and to the rebalancing of importance from news production to its dissemination. In other words, Twitter can be considered a part of the new ecosystem which allows “for the emergence of new, more flexible means of providing news” (Picard 2014: 277). What is more, on these platforms, journalistic practices shift from a “relatively closed system of news creation to a more open system in which news emerges from the public observations, data, flows of information and commentary” (Van der Haak *et al.* 2012). It is questionable, though, to what extent public is part of the equation and whether it is included in the journalistic practices as *producers*, to return to Axel Bruns’s term (Papacharissi 2014: 34), a point that is discussed further in the next chapter.

The implications of the shift towards dissemination has another side too: journalism is no longer bound to geographically determined markets, which has led to a shift in the actual work of journalists towards the embrace of new platforms, creating changes in the institutional logics of news organizations (Picard 2014: 276). Furthermore, the traditional functions of journalism are no longer provided solely by formal news media. These elements not only enhance arguments over the changing form of the public, but also demonstrate a *transition* in journalism that includes the reconfiguration of the organizations, the re-institutionalization of fields of

activity and the removal of the monopoly of news (Picard 2014: 278). The reason these institutional changes are important for this work is that they challenge journalism by introducing new structures and relationships, and remind of the shift across the different phases of capitalism, upon which Habermas based his argumentation on the formation of the political public sphere. What is the role of Twitter in these transformations? Shah (2008) argues for the employment of the term *global marketplace* instead of *global village*, basing his case on the corporate character of social networks, opening a discussion over the equality of the distributed influence and raises a prominent question about the meaning of these current shifts and their implications for the Habermasian theory: are they able to cause a further structural transformation of the public sphere? Is the Habermasian theory still the right one to contextualise current tendencies? The significance of the public sphere as a theory in contemporary contexts that are affected by the presence of digital technologies, along with its transformations and manifestations are discussed in detail after the presentation of the findings and in relation to them.

#### **4.3.1.3. Linguistic Choices as Indicators of Normalization**

The formatting points to the chosen syntax, the textual analysis, on the other hand, can reveal the different writing styles (formal/informal, technical, conversational) as well as the use of emotive discourse, unravelling what Carvalho's describes as "language and rhetoric" (2000: 23). Textual analysis of journalistic texts on Twitter not only offers an insight into the use of the medium by the different journalistic categories, but also highlights how language is used on the platform. The significance of this factor is dual. First, it is a crucial indicator of whether media actors are normalizing microblogging to fit their current norms - Singer (2005) included the expression of opinion, revealed also by the use of specific wording, as one of the key aspects of deviating from the journalistic norms. Second, language and the way it is used is an indirect signal of the changing nature of the relationship between different media actors and the public, and further highlights how media and journalists encourage the public to participate. In other words, language might act as the *invitation* media actors send to the audience to be part of the journalistic processes.

Twitter's unique nature has triggered linguistic research studies, which have taken place over the last years (Barton & Lee 2013; Zappavigna 2013) and adopted different approaches, such as systemic functional linguistics and corpus linguistics (Zappavigna 2013). The grammatical inconsistencies of computer-mediated discourse and the high level of interpretation that needs to be adopted by the researcher, make the linguistic evaluation of tweets quite challenging (Einspanner *et al.* 2013). Zappavigna identifies other obstacles to the study of Twitter language, especially when software is being used for the analysis. These include the use of non-standard orthography, the use of emoticons and hashtags, the abridged posts and the status of automated material that is being filtered out (2013: 19-22) (while this refers to computer-assisted methods, in this work manual analysis methods were followed). Studies have also focused on the affective language on the platform (Papacharissi 2014; Zappavigna 2013). For the purposes of this study, linguistic analysis is performed at a descriptive level, meaning that all the aspects that constitute a tweet are examined. Of particular interest is the use of emotive language and the choice of tone (personal/impersonal and formal/informal) so as to identify the *rational* aspect of the conducted dialogue, the use of conversational words, and the identification of possible unique features that may appear in the medium. Barton and Lee discuss a "new variety" of language, apparent in the collected material that appears in the computer-mediated communication characterised by a series of elements, such as (2013: 5):

- Acronyms and initialisms (e.g. lol for laughing out loud)
- Word reductions (e.g. gd for good)
- Letter/number homophones (e.g. U for 'you' or 2 for 'to')
- Stylized spelling (e.g. "I am soooooooooo happy")
- Emoticons (e.g. :) for smiling, :( for being sad)
- Unconventional/stylized punctuation (e.g. '!!!!!!!')

This approach is helpful to examine whether tweets encourage other users' participation in the conversation.

Studying language is crucial to understand that contemporary technological changes are also transformations in meaning making and communication, in the sense that language expresses how we perceive our lived experiences (Barton & Lee 2013). Therefore, language is understood as a semiotic system - "a system of signs used to encode meaning that senders intend to communicate to recipients" that acquires meaning in and through its context (Page *et al.* 2014: 27-28). As Bell and Garrett note, texts are communicative artefacts and media texts reflect the

technology that is available for producing them. The analysis of media texts is not concerned with language alone:

It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation, through what medium; how different types of communication evolved, and their relationship to each other. (Bell & Garrett 1998: 3)

Here, language is being considered as a dynamic process that depicts the movement from seeing the language as a product towards seeing it as an activity. Consequently, texts are no longer approached as fixed objects, but as constantly changing (Page *et al.* 2014: 27-30). Furthermore, Zappavigna points to the asynchronous communication<sup>56</sup> that takes place on Twitter, as well as to the fact that Twitter language is “highly temporally bound”, meaning that people post about events as they happen and about topics they have on their minds at a particular time, often as reactions to specific situations (2013: 31, 177) - an argument that is interesting to examine from the journalistic perspective as well: is journalistic speech, on this platform, reactive to specific situations and is it different from the one that other users use?

By taking these factors into consideration, the descriptive factors measured (manually) in this analysis are [Table 4d]:

<b>Descriptive Factor</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
<b>Conversation</b>	Use of conversational words
<b>Tone</b>	Personal/ Impersonal - Formal /Informal
<b>Emotion</b>	Use of emotional charged words
<b>Specific techniques</b>	Use of Twitter’s distinctive features

*Table 4d: The studied descriptive factors (linguistic choices)*

Analysis shows that legacy media accounts adopt a formal approach towards the medium: their tweets are either in first person or in third, are formal, although semi-formal tone is also present. There are several degrees in the use of additional elements [Tables 4e, 4f, 4g and 4h]<sup>57</sup>. All BBC accounts and The Guardian’s and The Guardian News’ accounts use formal language exclusively. There are only a few tweets with a slight expression of sentiment or with a hint of conversational tone, although the approach is one-dimensional with the employment of rhetorical questions. The latter can also be observed on the Guardian Politics account, which

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<sup>56</sup> According to this type of communication, users do not engage in real-time dialogue, instead there are no time boundaries and the timing of the use of the medium is an independent choice (Zappavigna 2013).

<sup>57</sup> While the main examples that underline the argumentation are presented in the current subsection, further examples of media and journalists’ tweets are included in Appendix A, so as to further showcase their approach.

occasionally adopts a semi-formal approach, especially when tweets concern the coverage of a live event or when it wants to communicate an internal issue, as below:

At the risk of sounding like a trendy vicar, register to vote <http://t.co/QAtJnzCv8h> - (@GdnPolitics)

And that's it. Phew. Who do you think performed the best? #BBCDebate - (@GdnPolitics)

The Telegraph's accounts follow the same pattern, with tweets that are headline-based and with only slight differences between its three accounts, mostly in terms of formality. The Telegraph account for instance, uses some emotive words, although sparingly when tweets are related to the General Elections. The Mail Online and Daily Mail UK accounts have different approaches to Twitter: while the first employs a formal tone, with the exception of the use of capital letters for emphasis in several of its tweets, the latter shifts between formal and informal tone by including in its tweets capital letters, and occasionally offensive words and emoticons. It could be argued that apart from the Daily Mail's account that can provoke reactions, the use of language on the rest of the accounts indicate a normalization of the platform, as well as little encouragement for participation, pointing to a *conventional* use of the platform in the coverage of the elections, with Twitter acting as a disseminative tool. Drawing from this use, it could also be argued that their tweets stylistically imprint the tone and the textual approach of their posted articles, representing in a sense the style and the journalistic pattern of the media they belong to.

On the net-native accounts, the *Headline + Link* type tweet, formal tweets, and switching between styles is also apparent. However, there are tweets written in the first person, employing a more informal language that is frequently emotionally charged. Expressions and techniques commonly used on social media platforms are also observed, matching the mediums' style of presenting news: in the case of BuzzFeed with the use of humour and the employment of lists, as also shown below:

The photographers go bananas as Cameron holds up manifesto. This scene will probably be on your front pages tomorrow. <http://t.co/7mD1CDEstM> - (@BuzzfeedUKPol)

SAD MUSIC NO MORE DEBATE #BBCDebate - (@BuzzfeedUKPol)

Vote for Dave and he has a little gift for you <http://t.co/oPiwLKJWuj> <http://t.co/ON9vIukQa3> - (@HuffPostUKPol)

With regards to journalistic accounts, as with the formatting of the tweets, the tone and expressive choices are highly dependent on their chosen approach, professional or personal, in the use of the platform, but also on their personality. Overall, the extensive commentary nature of tweets is demonstrated in the employment of emotive words and of non-strict syntax as observed in the case of tweets that include headlines.

Journalists from BBC and The Guardian adopt a mostly semi-formal tone, but there are exceptions: Laura Kuenssberg's tweets are split between semi-formal and informal, without following basic syntax rules, as for instance the use of the capital letter at the beginning of a sentence (tweet). Moreover, on all accounts there is indirect use of conversational words which shows evidence of willingness to initiate dialogue. Emotive words are present too, although specific techniques vary. Word reductions and the use of numeric sequences observed in Nick Robinson's tweets, are absent in James Landale account. Likewise, the Guardian's journalists Andrew Sparrow and Polly Toynbee use Twitter in a similarly informal way, while Andrew Rawnsley employs rather formal language. The Telegraph's journalists, Iain Martin, Dan Hodges and James Kirkup, adopt a more informal approach. Dan Hodges' tweets are the most highly opinionated with, at times, a humorous sense, as shown by the examples:

If Nigel Farage is leader of Ukip in 2020 I'll streak naked down Whitehall again...-(@DPJHodges)

May have to be some minor compromise on degree of nakedness, to avoid arrest. And spreading panic amongst innocent by-standers...-(@DPJHodges)

Techniques that comply with Twitter's nature and emphatic points are present here as well. Lastly, both journalists working at Daily Mail, James Chapman and Matt Chorley tend to use a more informal way of expression. The analysis of the textual characteristics of legacy media journalists' Twitter use reveals that the medium they work for is a variable that does not seem to affect their Twitter use. Their tweets do not present similarities either with the medium's official tweets or with those posted by other journalists that work for the same medium. Tone is diverse, as is the degree of employment of certain techniques. This is similar for net-native journalists, although the choice to adopt a mostly informal tone suggests a closer alignment with their medium, as shown below:

Massively enjoying watching political Twitter pick fights with each other at 2am after staying up too late getting tipsy watching Eurovision. - (@JimWaterson)

I'll spend the next month asking every politician I meet if they're prepared to eat a hat if they lose. Surely one will eventually pay off. - (@JamieRoss7)

While the use of direct, non-rhetorical questioning is completely missing from the studied accounts, in a more interpretative and probably subjective approach, it could be said that several accounts, such as BuzzFeed or journalists that adopt an informal approach, are expressed in a way that encourages or can provoke a response from the audience.

Language itself is not the only factor that determines the level or the direction of normalization. It is however, a significant indicator. When it comes to net-native media and more extensively to journalists, they affect the platform but are also affected by the norms of Twitter. They pose their rules, by choosing the content they share, the frequency or the ways they express themselves but at the same time, they conform to platform's conventions, firstly by complying to the "140-character" rule, and secondly by how they are choosing to exploit these characters. Their emotive reactions along with the expression of their personal opinion indicate, with regards to the first research question, a *change* in the journalistic practices; with a focus on the research aims, they also confirm as a consequence the blurred boundaries between the personal and the professional and the evolving relationship with the public. It is however essential to explore whether there are discursive patterns, whether Twitter provides an arena where dialogic exchanges take place and more importantly whether these elements are manifestations of a digital public sphere.

### **4.3.2. The journalistic use of Twitter: Addressing Research Question Two**

#### **4.3.2.1. Hypothesis & Twitter's Participatory Characteristics**

Contextualising this discussion by the aims of the second research question, *whether Twitter provides a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere*, the empirical research focuses on finding out whether journalists can transform Twitter as a public space to a mediated public sphere. The use of addressivity markers (retweets, hashtags and mentions) as well as the provision of external links point to specific manifestations of the public sphere concept on Twitter, although this becomes clearer by connecting this part with the theoretical framework.

The grounding for the discussion that takes place in Chapter 5 is set here by the key hypothesis of this thesis. This is highlighted by drawing on the proposed definition of a Digital Public

Sphere, according to which it is “one or more digital open-access arenas where individual citizens assemble by engaging in public conversation and debate to form a public body. Through interaction, the display of participation, and the raising of awareness within social networks, public opinion can be formed and socio-political issues can be addressed” [4.1]:

If *Digital Networked Participation* can be traced on Twitter and if certain criteria [cited below] are met, then a *Digital Public Sphere* can be formed.

The purpose of the hypothesis is to frame the discussion, but it should be mentioned that is not exclusive, in the sense that the research aim exceeds this restricted frame, pointing to the ultimate intention which is to map the dialogic arenas of Twitter, to identify their democratic features and to make a conceptual juxtaposition with the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere, by focusing on the evolving role of the *press*.

Transforming these criteria into discernible qualities, a typology could be built, outlined in the table below. It should be mentioned that in the case of *access*, while new media platforms offer greater possibilities for participation, they often impose constraints that can be barriers to equal participation as they often “marginalize some people while increasing the visibility enjoyed by more dominant groups” (Jenkins *et al.* 2016: 22), therefore frequency analysis has been chosen as the appropriate method to highlight the prominent actors on Twitter overall (macro-level) [Table 4i]

Criterion	Explanation	Measurement
<b>Open network</b>	The social networking platform should be open to all citizens, without technological limitations	The diversity of users that participate in the discussion through the hashtags #ge2015, #ge15 ( <b>Macro-level</b> )
<b>Extent</b>	The extent of the discussions over time	Time extent ( <b>Macro-level</b> )
<b>Rational Debate</b>	Debate should take a conversational form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouragement of audience, participation by journalists (<b>Meso-level</b>)</li> <li>- Conversation using addressivity markers (<b>Meso-level &amp; Macro-level</b>)</li> <li>- Level of responsiveness by journalists (<b>Macro-level</b>)</li> <li>- Textual analysis ('rationality')<sup>58</sup> (<b>Meso-level</b>)</li> </ul>

<sup>58</sup> Rowe 2015



<b>Formation of arenas</b>	The structure of the social gatherings on the social networking platforms and its relation to those of their predecessors ('coffeehouse')	Arenas of dialogue, as discussions under the same thematic categories are identified ( <b>Macro-level / Discussion</b> )
<b>Topics of general concern</b>	No restrictions in the choice of the discussed topics	Discussion of topics of general interest ( <b>Macro-level</b> )
<b>Diffusion of Information</b>	Circulation of information and ideas should take place in these arenas	Use of tweets for informative purposes ( <b>Meso-level, Macro-level</b> )
<b>Participants, Dominance of elites</b>	No prominent elite actors, non-hierarchical form of interaction	Identification of the possible prominent actors through frequency analysis ( <b>Macro-level</b> )
<b>Enhanced role of media</b>	Media should have a crucial role by giving opportunity for feedback and encouraging the dialogue	- Presence of media and journalists in Twitter ( <b>Meso-level</b> ) - Identification of whether the possible prominent actors are the media ( <b>Macro-level</b> )
<b>Overcome traditional limitations [media]</b>	Are there any restrictions or guidelines in the use of Twitter by journalists?	Use of Twitter by journalists ( <b>Meso-level, Interviews</b> )
<b>Address scepticism</b>	Offer alternatives to confront the scepticism regarding anonymity and fragmentation	Identification of levels of anonymity and fragmented dialogue ( <b>Macro-level</b> )

Table 4i: Habermas' criteria for the existence of a public sphere as measurable qualities (Twitter)

Through analysis it is also possible to research whether Twitter becomes “a facilitator of existing, formal politics rather than offering new opportunities” and if it is mainly used for “efficiency rather than to add accountability, transparency and participation” in order to broaden democracy (Siapera 2012: 86) - in other words, to identify the degree of normalization of the platform, similar to the one that existed in political blogs (Singer 2005; Lasorsa 2012; Parmelee 2013), and also to find the extent to which Twitter affects political communication due to the interaction of different logics - the mass media and the networked one (Jungherr 2014; Broersma & Graham 2016). What is more, it allows us to delineate the shape of the hybrid media system formed by the existence of the new political information cycles, those that are shaped by a “range of new-real time platforms, non-elite interventions and elite - activists' interactions” (Chadwick 2013: 87).

This hypothesis points to the distinction between participation and engagement as well as between participation and interaction. Regarding the first distinction, it is rather common for these two terms to be confronted as synonyms (Dahlgren 2009) as their definitions come to *the action of taking part or engaging with something*. Their difference, though, no matter how minor, is that they have different *conceptual weight* as participation implies greater level of commitment with a certain level of activity. A clearer distinction can be made about participation and

interactivity, despite an overlap between these two that can be observed in social media environments. Jenkins *et al.* summarise this by arguing that “we participate *in* something, we interact *with* something”, in order to show that interactivity refers to the technologies that are designed to enable users to make choices while participation refers to the culture, where groups “collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experiences” (2016: 12). The distinction between these elements paves the way for the thesis discussion in Chapter 5, based on inquiries into whether Twitter’s use points to users’ participation, engagement, expression or simple interaction, on what constitutes involvement in political dialogue, on the formation of political arenas, and ultimately, on the effect of these aspects for the manifestations of the public sphere and the reconceptualization of the concept.

The interactive aspects of Twitter include a series of options for a user to participate or engage with the platform or the ongoing dialogue, shown below. The official guidelines of Twitter define engagement as the “total number of times a user interacts with a tweet” (2016) and engagement rate as “the number of engagement activities / impressions” (2016). This emphasises the need for measurement of this variable as well as of the other variables as the “amplification rate” (the number of retweets)<sup>59</sup>. Twitter itself has started to provide detailed analytics<sup>60</sup>.

The different types of Twitter activities that can be regarded as participation or engagement are: Reply, Retweet, Hashtag, Favourite, Follow, Link, Embedded media (video, picture), Tweet expansion service, Twitter Cards (Twitter Government & Elections 2014: 26, 96-98), although the most essential, measured in this analysis are: links, retweets, hashtags and mentions. Following the rationale described above related to the distinction between terms and adopting an interpretative approach, it could be said there is a two-speed participation, leading to the taxonomy as presented below [Table 4j]:

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<sup>59</sup> These have serious limitations: despite the open-access nature of the medium, analytics are only available to the owner of the account. Access to other public accounts could be done through third-party organizations. However, these are not only fee-based but also have limited time-access, presenting only recent analytics for a tight time-frame. Therefore, a real-time collection of tweets along with their metadata, as conducted here, could provide access to these variables.

<sup>60</sup> Source: Twitter Analytics

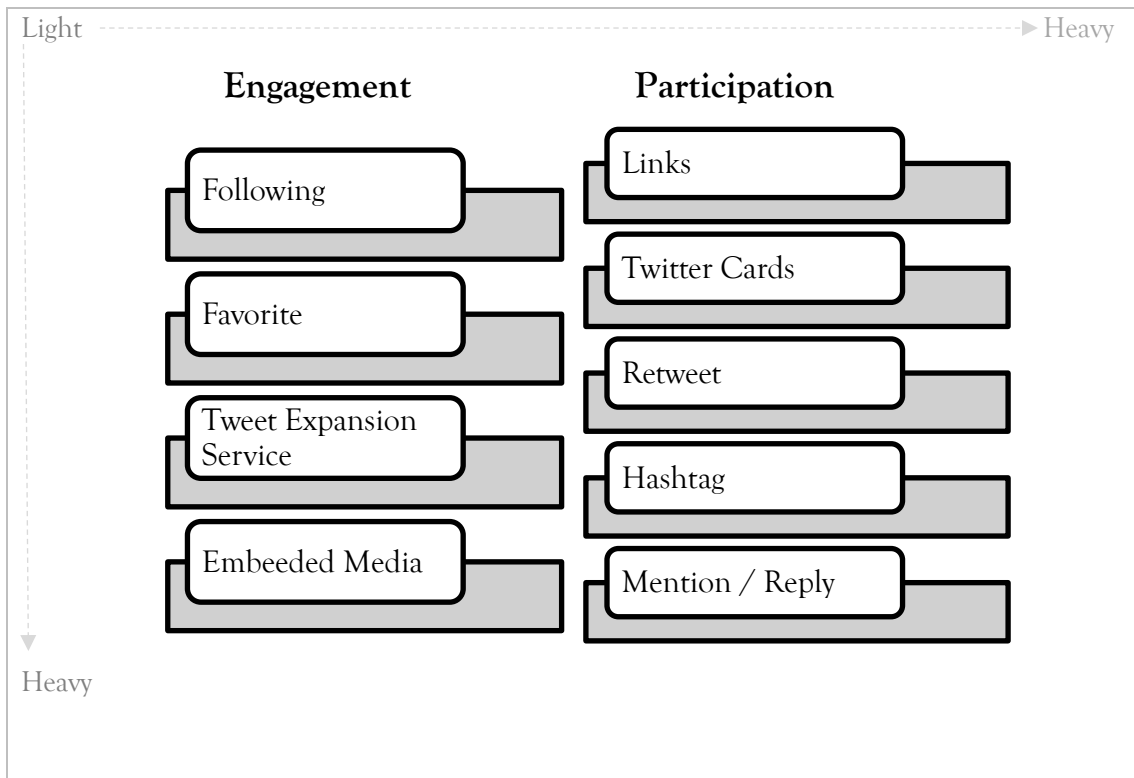


Table 4j: Forms of engagement & participation on Twitter

#### 4.3.2.2. Linking and Retweeting: Further Indicators of Normalization?

Initial results from the first part of the analysis demonstrate a limited provision of internal links, especially from media organizations, that refer to their own websites, without further commentary. The massive use of this feature, as depicted with the employment of the *Headline + Link* and *Comment + Link* forms, is translated to the use of the feature by legacy media solely as a dissemination tool for their own material: Twitter's use could be characterised as *refined clickbait*. BBC Breaking, BBC Politics, Guardian, Guardian News, Mail Online, Daily Mail UK and all Telegraph's accounts include links to their web platforms in all their tweets - an indicator of secondary usage of the content, which according to Engesser & Humprecht points to a less skilful use of Twitter (2015: 519). A differentiation is apparent on the BBC News account, which attempts to enrich its disseminative purposes by including links to the medium's election Instagram account, as shown in the example:

#BBCDebate: @Ed\_Miliband rules out #Labour coalition with #SNP <https://t.co/586P9B82VF>  
 #BBCElection #GE2015

Guardian Politics' account is also used for the coverage of live events, including live reporting, and links are occasionally omitted (15,3%). Overall, though, linking could be regarded as a form of enhancement of the already popular practice of sharing. Huffington Post follows the legacy media's example by including links to 98% of its tweets with only 8.5% of these not connected to a website. This automated version of linking to the website, however, is slightly different for the BuzzFeed account, where links, when included, are divided between those that are connected with their website and those that lead to a photograph posted on the Twitter platform - an indication of exploitation of Twitter's multimedia sharing features. From the tweets related to the General Elections in BuzzFeed's stream, 73.4% include a link and of those, 38.8% are a photograph attachment in a form similar to the following example:

This girl is really regretting asking a question and is bored out of her mind. #BBCDebate  
<http://t.co/boeoqjg2sr>

A greater diversity of use, is apparent in journalistic tweets, both when analysed quantitatively [Figure 4i] and qualitatively.

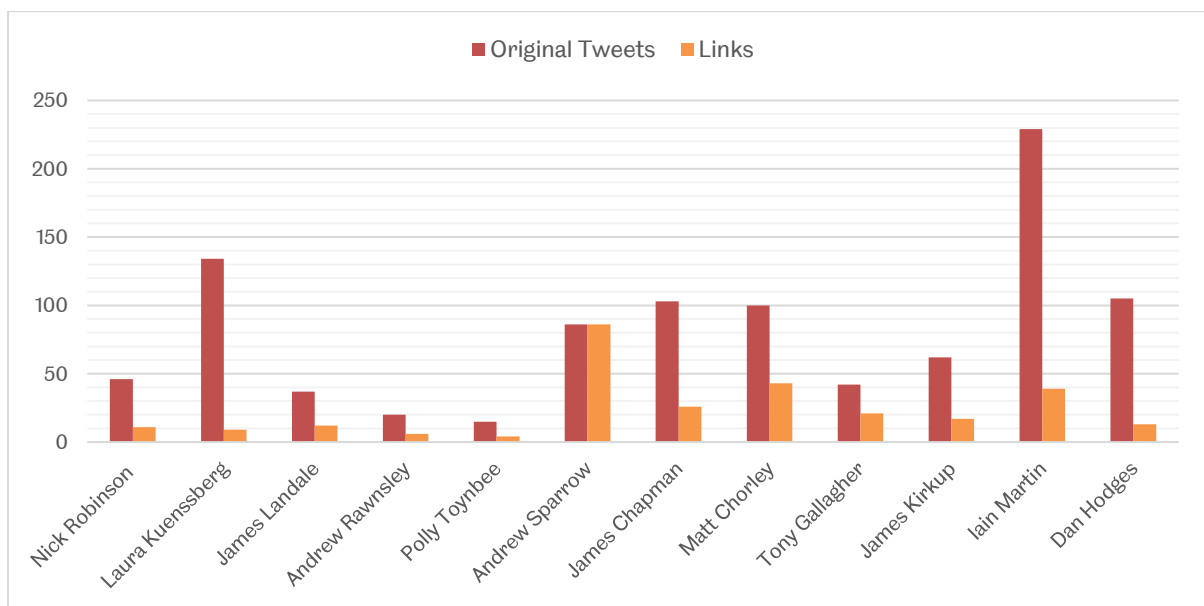


Figure 4i: Provision of links by journalists (legacy media)

A categorization according to their content starts with tweets that lead back to a journalist's personal work, acting as a mode of dissemination and promotion of their own work - examples of this case are Nick Robinson's, Andrew Sparrow's, Iain Martin's and Polly Toynbee's Twitter streams. Laura Kuenssberg and James Landale do not deviate from the dissemination pattern, although there are links to other websites - either social media platforms (e.g. YouTube) or

other websites (e.g. official organizations). An analogous approach is the one that includes links that may not be related to journalists' own work, but they are connected to the medium they work for. Matt Chorley's, Dan Hodges' and James Kirkup's links belong to this category which is reinforced either by adding the name of the medium in every link or by adding the *via @nameoftheaccount* expression.

Election 2015. Who won Day 5 > Telegraph > <http://t.co/Q0i2MVf8Rj> - (@DPJHodges)

If Ukip had any sense, it would talk about three million votes, not three seats - via @Telegraph <http://t.co/b048WANDrf> - (@JamesKirkup)

Net-native's media journalists adopt a different approach, including far fewer links in the tweets [Figure 4j], and in qualitative terms, the majority of their posts are dedicated to commentary. Their links may be connected either to stories on their webpages or photographs. There are also some external links, as for instance, Jim Waterson's tweets related to BBC Debate which lead to the respective website, a strategy that points to a more skilful *use* of the platform (Engesser & Humprecht 2015: 519).

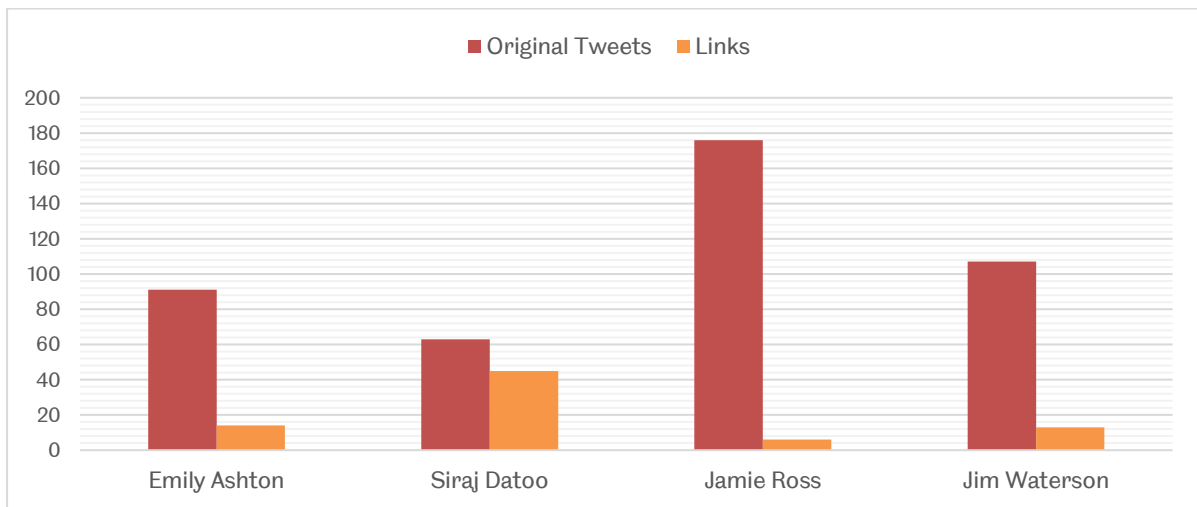


Figure 4j: Provision of links by journalists (net-native media)

The current journalistic norms are also challenged by the inclusion of posts from others in journalistic microblogs (Singer 2005; Parmelee 2013) - this tendency though is presented as limited both in media and journalists' accounts. Therefore, the findings so far echo the shift towards dissemination, especially by exploiting the platform primarily for this purpose. Retweeting can be considered as the same form of use: as another dissemination tool, apart from linking. This feature demonstrates another possible use of the platform by journalists, that of curating and filtering information in the stream before sharing it with the audience

(Molyneux 2015: 921). It also reveals the communicative strategy each medium or journalists choose to adopt: the low number of retweets demonstrates an annunciative approach, whereas a high number a disseminative one (Einspanner *et al.* 2013). Although, it should be mentioned that the boundaries between these approaches are not that clear in the case of media, as even the annunciative approach implies dissemination, as shown by the thematic analysis and the extensive use of the *Headline +Link* format employed by the majority of the media accounts.

Overall, retweeting is the function that not only shows a tendency of further engagement with the medium and a more skilful use (Engesser & Humprecht 2015), but also points to an interest in other users' tweets, which can be regarded as the first step towards a dialogic exchange. Molyneux underlines two distinct approaches regarding retweeting by journalists: among those who retweet for the above purposes, there are also occasions that express their cautiousness towards it, as it may reflect poorly on themselves or their organizations (Opgenhaffen & Scheerlinck 2014) - a stance often expressed by the phrase "retweets are not endorsements" (Molyneux 2015: 923). This attitude is also observed in the studied accounts, as for instance Laura Kuenssberg includes in her profile description on the platform the statement "retweets represent something worth a read, not my own or the BBC's view"<sup>61</sup>.

The data here shows that in practical terms the theoretical framework is not confirmed; both legacy media and net-native media tend to retweet only occasionally [Figure 4k]. This reflects the "retweeting pattern" - in other words, the accounts that the studied media tend to retweet more regularly. By applying frequency analysis to the accounts that use this aspect the most (BBC News, Guardian Politics, Telegraph and Mail Online), it can be seen that apart from the Guardian account (which does not present a specific pattern), legacy news media retweet almost exclusively other accounts that belong to their media organization as a mode of "enhanced dissemination". When it comes to net-native media, frequency analysis shows that BuzzFeed retweets its journalists' posts, while Huffington Post does not follow a specific pattern.

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<sup>61</sup> Laura Kuenssberg Twitter account @bbclaurak, available at: <https://twitter.com/bbclaurak?lang=en-gb>, Accessed: 5 May 2017]

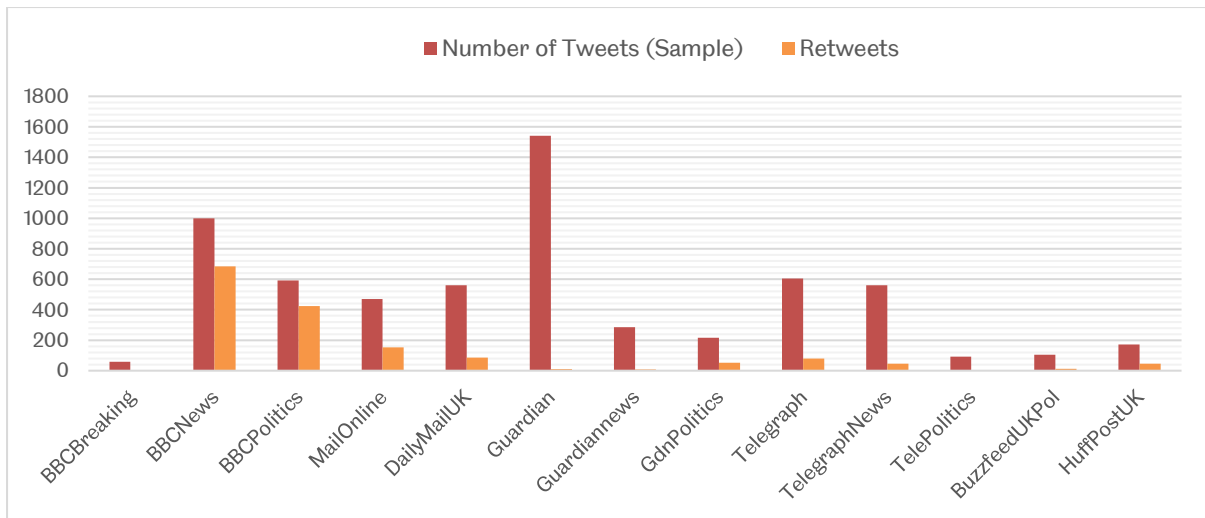


Figure 4k: Number of retweets by media organizations

Journalists tend to retweet more than the media accounts but the frequency analysis on their retweets shows a random pattern, and retweets cannot be associated to accounts that share specific characteristics, as shown by Molyneux’s work (2015) [Figure 4l]. Summarizing the employment of this feature so as to underline the communicative strategy of each account, it could be said that BBC News, BBC Politics and Polly Toynbee employ a disseminative strategy, while the rest tend to use Twitter for annunciative purposes.

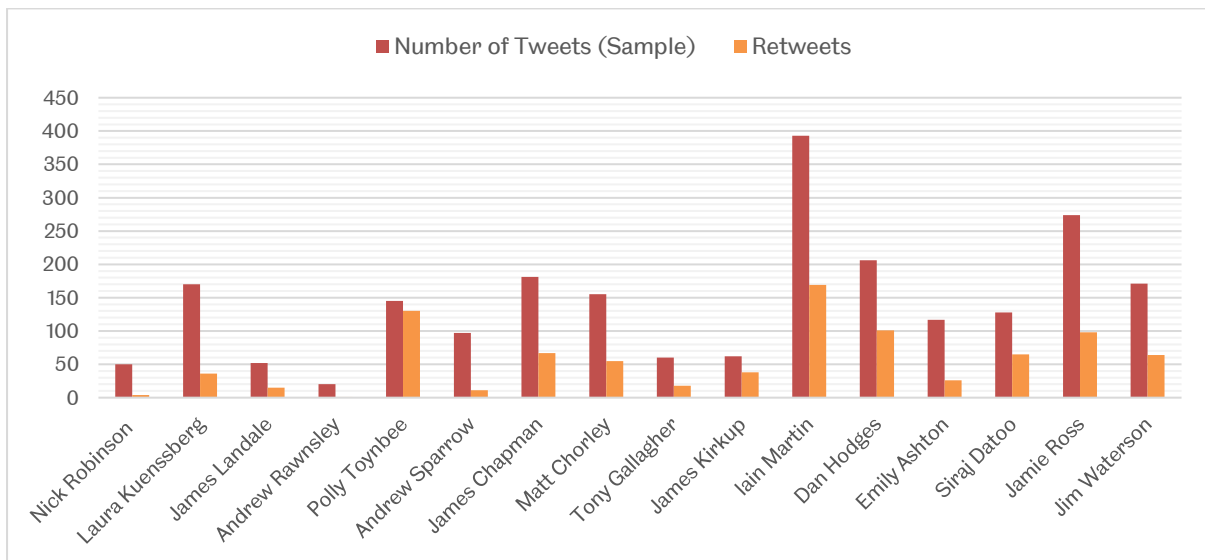


Figure 4l: Number of retweets by journalists

Retweets can also be regarded from the perspective of the audience. Engesser & Humprecht (2015) include this variable among those who show how a Twitter account is received. In other words, while the number of followers points to one’s passive audience, the number of retweets is an indicator of their active audience. It may not necessarily imply endorsement, but it further

adds to the dissemination of an account’s tweets. What is more, retweeting can be considered as a form of an indirect dialogue, even if the act is merely sharing, or as Hermida suggests: “This mechanism provides a way for publics to add another layer of meaning to the news” (2016). In other words, the choice of whom or which tweet to retweet constitutes participation and shows willingness to share an argument. The inclusion of commentary only furthers this act by adding to its participatory effect.

By considering the average number of retweets each account receives, thus measuring their active audience, it becomes apparent that BBC Breaking and Nick Robinson have the greatest impact, the latter receives almost double the number of retweets James Landale does, in second place. Interestingly this variable is not dependent either on the popularity of the account or on its activity, as shown by the figures below, which depict the relation between the number of retweets an account receives and the number of tweets it sends per day, during the studied time span [Figures 4m and 4n]. This opens questions as to the public’s criteria for engaging online with specific media or journalists. Therefore, retweeting is not directly correlated with specific online criteria that evaluate a user’s behaviour within the platform’s limits, which consequently highlights the *non-dichotomy* aspect between the digital and the non-digital world and the co-existence of users in both.

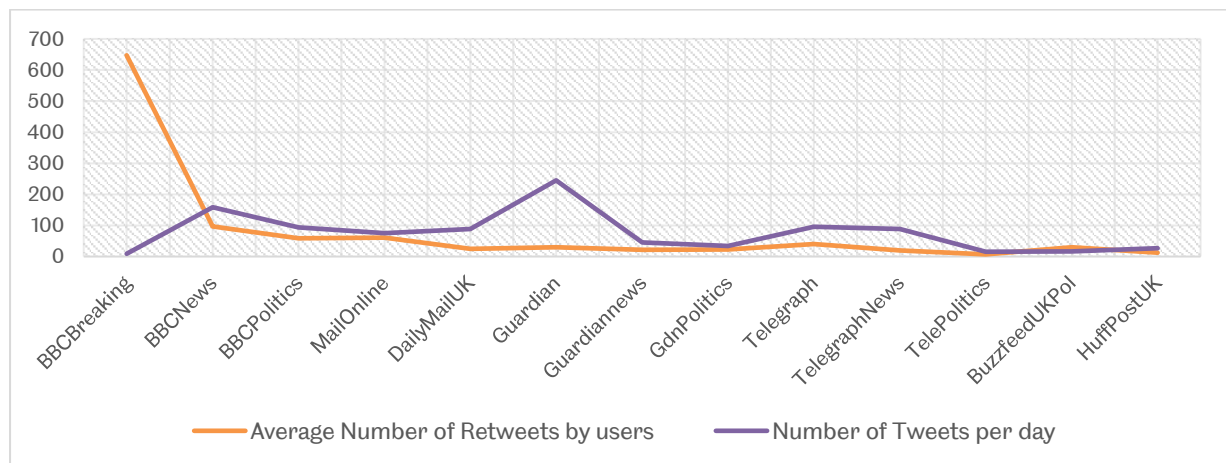


Figure 4m: The correlation between the active audience and the activity of an account (media organizations)



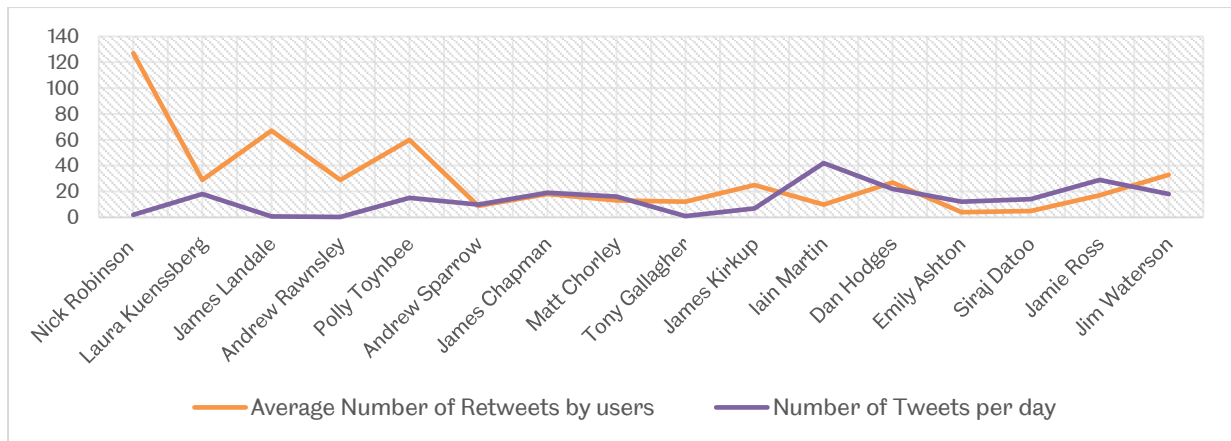


Figure 4n: The correlation between the active audience and the activity of an account (journalists)

#### 4.3.2.3. Hashtags: Media as parts of Twitter's discussions?

Moving on to hashtags, their use reflects a greater level of engagement with the platform. The goal of this feature is to enhance the dissemination of a tweet by categorizing it under a specific theme. More important, though, is that it allows users to conduct dialogue concerning this particular subject, by feeding with commentary a particular stream. This feature offers a type of structure to a form of conversation that is not strictly framed [2.2.3.3] resembling in a way the conversational arenas that formed in the coffeehouses, as described by Habermas (1989). Quantitatively, the use of hashtags is relatively low by legacy media and by BuzzFeed, while Huffington Post includes them in their tweets to a higher degree. This approach may also be related to the form of tweets, meaning that the stricter the form of the tweet, the less the space for the inclusion of an addressivity marker. These numbers are in most cases increased when the discussion is moved to General Elections [Figure 4o]. Journalists use hashtags only occasionally, regardless of the relevance of their tweets to General Elections [Figure 4p]. There are cases, though, like Nick Robinson and Dan Hodges that do not use hashtags at all.

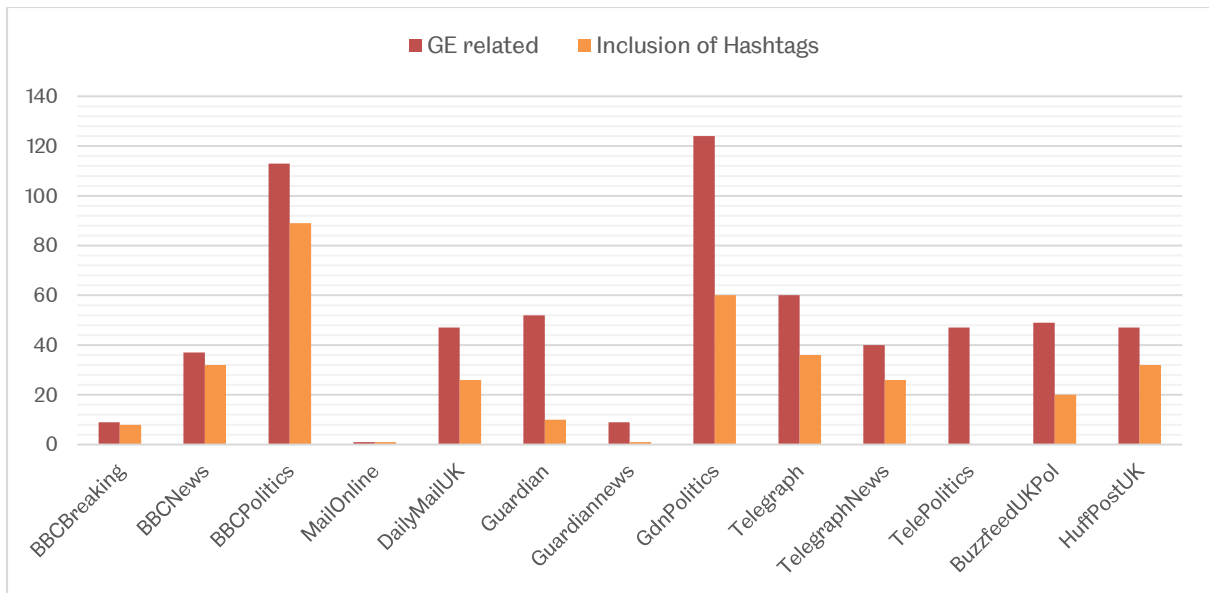


Figure 4o: Inclusion of hashtags on tweets related to General Elections 2015 (media organizations)

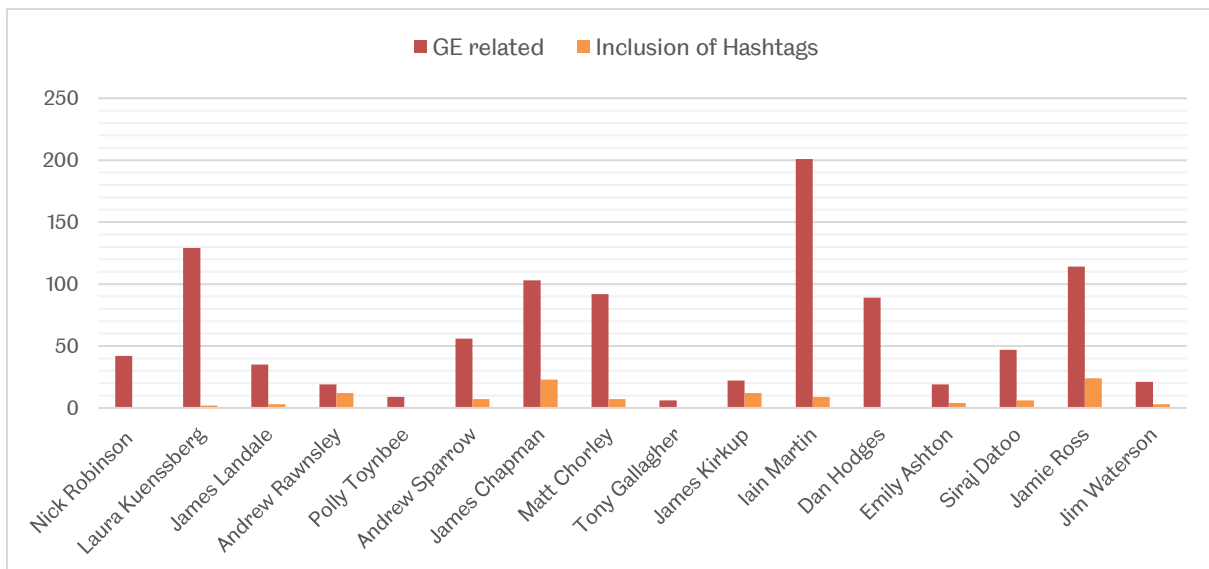


Figure 4p: Inclusion of hashtags on tweets related to General Elections 2015 (journalists)

Qualitatively, the range of the used hashtags during the electoral period is narrow, and the same combination of words appears repeatedly as much in different media accounts as in the journalistic ones. The most popular among all the participants is the #GE2015, either used alone or alongside other hashtags [Figure 4q].

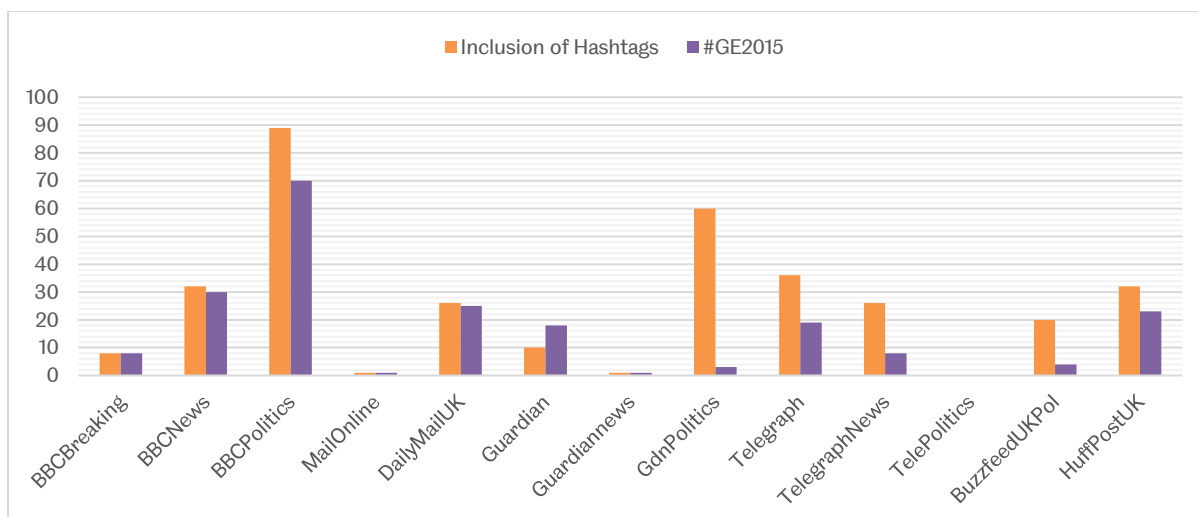


Figure 4q: Inclusion of #GE2015 hashtag (media organizations)

There is evident use of specific hashtags which suggests a willingness to participate, *to be included* in the same discussion with the rest of the users, this however contradicts the interviewees' perception on the matter [4.5]. Furthermore, in the case of BBC accounts, hashtags can also be self-referential, referring to the medium, and including a series of these kinds of hashtags: #AskBBCVine, #bbcqt, #BBCelection, #BBCDebate. The latter is quite popular on other accounts as well, showing that during the coverage of a televised event, the inclusion of a specific hashtag may lead to greater visibility for one's tweets. Guardian Politics for instance follows this practice extensively, in 88.3% of tweets, and its tweets about the elections include the hashtag #BBCDebate. What is more, it not only shows the extent of the dialogue about the debate on Twitter but it underlines the convergence of different platforms in the coverage of an event - the so-called "dual-screening" (Vaccari *et al.* 2015), where people watch the news on television (screen 1) and comment on the news on their social networking platforms (screen 2). This highlights the presence of the public as an active recipient instead of a spectator, further pointing to the process of transformation of its roles. Of the rest of the accounts, only Guardian includes a self-referential hashtag (#guardianwitness). Another distinct category is the one that includes the names of political parties, or of specific politicians, with Telegraph News and Huffington Post making greater use of them.

Arguably, the use of hashtags reflects the previous findings, according to which Twitter's addressivity markers are used to a limited extent for the purpose they have been designed - to enhance the social character of the medium. While they serve this purpose to some extent,

their use is focused on dissemination purposes, reflecting Singer’s work (2005) towards the normalization of digital modalities.

#### 4.3.2.4. Mentions, Replies and the limited discursive exchanges with other users

The last and the heaviest form of engagement with Twitter is the use of the mention sign (@) or reply. Quantitatively, evidence shows low numbers of inclusion of mentions in both media’s and journalistic tweets and subsequently, a low level of interactivity and responsiveness to Twitter’s users [Figures 4r and 4s]. The four exceptions are Iain Martin, James Chapman, Jamie Ross and Emily Ashton, who not only mention other users but engage further using direct replies as well. This variable demonstrates the measurement of the encouragement of dialogue from the media or the journalists, and as shown by the criteria presented above, it constitutes an element towards the identification of a mediated public sphere on Twitter.

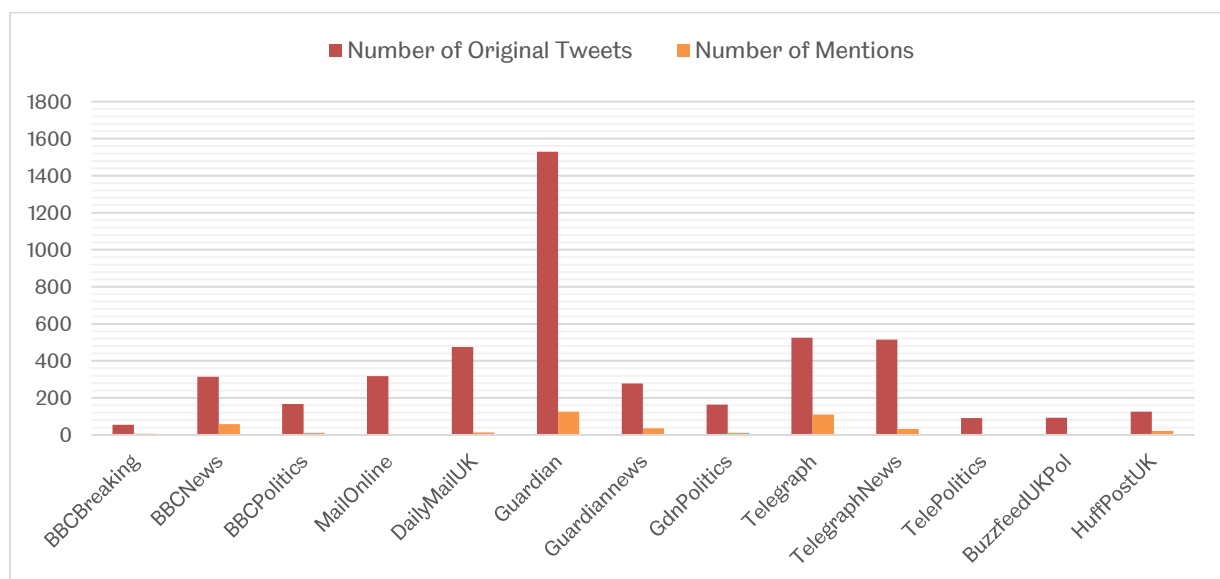


Figure 4r: Use of mentions (media organizations)

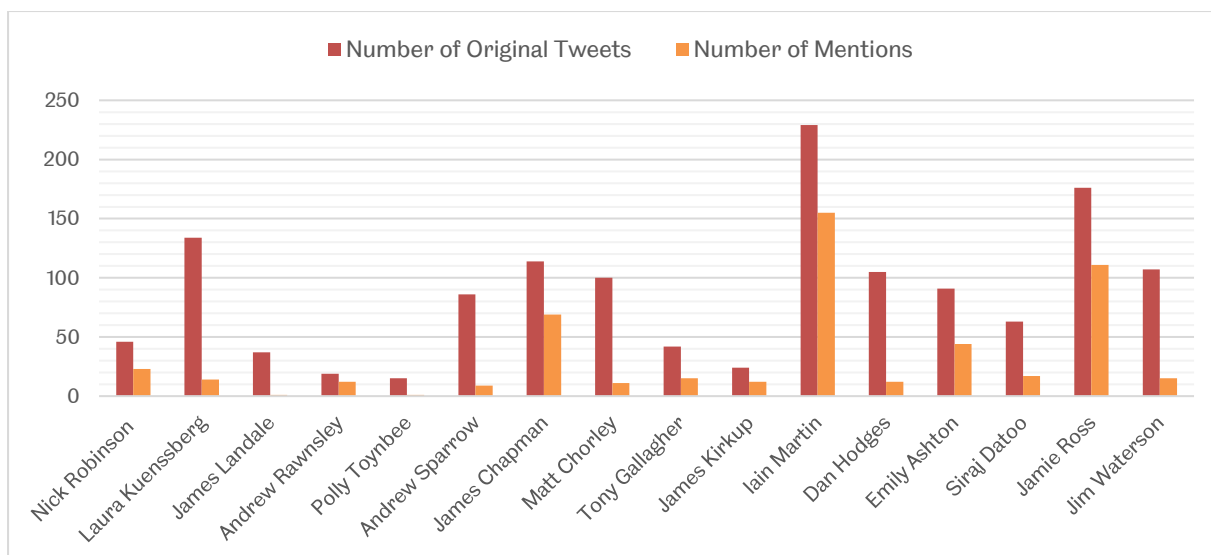


Figure 4s: Use of mentions (journalists)

In qualitative terms, textual analysis of the collected sample demonstrates a high level of interactions with other media or journalistic accounts – usually belonging to the same media organization – or with politicians. Most of them employ the *via @nameoftheaccount* format, which, except for the cases when they are accompanied by commentary, does not imply interaction but further dissemination of a tweet. Focusing on tweets related to the General Elections, legacy media follow this pattern extensively. BBC, Daily Mail, Guardian and Telegraph mention almost exclusively other accounts belonging to their organization (e.g. @BBCElectionbot, @BBCr4today, @FeMail, @GuardianWitness, @guardianworld), journalists working for the medium, and rarely politicians (e.g. David Cameron, Ed Miliband, Nigel Farage).

Whilst net-native media adopt a similar approach, journalists expand on this by either promoting themselves or by addressing journalists working for other media, usually commenting on their work. For example, Iain Martin extensively uses this feature to share articles posted on his other journalistic activity (@CapX). Drawing from Laura Kuenssberg’s account, examples that highlight promotion, include:

Should have said @MarkUrban01 and @RhodaBuchanan's exclusive on Virgin Galactic #newsnight – (@bbclaurak)

Proud to hear that @HardcashProd, me @LeeSorr and ITV have just won award for our documentary, Fashion Factories Undercover – (@bbclaurak)

Likewise, examples from James Chapman’s and Tony Gallagher’s streams, point to the second use:

'Ukip is not anti-immigration,' says @SuzanneEvans1. News to quite a lot of its supporters? Lots more Evans than Farage #UKIPManifesto - (@jameschappers)

The Tories have fallen for their own spin on Miliband. Perceptive from @IsabelHardman <http://t.co/3SryBZsfHo> via @spectator\_ch - (@Gallaghereditor)

Cameron lacks the ability to make people feel good. Excellent (and balanced) by Max Hastings <http://t.co/q2eLaEYBNG> via @MailOnline - (@Gallaghereditor)

The use of mentions and replies is quite limited, pointing again to low levels of deviation from the current journalistic norms. The *social* aspect of the platform is not exploited in full. The *social* character of the platform is normalized to fit into the media logic of media organizations, while an elitist approach emerges. Media engage in conversation with specific *actors*: politicians, journalists, other media actors. Twitter is a public space where media and journalists claim their space and to some extent manage to transform it to an “ambient news environment”. While it can be considered an “awareness system”, its conversational aspects are downgraded. Consequently, it is a space where media are present, but is it a mediated public space? How does the new form of the Habermasian “press”, disguised as “ambient journalism” (Hermida 2012: 311) act, react, encourage and promote public dialogue? Ultimately, is the “digital public sphere” model sufficient to depict the current dialogic arenas or is there a need for a new theoretical framework that can encompass the new societal needs and manifestations?

This section focuses on the journalistic side, but before attempting to respond to the questions above, a macroscopic approach is necessary to be able to add another layer to the discussion of the formatted arenas, their characteristics, the developed relationships, as well as the nature of the audience. This way their correlation, if any, with the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere would be more evident by focusing specifically on political arenas.

#### **4.4. Macro Layer Findings: Researching “Hashtagged” Exchanges**

The interaction between journalists, sources, and members of the audience on Twitter is triangulated, in the sense that there is a permanent exchange between all parties that offers “the possibility to step in and (re-)distribute, respond and comment continuously” (Broersma & Graham 2012: 404). This constant exchange occurs in multiple levels as well, across the different dialogic arenas and the various communicative layers.

The primary use of the *hashtag*, which is the addressivity marker that signifies the existence of the macro-layer, is that of a tool for researching conversations on Twitter, and at the same time it functions as an indicator for the thematic categorization of these conversations. Its existence extends however to further purposes; it could be appropriated “to articulate a counter-narrative to legacy media framing of a news event” (Hermida 2016), or as Murthy writes, Twitter is “more of a stream, which is composed by a polyphony of voices all chiming in” (2013: 4), and hashtags act as “imaginary borders” that delimit certain dialogic arenas. These arenas are open public spaces, and the aim of this part of the empirical analysis is not only to test the validity of the hypothesis that “If *Digital Networked Participation* can be traced on Twitter and if certain criteria are met, then a *Digital Public Sphere* can be formed”, but also to map these spaces in order to further identify their implications for democratic deliberation.

The starting point of the discussion is the suggested criteria [Table 4k] which can also act as parameters to be tested for the existence of the public spheres, or multiple spheres. A crucial point, though, regarding their measurement concerns the journalistic perspective of the thesis; in other words, the findings are approached in relation to journalism – how it affects and is affected by them. The reasoning is based on Habermas’ rationale in the conceptualization of the bourgeois public sphere and the subsequent refeudalization, where the press had a central role as much in its formation, as for its disintegration.

Criterion	Measurement
<b>Open network</b>	The diversity of users that participate in the discussion through the hashtags #ge2015, #ge15, based on demographics
<b>Extent</b>	The extent of the discussions over time
<b>Rational Debate</b>	Level of responsiveness by journalists & textual characteristics
<b>Topics of general concern</b>	Discussion of topics of general interest
<b>Diffusion of Information</b>	Use of tweets for informative purposes
<b>Participants, Dominance of elites</b>	Identification of the possible prominent actors through frequency analysis
<b>Enhanced role of media</b>	Identification of whether the possible prominent actors are the media

Table 4k: Transformation of Habermas’ criteria into measurable qualities (Hashtag research)

Some of the criteria presented here, for instance the discussion of topics of general interest under specific hashtags or the use of tweets for informative purposes by the journalistic actors have already been met, either identified in the discussions in the literature review, or previously in this chapter. This has been enhanced by “a subtle but meaningful change in Twitter’s interface” that “indicates a strategy that emphasises the global and public news and information, over personal and private conversation in restricted cycles” (van Dijck 2012: 340-341), highlighting also the publicness of the medium as well as its evolving emphasis on

information purposes. While the personal can find its space on the platform (in the micro-layer), in its wholeness it demonstrates the prevalence of the public nature of the conducted dialogue. In its limits, the audience - or the “networked audience” according to Marwick & boyd - develops its unique characteristics: it consists of real and potential viewers for digital content that exist within a larger social graph (2010: 129), confirmed also by the ever-increasing number of its users<sup>62</sup>. While it could be argued that Twitter is populated by a wide audience, it should not be ignored that the number of its active users mostly consists of those who are politically interested (Gotfried 2014) - an argument that is confirmed further by the findings here, showing that when it comes to the users that are more active in the stream, these are in their majority people who declare on their account their political inclination.

The three parameters presented in this chapter are the time frame, the thematic imprint of the dialogue under specific hashtags, as well as the participation of the various actors. Starting from the time frame, the collected material has been extended over 63 days, prior to and following the 2015 General Elections. Before conducting the analysis, the collected tweets were filtered to remove potential duplicates<sup>63</sup> and the final data consisted of [Table 4l]:

Hashtag	Number of Tweets
#GE15	95629
#GE2015	149287

*Table 4l: Sample (Hashtags research)*

In this material, the analysis of the metadata of the tweets demonstrate the intensity of the dialogue across the different days by highlighting those with most participation. In the macroscopic analysis the sample is consisted by tweets that cover the whole period (30 March - 31 May 2017), and thus the discussion of the findings concerns the pre-election period, the election day and the post-election period. However, further filtration of the sample through DiscoverText highlights a rise in the activity during the election day and the post-election period, as shown here in pictures 4a and 4b (below).

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<sup>62</sup> Statista.com, Twitter.com

<sup>63</sup> Using the Social Media Analytics tool DiscoverText.



Top values for: <b>created_at:</b>		
Meta value	Total	View
May 6, 2015	35640	
May 13, 2015	19007	
May 11, 2015	17820	
May 7, 2015	17325	
May 18, 2015	8300	
May 14, 2015	7563	
May 8, 2015	6336	
May 12, 2015	6100	
May 17, 2015	5959	
May 26, 2015	5769	

Pictures 4a (#GE2015)

Top values for: <b>created_at:</b>		
Meta value	Total	View
May 8, 2015	22983	
May 9, 2015	18302	
May 6, 2015	14751	
May 7, 2015	12078	
May 11, 2015	6381	
May 10, 2015	5515	
May 12, 2015	3761	
May 13, 2015	2379	
May 25, 2015	1633	
May 18, 2015	1385	

Picture 4b (#GE15)

The output of this filtration, but not the whole sample, is also depicted in figures 4t, 4u<sup>64</sup>. While the patterns reveal a diversification in posting between the two hashtags, they also show an extension of the dialogue connecting to the topic after the General Elections, on 7 May, revealing an increase in the interest the day before (May, 6) and the day after (May, 8).

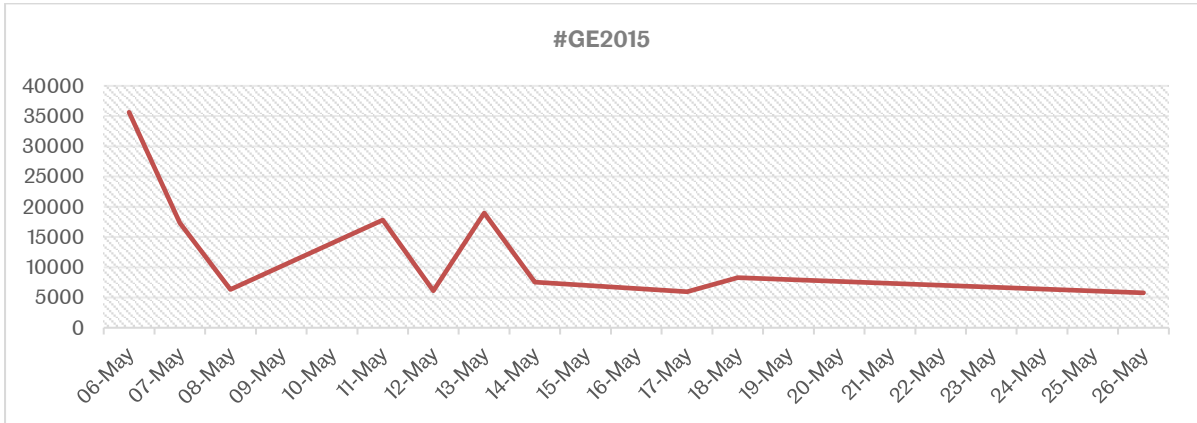


Figure 4t

<sup>64</sup> These two figures here do not represent the whole studied sample, which covers the pre-election period, the election day and the post-election period, but they depict only the filtered sample that showcase the intensity of the dialogue during specific days. In other words, it only consists a graph-depiction of pictures 4a and 4b.

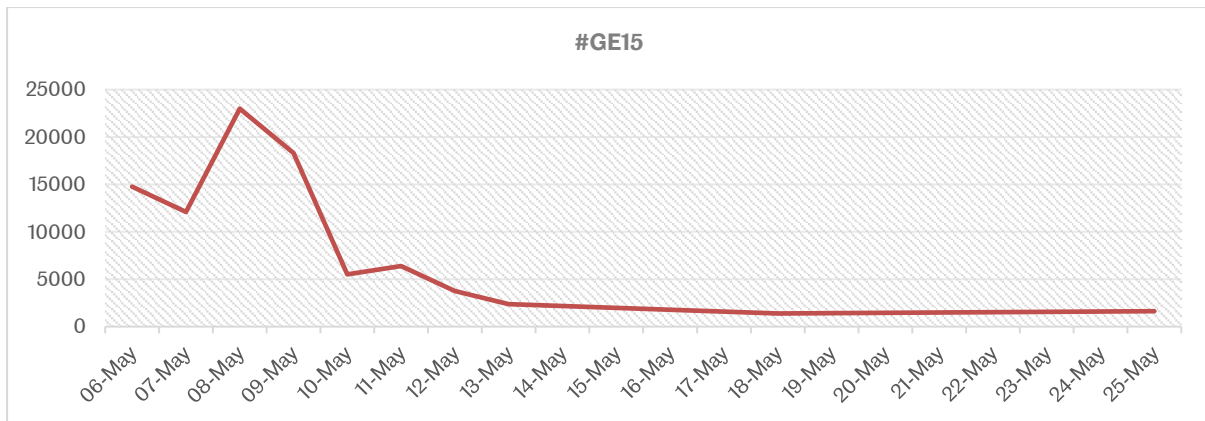


Figure 4u

These figures mirror also Jugherr’s argument on the intensity of Twitter coverage, which is proportional to the “established dramaturgy of the political campaigns” and indicates that the daily volume of political commentary rises closer to the Election Day. Accordingly, they echo the point that Twitter becomes a “digital backchannel on which the increased social attention to the campaign is mirrored by the steadily increased volume of messages” (2014: 242).

#### 4.4.1. The Discussed Topics and the Elite-focused Tweeting

Thematically, tweets included mostly words related to the General Elections, demonstrating their alignment with the discussed topic. Among them, there are often references to politicians – for instance, under the #GE2015 hashtag, David Cameron has been mentioned 4,999 times – as well as to political parties: Conservative Party has been mentioned 17,786 times, Labour Party 14,922 times, and the Scottish National Party 10,076 times. These findings point to a preference to elite-central discussions, as politicians and political parties. A great number of tweets are in the format of commentary:

24% of the voting population voted Conservative (37% of 66% turnout). Maintaining the current system is morally bankrupt politics. #GE2015

#BBC Forecasting Conservatives will finish with 331 seats! #Wow #GE2015 A huge victory for common sense.

Lots saying 'I don't even know u anymore Britain'...u clearly didnt know it before, or ud know its basically a Conservative country #GE2015

These references point back to the argument that the traditional functions of journalism, as that of bearing witness or holding to account, are no longer provided by news media solely

(Picard 2014: 278). In other words, a look at the bigger picture – the hashtagged discussions instead of media and journalistic accounts – demonstrates that users on Twitter are adopting a *journalistic* role. The use of the term *journalistic* is employed here in the sense of *citizen journalism*<sup>65</sup>, so as to describe users' willingness to provide information or criticism on the elites, on policies, and on processes like the elections. It also aims to showcase a difference with the use of Twitter by the media. In other words, this finding generates questions when juxtaposed with the disseminative use of Twitter by the *press*, as well as with the (un)skilful use of the medium. Furthering this point, while bearing in mind that this use by the audience does not necessarily translate as fruitful, beneficial or advantageous, it could be underscored that Twitter users commenting, opposing and adding their voices to Twitter's stream, so to express themselves politically, as shown by the examples here:

3) I argued beginning of April that a majority CON/LAB needed to face down SNP in House of Commons. Now CON listen to @PaulGoodmanCH #GE2015

@David\_Cameron 0 hour contracts? I'm guaranteed 0 hours, how am I meant to build a future for myself? It was easier on the dole. #ge2015

This is David Cameron-The man who forced a Hospital to open a food bank for sick children #GE2015 <http://t.co/smonN0cwww>

Journalistic actors are not included in the most popular mentioned words, apart from BBC's accounts, which are mentioned 12.458 times, and in relation to the BBC Debate, reinforcing the argument of “dual screening” (Vaccari *et al.* 2015) – or as Jugherr underlines, Twitter appears very receptive to media events, as the volume of the messages rises sharply in reaction to a scheduled event, such as the debate of the leading candidates (2014: 242). Twitter users, however, mention individual journalists as an attempt to engage in dialogue with them – without always receiving a response, as indicated previously in the non-embracement of the “reply” function by journalists:

So bored of 'news' based on predictions. It's like rolling news. Just so much tosh! @pollytoynbee #voteLabour #GE2015 #bbcdp #VoteCameronOut

Tag clouds [4a and 4b] of the most popular words reveal the existence of expressions related to the elections more broadly (like result, voting, count, coverage, win).

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<sup>65</sup> For further reference on how citizen journalism is perceived within the context of thesis, see section 2.2.3.3. Also, Blaagaard B.B. (2013), Bruns A. (2011) and Fenton (2010).

acknowledged amnestyuk analysis attack austerity bbc bbcbreaking bbcdebate bbcnews  
blog britain british cameron cameron's campaign cant commons conservative  
conservatives count coverage cuts david davidcameron day democracy east ed  
election election2015 electoral england enquiries establishment eu exit farage fight

final five following fraud front future ge15 **ge2015** ge2015bot  
generalelection gove government greens guardian hardwon heres hope houseofcommons  
itvnews justice kent lab labour labours ld leader left lib libdems live london  
londonprotest look looks lost mainstream majority media michael miliband minister mp  
mps news nhs nigel night north parliament parties party people please police  
political politics poll polling polls post protest protests proudly read reported reports  
result results retweet rights samengland scotland scottish seat seats secretary set  
skynews snp south speech support suttonnick system thanet thanks time tomorrow  
tonight tories toriesoutnow tory turnout uk ukelection ukip uklabour uppington vote  
voted votelabour voters votes voteukip voting wales watch welcome westminster win  
won wrong

Tag Cloud 4a (#GE2015)

abolishing agree ahead amazing angrysalmond austerity bbc bed believe biggest boss  
cameron campaign candidate candidates cant cent changed congratulations conservative  
conservatives count country day dear didnt dont east ed electio election england

except exit fabulous friend ge02015 **ge15** ge2015 ge2015bot  
generalelection glasgow gorbals government grayinglasgow greenparty greens heard hits  
house huge ill indyref ivotedsnp jakimccarthy jefforbited jim labour labours leader  
libdems look lords luck majority map matt1956 met miliband mp mps murphy nice  
nicolasturgeon night noise onescotland palestine party paul1kirby people petermurrell  
photo plaidcymru please politics politicshour poll proud result results rosscolquhoun  
scale scotlan scotland scotlands scottish seat seats seeing seek selfie sexysocialism  
share simpsonsqotd single **Snp** snpfop snpfriendsfopalestine song south stop success  
suddenly support swagger talking team teams thank thanks **thesnp** thirdparty  
throw time tomorrow tories toriesoutnow tory trust uk ukip uppington voice vote  
voted voters votes votesnp voting wait westminster whatever win won wonder wow  
yes yesterday youve

Tag Cloud 4b (#GE15)

Among them is the word *democracy*. Taking this as an example of political dialogue, its contextualisation presents a variety, which indicates diversity in conducted discussion: it includes tweets that criticise its functioning, commenting on the elections' result, or urging others to participate, resulting occasionally in the use of offensive wording:

Great day for democracy if you're wealthy, powerful or enjoy your volunteering at a food bank.  
#GE2015

36% of people who voted, voted Tory. That's less than a quarter of public as a whole. This is not democracy. #GE2015

Why would you think the UK a democracy when this happens? #GE2015  
<https://t.co/j5ALJSboL4>

How can we attain equality if our votes are not equal or democracy if voting system is not democratic? VOID #GE2015 https...

Look, the Tories won: it's called a democracy. I don't like it either but violence and vandalism is inexcusable. #GE2015

#UKelection #GE2015 #britishelections good luck to all candidates, families & supporters today. It's democracy in action, people decide vote

Democracy: a system of government by the whole population of a state...through elected reps. Be part of it to ensure that it works #GE2015

Hark! Champagne socialists and media luvvies still mewling about the election results. It's called democracy. You lost. Suck it up #GE2015

A closer look at these examples, reveals a discursive exchange among users who seem to direct their tweets to their perceived audience. Either when receiving direct responses, or when adding their voices to the feed, it is evident that they are considering themselves parts of a wider dialogue, a tendency that is apparent in the examples above. Following this rationale, the resulting streams show evidence of the development of a new hybrid media environment, where events are the evolving stories and which according to Papacharissi

Blend news facts with the drama of the interpersonal conversation and combine news reports with the emotionally filled and opinionated reactions to the news in a manner that makes it difficult to discern news from conversation about the news, and doing so misses the point. (Papacharissi 2015: 31-32)

It is however important that this is evident only when researching tweets that contain the same keywords, and not generally in those that use the same hashtag. Random streams, as shown later [4.4.4] demonstrate different results.

#### **4.4.2. Who is Tweeting? Vocal Actors on the Stream**

At this point, and before expanding the discussion on new forms of storytelling (Papacharissi 2016), in this section the most vocal actors in Twitter's feed are identified through frequency analysis of the collected material<sup>66</sup>. Distinguishing the first 100 in each stream, it is apparent

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<sup>66</sup> Frequency analysis has been conducted via DiscoverText and SPSS.

that streams are monopolized by the presence of bots (@ge2015bot), which were not existent at the time of the analysis. As described earlier, bots are automated information transactions (Larsson & Moe 2015: 362) and do not indicate human intervention, feeding this way the stream with automated tweets, in the following form:

ZoMyG0d: RT TheGreenParty: Tomorrow we can make our choice in #GE2015. Please RT and join us for the common good: â€¦! <http://t.co/QMX2k308KV>

PRTweetz: So GoogleUK leaves UKIP off #GE2015 #Doodle <http://t.co/PaKXqQlqqF> Conservatives UKLabour LibDems TheSâ€¦! <http://t.co/BXF2emSWB1>

The number of the posted tweets from this account is 19,985 for #GE2015 and 10,075 for #GE15, 13.4% and 10.5% respectively. The first stream is dominated by similar accounts, as the next two are two other bots, @UKElection and @Election2015, retweeting mainly random pieces of information. While the following pictures [4c, 4d] show the most vocal accounts in the stream quantitatively, an overview of the first fifty allows for further insight. It should be noted, though, that even the most active users in each stream cover only 0.3% of the dialogue, showing a significant difference from the space the bots cover.

Meta value	Total
ge2015bot	19875
UKElection	1351
Election2015	1063
ukiplover456	411
RelentPolitics	340
Neil_Eastwood77	322
TootingTories	317
BBCElectionBot	273
UKPolitics	269
mikloshvanEgan	193

Picture 4c

Meta value	Total
ge2015bot	10075
LucyGill09	317
Uppington	297
ho_ho77	219
jakimccarthy	214
LauraDickens90	177
snpbecause	158
politicsHour	156
agapanthus49	155
susan_bell1212	127

Picture 4d

On the #GE15 hashtag, a significant finding is that among the first fifty accounts, 38 belong to individual users, and from those 24 (63.2%) declare in their short biography on their Twitter page that they are interested in politics in general, or that they are supporting a political party. This mirrors Gotfried's analysis (2014), according to which Twitter attracts those who are politically interested. Another element concerns the level of anonymity: in #GE15 stream 30% of the participants do not include their photograph or a short biographical note in their

profile. This number is slightly lesser in the second stream (23%). Politicians, political parties and political actors are absent, especially those belonging to the main contestants in the 2015 General Elections. Journalists and media are almost absent, with the exception of @politicshour and @ConversationUK (on the #GE2015 hashtag). This may reflect the unsophisticated use of Twitter by an amount of media actors.

Regardless the identity of the participants on Twitter, the potential to participate is open, although this does not necessarily translate into actual participation. Putting this under the scope of democracy, the discussion returns to Green's argumentation on *spectatorship* (2010), arguing that "political voice is something that people now exercise rarely, if at all" and juxtaposes the current situation with the one during the Athenian democracy, so as to support his claim: the spectator citizen in Athens had the chance to take the position of a political actor very easily, in direct contrast with today, when it is nearly impossible for political spectators to react or respond (2010: 4). Although, Green draws on previous communication forms; on networking platforms, such as Twitter, the audience has a clear way to communicate with the speaker through the network. While, the impact of this participation is not measurable in non-digital terms, but accidental - in the sense that it may or may not affect political reality - the reactions and the responses, could be incorporated into new forms of storytelling. Here, journalistic actors can have an essential role, either by echoing these voices in their other journalistic channels off Twitter, by filtering the information and promoting important topics on the platform, or by positioning themselves in the discussion and performing their journalistic practices. Frequency analysis shows that media and journalists are not vocal in the streams, although, this is only on inspection, which indicates that they are not participating via the use of hashtags. Their popularity along with their passive and active audience - the first measured by the number of followers and the second by the number of retweets they receive - demonstrates a high degree of impact, which puts them in a central place on the platform. In terms of exploitability of the platform, their presence is not equal. Green's argument however opens another discussion - it not only underscores the confusion and differences between political expression and political participation, framed theoretically earlier in Section 2.3.4, but it also raises questions about the significance of civic awareness, which enhanced by social media (Boulianne 2016), can lead to participatory actions in digital environments.

### 4.4.3. Mapping Twitter’s Dialogic Arenas

In relation to the questions of whether there are any discursive patterns on Twitter, these could be responded to by selecting fragments<sup>67</sup> of the discussion on the platform, within the limits of a *hashtagged conversation* tweeted at the same time [Tables 4m and 4n]<sup>68</sup>. Drawing on Murthy’s point, these discussions on Twitter “are more of a stream, which is composed by a polyphony of voices all chiming in” (2013: 4), and hashtags can be seen as a way to link messages of strangers together in a new form of conversation that may be asynchronous and loosely structured. These streams, overall, highlight Twitter as a platform that encourages parallel narratives. The sequences above reflect this type of dialogue, which deviates from the conventional form of conversation where a post or a comment responds to another. The thesis problematizes with the use of the word *conversation* as it cannot be employed here in its literal sense. While the choice of the term *dialogic exchanges* partially captures the complexity of the discursive exchanges that are studied<sup>69</sup>, conversation has been chosen so as to comply with both Habermas’ definition of the public sphere and the thesis definition of the public sphere<sup>70</sup>, aiming to maintain an internal coherence.

A random sample of tweets posted with the hashtags #GE2015 and #GE15 confirms that the exchange is highly fragmented and that it lacks coherence, as shown by the typical examples and the full sequence (Appendix).

Tweet	User	Time created
I wished I could vote tomorrow - years of residency - no say over what affects me #letmevote #GE2015	josephine1060	5/8/2015 0:54
Dance Workout Videos “ Exercise Dance Beats <a href="http://t.co/AGJigV3oyx#maypac">http://t.co/AGJigV3oyx#maypac</a> #garlandshooting #ge2015 #yaztatiligelsede #kiamvp	FitnessMotivatb	5/8/2015 0:54
Put forward your arguments if you wish but don't patronise as if people can't make their own decision.#GE2015	jonhotspur88	5/8/2015 0:54

<sup>67</sup> These fragments of the discussion have been selected through random sampling from the sample of the tweets that is used for the analysis.

<sup>68</sup> Examples of this fragments are included in this subsection so as to highlight the argumentation, however due to their length, these tables are continued in Appendix A.

<sup>69</sup> Apart from the conceptual reasoning in the use of the word conversation, methodological restrictions have been taken into account, meaning the amount, the sample and the availability of data that Twitter provides. Given its API restrictions, the full capturing of chains of tweets and replies is not allowed.

<sup>70</sup> Both these definitions include the word “conversation”: Habermas refers to “a portion of the public sphere” that “comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body” (1974: 49), whereas the thesis suggests that the digital public sphere should be regarded as “one or more digital open-access arenas where individual citizens assemble by engaging in public conversation (...)” (p.123)



#GE2015 Conservatives won. It's all Thatcher's fault.	MontagueBrench	5/8/2015 0:54
Not sure i have any faith in prediction polls anymore after #GE2015 <a href="https://t.co/sTZOtVkkhL">https://t.co/sTZOtVkkhL</a>	citybeatmaria	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: alistair_lawson: OzodaM GreenJennyJones Nobody (or very few) bought this at #GE2015 & frankly it's justâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/6fwSjDKjij">http://t.co/6fwSjDKjij</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
1957AJB: Thank heavens the media didn't talk about council cuts during #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/D6yDKmopCX">http://t.co/D6yDKmopCX</a> Not that tâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/NbFSvq2crA">http://t.co/NbFSvq2crA</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
In The Wake of #indyref & #GE2015 We Need To Put The #BBC Under The Microscope To See If It Is Fit For Purpose & In Scotland's Interests	ScottieMcClue	5/8/2015 0:54
Anti-Austerity Activists Plan 'five years of protest' - #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/2x1k5DcxOm">http://t.co/2x1k5DcxOm</a> #ScrapTrident #EndAusterityNOW <a href="http://t.co/Ssfq8CF2jQ">http://t.co/Ssfq8CF2jQ</a>	AntiAusterityUK	5/8/2015 0:54
kgbbmx: Michael Gove Cabinet Card No2/30 from airdmckinstrie #tory #GE2015 #snpbecause #gove #GE15 #cabinet â€¦! <a href="http://t.co/Vcne9YgWv3">http://t.co/Vcne9YgWv3</a>	snpbecause	5/8/2015 0:54
Tired from grappling with the idea that humans are fundamentally awful. Taking my leave from caring for the foreseeable future. #GE2015	foxmakesthings	5/8/2015 0:54

Table 4m: Fragments of dialogue (continued in Appendix A)

Tweet	User	Time
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: freddiejohn1: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/sb8qDctLAR">http://t.co/sb8qDctLAR</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland â€¦!	mcalinden88	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland â€¦!	Moondog1976	5/9/2015 15:02
Do we need to purge the BBC & some of the media? Seems to me that it's pushing its own agenda down my throat not just news. #indyref #ge15	CRE8NU	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @EastLeedsNewEra: Thanet declaration times:2015: 10.30am2010: 3:17am2005: 4:44am2001: 3:33am1997: 3:12am#UKIP #Thanet #ThanetRiggâ€¦!	CarolTeague2	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland â€¦!	19LisbonBhoy67	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: htâ€¦!	Paul_WE_Ingham	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland â€¦!	pictishbeastie	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @TheRulesOrg: "...we need... to find new means of pushing neglected issues on to the political agenda." @GeorgeMonbiot <a href="http://t.co/4Wjdaâ€¦!">http://t.co/4Wjdaâ€¦!</a>	mindmedicines	5/9/2015 15:02

Table 4n: Fragments of dialogue (continued in Appendix A)

This is particularly significant when it is regarded through the prism of the second research question, as to *whether Twitter provides a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere*. The apparent fragmentation is problematic for the existence of a bourgeois type of a public sphere – however, “fragmentation of the dialogue” *per se* is a complicated topic that may be translated in positive terms as well. Comparing this aspect with the research of specific words in a “hashtagged discussion” indicates a limitation of the platform, as the use of hashtags is not the only way, as suggested by Twitter’s conventions, to categorise tweets thematically, or to explore any discursive exchanges.

A crucial question raised at this point, though, is whether it is important to trace manifestations of the Habermasian public sphere on Twitter, or whether Twitter, as part of a new media ecology, presents signs of a new form of dialogue where the press and the public (and politicians as the third actor of political communication) co-exist and co-affect each other, even if they are not engaged in *dialogic exchanges*. Subsequently, it becomes important to discuss whether Habermas’ theory should act as a typology or whether it is a concept that needs to be updated in accordance with new societal needs. In other words, Habermas put in the centre of his concept “the press” as a “unique explosive power” (1989) that nourished the debate by presenting critical reporting and by submitting political issues to critical discussion. The press was a catalyst for the circulation of information - Habermas himself referred to it as the “most eminent institution of the public sphere” (Peters 1993). Two points emerge here: the one concerns the notion of the public and the second the role of “the press”.

Starting from the public, it could be argued that it is now presented as fragmented and is present on a variety of platforms, one of which is Twitter. This argument initiates further discussion, that takes place in the next chapter, and that underlines a multitude of public sphericules. Regarding the press, though, it is essential that it has evolved greatly, making gigantic steps from the univariate form that it had during the epoch of the bourgeois public sphere. The press now is multidimensional (due to the multimodality, the hyper textuality and the interactivity); it is a complex ecology. Regardless of its nature, though, the question is whether it performs its core functions, whether it has a central role, whether it still consists of an eminent institution that can be at the core of a digital public sphere. The findings show that media, journalism or the press, still have a central role, as they manage to transform – even indirectly – these networked arenas into ambient news environments, generating at the same

time questions about their direct impact. That being said, change is occurring; even if media actors normalize to a significant extent these platforms to fit their norms and needs, practices and relationships are constantly changing. Media and journalists are experimenting with digital tools, and findings point to a minor, yet important, two-way process of normalization. All these aspects are more clearly evaluated after adding journalists' perspective that enhance our understanding and shed further light on the findings, by highlighting further the question raised in this subsection.

## 4.5. Interviews

### 4.5.1. Rationale

Respondents are coded (R1, R2, R3...) to clearly separate interview responses, and furthermore they are anonymised, complying to the request of the participants.

Occupation - Organization	Code
Journalist - BBC	R1
Journalist - BBC	R2
Journalist - Guardian	R3
Journalist - Guardian	R4
Journalist - Telegraph	R5
Journalist - BuzzFeed	R6

*Table 4o, Interview Respondents*

As interviews are incorporated as a secondary methodology and for the purpose of evaluating the findings of the Twitter research, the focus was on a) the purposes and the impact of the use of the platform in journalists' everyday practices, b) the advantages and the disadvantages of this use that may be connected with optimism or scepticism, c) the rebalancing in the relationship with the audience, and d) the ways that Twitter affects political dialogue; aiming to assess the current findings on normalization, on the circulation of news information on the platform and on public sphere manifestations in this environment, but also to evaluate whether previous findings resonate with participants' input that emanates from their first-hand experiences.

#### 4.5.2. Journalists' Perspective on Twitter

Journalists' responses reflect the findings about Twitter's popularity as a medium with journalistic dynamic; all interviewees in this research consider Twitter significant for their work. However, they saw it only as another piece of the puzzle that constitutes their journalistic routine - it is "a part of the job, but not the whole job" (R1). This use is closely related to the intensity of the news cycle; data shows that individual journalists tend to discuss the General Elections more often in their streams during the electoral period. The fact that journalists' Twitter engagement "tends to be led very much by the prevailing news cycles", especially when "political issues [are] dominating or leading the news agenda" (R5), is due to a variety of reasons: R3 for instance, points to its use as a news source especially when it is a "heavy news day" as the platform could be very useful to aggregate reactions, either from the audience, politicians, or other journalists and commentators. The aggregation of reactions, in this case related to the elections, also showcases how journalists connect social media with public opinion through three possible ways: (a) by selectively quoting individual users "to create anecdotal evidence of the public's reactions" as a form of "electronic vox pop", (b) by citing "raw quantitative statements", and (c) through *semantic polling* - a practice that involves the harvesting and the analysis of large social media datasets that provide with some kind of numeric indicator of sentiment, and as such, measures the different attitudes and reactions among citizens, and towards politicians, parties, or policies (Anstead & O'Loughlin 2015:207-209). Accordingly, R6 regards those events as an opportunity to meet people's need for information, by providing points that would initiate further commentary, such as funny pictures and jokes along with policy points, and highlights that this is a way to "get people on board" - in other words, to encourage them to participate.

This use is also intensified during the electoral period because "Twitter is basically where politics is happening now" (R6). As R6 argues "whoever dominates the news cycle on Twitter has a pretty good lead in shaping the international news cycle", further explaining that the platform can act as an "early warning system" (before the formation of the news cycle). Twitter is useful from another perspective as well: it can be considered a "noticeboard for the political community" and "a marketplace for a political journalist" (R2) and thus it becomes more significant when events with political interest are at the centre of attention. This leads back to the discussion of Shah's (2008) argument that Twitter can be regarded as a "global

marketplace” instead of a “global village”, in which news items are confronted also as products, or merely as such. Furthering this point, it was this very essence of the news that led Habermas to consider the “refeudalization” of the public sphere, according to which, the value of news is limited to that of a commodity; therefore, this research questioned whether a process similar to “refeudalization” is apparent in digital environments - in the sense that this process fulfilled the procedure of transformation by indicating that the conscience of (the previous) citizen became the conscience of a consumer (Miloni 2006). The commercial nature of social network sites and their exploitation as profit-making businesses, prompt further questions about the formatted power relationships in their environments, as much in terms of the presence of the elites as in terms of access.

Additionally, the argument that Twitter can be seen as a “noticeboard for the political community” (R2) suggests an internal communication among the members of the same community and highlights the notion of *inclusion* in specific cycles, which are based on the follower/following relationships. R2 notes this sense of community as well, saying “sometimes I would tweet in a way that it is perhaps, slightly less understandable to the general audience, knowing that the political audience would get it”, pointing to the presence of a specific audience, and to elite-dominated streams, as demonstrated by the analysis of the hashtagged discussions. Depicted in Schudson’s words “news is to a degree designed for insiders and is written almost in code (...) A news story may be a complex construction that communicates one message to one audience and, by irony and innuendo, a very different message to a more sophisticated audience” (2003: 174). This is also echoed by two of the previous findings: the fact that the most vocal participants are interested in politics or belong to a political party [4.4.2] and the limited use of the *reply* function by journalists. The latter reveals a tendency to refer only to specific groups, among which are politicians and other journalists. The strong presence of elites in the streams raises questions about the role of journalism on the platform, but also on the formation of new political cycles, which according to Chadwick (2013) are co-shaped by the presence of new real-time platforms (like Twitter), by non-elite interventions and by elite-activist interactions.

This limited use of the platform for engaging in discursive exchanges with a wider number of users underlines the use of Twitter for other purposes, mainly as a dissemination tool, reinforcing the previous findings. The effectiveness of this function is contested, especially

when it is employed as a strategy by journalists. According to R6, Twitter is not that important in terms of traffic due to the fact that it is used by “a small, incredibly intense group of individuals who read everything”, a view supported by the related statistics (Newman *et al.* 2015). It is underlined however that its significance lies in the attraction of attention in the sense that it can “reach the eyes of every journalist in the country within the hour”, it can draw interest to a news story and thus it can contribute to the news cycle as an “early warning system” by highlighting a story as *viral* (R6). Regardless of each journalist’s intentions, dissemination is recognized from the respondents as a significant action, as all of them have underlined that one of the main ways they are using the platform is by sharing an article primarily for their own work, and also to share a piece published on their organization’s website. Respondents refer to this as a way to “flag up” a new piece they have written, pointing to the discussion of the use of the medium for the enhancement of one’s personal branding (R2, R3) (Artwick 2013; Canter & Brookes 2016). It is apparent that journalists operating from their own account are actively constructing a brand of their own (Hermida 2013), aiming to strengthen the reputation of their media brand as well (Brems *et al.* 2016: 3).

Brems *et al.* (2016) in their recent study on the topic, invoke Goffman’s theatre metaphor (1959), which provides an analytical framework wherein “journalists are conceptualized as performers who are acting on a stage (i.e. Twitter) in front of an audience (i.e. other Twitter users)” (Brems *et al.* 2016: 2). In the context of Twitter, journalists are compared to the actors, having their profile pages and their tweets act as their front stage functions, and the direct messages as their back stage (2016: 4). This theory interestingly frames the discussion on personal branding, and it provides a good starting point towards a different direction: the one that concerns audience’s participation. In Goffman’s concept, people’s activities move within the scope of a dramaturgical metaphor in which the context and the location where a conversation takes place are particularly important. According to Brems *et al.* (2016: 4), “when journalists are performing in the front, i.e. in the public feed, they are aware that they have an audience, but also that they build and shape it” (2016: 4). Perceiving Twitter as performative raises questions about the nature of the audience in this metaphor. In terms of research on dialogic arenas – audiences are understood as “active recipients”, as Hermida underlines, acting when news happens and reacting when news is published (2012: 312) and thus constantly interacting with journalists – or are they spectators as conceived in the mass media

communication model (Bruns 2008: 73), or are they both? More importantly, what does this metaphor mean in the sense of a “perceived audience”?

While the discussion on the networked audience is developed further in the next section, it is essential to highlight at this point how the perception of the audience affects journalists’ everyday practices, and thus the use of Twitter. Marwick and boyd stress that on Twitter, there is a disconnect between followers and those followed, and that a tweet’s actual readers differ from the tweeter’s imagined audience (2010: 117). This reinforces the dilemmas that journalists face regarding its use, summarised by Brems *et al.* as: broadcasting information and interacting; remaining factual and being opinionated; sharing personal information and remaining professional; and promoting the self in an implicit or explicit way (2016: 13). These points are referenced by the respondents and encapsulated in the scepticism towards the effect of Twitter in their everyday work:

I think that one of the things that I have become actually conscious of is that one of the risks when you are engaging on Twitter is that you have to be careful, to make sure that you continue to write for yourself and not write for or around any perceived audience and in particular any particular perceived Twitter audience. There is a danger that you can find yourself writing things with the thought of how your article would be perceived by the sort of the Twitter community and how you will have to defend and represent your article to the Twitter community. (R5, Research Interviews)

It could be argued, though, that the notion of the *perceived audience* is not a new one - journalists have been writing for their audiences since the early years of journalism’s emergence, an aspect that it is highlighted in the relevant discussion [Section 2.3]. Even in less interactive forms, where, for instance, the public could take the form of spectator, public’s existence is presumed. Besides, as also discussed earlier, when approaching journalism as a profession, this sheds light on the notion of journalism as a “public-minded institution removed from politics and oriented toward the greater good to better serve democracy” (Waisbord 2013: 20). Highlighting these points further, Goffman’s (1959) theatre metaphor presented above additionally underscores the importance of the existence of an *audience*, which provides the reasoning for its validity; performers are not acting for themselves. However, the perception of one’s imagined audience could be false - as several of the respondents noted, the medium’s non-representativeness, underlining that Twitter users are not the electorate, but a specific audience. Interestingly, this perception of a politically interested audience, that is not the general one, is contradictory to Twitter’s actual use as a disseminative tool - if Twitter is not

a medium populated by a general audience, what motivates its use as a form of refined clickbait? While this is partially addressed by the theory of its consideration as an ambient news environment - thus an arena that news is always there for all its users *including* the politically interested - it remains contestable whether this is an effective practice that points to a holistic exploitation of the medium by media actors and the provision of an additional journalistic service to the audience.

Another aspect, linked to the changing relationship between the journalists and the public, is the blurring of boundaries between the *personal* and the *professional*, or as supported earlier, the blurring of boundaries between the personal and the professional spheres. The researched journalistic accounts present in their majority work-related tweets, which is also revealed in the interviewees' self-perception of the use of the medium. A distinction here is related to the nature of the medium; while the five respondents that work in legacy media news organizations referred to an exclusively professional use, the sixth respondent working for a net-native media, refers to the occasional expansion of this use, by chatting publicly, or posting funny material, pointing to Gulyas' research, which indicates that the media sector variable has an important effect on patterns of use (2013: 276). This use is also reflected to slightly unusual or slightly different tweets posted by R2, which is regarded as "a method that encourages people to stay with a journalist", stressing that the aim is to add value to their Twitter accounts. However, this could be related to media's guidelines, as both BBC and the Guardian "allow journalists to freely disclose their personal lives using personal accounts as long as they do not identify themselves with the news organizations", drawing a line between the perception of a personal and a professional account (Lee 2016: 120).

The hesitation and often the difficulty to participate in a wider dialogue emanates from different reasons, it may be time restrictions or the heavy journalistic schedule (R11) or the overwhelming number of tweets journalists receive. R3 refers to an amount of two to three thousand tweets daily, which makes it physically difficult to respond:

I have to try to pull myself back a little bit, in terms of my engagement since I have started using Twitter. Partly that is because just naturally your number of followers grows, your audience grows and then, physically, the needed time to respond to people becomes limited. And I mean literally physically, you sit there and suddenly, you have been on Twitter for an hour and a half without realizing it. So, you have to be a little bit careful about that. (R5, Research Interviews)



While the engagement with the audience could be subconsciously and not strategically decided by the journalistic routine it could also be a conscious choice:

I don't use Twitter to engage in too much dialogue. Because I think the danger is you end up maybe treating it like a private e-mail exchange, when it is actually it is a public thing. I am very conscious of the fact that Twitter is another form of broadcasting, the Twitter I have is through the BBC, and therefore I need to be very responsible for about what I am tweeting on it. (R2, Research Interviews)

In practical terms, the engagement in dialogue with other users is also depicted in the use of the social characteristics of the platform, in other words, its addressivity markers; Twitter's research findings show that journalists use hashtags only occasionally. Despite the theoretical works that highlight their significance as a feature that can “weave the idiosyncratic microsyntax” of the medium “into the fabric of sociality” (Van Dijck 2013: 72) interviewed journalists are sceptical. As potential reasons, noted is a lack of time (R1), which points to a non-strategic use of the medium, especially during days with a heavy political agenda. R5 and R6 underline that they do not understand the importance of the use of addressivity markers, reflecting the view that hashtags can be “aesthetically damaging” (Victor 2013) and resisting Twitter developers' ongoing efforts to encourage the use of the marker by enriching the symbol “#” with emojis – the so-called “hashflags” (Highfield 2016). R3 captured interviewees' responses in the context of his own scepticism:

I am relatively sceptical about the value of hashtags partly because I am addressing people who are following me on Twitter anyway so, I don't feel that in this way my tweet is going to get noticed. I also find that the sorts of events I tend usually to tweet about – as a budget discussion or a party conference – attract a lot of interest and a huge volume of tweets and I am not sure that people are going to read it. For example, if I am using a hashtag or creating a list based on a hashtag is just that I am getting hundreds of tweets and after minutes it is impossible to find a decent one, so I would say that I do use it, but if I am searching for a tweet on a subject, simply looking a hashtag alone in itself is not always the best way to find the decent tweet or the important one. (R3, Research Interviews)

This scepticism also affects the tonality of the conducted dialogue, which can be described as a “two-way informal relationship” (R1). R6 suggests that it is important for the audience to feel “a sense of belonging” by knowing the person behind the professional identity, underlining that users “prefer to follow individual reporters' accounts to corporate's accounts, they prefer to follow someone with a face and sense of humour, who mixes up the reporting with a bit of personality”. R6 also points to the connection between this factor and their trust towards the

professional work of a journalist – a point made by Lee who suggests that positive perception of a person is transferred to their news product, leading to an overall positive evaluation (2016: 108). This informality also results in a raised level of accountability and scrutiny, an aspect that has been pointed out by both R1 and R3 – the latter referred to the fact that they often receive direct questions regarding the topics they cover or those they do not cover, and sometimes they receive corrections on typographic or other mistakes in their articles. An additional parameter however, which has a significant effect on relationships formed but also on the attitude journalists adopt towards the medium is the one that concerns the “imagined” or “perceived” audience, in the sense that journalists target tweets or conceal and reveal information based on who they imagine is listening (Marwick & boyd 2010: 130).

A further aspect, resulting from this turn in the tonality of the dialogue and the sense of access to the journalist as a person, concerns the level of abuse. This has been discussed by several interviewees, and especially highlighted by women journalists, reflecting one of the platform’s widely recognized downsides (Warzel 2016). R1 considers the immediacy of the platform as the main reason behind the abuse, noting that “they wouldn’t do [these abusive comments] if they meet you in the street”. In agreement, R4 adds that they avoid any personal use of the platform, to minimise chances of receiving disrespectful comments. However, R4 adds that the first milestone pointing in this direction and the moment in time when the relationship with the audience really changed was when their newspaper column migrated online and people had the chance to comment in the respective section. R6 stresses the importance of misunderstanding from the audience’s perspective, where occasionally audiences cannot separate reporting from the endorsement of an opinion, stressing that, “reporting a fact is not the same as agreeing with the facts”. They also highlight the significance of another factor – that of the attention a journalist pays to abusive comments: “if he uses the platform extensively, he can end up slightly drowning beneath the sea of it, sometimes”. R5 adds another layer to the discussion by pointing out that “Twitter can mobilize a bulk of opinion and target a bulk of opinion in a quite aggressive way”, adding:

I think there is a danger on Twitter of controlling and attempting to distort the debate but putting in place a sort of unofficial (or almost unofficial) rules and restrictions of what people can and cannot say, what opinions can or cannot hold, and how they express them. I think that is something else that all of us have to be aware of and have to be careful. (R5, Research Interviews)

Respondents' scepticism extends to other aspects of the platform as well, for example, the instantaneity of the platform, which can lead to instant condemnation or appraisal of a topic without further consideration (R1), to the verification of the reported events revealing a willingness to address either official sources (R2), or to other journalists and political commentators on the platform (R3). The need for these points to be addressed is highlighted by the developers of the platform, who attempt to find ways to eliminate the presence of fake news (Jackson 2016).

Returning to the notion of the stage, Twitter is regarded as "a well-built stage [that] can be a useful tool for producing and spreading the news" (Brems *et al.* 2016: 13). In that sense, Twitter can be used as a news source, or as "huge pools of collective intelligence" (Broersma & Graham 2012: 404). This highlights another side of the audience's participation encouraged by journalists. R5 emphasises that Twitter is a "valuable newswire" that precedes other media forms, such as newspapers and their websites, in terms of news gathering, whereas R3 referred to his use of Twitter primarily as a "news source", where with the setting up of lists and news alerts, he can exploit the platform's affordances. Sources are not exclusively the audience, as he clarifies that other journalists' feeds are particularly important when he cannot attend an event or when he wants to search for additional commentary. However, he relies on the audience when an obscure event is happening as it is much easier to spot experts on Twitter. This view is also shared by R4 who argues that Twitter is a way to get news that may be unavailable otherwise. Therefore, the engagement with the audience is considered a crucial aspect of networking platforms by the interviewees, although they agree that its main importance lies in serving as an additional news-gathering tool, in the sense that it allows them to ask questions (R1) and to aggregate reactions (R3) in a way that Twitter can be regarded as a pool of "collective intelligence" (Broersma & Graham 2012: 404).

Relating those findings to the research questions, it has been argued that Twitter is a valuable resource, especially during periods with intense political interest. Either regarded as a "newswire" (R5), as a "noticeboard for the political community" (R2) or as an "early warning system" (R6), interviewed journalists highlight its importance as a medium where they can not only find newsworthy information instantly but can also aggregate reactions by a variety of actors, elites and non-elites (R3). As Anstead and O'Loughlin suggest the use of semantic polling in social media could "measure the differing attitudes and reactions among citizens"

and provide with a sense of the discursive exchanges within these platforms (2015: 209). On the matter of representativeness, they further highlight that semantic polling “allows public opinion to be conceptualised as being more than the sum of discrete preferences and instead as an on-going product of conversation, embedded in social relationships” (Anstead & O’Loughlin 2015: 215). What is more, Twitter can provide another form of broadcasting, by adding value to the reporting, feeding the stream with political commentary and up-to-date information on events in real time (R2). At the same time, it provides an arena for open dialogue, where interaction with journalists is encouraged in a way that rebalances the current relationships, demonstrating the distance from previous epochs, when participation was limited.

Although different media actors use the platform differently – news organizations, either legacy or net-native, reveal a “less skilful” use (Engesser & Humprecht 2015: 519), where engagement with the readers is still far from the norm (Hermida 2016). Journalists incorporate the platform into their practices, however they carry a scepticism and occasionally a reserved attitude towards its networking possibilities. Thus, disseminating material and promoting the brand – or the self in the case of personal accounts – are highlighted as the primary uses of the platform. This shows at the same time minimum progress from previous studies that argued that Twitter’s “full potential as a community building and engagement tool has not been developed yet” (Messner *et al.* 2011: 18; also, Armstrong & Gao 2010). While this could be a result of the overwhelming number of tweets, or the unfriendly interface which requires an experienced user to exploit its features in full (R6), or even of the structure of the streams which do not allow further filtering, media organizations, aiming to enhance their Twitter presence, make efforts to confront these issues by publishing guidelines for their employees and by encouraging them to engage further with their audience (R3). Lee’s research shows that established media outlets approach social media from both sides, as an opportunity and as a risk, and adopt an attitude that is simultaneously promotion- and prevention-focused (2016: 107). By analysing these guidelines according to these parameters, Lee found that the overall proportion of opportunity-framed instructions are smaller than a fifth of that of risk frames, although organizations like The Guardian, encourage journalists to contribute by adding their voice and acknowledge these additions (2016: 120).

The current findings, which point to limited engagement with the public, raise also questions about the extent of the break to established journalistic norms (Malik & Pfeffer 2016: 11). It could be argued that this level of engagement demonstrates the diffusion of the mass media logic in the platform, however the research also highlights that, regardless of the degree of the participation, there is a partial disruption in the “normalization” process, agreeing with Broersma and Graham’s study (2012, 2016) which develops “a cross-national typology of seven dominant reporting practices and routines of political journalists on Twitter: monitoring, networking, engaging, sourcing, publishing, promoting and branding” as all of these forms can be observed in different stages of the empirical analysis. While this repertoire is not fully echoed in the current findings, which point to a much more limited use, it is important that users’ behaviour is “to a large extent inscribed in the design of the platform” (Broersma & Graham 2016), an aspect that is not depicted in normalization theory, and as such confirms a minor yet important two-way process of normalization as supported earlier. These points, though, will be clearer in relation to arguments on the different logics within the Twitter environment.

When the discussion moves to political dialogue, it could be said that Twitter is part of a diverse environment offering open arenas for its existence. In these spaces, as ambient news environments [2.2.3.3], news information is constantly present, and the boundaries between the different actors are blurred. The public is incorporated into the various stages of the ever-changing journalistic practices that seem to slightly surpass the normalization process, adding new elements into the reporting and by attempting to adjust further – a point that becomes clearer through the insight offered by journalists. All journalists underlined that Twitter has sped up political information cycles. R3 points to a more “sparky conversation” that added volume to the reporting by including “all sorts of the political public” and provided political dialogue with a huge force, now addressed to a much wider audience. Referring to the downsides of this matter, R1 suggests that “a topic can also be dismissed or disputed before people have all the details”. R2 reinforces this, referring to news cycles with much shorter durations that include instant reactions and raise the issue of “who controls the agenda”. In their view, it is much more difficult for politicians to control the news stories. According to R5, this is due to the fact that politicians have not been able to master the platform:

Twitter is a free-flowing, spontaneous, informal sort of medium, when it is at its best and politicians have not been able to align. I don't think that they use it effectively, with restrictions of being able to frame and control the message (...) and that's why, with a few notable exceptions, politicians use of Twitter is quite dull. That said, there have been numerous examples where politicians have said things on Twitter, which have sparked debate, or you know, essentially got them into trouble and there is difficulties, so it's a medium that actually I think presents risks for politicians. (R5, Research Interviews)

Despite the skilfulness of their use of Twitter, R5 adds that the medium has allowed people, who previously had not had the opportunity to participate, to now engage and comment on the political processes. As such, it could be argued that while politicians may not be skilful users of the platform, the content of their tweets affects the daily news agenda; journalists use political actors as sources and topics of political news coverage and the public uses both in order to comment on political events or to discuss politics (Jugherr 2014: 239), or in the words of Broersma and Graham “the relationship between politics, journalism and the public changed [in the social media era] into an actual ménage a trois” (2016: 90). Accordingly, R3 considers that the dynamics have not transformed fundamentally, as political parties and legacy media still shape the public narrative. Therefore, it could be argued that the new political cycles have been affected on various levels and the analysis shows that the contemporary media ecology is diverse and complex.

The new form of storytelling, the one that evolves beyond the traditional ecologies of journalism by rendering media organizations, journalists and individual users as complex and networked social awareness systems, provides them with the power to make concrete decisions about the presentation of events (Papacharissi 2015: 28). As Papacharissi suggests “these decisions are collaboratively and organically made through practices of repetition and reduction that do not always produce a coherent narrative” (2015: 36). Twitter, however, encourages the existence of parallel narratives, all taking places in different dialogical arenas across its different communicative layers, providing an opportunity for the journalistic actors to follow these narratives.

The findings above, based on interviewees' responses, show that journalists primarily recognize this possibility and attempt to incorporate Twitter into their news gathering processes. In this sense, content on Twitter “travels to the news media and contributes to intermedia agenda-setting and agenda building” (Skogerbø *et al.* 2016: 215). Interviews also indicate that they recognize the importance of participation, not necessarily by the discursive exchanges with

them but by urging the audience to add their voices, to tell their stories from spaces within their everyday lives, to infuse the digital spaces with meaning (Papacharissi 2015: 28), to act and to react - to become active recipients that affect and are affected by real-time news. But are these prompts met by their actual use of the platform? Going back to Green and his discussion of spectatorship, he argues that political voice is something that people now exercise rarely, if at all (2010: 4). While it could be argued that Twitter findings point to audience's political expression to some extent, they do not confirm its political participation - unless, we broaden the notion of participation to include expression as well. Green also underlines that the vast majority of our political experience - either we vote or not - is not expressed through our active engagement in the decision-making processes but "rather (by) watching and listening to others who are themselves actively engaged" (2010: 4), leading the discussion to a separation between *active* and *passive engagement*. What is more, in juxtaposition with the Athenian democracy, he underlines that the spectator citizen in Athens had the chance to take the position of a political actor very easily, in direct contrast with today, when it is nearly impossible for political spectators to react, to respond directly, or even to respond at all; evidence shows that this is not the case for Twitter, in the context of this research.

Furthermore, audience's reactions to political events, which are immediate, available, and public, apart from being increasingly incorporated into traditional coverage, are "anecdotal evidence serving as an indicator of the public sentiment or as basis for ad hoc quantitative analysis of public reactions online" (Jugherr 2014: 240; Anstead & O'Loughlin 2012). Therefore, networked participation may not be manifested through the established norms of participation, or through the previously designed participatory activities as classified earlier in the taxonomy table, but might constantly underlie in the platform, which is *social* in its very nature. Considering participation has historically been a loosely defined term that encompasses different meanings, it could take different forms, leaving space for different interpretations and for adaptation to different environments [2.3.4.].

Identifying digital network participation is important in order to highlight the manifestations of digital transformation of the public sphere, although it is equally significant to map the new political arenas so as not only to observe how political dialogue is conducted in them, but to shed light on journalistic presence in these formatted political cycles. Twitter's research findings, in relation to the second research question, mirror the argument that Twitter

provides an arena where *information exchange and circulation of ideas* take place. They do not confirm, though, that Twitter encourages *debate*. Samples of Twitter streams demonstrate a type of unstructured, non-coherent dialogue.

In this context, mass media logic is intertwined with the networked one, incorporating in the coverage other modes of political messages, as the public contests positions and statements of traditional political actors and the high levels of ironic commentary (Jugherr 2012). This interconnection of logics is the one that highlights the formation of a hybrid media system (Broersma & Graham 2016: 90). While mass media logic is quite different from the networked one (which is an evolving logic based on the affordances of the networked / social media), it still exists in the process of political reporting (Broersma & Graham 2016: 91). In this system, relationships between the different actors are rebalanced, posing questions of whether and how Twitter affects politics - and journalism.

The journalistic use of Twitter has not progressed much beyond embracing processes that - as that of a dissemination or self-branding tool - date back to the early years of the platform. But the question remains: does its use need to be innovative in order to be effective? Do journalists need to engage in dialogue with the public on the platform, or are there different forms of engagement? Does the public need to participate in a conventional, previously-defined way of participation, or are different ways for raising its voice and being heard? Are democratic manifestations solid, or are they adaptable to societal changes, even when those are based on technological ones? Accordingly, is the public sphere a static concept that has reached its zenith and its nadir, or is it a conceptual framework that could be embraced for its idealistic approach and adapted as such? And lastly, is there a need for one extensive representative arena, or is its fragmentation one of the elements of the new media ecology? These are the questions that the next chapter discusses, in relation to the theoretical background developed in the literature review.

#### **4.6. Chapter Conclusion**

The chapter starts with the conceptual hypothesis of the thesis and the criteria that can define whether Twitter meets Habermas' prerequisites of the bourgeois public sphere, and subsequently, whether it could be considered as a digital public sphere, or part of it. By having



in mind these parameters, the findings of the empirical research are framed by two theories, that have been discussed previously: the normalization narrative, as conceived by Singer (2005) and further developed by Lasorsa *et al.* (2012), and the perception of Twitter as an ambient news environment (Hermida 2012). In this context, the use of Twitter by different media actors (legacy media, net-native media and journalists) is studied for a period of 63 days, during the General Elections in the United Kingdom. The analysis is divided into two parts: Twitter research and interviews. Twitter research is further divided into two subparts: accounts research that examines media and journalists' accounts (meso-layer), and hashtags research that looks into the elections' hashtags #GE2015 and #GE15 (macro-layer). In the first, several aspects are studied: the activity of the accounts, their thematic adherence to the elections' topic, the formatting of the tweets and their linguistic approaches, aiming to shed light on the journalistic use of Twitter and to respond to the first research question as to how journalistic actors use the platform to cover the elections. Likewise, and in response to the second research question, the participatory elements of the platform are analysed, meaning the use of its addressivity markers. In addition, and complimentary to this, hashtagged exchanges are examined in depth: the discussed topics, the elite-focused discourse and the vocal actors on the stream, leading to the mapping of Twitter as a synthesis of dialogic arenas. The second part of the empirical research consists of journalists' perspective on issues raised and the initial Twitter results. The findings of the empirical research highlight that journalistic use of Twitter is not as advanced as the literature review suggests, especially when it comes to the use of its participatory aspects. The perceptions of the academic discussion differ as much from the real media and journalistic activity on the platform as from the self-perceptions of the interviewed journalists. These contradictions, and the new functions of the *press* they underscore, along with the current societal and financial background, impose a new reality for the public sphere and its conceptualization. Consequently, they initiate a new discussion for the *public*, for its participatory possibilities and activity, but also for the notion of *participation per se*. All these elements that ultimately lead to the reassessment of the Habermasian theory through the lens of duality, are further discussed in the following chapter.

## 5.0. Discussion

### 5.1. The Framework and the Analytical Process

The existence of a new media ecology is underscored in the previous chapters, emphasizing the formation of new political arenas - these public spaces where new forms of political expression, engagement, and participation are developed. The causal relationship between technology and society and the interconnection between the public sphere, democracy and journalism reveal that the internal and external systemic changes have direct impact on the actors involved, either political, journalistic, or the public. These changes are occurring continuously and they transform the meaning of publicity, of the public, and of the press, highlighting their diverse digital existence that further challenges not only their democratic premise, but also Habermas' theory. This digital essence emphasises newness, which is apparent across the entire thesis, however the term *new* is contested: the adopted diachronic perspective points to normalized hybrid versions of older, transformed models. In this sense, the press as a prominent institution is in the spotlight: it is affected but it simultaneously affects the core of democracy and of the public sphere.

The questions that informed the research process, underline the conceptual diversification between the normative and the pragmatic essence of journalism, of democracy, and notably of the public sphere theory. Putting the empirical findings under the scope of the theoretical orientation of the thesis, and aiming to respond to the emerging questions, the frame broadens and highlights the need for a critical approach which is in alignment with Dahlgren's (2016) emphasis that "we need more theory, not less". Why do we need more theory? Placing this inquiry within the scope of the debate on the public sphere, it could be argued that the years since 1962, when Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was published, managed to highlight the diachronic value of the theory as a guiding map of successful deliberation, which despite its limitations, enhances our understanding of the relationship between democratic theory and the media. However, these years had also a corroding effect on the concept. This effect provides two options: the first is to heavily criticise the concept, by focusing on its lack of flexibility to adapt to different societal needs. The second is in agreement with Fraser's (1992) proposal for its reconstruction, which, by recognizing the value

of the public sphere as a conceptual framework, further suggests its reevaluation, especially with regards to the digital affordances.

Following the second direction, the reasoning of the discussion is organised around two key arguments. The first is that the public sphere concept is not a static one, on the contrary: it is flexible, open and adaptable. The second argument suggests that the focus of the interest should not be the public sphere *per se*, but its structural transformation. While the former has been at the centre of attention for a broad range of research, as the literature review has highlighted, the latter tends to be overlooked. According to this viewpoint, the significance of the Habermasian idea lies not only in why the phenomenon existed (and was later conceptualised by Habermas) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in its bourgeois form, but also why it did not exist in the same form after this period. A supporting argument in this direction comes from Habermas himself, who considers as responsible for the disintegration and the re-feudalization of his original concept as much the changes in the *press* - the prominent institution of the public sphere - as the financial and the political background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Taking these into consideration, the question that emerges here is: what if this is only a starting point? Changes are still occurring in both the media and the financial and societal sectors, and as such, continuous structural transformations of the political arenas (and of the political dialogue in these) are occurring too, in accordance with the political climate and the political circumstances of each epoch. To emphasise, it is also suggested that Habermas' aspiration was not one-dimensional - he aimed also to provide a measure for comparison of the reasons why it existed in different, less perfect, forms afterwards. By having this as a premise, the public sphere is confronted as a metaphor, that takes different forms in different societies, or in Papacharissi's words "a metaphor, which when it is materialized, may take several shapes and forms and adopt multiple incarnations" (2010: 119).

This reasoning emerged in the incorporation of the empirical findings into the theoretical thinking, as this is developed in the literature review. In its first drafts the thesis aimed to examine whether public sphere manifestations could be traced on Twitter, by highlighting its journalistic use. However, the emerging normative questions, the conceptual hypothesis, and the deep interrelation of the three essentially contested concepts of the thesis led to a divergent, yet critical path. In this, which is delineated in the present chapter, the public sphere is regarded as having a dual essence: the normative and the pragmatic. While the first

highlights the value of Habermas' work, the latter points to the need for the reconceptualization of the concept in order to align with the realistic needs of the ever-changing societies.

The chapter is organised in four subsections. After setting the scene for the discussion of the journalistic use of Twitter and its effect on the public sphere, the two constituent elements of the public sphere (depicted in the terms *public* and *sphere*) are unpacked, to highlight their significance for the understanding of the essence of the Habermasian idea [Section 5.3]. Moving on, and by regarding the public sphere through the prism of duality, the normative approach is analysed first [Section 5.4.1]. Drawing on the literature review, and by underlining the main points of Habermas' conceptualization, it raises questions over the contemporary substance of the concept. In response and building a conversation between these two sections, 5.4.2 emphasises the pragmatic public sphere, it delineates how this is formed on Twitter, and, by following the reverse process of the previous section, it poses questions for the reconstruction of the normative model. For these purposes, it relies on the hypothesis of the work here, the definition of the digital public sphere presented in Chapter 4, and draws from Fraser's criticism of the bourgeois model (1992). It also builds on the current situation of journalism in the new arenas, as this has been addressed by the empirical research; this situation is confronted as one of the causes for the current structural transformation of the public sphere, but also as the most prominent institution of the Habermasian theory diachronically [Section 5.4.2.1].

## **5.2. The journalistic use of Twitter & the Public Sphere: Setting the Scene**

The story of the journalistic use of Twitter is a story of promises. Whether fulfilled or not, the emergence of Web 2.0, and the social platforms that came with it, provided the dialogue on the democratic promise of the Internet with "a fresh wave of technological optimism" (Loader & Mercea 2011). At the same time, social platforms reinforced a polarization of debates between cyber optimists seeing technology as a revolution, and cyber pessimists doubting its emancipatory nature. While this polarization is useful to depict the extent and dynamic of such discussions, as analysed in Section 2.1.10, it is suggested here that it could be now considered as obsolete, and a techno-centric approach is much more fruitful. As Fenton argues, techno-

optimists remain “firmly wedged in the starting blocks of potential”, whereas the techno-pessimists “disregard that the Internet has modified things, often positively and productively” (2010: 14). What is more, such dichotomies are unhelpful in seeking explanations about changes in political communication (Chadwick *et al.* 2016). They are also anachronistic for another reason: social media platforms are part of the reality, and beyond any polarization, they should be regarded as influential factors.

Expanding on this, the Internet is a technology, but its significance is far from a merely technologic one. The dismissal of this deterministic scope is based on Papacharissi’s argument that technology should be considered as an architecture, and as such “is integrated to the rhythms of everyday life, serving as the environment within which the individual becomes civically enabled” (2011: 10); in other words, it is not the technology *per se* that matters, but how this technology is appropriated. Building on this argument, the thesis suggests that the physical spaces of interaction have been expanded with the provision of digital ones. Digital arenas first appeared as an *external* part of the non-digital world, and participants were trying to explore and exploit its possibilities, as shown in Section 2.2.3.1. Gradually, however, these arenas have evolved to be an *internal* part - co-existing, co-acting and co-reacting with their inhabitants. As with the non-digital world, the experience of the digital world varies too<sup>71</sup>, but its importance is reinforced by its mere existence. Whether democracy is enhanced in it or *by it* or not, the significance of this expanded global arena is that time and space restrictions are nullified, in a way that the McLuhan’s global village is partly realised and Twitter, “can be viewed as accelerating the reach of McLuhan’s global village” (Murthy 2013: 20), inasmuch as it builds connectedness, in terms of an increased awareness of those others in the *village*.

Moving the interest from whether the norms and the affordances of the digital world have an impact on democracy, to how they impact on the concept of democracy, and the ways it may be rejuvenated, the premise remains that social media platforms are arenas with equal substance to the non-digital ones. In other words, “the opportunities for citizens to *use* and *inhabit* media as a means of influencing the form and content of public discourse, are, on balance, greater than they were during the duopoly of mass broadcasting and newspapers” (Chadwick *et al.* 2016: 24). Aiming here to understand how the digital public sphere(s) is formed, the scope is narrowed to its comparison with the bourgeois model, and more importantly, to the

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<sup>71</sup> The Web Worldwide, available at <https://www.webworldwide.io/>

identification of its strengths and its weaknesses. This pushes past tracing the public sphere's potential manifestations that, due to the instantaneity of the web technologies could be extremely temporary. Fenton argues that the Internet: provides space for new voices to find expression; has enabled established communities of interest to circulate more effectively their communication and information; offered voice to alternative interpretations of news; and works perfectly as a repository of information and knowledge (2010: 14) - based on these and the additional elements that arose in the empirical research presented in Chapter 4, the remaining questions are: how are the digital arenas formed, and how do they compare to the normative typologies of the public sphere?

### **5.3. Public(s) & Sphere(s)**

A suggested way to encapsulate the different but complementary roles of the *press* and the *public* into Habermas' theory could be by breaking the term *public sphere* into its components: public and sphere, and discussing them separately at first. Without disregarding or disrespecting the original translation of the term as *publicity* and the related analysis in Section 2.1.3., the discussion at this point aims to highlight the importance of the two elements separately, and at the same time their equal conceptual gravity.

#### **5.3.1. The notion of the *sphere***

In its literal sense *sphere* could be regarded as an area of activity, interest, or expertise; as a section of society distinguished and unified by a particular characteristic or as a mediated arena. It could however be perceived metaphorically: journalism is a fundamental mediation between the individual and the community (Muhlmann 2010: 9). This reflects the argument that “journalists and media should contribute to creating the conditions of possibility for participation and deliberation by adopting the position of an institution operating in the public sphere” (Livingstone & Lund 2013: 91). In other words, it is journalism that provides an arena where the idea of a sovereign reasonable public is “nourished by the critical reporting of the press and engaged in the mutually enlightening clash of arguments” (Peters 1993: 544), revealing a conscious role of the press in these arenas.

Pointing back to the empirical research, the element of the consciousness becomes crucial - findings show that, especially when it comes to media organizations, their use of the *spheres* of dialogue (like Twitter in this case) is more automated than conscious. This could be explained by placing their automated pseudo-RSS use in the electoral period, which underlines that the democratic role of journalism within the limits of the platform is not fulfilled. Examples from Twitter data, that depict the *Headline + Link* logic, reinforce this viewpoint<sup>72</sup>:

Media Organization	Tweet
BBCPolitics	"Think about what we've done, think about what's at stake" - David Cameron in #GE2015 speech <a href="http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA">http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA</a> <a href="http://t.co/0k7HTsiB8m">http://t.co/0k7HTsiB8m</a>
BBCPolitics	Can Alistair Carmichael's election be overturned? <a href="http://t.co/Yh5AZnS0Ey">http://t.co/Yh5AZnS0Ey</a>
BBCPolitics	Highlights of Ed Miliband's interview with Russell Brand in our #GE2015 coverage <a href="http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA">http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA</a> #Milibrand <a href="http://t.co/V9drGdmyGF">http://t.co/V9drGdmyGF</a>
DailyMailUK	This is what extreme voting in the #GE2015 looks like <a href="https://t.co/U8rJv1KLMR">https://t.co/U8rJv1KLMR</a>
DailyMailUK	Mums, are you still undecided who to vote for in the #GE2015? Here are parties' childcare pledges laid bare <a href="http://t.co/uFYQPkmQ16">http://t.co/uFYQPkmQ16</a>
DailyMailUK	Prime Minister David Cameron arrives with his wife Samantha to vote in Spelsbury <a href="http://t.co/hVcJtoB5AV">http://t.co/hVcJtoB5AV</a> <a href="http://t.co/zryla4O3u5">http://t.co/zryla4O3u5</a>
GdnPolitics	Labour has one-point lead over Tories in final Guardian/ICM poll <a href="http://t.co/iTTgK6ljbO">http://t.co/iTTgK6ljbO</a> #ElectionDay
GdnPolitics	IT problems mean some voters in London and Dorset haven't been able to vote <a href="http://t.co/CdTrvjilwM">http://t.co/CdTrvjilwM</a> #GE2015
GdnPolitics	Tube staff are using cheeky messages to encourage commuters to vote. Story: <a href="http://t.co/F0DfczIONO">http://t.co/F0DfczIONO</a> <a href="https://t.co/YTp6KEdZgZ">https://t.co/YTp6KEdZgZ</a>
TelePolitics	Is it illegal to tweet how I vote? <a href="http://t.co/cVKXtd3iDK">http://t.co/cVKXtd3iDK</a>
TelePolitics	Nigel Farage: I hope future generations are proud of me when I am 'dead and gone' <a href="http://t.co/W65lmtNixh">http://t.co/W65lmtNixh</a>
TelePolitics	Miliband isn't fit to lead. It's as simple as that <a href="http://t.co/TiEiK9ORm">http://t.co/TiEiK9ORm</a>

Table 5a: Twitter feeds as pseudo-RSS feeds

### 5.3.2. The notion of the *public*

The public is a term that presents wide variations, and it originates in the Athenian democracy and the division of the public (*polis*) and private (*oikos*). The Arendtian perception of the term as everything that appears in public and “can be seen and heard by everybody and has the

<sup>72</sup> Examples here are drawn via a random sampling process from the collected material on the Election Day (7 May 2015) and from the political accounts of the four legacy media on Twitter.

widest possible publicity”, but also as the world itself “in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately own place” (Arendt 1998: 50) coincides with Habermas’ view of the term. This is simplified by Peters, who considers the public as “a sociological aggregate of viewers, readers or citizens, that excludes no one a priori and is endowed with key political and critical powers” (1993: 543), capturing in this definition Habermas’ idea of a sovereign body of citizens.

The public, and especially its perception as singular, is a long-contested term - John Dewey writes in 1927 about the *Eclipse of the public*, wondering: “What is a public? If there is a public, what are the obstacles in the way of its recognizing and articulating itself? Is the public a myth?” (1954: 123). In a more extensive approach, the public could be considered a kind of social totality, or a concrete crowd bounded by an event, or the one that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation (Warner 2005: 66). While Twitter belongs to the latter, as communication within its borders is based on the exchange of texts, the existence of a public presupposes that certain parameters are met. Warner, with regards to the last category, argues that it needs to be self-organized, and it is autotelic and temporal (2005: 66) or as Dewey notes: “In no two ages or places is there the same public” (1954: 33). This public could be changeable and unknowable, and while it is based on a relation among strangers, these are united through participation alone - in other words, participation is required, even if it is only patient or notional and not a permanent state of being (Warner 2005: 70-75). This points to a form of participation that is created by the “reflexive circulation of discourse”, meaning that the interactive character of public discourse is “through metaphors of conversation, answering and talking back” (2005: 90).

Specifying the *public* or the *publics* as active, critically engaged and a politically significant aggregation of users, the distinction with the term *audience* emerges, especially with regards to their value: in contrast to the positive signifier of the first, the latter is “denigrated as trivial, passive and individualized” (Livingstone 2005: 7). In support of this argument, Livingstone cites the works of Williams and Hartley, who respectively describe the audience as “something amorphous and indistinguishable” and “a large number of unidentifiable people, usually united by their participation in the media use” (1983: 192, 2002 also cited in Livingstone 2005: 24). She, however, refers to the “fundamentally dual character of the audience”, and drawing on McQuail’s work, she refers to an audience that is formed either “in response to the



media” or “out of independently existing forces”, showing a connection with the public (1987: 215; also cited in Livingstone 2005: 24). In addition to this, she argues that the terms “do not refer to wholly separate realities. In a thoroughly mediated world, audiences and publics, along with communities, nations, markets and crowds, are composed of the same people” (2005: 17).

Why is this distinction important for the current discussion? The public, through the lens of normativity and theorised in terms of the Habermasian public sphere, acquires a positive substance, considered as an entity that “requires a visible and open space in which to engage in rational-critical debate in order to build consensus and legitimate democratic government” (Hartley 2002; also cited in Livingstone 2005). Livingstone underlines effectively the democratic premise captured in the term public by arguing that the analysis should focus on seeking to understand how publics not only do but also should act for the benefit of democratic society (2005: 35). As Dahlgren puts it: “If publics emerge in the discursive interactions of citizens, then audiences (the position of being a member of the audience) should be seen as a moment, a step in the process of being a member of the public” (1991: 16).

The democratic public is often largely inchoate and unorganised, a tendency that has become significantly more pronounced due to the impact of technological advancements, regardless of which these were. Dewey had foreseen this impact on the conception of the public and its evolution to a diverse entity with multiple manifestations. In his 1927 work, he writes

But the machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified, and complicated the scope of the indirect consequences, have formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather a community basis, that the reluctant public cannot identify and distinguish itself (...) there are too many publics (...) (Dewey 1927, 1954: 126)

While this argument is important by itself, it becomes even more prominent, when discussed in conjunction with previous models of democratic participation. Drawing on Dewey again, he refers to Plato and his perception of a genuine state that “could hardly be larger than the number of persons capable of personal acquaintance with one another” (1954: 114). In this context, Dewey argues that the consequences of technology employed to facilitate the rapid and easy circulation of opinions and information, generated “constant and intricate interaction far beyond the limits of face-to-face communications” (1954: 114). The parallel with the Habermasian theory is telling: Habermas not only envisioned the public as a “homogeneous entity” (Coleman & Ross 2010) that interacts in restricted physical spaces, but he also points to

the impact of technology on the disintegration of this public. For him, it was the media and the rise of broadcasting that altered the public to something that could be “mounded and tamed”, posing the media as responsible for providing the public with what it needed, but also considering them as responsible for reshaping its needs (Coleman & Ross 2010: 30-33). Coleman and Ross, framing this as the “three conceptions of the public”, they regard as significant the third. In this, recent discussions, which place democratic emphasis upon hearing public voices, “letting the public in” to media spaces, and encouraging various forms of active citizenship (2010: 30-33). While this is the broader scope, the degree of its employment is contested: pointing back to the conceptual questions of the thesis, what is the respective Agora in our digital epoch? Is there a parallel that depicts effectively the core of the democratic social deliberations in ancient Athens, with means that may replace face-to-face communication or the limited number of participants? Equally, is it possible to locate a contemporary analogy for coffeehouses? How are these spaces adjusted and influenced by the contemporary social conditions?

### **5.3.3. Public(s) & Sphere(s)**

Combining again the discussed terms, public and sphere, and with a specific focus on Twitter, it could be argued that the platform is a *synthesis of arenas*, consisting of different communicative layers, where textual exchanges are taking place. Two are the key elements emerging here. The first is that Twitter is not an isolated platform, but part of a multiplicity or a sum of platforms, where people exercise new forms of sociality, meaning that they associate with each other to form social relations and societal arenas (Miller *et al.* 2016: 3). Madianou and Miller employ the term “polymedia”, an approach that highlights that none of these platforms can be properly understood if considered in isolation - the meaning of each one is relative to the others (2011; also Miller *et al.* 2016: 4), a point that highlights the contemporary complex media ecology. It also underscores the multiplicity of arenas that challenge the idea of a unified public sphere, a particularly significant challenge for the Habermasian perception of the concept, which becomes the focus of the next discussion of the chapter.

The second element concerns essentially political dialogue. Twitter is not a political social media by definition - on the contrary, it is a relatively generic channel that enables a wide range

of topical coverage, of which politics is one example (Highfield 2016: 30). Political discussions appeared more haphazardly in it and to a more diluted extent, underlining the existence of the accidental engagement - implied also in the notion of the *ambient environment* - due to the fact that political discussions are not visible to all users purely because of the sheer material and the shaped follower networks (Highfield 2016: 30). For instance, during the studied electoral period, the followers of the media and journalistic accounts were exposed to a diversity of political news, consisting either of information or commentary. This accidental exposure arguably affects their perception of the news and acts as encouragement to engage.

What is more, this understanding of Twitter stresses the importance of hashtags as a marker that would enhance the delimitation of imaginary borders of the discussions<sup>73</sup>. Bruns and Highfield refer to users which gather around and engage with hashtags as a form of an *ad hoc* public and make a distinction between short-term and long-term hashtags; in the first case the public could be regarded as *issue publics*, whereas in the second case they could be understood as kernels for the formation of parts of the public sphere (2016: 116). Either way, both these aspects point to the same question: What is media actors' role in filtering the circulated information and towards building political arenas, by exploiting the current digital modalities? Is accidental exposure an opportunity for the journalistic actors to encourage the formation of political dialogue and political deliberation, and how could they exploit this factor?

Even though Twitter is not a political platform, the personal and the political are not mutually exclusive. This may make even more difficult to discern the conducted political dialogue; however, it reinforces the notion of the awareness system. This interlinking between the personal and the political, which is encouraged by the social media norms, could be seen in the discussed topics, the framing and the presentation of these topics, as well as on how the messages are tailored to the individuals (Highfield 2016: 15), to point back to the discussion of the perceived audience. Highfield notes, on this, that the overlap between the personal and the political shows that the political could emerge out of non-political discussions or, in other words, "politics emerge out of the presentation of the mundane" (2016: 39).

This argument could be linked with the Arendtian perception of the intersection between the social and the political realms, which is apparent in the modern world. Drawing on Aristotle's

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<sup>73</sup> Considering them as such, rationalizes their choice as research material, despite the apparent limitation of not including every discussion related to the case study, namely the British General Elections of 2015.

*zoon politikon* (political animal) (2006), Arendt justifies her consideration of the man as by nature political, that is social - the political cannot exist without the presence of the latter (1998: 23). This argument, though, underlines another significant argument: that the blurred boundaries between the *private* and the *public* that exist predominantly in current societies, highlight a difference as much with the Athenian Democracy, as with the public sphere theory. At first, the citizen had a dual existence: his own (*idion*) and the communal (*koinon*) - his private life and his political one (*bios politikos*) (Arendt 1998: 24) - later, social, financial and cultural changes formulated the dual existence of the new identity of the citizen: as a human *homme* being among others and as a property owner (*bourgeois*), even though he did not assume political functions right away (Miloni 2006), as explained in Section 2.1.4. Despite these differences, a similarity of these models to the contemporary ones emerged through empirical research: participants in the streams (delimited by the hashtags #GE2015 and #GE15) are politically interested, declaring on their account their political inclination. Drawing from the findings and the 100 most vocal actors in the Twitter stream<sup>74</sup>, 38 belong to individual users, and from those 24 (63.2%) declare in their short biography on their Twitter page that they are interested in politics in general, or that they are supporting a political party, a percentage that (within the limitations of the study) signifies the adherence of the users on the platform to political matters, resembling the Habermasian coffeehouses.

Focusing on the arena formatted by the researched hashtags, the collected data reveal that coverage on Twitter is proportional to the established dramaturgy of political events - in this case during Election Day, but also the days before and after this. The majority of the tweets demonstrate that the users' posts align with the discussed topic, however, there is an evident focus on elites. Even though the presence of political and media actors is almost non-existent (none of them is included among the most vocal actors in the hashtagged streams), non-elite users refer extensively to them. Research results show for example that during the two-month period there are often references to politicians and political actors: for instance, under the #GE2015 hashtag, David Cameron was mentioned 4,999 times, Conservative Party was mentioned 17,786 times, Labour Party 14,922 times, and the Scottish National Party 10,076 times. They also underline that media actors are mentioned less often, especially when it comes to media organizations. As an exception, BBC and the reference to its accounts (which are

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<sup>74</sup> In this case, the stream is delimited by the hashtag #GE15

mentioned 12.458 times) is linked to the televised BBC Debate, echoing the argument on the notion of *polymedia*, and subsequently of publics (in plural), that co-exist and co-act simultaneously in digital and non-digital environments.

The argument on politically interested users, along with the thematic and the elite-focused tweeting, lead to a comparison with the Habermasian perception of the public sphere and its bourgeois manifestation: Habermas considered as prominent themes of discussion the current affairs, including also an elite-focusing discussion. He however, expected that through deliberation, participants would be able to reach informed decisions, or to affect the decision making process, which is not apparent in the case studied in this research. In other words, while political discussions on the platform are extended, they do not have a direct impact on decision-making processes. This finding indicates also that the opportunities for social media users to contribute to new spaces for political commentary do not necessarily mean that traditional power relations are completely and irreversibly altered” (Highfield 2016: 79).

At the same time, it is also connected with another finding of the empirical work: users on Twitter adopt a *journalistic* role, which is incorporated into their political expressions on the platform. They may not deliberate towards decision-making, and the beneficial value of this action could be contested based on arguments related to the authenticity of their presented viewpoints, however it is important to stress, as Picard puts it, that the traditional functions of journalism, as that of bearing witness or holding to account, are no longer provided by news media solely, but it expanded to the audiences (2014: 278). Furthermore, this argument also provides a point of comparison with the diffuse disseminative role of the researched media and journalistic accounts. While journalistic tweets are rather monochromatic, in the case of the users’ tweets, these present a wider palette of approaches. Political commentary is the most widespread, as shown both in Chapter 4, and in the examples here:

Jim Murphy hit the nail on the head. It's not about losing seats, it's about facing another 5 years of a govt lacking compassion. #GE2015

Pretty snipey speech from @JimForScotland. The #SNP beat you Jim, voters made their choice. Show a little class. Nice close though.#GE2015

What happened to the opinion polls? They were a bit out #GE2015 <http://t.co/E2hkOySWap>

Seems a lot of people value their wealth over their health #GE2015

#GE2015 "The public gets what the public wants" The Jam

Was this when Labour failed its nerve? Will Keegan 2013 - This austerity U-turn by Ed Balls is a mistake <http://t.co/97mQAzR530> #GE2015

Next time round, let's all remember to ignore the opinion polls #GE2015

Interestingly, the sample of the tweets indicates that the users consider themselves as part of a wider deliberative community, they direct their postings to their perceived audience, and they anticipate a response. An additional finding here, that should not be underestimated, is the extensive presence of bots, which in the research sample monopolised the feeds.

Twitter encourages parallel narratives and within its environments; formatted discussions demonstrate a significant amount of posts coming from users. Whether this constitutes *participation* in political dialogue is a crucial point to be discussed, but it should be mentioned first that parts of the conducted conversations show that they are highly fragmented. As the results<sup>75</sup> reveal, they also lack any kind of coherence as the table here also shows:

Tweet	User
What would the result be if it were a French system where you vote for the actual candidate? Curious? #GE2015	HPExpertNorwich
.@rowenamason @sjcoltrane It's a victory for rhetoric over substance #GE2015	BCollier2012
Want to understand the amazing outcome of #GE2015? @FT coverage free to read here: <a href="http://t.co/z0cNqcVG0S">http://t.co/z0cNqcVG0S</a> and here: <a href="http://t.co/BnNyA1hSFN">http://t.co/BnNyA1hSFN</a>	Ed_Crooks
Henry got me laughing this morning! #OpinionRoom #GE2015 #GayUk #EqualityForAll #LGBT #ExitPolls #DecisionTime <a href="https://t.co/OtFFe90uhc">https://t.co/OtFFe90uhc</a>	SnowAndBeach
As I predicted a #GE2015 disaster for Labour, but v. pleased to see that our excellent Exeter MP @BenPBradshaw still in office. Well done.	antbruceking
Miliband out, I'm thinking maybe Jurgen Kloppe to replace him? Pellegrini? #GE2015	tom_rucky
haha! farage lost! right, lib dems destroyed, ukip fucked, snp takeover for scotland... really, england, what were you THINKING?! #GE2015 ?	PoisonPopcorn
@EricaJayneAlden @craigrevhorwood least you will be Woking .. #GE2015 #Tories	zsharman
Turned off all #GE2015 and listening to Coastal Love EP by Home. Quickly realise I cannot chair dance because of pulled muscle moving boxes.	MRadclyffe
Sums up the election really. #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/rvD0L8NtrE">http://t.co/rvD0L8NtrE</a>	Blackadder345
Jim Murphy hit the nail on the head. It's not about losing seats, it's about facing another 5 years of a govt lacking compassion. #GE2015	GETtoasted

<sup>75</sup> Similar findings have been presented in Section 4.4.3 (Mapping Twitter's Dialogic Arenas) and highlight the fragmentation of the dialogue (that is delimited by the hashtag #GE2015). The sample presented here is collected via random sampling. The process is similar to the one followed in Chapter 4.

I'll leave this here...Ed Milli-bland #GE2015 #Labour	war_chief82
The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. #GE2015	sophhskii
My family (fireman, carer, social worker and student nurse) are obviously thrilled by the election results #GE2015 #doomed	MrLaurenGray

Table 5b: Fragmentation of the dialogue

Tweeting by having in mind a perceived audience leads users to infuse events with a meaning of an evolving story, where news reports are blended with opinionated and emotionally filled reactions, which makes it difficult to discern news from conversations about news (Papacharissi 2015: 31-32). This new essence of political dialogue points to the formation of new political cycles, which

Are composed of multiple, loosely coupled individuals, groups, sites, and temporal instances of interaction involving diverse yet highly interdependent news creators and media technologies that plug and unplug themselves from the news-making process, often in real time (Chadwick 2013: 64)

Drawing on Chadwick, his model of these political information cycles as “complex assemblages”, is based on three axes; the first concerns the integration of non-elite actors, meaning the integration of information from the online realm. The second concerns the orchestration of real-time coverage, during and immediately after the event, and the last rather crucial point is the implication of different actors in the production of news, showing that these new cycles offer opportunities for non-elites to affect news production through “timely interventions and sometimes direct, one-to-one, micro-level interactions with professional journalists” (2013: 89). The empirical research of the thesis echoes these points: Twitter’s political information cycles during the elections are real-time, and with interventions from the non-elite actors, and interactions. However, the value of these interventions could not be measured, and as discussed before, neither could the impact of users’ participation in the production stage of journalistic practices. This is also mirrored in Brants’ and de Haan’s work, who argue that journalists feel a discomfort and ambivalence when positioned *vis-à-vis* with the public. According to the authors, this is reflected in two areas:

First, there seems to be some unease at incorporating interactive instruments within journalistic processes. Whether it is unease about opening up to and coming clean with the public, or the unfamiliarity of various types of interactive instruments such as website forums, the cases illustrate that the cultural shift taking place within media organizations

is somewhat lagging behind rapid technological advancements. Second, journalists are uncertain in their coming to terms with their own role. (Brants & de Haan 2010: 425)

#### **5.3.4. Audience(s) and Public(s): Spectatorship or Participation?**

In relation to the second research question which inquires whether Twitter provides a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place as a digital public sphere, the findings presented in Chapter 4 demonstrate that Twitter provides an arena where *information exchange* and *circulation of ideas* take place. They do not confirm, though, that Twitter encourages *debate*, presenting an initial diversification of Fraser's (1990) definition, according to which the public sphere is a place where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society and where political opinion can be formed. Based on this finding, but also on discussion of the (non) inclusion of the public into the journalistic processes, the form that the public has in the new mediated arenas is questioned. Not only because there is no evidence of deliberation that may or may not lead to the formation of public opinion, but also because the latter is not measurable within these circumstances, meaning the multiplicity of layers and platforms.

The combined findings of the empirical research presented above indicate that the public participates in political dialogue, and in journalistic processes, but not in the conventional and expected way. It acts when the news is happening, by being a significant news source for the journalists, and it reacts when the news is published, by being a crucial disseminator tool. Either by retweeting, commenting or posting specific thematic tweets using the appropriate hashtags, the public has a dual impact: the users feed the ambient news environment with their inputs and they also direct the agenda-setting. This way of participating is not depicted in a coherent, structured, rationalised dialogue, but Twitter feed, constituted by parallel narratives, emerges more as "a stream, which is composed by a polyphony of voices all chiming in" (Murthy 2013: 4). The questions are: Do the reactions and the responses, when incorporated into the new forms of storytelling, constitute participation? Could they be considered as essential parts, that journalists could use either by echoing these voices in their other journalistic channels off Twitter, by filtering information and promoting important topics on



the platform, or by positioning themselves in the discussion and performing their journalistic practices? Could they act as opinion-leaders in their networks and thus be *participating*?

The response to these questions is based upon the definition of *participation* and its inclusiveness. For instance, by combining Green's argument on spectatorship (2010) and Goffman's perception of the theatre metaphor, it could be argued that the public is a *spectator* - it however differs from both the spectator citizen in ancient Athens, who had the chance to take the position of a political actor very easily and the spectator in the mass communication models that had not had the chance to form a response or a reaction. On Twitter, the citizen has a clear way to communicate with the speaker through the network, although and very importantly, in a non-measurable way - meaning that it *may* have an impact, but it also *may not*. As such, where this action coincides with that of spectatorship is the difficulty of citizens to transform themselves into political actors, or to have direct impact through this in political decision-making. It is suggested that Hermida's term of *active recipient* depicts accurately the relation of the public with the news in a generic way, but when it comes to political dialogue, this role differs: the adoption of social media highlights them mostly as "reactionary platforms" where "social media users are political media omnivores, consuming mainstream and alternative sources alike and engaging with different contexts on newer platforms" (Highfield 2016: 82).

The emphasis on the reactionary element indicates that the mental weight-scale leans towards the second component of the term - the *reception* is more evident than the *action* - a point that is further highlighted by the wide use of the platform for disseminative purposes. Could this be considered as mere spectatorship? If the role of the public is considered as that of a *spectator*, then the participatory premise of social media platforms is dismissed entirely and this is not the result that emerges out of the current findings which point to *some* degree of participation. Spectatorship, though, could be confronted as a form of *passive engagement* (Green 2010). Furthering this argument to include the reactionary functions that depict the *social* character of the social media platforms and the findings of the research, this thesis suggests the employment of the term *enhanced spectatorship*, which could be placed, on a scale of participation, between the active recipient and the mere spectator, and which relies on the accidental exposure that is implied by the ambient news environment argumentation but also on the accidental engagement of the users in the hashtagged exchanges.

Spectatorship could be seen from another perspective too: Jodi Dean, referring to the Internet in general, develops her notion of the communicative capitalism, a political-economic formation in which there is talk without response, in which “the very practices associated with governance by the people consolidate and support the most brutal inequities of corporate-controlled capitalism” (2009: 23). In this environment, three fantasies flourish: the fantasy of abundance, of wholeness, and of participation. Focusing on the latter, she argues that people treat their contribution to circulating content as communicative action, and they believe that they are active and making a difference through simplistic acts, like commenting on a blog or in her words “they turn efforts at political engagement into contributions to the circulation of content” (2009: 31-32). While Dean’s theory of communicative capitalism sheds light on a current manifestation of the neoliberalist era, a point that is taken into account in the relevant discussion of the current structural transformation of the public sphere, is her perception that the Internet could be considered as rather nihilistic - as for instance its consideration as an empty signifier - based on the argument that her work dates back to before the explosion of the social media platforms. What is more, it also relies on her note that

The promise of participation (...) it was and remains a deeper, underlying fantasy wherein technology covers over our impotence and supports a vision of ourselves as active political participants. A particular technological innovation becomes a screen upon which all sorts of fantasies of political action are projected. (Dean 2009: 36)

The technological determinism argumentation presented in Section 2.1.10, along with the journalistic use of the platform for activist purposes detailed in Section 2.2.3.3, do not refute entirely her point but underline its hyperbolic sense.

### **5.3.5. Reassessing Participation: The Need for an Expanded Definition**

Reassessing the discussion of what counts as participation, is primarily a definitional matter. Returning to the related analysis from the literature review in Section 2.3.3, defining political participation is a difficult task (Milbrath 1965; Parry 1972; Whiteley 2014; Hooghe *et al.* 2014; Theocharis 2015) as “any definition of political participation is inevitably tendentious and contestable” (Parry *et al.* 1992) or loose (van Deth 2014: 351). However, this thesis suggests the employment of an expanded definition of political participation that takes into account the

networking sites. The argument for this proposal relies on the discussion above, but also on enhanced spectatorship - a term that accounts for *some action*, even if it is reactionary. It also relies on Kantian theory: this is depicted in Kant's view that the true place of rational politics, is not "immediate action, but action *put on display*", meaning that "the actors enter politics by becoming both actors observed (...) and spectators observing other actors" (cited in Muhlmann 2010: 53). This role of the spectators is not one that should be undermined, as Kant believed that "the spectator had the advantage over the actors of being able to discover a meaning in the course taken by events, a meaning that the actors ignored, by reason of the distance and disinterestedness" (Muhlmann 2010: 54).

The foundation for the reasoning of this suggestion relies, though, on the Aristotelian perception of political life (*bios politikos*). As Arendt explains, this is constituted by action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*). Aristotle's further conception of the man as a "political animal" (*zoon politikon*) but also as a "rational animal" (*zoon logon echon*), highlights the importance of the speech as a form of political action (Aristotle 2006). In Arendt's words

Speech and action were considered to be coeval and coequal, of the same rank and the same kind; and this originality meant not only that most political action (...) is indeed transacted in words, but more fundamentally that finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information or communication they may convey, is action. (Arendt 1998: 26)

The parallel with ancient Athens (despite its limitations) offers an interesting view of the ideal form of political participation, and it highlights the interconnection of political expression with political participation. Bridging the gap with the digital networked participation presented in Section 2.3, it could be argued that this mode of participation in the current public sphere(s) could be a synthesis of the *lexis* and the *praxis*. The findings, especially in the case of the hashtagged exchanges, where the broader arena is studied, indicate the presence of *lexis*. When it comes to *praxis*, though, this is limited, and most importantly, without apparent political impact on the decision-making process (for instance, on voting). However, indirect impact of news sourcing that affect the journalistic product, as well as the dissemination of the news that affect the agenda-setting, is *still* impact - hence, a form of participation. To return to Green, and his argument on the "plebiscitary" form of democratic participation and engagement, this does not prioritise speech and dialogue over other forms of expression, as for instance are the power of public gaze, the act of looking, the politicians' never-ending public exposure (2010: 156; also

Steel 2016: 43). Steel writes that Green in his work aims to understand the realistic expectations of what we understand political participation to be (2016: 43), and as such it should not be narrowed.

The expanded definition of political participation highlights the need to move from strictly conventional forms of deliberation, as these rarely involve the wider public and are instead largely confined to an elite few (Steel 2016: 44). It also underlines the need to exploit the technologic developments that do not so far act in a revolutionary or entirely transformative way. The thesis argues that this move largely depends on journalism, agreeing with Livingstone and Lund, who write that media institutions should contribute to “the constitution of a civic republic by actively engaging the public in production of news and current affairs by creating a public sphere around each institution as part of the disperse institutional sites of the new governance structures” (2013: 92). In a similar vein, it also agrees with Dahlgren, who underlines that media, and journalism as part of it, are central agents in the shaping of publics, by taking into account their specific socio-economic traits and contingencies, by not confronting them as collectives of “talking heads”, and by providing shared interpretive frameworks (1991: 15). Their role should deviate from the reduction of politics to communicative acts, and from what Dean describes in her work:

Media circulate and extend information about an issue or an event, amplifying its affect and seemingly its significance. This amplification draws in more media, more commentary and opinion, more parody and comic relief, more attachment to communicative capitalism’s information and entertainment networks such the knot of feedback and enjoyment itself operates as (and in place of) the political issue or event (...) and the problem or is issue is neglected, left to continue along its course, undeflected and unchanging despite the massive amount of interest and energy it has generated. (2009: 32)

However, it could be argued that the coin has two sides: on platforms like Twitter, events become news due to the instant dissemination, repetition, commentary and filtering of what is happening and its presentation through lived experiences, opinion and emotion (Hermida 2016). Furthering this significant role, media and journalism have to provide the public with a sense of belonging - drawing parallels with Muhlmann’s idea of reading the paper as a *mise au monde*, meaning the action that places the individual within a totality that is greater than the individual, and at the same time provides an experience of political belonging (2010: 9). Equally, and by providing these aspects, journalism can centralise its role as the mediator

between the state and the public, and provide political arenas that encourage different forms of deliberation. Whether these arena(s) are public sphere(s) remains a question to be responded to in the last section of this chapter. In this, it argues that the public sphere is not a pragmatic situation, an applicable-to-all societies model, but a guiding map of successful deliberation, which despite its limitations offers a solid basis. As such, it is approached from two perspectives, the normative and the pragmatic. While the first aims to delineate the bourgeois model, the expectations it poses for the following models, and the reasons why those are different, the latter describes the pragmatic situation. Based on the argument that the ever-changing societies lead to ongoing structural transformations of the public sphere, it suggests the reconceptualization of the concept for the digital environments.

## **5.4. The dual public sphere(s): Normative and Pragmatic**

### **5.4.1. The Normative Approach**

The normative approach to the public sphere points to the bourgeois type of the concept, as this is analysed in the literature review [Section 2.1.4]. The historical circumstances and especially the maturation of capitalism with its transition from its early phase to its mercantilist one, transformed the political and the social order as much with the privatization of the process of the economic reproduction as with the explosion of the press as a power that intervened between the previous feudal powers that imposed the values of hierarchy, tradition and respect for authority (Habermas 1989; McKee 2005). These led to the gradual formation of the new *public*, part of which was the new stratum of bourgeois people, who assumed their dual identity as both humans and property owners. This public was gathering in social spaces, where it discussed public affairs and organised itself against state power, whilst it manifested itself as the *subject* instead of the *subjectum*, as the contracting opponent rather than the recipient of commands (Habermas 1996: 81).

These social spaces (*coffeehouses*), accompanied by the organs of information and public debate - in other words, the newspapers and the journals - were the embodiment of the Habermasian idea; they provided arenas for the conduct of political dialogue between private people, and they acted as a sphere which mediated between the state and society. The principles upon

which this sphere organised consisted of a variety of norms and modes of behaviour that include aspects of general accessibility, the elimination of all privileges in its limits, and the discovery of general norms and rational legitimations (Habermas 1974: 50).

There are, though, two other, rather significant, prerequisites that guaranteed the functioning of the bourgeois public sphere: publicity, in the sense of openness and access where *the public* is considered as the sovereign body of citizens (Peters 1993: 544), and people's public use of their reason (*Raisonnement*). Both these initiated this thesis' parallel with the Athenian Democracy, where the *coffeehouses* could be considered as a form of Agora and where *Raisonnement* as the equivalent of Plato's dialectics, as two forms that consider dialogue as the ultimate form of political expression, and simultaneously, the ultimate form of participation in decision-making processes.

This parallel initiated the conceptual inquiries of the research, however, what makes it important at this stage is that both the bourgeois public sphere and this model of democracy, existed rather briefly in specific societies where specific criteria were met, and both respectively are the normative, ideal perceptions of the theories they foment. Furthering this, the variety of the societal backgrounds and the societal functionalities indicate that by definition the Habermasian concept is not applicable to all societies as a model. This highlights the argument of the present research that the public sphere concept should not be regarded as a fixed model, successful once; despite its limitations, it should be confronted as a flexible, open and adaptable guiding map of effective deliberation. It could be argued that in a way "Habermas first examines the bourgeois public sphere by elucidating the historical circumstances which make it possible and eventually, also impossible" (Dahlgren 1991: 7). The different conditions impose the form that the concept takes: the maturation of capitalism led to the bourgeois public sphere, and the increasing case of interventionism in commerce led to the undermining of the foundations of the public sphere at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, which is the current form of the public sphere? The response should be sought in the contemporary socio-economic context, or as Dahlgren puts it: "History is not static, and the public sphere in the contemporary situation is conditioned by other historical circumstances and is imbued with other potentialities" (1991: 2).

Analysing the extent of the adaptation of the current spheres of dialogue to the bourgeois model provides a way to understand how well these contemporary spheres are functioning. Why is this important? As Dahlgren notes: “how well the public sphere functions become a concrete manifestation of society’s democratic character and thus in a sense the most immediately visible indicator of our admittedly imperfect democracies” (1991: 2). Accordingly, and with regards to the Athenian democracy, the discussion is similar; this model of democracy provides a measure of comparison for subsequent democracies, however it can only act as an ideal type and not as a model that contemporary democracies could fit into. This argument has a dual implication - on the one hand, it points to the refusal of extensive hopes towards the democratic dynamic of the Internet, as is expressed by techno-optimists; arguments like the one expressed by Brants that “if the openness of the Internet can overcome the limits of elitist and dominating participation, then the Internet could be even better than Athenian Agora” could be considered as rather hyperbolic, as the historical framework makes this comparison impossible. On the other hand, it underscores the perception of democracy as a negotiable abstraction, “reified singularly by each society” (Papacharissi 2011: 11), which has been wrongfully treated as a static concept; the link with the public sphere here is telling. The conceptual question raised in this context, as to whether the new digital public spaces could be considered as a contemporary Agora or as the contemporary (digital) Habermasian coffeehouses, takes another form here: to what extent the digital arenas comply with the ideal types of arenas of successful deliberation? Likewise, which is the role of the press in this compliance? If the “burgeoning public sphere of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries had shaped the normative core of journalism” (Steel 2016: 35), to what extent does journalism functions today in accordance with the normative expectations?

The delineation of the pragmatic public sphere sheds light on the contemporary societal conditions that these arenas are formed on, however the premise highlighted by the current section is that the public sphere should be understood “as an analytic category, a conceptual device which, while pointing to a specific social phenomenon, can also aid us in analysing the phenomenon” (Dahlgren 1991: 2). The need to move attention to the realistic public sphere emerges from the argument that Habermas not only examines the public sphere to underline the historical circumstances that made the bourgeois model possible, but also those that made it eventually impossible (Dahlgren 1991: 7).

### 5.4.2. The Pragmatic Approach

The evolution of the public sphere across the centuries reveals the respective societal background; as the circumstances of the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to the formation of the normative type of public sphere, the conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries led to its disintegration - the decline of the public sphere is a result of the neo-mercantilist policies that transformed western societies (Habermas 1989). In this context, the role of the press was downgraded. As Dahlgren notes, “journalism’s critical role in the wake of advertising, entertainment, and public relations becomes mute. Public opinion is no longer a process of rational discourse but the result of publicity and social engineering of the media” (1991: 5). In Habermas’ words, in this era “critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity” (1989: 177-178).

Drawing on this, if Habermas’ goal was to recount the changes that publicity has been subject to, from the feudal society of medieval authorities until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Miloni 2006), then the obvious question arising here is: which is the case for publicity and for the public sphere after this period? Does the structural transformation of the public sphere occur only once? Habermas himself disregarded the effect of the Internet on the public sphere (Rasmussen 2008) as the related discussion in Section 2.1.10 shows, however his reasoning for the refeudalization of the public sphere, caused by the changes in the financial and political background, only suggests that this process is ongoing - changes to these sectors are continuously occurring.

Expanding on this reasoning, this thesis proposes that it is not “the structural transformation of the public sphere” as Habermas initially suggests, but the “ongoing structural transformations of the public sphere”. The choice of the word *ongoing*, instead of *digital*, is justified by arguments around technological determinism, and by the online/offline non-dichotomy. However, for the current structural transformation of political arenas, there are digital opportunities and challenges that respectively move them closer or further from the normative type. Equally, and with regards to the other two key concepts of the thesis, the *press* is moved closer or further from its normative expectations, and democracy from the Athenian paradigm. Arguably, the ongoing structural transformation of the public sphere(s) is depicted in journalism as well: if Habermas’ aim was to recount the changes in publicity, semantic changes to publicity are evident in journalism’s manifestations on Twitter today. It should be noted here that the term *structural* indicates that the process in delineating the present



pragmatic public sphere comes through a brief reference to the contemporary political and financial setting, but also through the depiction of how the *press* is functioning in this context. As such, the defining structural transformations that affect the formation of the (digital) public sphere(s) occur as much in the media ecology and its relationship to the public sphere, as in the political and financial setting.

With regards to the first, the movement from face-to-face communities and from Plato's perception of the state as one that could "hardly be larger than the number of persons capable of personal acquaintance with one another" (Dewey 1954: 114) towards a global village, that employs characteristics of a global marketplace, indicates that technology and its effect on journalism are particularly important to understanding how the public sphere(s) is formed, but also how the public(s) is involved. What this research underscores is that the contemporary *press* deviates to a great extent from the Habermasian one - the multiplicity of arenas underlines the existence of a complex media ecology with a variety of characteristics. While this argument echoes the one about the 19th century press (Chalaby 1989), it suggests that this media ecology is much more diverse, complex and widened than ever before, and dominated by the polymedia logic. Consequently, it involves a variety of implications of the current power relations, which are imposed by the political (and financial) framework. Unpacking these two elements, the role of the *press*, or in other words the current state of journalism is discussed first.

#### **5.4.2.1. Factor I: Journalism on Twitter**

##### **Normalization of Twitter**

Drawing on the findings, it could be argued that the narrative of the journalistic use of Twitter coincides with the narrative of normalization. Having Singer's work on the normalization of political blogs (2005) as a paradigm, and its further testing of political journalists on Twitter (Lasorsa *et al.* 2012) as a basis, the current research echoes the results of the latter: normalization is apparent on this platform, even though it is displayed to a smaller degree and with only a slight two-way direction. The details, presented in Chapter 4, provide a holistic image of the journalistic use of Twitter, but at the same time they provide us with the material

for the comparative analysis of the perceived use of the platform as described in the literature review – the actual use by the studied media during the general election as underscored by the empirical research, and the self-perceptions of the interviewed journalists of the journalistic use of the platform, as detailed in the conducted interviews.

Before proceeding with this part of the discussion, a parenthesis regarding the contribution of the present thesis to the *normalization narrative* is necessary. Mirroring the results from these previous studies, the present empirical inquiry and the updated data it contributes, underscores a stability of the previous results, despite the rapid development of the social media platforms. The findings also demonstrate an unusual stagnancy in the journalistic use of the platform, especially when this is compared with the broader use and evolution of Twitter. Furthermore, an additional argument, suggested in this work, is that the normalization of the blogs, and by extension of the micro-blogs, is not an unexpected outcome but a *natural consequence* of the progression of the web. Returning to the non-dichotomy argumentation above, the transition of the web from an *external* part of the physical world to an *internal* part, which provides an environment that includes both the digital and the non-digital spaces and encourages the co-existing, co-acting and co-reacting of their inhabitants, indicate that any form of normalization of the practices should have been expected.

The findings of the current empirical inquiry offer a supportive example which demonstrates that there is no correlation between the passive and active audience of a media or a journalistic account and the frequency of their posts. In other words, the fact that the activity of an account on Twitter is unrelated to its popularity or the number of retweets it receives by the users, not only underlines media and journalists' dual existence as professionals whose work has an impact on both environments, but also reinforces the point of a *dialogue among platforms*. Furthermore, as the textual analysis of the tweets reveals, journalists' linguistic approach represents the journalistic pattern of the media they work for offering an additional indicator in the relation between the two environments. Reinforcing this point, the challenging of the phrasing of the process of the realization of online forms of journalism as *migration* (Singer 2005) is suggested here: is online journalism, journalism that migrated online? It could be argued that the specific wording encompasses a permanent essence and based on the non-dichotomy point it could be supported that there is a movement between the two worlds, and between the different arenas, of which Twitter constitutes only a part - thus, migration does not

accurately depict this realization process. It could also be argued that this is further illustrated in the interviewees' perception of Twitter as another piece of the puzzle that constitutes their journalistic routine, as "a part of the job, but not the whole job".

### **Perceptions, self-perceptions and reality**

The second layer of analysis of the journalistic use of Twitter here suggests its examination through three dimensions: the one that emerges from the related literature (*perceptions*), the one that is highlighted by the empirical research on the platform (*reality*), and the one described by the interviewees (*self-perceptions*). Having covered the first part in Section 2.2.3.3, and the second in Chapter 4, the interest now focuses on their comparative analysis.

Twitter research indicates that the use of the platform during the General Elections is *normalized* to a considerable extent, however this use is neither innovative nor, to quote Fenton, one that could take "journalism in new heights" (2010: 10). While Twitter, in its life-span, has evolved and become ingrained in users' everyday practices and news experience (Newman 2015), its use by the media has not evolved equally. In quantitative terms, both media organizations and journalists recognize Twitter's gravity as part of the new media ecologies, however this is not depicted in qualitative terms.

The collected material, especially that sourced from mainstream media, shows that accounts adopt a generic mode, covering a great diversity of news that makes their filtering extremely challenging, and reinforces the scepticism towards the platform, which is that the overwhelming number of tweets discourages their filtering (Mills *et al.* 2007). The popular *Headline + Link* form of the tweets among the media organizations, both mainstream and net-native, mirrors the dominance of shovelware on the feed, acting as a pseudo-RSS feed with the sole purpose of enhancing the traffic on media's webpages. While it could be an exaggeration to consider news offer on Twitter as *parasitic* (Bardoel 2002: 503), the importance of this news offer could be contested in terms of the purpose of its existence, that seems to be narrowed to a *refined version of clickbait*. The linguistic approach emphasises this further: it points to a conventional use of the platform in the coverage of the elections, when Twitter is used only as a dissemination tool. While a diversification is apparent when it comes to journalists, mostly agreeing with Canter's distinction of a traditional function of the platform for media

organizations and a social one for journalists, the low degree of interaction indicates that the journalistic use is not entirely social, but rather semi-social.

This is also depicted in the participatory elements of the platform, which are employed in a very low degree by both the journalists and the media accounts. Twitter's addressivity markers are not used for the purpose they are designed for, meaning to enhance the social, in its literal sense, character of the platform. The social aspect of Twitter is not exploited in full, and it is normalized to fit into the previous media logic. The downgraded conversational aspects do not confirm neither their role as "the socio-informatic backbone of Twitter" (Papacharissi 2014: 36), nor their theoretical goal to "contribute to a conversational ecology in which conversations are composed of a public interplay of voices that give rise to an emotional sense of shared conversational context" (boyd *et al.* 2010: 1), presenting direct and significant differences with the related literature. Furthering this, it could be argued that the dynamic of these uses for journalistic purposes tends to be overestimated in the related academic scholarship. What is more, putting these factors, into the narrative of normalization, the empirical data confirm Singer's point "(...) it is still about vertical communication, from journalist to user, rather than horizontal communication that positions the journalist as a participant in a conversation" (2005: 192).

The several parameters of the Twitter research of the media and journalists' accounts, despite some minor differences, confirm the same pattern - a medium that acts as an additional way to promote the journalistic product, or to attract more audience, revealing a resemblance with what Dimitrakopoulou and Siapera suggest when writing about the first years of the web when "media organizations tried to find out how they could possibly exploit financially the web, without gaining a certain autonomy but by functioning as a support to their existent offline presence" (2012: 31-32). This use does not constitute a paradox, but underscores the diffuse market logic as the main element of a global marketplace, the main characteristic of which is refined clickbait.

The final contribution for the assessment of the journalistic use of the medium emerges from the interviews with the journalists (*self-perceptions*). Twitter is recognized as a significant element of their everyday work, and despite the enthusiasm that is apparent at the beginning of their conversation, scepticism emerges out of the respondents' thoughts in the discursive process. In relation to the previous discussion, a response that stands out concerns Twitter's role as "a

noticeboard for the political community and a marketplace for the political journalist”, highlighting the gravity of the market logic within the platform. The encouragement of the media organizations of their journalists to participate on Twitter, depicted in the respective guidelines, however, the scepticism here is disguised as hesitation: these guidelines reveal that the overall proportion of opportunity-framed instructions are smaller than a fifth of that of risk-framed ones (Lee 2016).

Journalists underline their active presence on the platform, especially during periods with high political interest as the electoral ones, however their total activity during the researched time-frame mirrors the argument that Twitter is only one part of the puzzle. Of particular significance and related to the normalization narrative, is their perception of the platform as a news source or as an opportunity to meet people’s need for information - Singer (2005) refers to this, with regards to blogs, as the traditional gatekeeper role. On Twitter, this role is extremely challenged, not only because it is a part of a multiplicity of platforms, but also because within its limits the information is diffused in various levels and communicative layers. Furthermore, the networked gatekeeping challenges the hierarchical construction of journalism and affects what stories are elevated (Hermida 2016).

Furthermore, the openness and the instantaneity of Twitter has affected two key aspects of gatekeeping: sourcing and verification (Hermida 2013: 302) - both have been mentioned by journalists. Interviewees’ consideration of the platform as primarily a “valuable newswire”, a news source, an “early warning system” or a reactions aggregator, reveals that “journalists are shifting the definition of the gatekeeping away from story selection and toward news judgement” as a form of *augmented filtering*. Arguably, though, this demonstrates that gatekeeping remains a primary function. In Brants and de Haan’s words

Journalists still regard their gatekeeping role as of paramount importance. A dialogue with the public is generated in the first phase of the news production process, when issues are selected and formulated. Here, the audience’s contributions are requested and appreciated. In the second phase of the production process, that of news construction and interpretation, the public returns to the receiving end and journalistic principles become important again. (Brants & de Haan 2010: 426)

Confronting the audience primarily as a news source, confirms also what research on Twitter demonstrated: there is a very limited use of the platform for discursive exchange with the users. According to the journalists, there are several different reasons for this: the time restrictions;

the heavy schedule; the great volume of tweets; the abusive commentary; the instant and inconsiderate reactions. This is also depicted in the low use of Twitter's addressivity markers, which however is a conscious choice. Either considered as "aesthetically damaging" or of no importance, this use and this perception is in direct contrast to the related literature, that invests a significant amount of thinking to their contribution in the formation of sociality into the platform - or to quote Van Dijck, the hashtags are regarded as a feature that can "weave the idiosyncratic microsyntax of the medium into the fabric of sociality" (2013: 72).

The unwillingness of journalists to engage in dialogue echoes the theatre metaphor, in which Twitter is regarded as a virtual stage. From its various implications, particularly important here is the role of the audience and the *perceived* audience. However, a crucial point here is in accordance with the academic discussion: journalists consider their perceived audience as highly significant, reaching even a point of referring to potential "self-censoring writing" by having in mind the reactions of the Twitter community. Connecting this with the discussion of personal branding, while there is no direct mention of the importance of the medium as a dissemination tool - showing a clash between the *actual use* of the platform and its *perception* - there is a reference to the construction of a positive image, that emerges from the mixing of the personal with the professional. Despite the negative essence that the notion of branding may have due to the implied commodification of the journalistic product, the incorporation of personal elements, of humour, and of professional opinion is regarded by the journalists as a way of enhancing the audience's sense of belonging and at the same time a way of building a relationship of trust, that may lead to the positive evaluation of their work, as Lee argues (2016: 108).

An essential addition to this discussion is the significance of the linguistic choices. Livingstone and Lund argue that journalism could be effective in their encouragement of the public discourse by inviting it through the choice of specific expression, but also by "translating key issues and concerns of the public into a language that is intelligible to the political administrative complex" (2013: 91) - by breaking, in other words, the linguistic boundaries that impose a distance between the other two actors in the system, the politicians and the public. It becomes evident, though, that in the case of the studied journalists this is not confirmed.

These points indicate another essential difference with the literature, that of the pressing question of whether journalists should participate in the “messy mixture of personal and professional in social media” or if they should maintain their professional standards and use Twitter as simply another arena for publication (Rogstad 2014: 688), which is responded, even indirectly. Personal could be professional and *vice versa*, in the sense that the motive signifies the use; while it is helpful to recognize the difference between the traditional and social function of Twitter by media organizations and the journalists (Canter 2014), the categorization of journalists with regards to their enthusiasm (Hedman 2016) or the extent of the personal material they share, may not depict the reality.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Summarizing these, a comparative analysis of the results across these three parts of the empirical research shows that there are areas where the perceptions, the self-perceptions and the real use of Twitter coincide, but there are also areas of disagreement. The examined parameters of the comparison are evident in all three parts of the research; however, the degree of emphasis is different. Drawing on these combined results, they reinforce the argument that Twitter is an ambient news environment, where ambient journalism flourishes. The platform is “an awareness system that offers diverse means to collect, communicate share and display news and information serving different purposes. The system is always-on, but also works on different levels of engagement (...)” - simplistically, it is a system that enables citizens to maintain a mental model of news and events around them (Hermida 2010: 301).

Returning to the narrative of normalization, the inter-winding of both worlds is further highlighted by the comparative analysis: practices and processes of the offline world are transferred to the online, whereas at the same time, a slight transfer of the online norms is apparent in the form of two-way normalization. The first is depicted in the *conventional* way the platform is used. The observed pseudo-RSS feed with the sole purpose of circulating the already published journalistic material is disregarded by the interviewed journalists, who despite their scepticism, refer to the embracement of the medium in their news practices. In other words, while the academic discussion emphasises the interactive elements and the high participatory potential, the analysis of the collected data from both parts of the research reveals that these

are used only rarely. On this basis, it could be concluded that the journalistic use of Twitter in the context of the current research is not innovative.

Focusing on participation, the analysis of the tweets demonstrates that it is either downgraded to a one-way approach from the media actors without a dialogic exchange, or it is confronted as a narrow contribution that relies mostly on *reaction* and less on *action*. Arguably, this indicates a *change* on the journalistic practices, as the audience's role, even a news-source or as a disseminator, implies participation. However, through the analysis of the tweets it becomes obvious that the attempt to approach the audience does not confirm the co-creation of content or the collaborative filtering that is encapsulated by Bruns' *produser* term (Papacharissi 2014: 34). Further research confirms that "only a fraction of journalists turns to Twitter to solicit information and involve users in the co-creation of the news" (Cozma and Chen 2013; Hermida 2013; Hermida 2016). Interestingly, this perception of audience's participation - as one that contributes to the reporting with unfiltered material, or the one that is expected to react - is apparent even in parts of the interviews that refer to a dialogue. For instance, drawing on the discussion as to how Twitter affects politics, the response that Twitter leads to a more "sparky conversation" is complimented by the explanation that the added volume of reporting that is enhanced by the tweets, can reach a wider audience, implying that *conversation* here is not employed in its literal form, but in a more abstract one.

Interviews, though, point to another element too: that of the indirect effect of the audience on the agenda-setting, which is extensively directed by the political commentary on platforms. As Highfield notes, "social media users have the potential to reshape agendas and information flows - at an individual level and within groups at least, even if not completely altering a large-scale public agenda" (2016: 78), in a way that content on Twitter travels to the news media and contributes to "intermedia agenda-setting and agenda-building" (Skogerbø *et al.* 2016: 215). Acting as opinion-leaders in their networks, social media users source information and commentary, and by investing in the power of sharing they engage with politics and they become aware of the issues shared by others (Highfield 2016: 78).

Juxtaposing the results from the different parts of the research, two tendencies emerge. When it comes to media, Twitter is used as an RSS-feed without any sign of interaction. When the discussion moves to journalists, though, the traditional, non-interactive, awkward use is



differentiated - not to a great extent, but still it differs. The results show that journalists are sceptic, but at the same time more open to new practices, even though the two-way normalization leans toward them shaping the way they use the platform rather than the opposite. Their hesitation is not unjustified: the diachronic perspective on the notion of professionalism may provide a response to whether they are reserved about embracing the public as part of their work routine. Their pursuit of professionalization, which started in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was a long process and fed an even longer debate (Conboy 2013). This professionalism that emphasises “the ability of a field or a practice to settle boundaries and avoid intrusion from external actors” (Waisbord 2013: 11) becomes more critical at a time when external pressures, such as the technological and economic developments, change the daily journalistic practices and the division of labour in media companies. Witschge and Nygren put it rather eloquently, arguing “the internal return to professional values” happens “when the profession is under pressure from the outside”, as “two sides of the same coin” (2009: 57), pointing to the issue of prevalence, which is linked to the normative expectations, and at the same time to the degree that professionalism is challenged by the current technological developments.

However, it could be argued that the inclusion in the journalistic processes is not the same as the inclusion in the public dialogue, and media’s role in the public sphere does not necessarily translate into a relationship defined by the audience’s participation in the journalistic job. In other words, journalistic actors could realise their role in the public sphere as envisioned by Habermas without including the audience in the journalistic role. This could happen by providing an arena of open dialogue or a space for deliberation, where they would have a central role in the circulation of ideas, in the distribution of information, and in the fuelling of the debate, and where they would serve to facilitate the communicative links between the two other actors, the public and political ones (Dahlgren 2005: 148; Steel 2012: 46). Platforms like Twitter offer a ground for the fulfilment of this potential, for the three actors to co-exist in an arena where public political dialogue could be conducted. What this section highlights is the journalistic activity on the platform, which when later compared to the Habermasian press could show how the present arenas are formed in comparison to the bourgeois concept. The three different angles adopted here, along with the comparison among the actions of the media actors, the perceptions of these, and their self-perceptions, shed light on the different dimensions of the journalistic use of Twitter, and provide a more comprehensive image.

Focusing mainly on journalists, since the media’s use of Twitter is rather indifferent, and with regards to political dialogue, a summary of this comparison is presented in the table below. The indicator for the comparison is the degree of emphasis:

Parameters	Degree of Emphasis		
	Perceptions <sup>76</sup> (Theory)	Reality (Actions)	Self-perceptions (Interviews)
Market Logic	Twitter as a global marketplace	Through dissemination and the <i>refined clickbait</i>	Twitter as a political marketplace
Normalization	Two-way normalization	Slight evidence of two-way normalization	No evidence of normalization
Ambient News Environment	Twitter as an awareness system	Twitter as awareness system	Twitter as an awareness system
Activity on the platform	High activity	Low activity	High activity
Thematic Focus	Breaking News	Extended commentary	Emphasis on breaking news
Addressivity Markers	Highly important elements as the socio-informatic backbone of the platform	Low degree of employment	Low degree of employment
Audience Participation	Audience included in the journalistic processes	Audience <u>not</u> included in the journalistic processes	Audience included as a newswire
Audience	Elites and non-elites, Open space	Elites	Elites and non-elites
Content	Original content	Pseudo-RSS feed	Original content

Table 5c: The journalistic use of Twitter: Perception, self-perceptions and reality

The ways Twitter is used in political dialogue is crucial for the reasons raised throughout this thesis. However, the question of *how it is used* is linked to the question of *why it is used*: is it a matter of enhancing the sociotechnical traits of journalism? Is it a matter of innovation *per se*? Is it an issue of a *high-tech* outgrowth of the current norms? Changes are happening, journalism is changing, societal needs are changing as well, but the normative assumptions for journalism’s role in a democracy remain stable: the rejuvenation of democracy derives from an informed electorate, in which the *press* has a prominent role. The related literature indicates this line of argumentation in different tones: Papathanassopoulos (2011) suggests that “an informed electorate is a premise for any meaningful democracy”; Dahlgren (2005) argues that a strong democracy requires the informal citizen deliberation that enable the formation of rational public ideas that can critically guide political systems; Pavlik (2001) underscores that democracy *depends on* an informed citizenry; Livingstone (2005) and Warner (2002) highlight that

<sup>76</sup> For the purposes of the table the argumentation is narrowed to a simplified example. A more detailed discussion of the perceptions is provided in Section 2.2.3.3, Chapter 2.

information plays a crucial role in a democratic society, as a well-informed electorate is the key of a healthy democracy.

What is more, information is at the core of the public sphere and the media are one of the most important contributors for its effective functioning (Webster 2006). As such, the findings presented in this research should not be evaluated on a scale of adherence to the normative assumptions or theoretical premises, but on a scale of effectiveness. A proposal could be not to attempt to change the actions to fit the perceptions, but to embrace the actions and to reflect on their effectiveness. Making this argument clearer, it is suggested that the importance of the media's use of social media platforms should shift (1) from focusing on the degree of the personal tone in the media accounts and how this challenges the notion of objectivity, to whether this tone for instance could inspire trust in their product and invite the public to be part of the dialogue; (2) from attempting to frame participation in conventional terms, to enlarging the definition to include more ways of engaging; (3) from being interested in the degree of the employment of the sociotechnical characteristics to whom the media are giving space; (4) from succumbing to the market logic to how this market logic could stop leading to the mere commodification of their products; (5) from feeding the streams with overwhelming amounts of information to exploiting the technological developments in favour of quality.

#### **5.4.2.2. Factor II: Political and Financial Background**

The point of departure for this discussion is connected to the political and financial setting here offered by Steel who argues that the present neo-liberal era “more than ever have limited the possibilities of a dynamic, rich and deliberative rational public sphere despite the rapid technological transformations in the communications technology” (2016: 37); the concept became “corrupted by the capitalism's propensity towards the atomization and fragmentation of the public” (2016: 37). It could be argued that since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which, according to Habermas (1989) led to the refeudalization of the public sphere, capitalism grew as much in strength as influence. Webster (2006) writes that during that phase, there was a move from the call for reform of the established state towards a takeover of it, in a way that state and society were not distinct anymore, highlighting a still valid point: capitalism removed from the public sphere its former basis, without supplying a new one (Webster 2006). There

are differences, though, with the present phase, which points to the new societal background: capitalism has deepened and manifests itself in more than one ways, whereas as a financial system is now contextualised by the political framework provided by neoliberalism.

With regards to capitalism, the context for the current discussion is provided by what Jodi Dean describes as communicative capitalism, which is placed on the Internet and which supports that “the deluge of screens and spectacles coincides with extreme corporatization, financialization, and privatization across the globe” (2009: 42). This could be linked specifically with the capitalist nature of social media platforms, which as parts of the global market follow its rules. Highfield refers to the “corporate ownership of the major social media”, their commercial interests and the “capitalist nature of social media platforms” (2016: 35), whereas Papacharissi suggests that “for a vast majority of corporations the Internet is viewed as another mass enterprise” (Papacharissi 2002: 19), since it is not immune to commercial objectives” (2010: 123). In a similar vein, Dahlgren views the Internet as an integrated element of global capitalism (2005: 151). More importantly, the Internet is still a medium “constructed in a capitalist era susceptible to the same forces that originally transformed the public sphere” (Papacharissi 2002: 18).

This form of capitalism, and its impact on the public sphere, differs from the respective one at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Central to this argument is that “the Internet is susceptible to the profit-making impulses of the market, which do not traditionally prioritize civic participation or democratization” (Papacharissi 2010: 123), a point that it is captured by Dean’s term of communicative capitalism. According to this, there is a “strange merging of democracy and capitalism in which contemporary subjects are produced and trapped”, due to the power of the networked communications (2009: 22). What is more,

The values heralded as central to democracy take material form in networked communications technologies. Ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation come to be realized in and through expansions, intensifications, and interconnections of global telecommunications. Changes in information and communication networks associated with digitalization, speed and memory/storage capacity impact capitalism and democracy, accelerating and intensifying some elements of each as they consolidate the two into a new ideological formation. (Dean 2009: 22-25)

Dean’s perception of communicative capitalism indicates that the Internet exists only for the circulation of content, whereas the media reduce politics to communicative acts (2009: 36,42).

It also points to the political philosophy that formulates how societies use capitalism today, which is neoliberalism.

David Harvey describes neoliberalism as

A theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. (2007: 22)

This political scenery imposes a new role for the state, which is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate for the practices described above, but also new roles for the individuals living within the limits of the state. Harvey refers to neoliberalism as the political scheme that aimed at re-establishing the conditions for capital accumulation and the restoration of class power, and stresses that it only succeeds in the latter (2007: 29). While the delineation of the political system *per se* is a crucial point, it is only presented descriptively here, to shed light not only to the current societal structural transformation, but also to the changing circumstances that allow for this transformation. Habermas' rationale for the conditions that led to the existence of the bourgeois public sphere but also to its decline, is apparent here as well: new conditions lead to further transformation(s), whereas the political setting is formed by the existence of new powers, that impose – directly or indirectly – a different set of rules, and affect as much the communicative actions as the exchange of ideas. This depiction of the political background, that contextualises the pragmatic public sphere, is complemented by Highfield's note that within the context of online communication, traditional holders, as governments, states and mass media still have power and determine access, control and information, however, in these the owners and developers of popular social media should be added (2016: 64). In addition to them, actors within the networks, through their own choices, help determine the scope and the form of the networks (Highfield 2016: 64), as demonstrated by the changing directions that platforms like Twitter took since their emergence.

This multiplicity of networks, the complexity of the media ecology, the plurality of arenas, along with the variation of existent publics indicate that the current structural transformation led to a questioning of the unified public sphere, to its consideration as an “explicitly idealist concept” (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 102) and to its presence as a sum of sub-spheres. Bruns and Highfield name these spheres as *public sphericules* where micro-publics co-exist, intersect and overlap (2016: 98). According to this perception, public sphericules exist in both digital and

non-digital arenas, and as “the Internet becomes the backbone for any kind of media distribution, distinctions between networked and non-networked public spheres are increasingly meaningless (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 106). The argument, connected with the notion of the *polymedia*, suggests that due to modern pluralistic liberal democracies and globalization, the singular conception of the bourgeois public sphere is contested, leading to the recognition of the plurality of public spheres - these are less confined in terms of a geographical metaphor (Livingstone & Lund 2013: 91). The rationale here underlines the non-dichotomy argument but it also underscores how this multiplicity of sphericules is unfolded: Twitter, for instance, is not only a synthesis of communicative layers but at the same time it is a part of the wider ecology. Unpacking the term *polymedia* shows that none of the social media platforms can be properly understood if considered in isolation, as the meaning of each one is relative to the others (2012; also Miller *et al.* 2016: 4).

Accordingly, few everyday citizens engage exclusively only in one or another of these technologically defined public spheres (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 106), an argument that applies also to journalists: the empirical research demonstrates their presence in a variety of digital and non-digital arenas, in which Twitter constitutes only a part. When it comes to politics, the engagement with these issues does not happen on a single platform either and also not in a single way. With regards to Twitter, Highfield argues that the engagement could manifest as further framing of political coverage - from serious to seemingly flippant and sarcastic, and cites Smyrniotis and Rieder, who used the term “social infomiation of news” to describe the variety of styles of news engagement, but also the apparent content (2013, cited in Highfield 2016: 71). Either way, engagement is not happening on Twitter alone, since the platform “is inextricably linked to other so-called Web 2.0 services, as well as to the information and media sphere in general” (Smyrniotis & Rieder 2013: 360). Participation, though, remains an individual choice and as Bruns and Highfield suggest it is noteworthy that “the sheer availability of this choice is a relative novelty within the mass-mediated public sphere model” (2016: 125).

The existence of the multiplicity of spheres of dialogue differs from the unified form of the original bourgeois model and at the same time coincides with one of the critical strands against Habermas, which refers to the exclusion of the counter public spheres. Both Geoff Eley and Nancy Fraser (1992) agree on the existence of other publics, either competing publics or

counter publics, apparent not only in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century as Habermas supports, but since the appearance of the bourgeois public sphere. These publics, unrecognized in the original model, guide how the contemporary pragmatic public sphere is now formed - the variety of multiple publics cannot be disregarded. This further emphasises the public sphericules argument - smaller subsets of participants with interests in a specific topic are apparent in the hashtagged exchanges, despite the simultaneous existence of particular thematic debates within and across broader domains (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 107). These participants form publics that might operate in combination or opposition, they might overlap, but they represent and bridge the macro, meso and micro levels of communication in Twitter (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 12), highlighting the use of the word *synthesis* by this thesis, which implies that these layers are not isolated from one another, and that there is a constant movement across them, as many users actively and deliberately transition between the layers (Bruns & Moe 2014: 21).

However, there is another implication that derives from this multitude of sub-spheres, which is the fragmentation of the public. This is not only another characteristic of the pragmatic public sphere, but also an element that the bourgeois model does not include and has been criticised for. Fragmentation may be a challenge for the bourgeois model of the public sphere, in contemporary environments, and it could be perceived in two ways. On the one hand and drawing on the empirical inquiry, there is the fragmentation of the dialogue: hashtagged exchanges are widely fragmented and incoherent and they are not taking the form of organised dialogue or conversation. On the other hand, though, fragmentation could be seen with regards to the public, which highlights the inevitability of the multiplicity of spheres. While it is confronted as a new phenomenon, especially by the techno-pessimists who include it in their argumentative quivers (Bohman 2004), fragmentation of the public is diachronic. Going back to 1927, Dewey argues that “the ramification of the issues before the public is so wide and intricate, the technical matters involved are so specialized, the details are so many and so shifting, that the public cannot for any length of time identify and hold itself”, without questioning, though, that there is a large body of persons that have a common interest in the consequences of social transactions (1954: 137). His next point however not only criticises the Habermasian idea of the public before this existed, but it effectively captures the current dialogue of the diversification of publics, and how these manifest in the present pragmatic public sphere:

There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition. And there are too many publics, for conjoint actions which have indirect, serious and enduring consequences are multitudinous beyond comparison, and each one of them crosses the others and generates its own group of persons especially affected with little to hold these different publics together in an integrated whole. (Dewey 1954: 137)

Fragmentation is also linked to Habermas' only reference to the effect of the Internet on the public sphere, in his ICA keynote speech in 2006. In a footnote, he argues that "in democratic countries, the Internet serves only to fragment focused audiences 'into a huge number of isolated issue publics'" (Rasmussen 2008: 74). It depicts a realistic and unavoidable situation that highlights that publics exist at various levels for different lifespans. Taking this into account, it is suggested that the focus should be on how this fragmentation could be regarded positively. It could be argued for instance, that the movement between layers and platforms allows for the notion of the virtual stage to be downgraded - in other words, these different forms of publics, either issue or personal, indicate that the public sphere, or its diverse constituent elements, could be considered "as a space that a wide range of citizens engage in, rather than as something that is played out for them by elite actors on a virtual stage" (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 113). Equally, this point challenges the journalistic virtual stage, according to the theatre metaphor analysed earlier, which could be apparent in some levels - like the meso one - but absent in others, like the macro one.

To return to the discussion about political participation in social media environments, this leads back to Kushin and Yamamoto's (2010) argument that in social media people are more likely to be exposed to political news and therefore they are given more chances to express themselves politically. Fragmentation augments these chances, or as Geoff's *et al.* (2012) argue these platforms could cultivate users' political consciousness in their daily practice, in a way that more exposure leads to more participation. De Zuniga *et al.* support social media use, even for different reasons than that of political interaction, which may lead people to express themselves politically, "thereby putting them on a pathway to participation" (2014: 613). Besides, in these networks the overlap between the personal and professional is observed widely; the political could emerge out of non-political discussions - "politics could emerge out of the presentation of the mundane" (Highfield 2016: 39). The premise however is the expansion of the definition of participation, as suggested earlier. This could happen either expressed by a personalization of politics, where political talk draws upon an individual's own perspective and experience (Highfield 2016: 15), or through new forms of storytelling. These



evolve beyond the traditional ecologies of journalism by rendering media organizations, journalists and individual users as complex and networked social awareness systems, and provide them with the power to make concrete decisions about the presentation of events, or as Papacharissi suggests “these decisions are collaboratively and organically made through practices of repetition and reduction that do not always produce a coherent narrative” (2015: 28, 36). Therefore, it could be argued that it is not only a matter of coherence, but of new narratives that are constituted by “constantly updated, live representation of the experiences, interests and opinions of users” (Hermida 2014: 360).

### **The Pragmatic Public Sphere: Characteristics**

Mapping the pragmatic public sphere through the related literature, but mostly through the findings of the empirical research and despite its limitations, it could be said that this is formed as a model that moves beyond the orthodox model of the public sphere (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 98), leading to a more dynamic, flexible, adaptable and inclusive model. This model differentiates from the Habermasian bourgeois model in different aspects: it is more diverse and fragmented, has both digital and non-digital manifestations, includes a variety of actors, recognizes the multiplicity of publics and manifests itself as a constitution of sphericules rather than a unified model. In this sphere, the press functions differently; the setting challenges journalism’s functions: if publics are present in different arenas, how could the *press* be the institution that mediates among these and the state? How could it provide arenas of dialogue, in which to feed the discussion with information? Despite these differences, though, it is particularly important that a regular and accessible press, the pre-requisite for the existence of the bourgeois public sphere in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, remains a pre-requisite for the current form.

Delineating across the chapter the characteristics of the pragmatic model as depicted on Twitter, and aiming towards a summary of the current model, this could be regarded as a multiplicity of arenas where the variety of different layers not only encourages the movement across them, but also the existence of parallel audiences and narratives. Accordingly, the public is not presented as a sovereign body of citizens; there are multiple publics, mostly composed by politically interested users, however, in principle no one is excluded from the platform, due to the openness of the network and few access restrictions. Interestingly, though, elites remain

elites in the network too and no apparent elimination of their privileges is observed - at least in Habermasian terms. The formatted publics, either as *ad hoc* or *issue* publics, manifest themselves as enhanced spectators rather than active recipients, as more emphasis is placed on the *reaction* aspect and less on the *action* one. In supplement, it could be argued that these publics balance between being fully participants and fully spectators. The multitude of arenas and publics, though, points to the “central feature of the new model” which is “the fragmentation of the unified public sphere into a range of diverging yet potentially overlapping publics” (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 105). An additional element in the discussion related to the multiplicity of publics concerns the existence of new methods of measuring the opinion of these publics - as for instance is semantic polling: this method could be used to “understand different organs in real time: the audience for a televised event, protesters at a demonstration, or delegates at conference, for instance” (Anstead & O’Loughlin 2015: 216). What is more, this perception allows public opinion to be re-conceptualized as a “more well-suited concept to the more restless and atomized society found in late modernity”, in other words to be understood “through both realist and constructivist lenses because of the reflexivity built into this infrastructure” (Anstead & O’Loughlin 2015: 215-216).

The role of the technology is particularly important: the digital and non-digital worlds are not dichotomised. The enlargement of the environment brings into spotlight different forms of participation, like the digital networked one, and most importantly, draws attention to the expansion of the definition of the term, to include both political action and political expression as forms of political participation, following Arendt’s rationale on *lexis* and *praxis* (1998: 26). This expanded arena also acts as an ambient news environment, where news is always present in the periphery of users’ attention, highlighting Twitter’s presence as an awareness system. In this, engagement with news and politics is also expanded, but also accidental. In this context, the role of the media, as the equivalent of the Habermasian *press*, presents a deviation from the unified model, as it is now a complex media ecology that includes a plethora of actors. Media normalize the platform according to their previous media logics, norms and behaviours, mostly by not encouraging the public(s) to be part of the journalistic processes - even though this has indirect effects, like in the agenda-setting process. What is more, media diverge from the normative expectations related to their democratic role - most of the media accounts function as pseudo-RSS feeds filled by shovelware, whereas the journalistic

ones prioritise dissemination. Despite these functions, though, journalistic actors are crucial for the formation of public sphericules.

### Public Sphere: A Dual Approach

When it comes to the comparison of the pragmatic public sphere with the normative, bourgeois model, the first differs in relation to two of the basic principles of the ideal model: there is no evidence of debate, and notably a rational one, and there is no indication of formation of public or political opinion. However, it could be argued that neither in the normative approach are these two elements measurable, which suggest that the limitations of the contemporary spheres are not new. Either way, in both, the central feature is publicity, and in both, all thematic areas are open to discussion. Moreover, it is noticeable that the intensity of the discussions is proportional to the established dramaturgy of the political topics (e.g. the elections), which points directly to the existence of the new political information cycles, within its borders. The model highlights that the criteria Chadwick (2013: 64) poses, are met. With regards to the political cycles, there is affirmation of the formation of real-time genres and non-elite interventions, as well as of even minor elite-activist interactions. Furthering this, the present form confirms also the connection of older and newer media logics in the reflexively connected areas of media and politics as well as in the ways political actors, publics and the media interact - underlining the notion of hybridity. When put into the broader context, the formation of the pragmatic model succumbs to external forces, as did its predecessors, only this time there is a deepened form of capitalism, which is framed politically by the ideology of neoliberalism.

Depicting these points schematically, the following table emerges:

Parameter	Parameter (II)	Manifestations on Twitter (Pragmatic Sphere)
Basic Principles	Access	Twitter is an open network with only a few access restrictions
	Elimination of privileges	No apparent elimination of privileges, elites remain elites in the platform
	Publicity	Changing form of publicity: the openness of the network points to extended publicity of the discussed topics
	Variety of themes	All thematic areas are theoretically open to discussion  The intensity of the discussions is proportional to the established dramaturgy of the political discussions
	Rational Debate	No evidence of debate Apparent exchange of ideas

	<b>Formation of public or political opinion</b>	No evidence of formation of either public or political opinion
<b>Singularity or Plurality</b>	<b>Multiplicity of Arenas</b>	Variety of layers and arenas, constant movement between the layers Deviation of the bourgeois model (unified public sphere) Encouragement of parallel audiences and narratives
<b>Fragmentation</b>		Extended fragmentation of dialogue and of the public
<b>Public</b>	<b>Plurality</b>	Multiplicity of publics, but not a sovereign body of citizens
	<b>Composition</b>	Politically interested participants but in principle, no one is excluded from the platform
	<b>Activity</b>	Enhanced spectators, balancing between full spectators, active recipients and participants
<b>Technology</b>	<b>Expansion of Participation</b>	Technological affordances in favour of the expansion of the terms to include both the lexis and the praxis: political participation as a combination of political action and political expression Evidence of Digital Network Participation
	<b>Non-dichotomy</b>	Online and offline world are interrelated and interconnected
<b>Environment</b>	<b>Ambience</b>	Twitter as ambient news environment, news is always present on the platform, in the periphery of users' attention Awareness system
	<b>Exposure</b>	Accidental exposure Accidental engagement
<b>Media</b>	<b>Plurality</b>	Not a unified press, complex media ecology Its presence is still a prerequisite
	<b>Normalization</b>	Slight two-way normalization, journalists transfer their professional norms on Twitter Indirect effect of the public, e.g. on the agenda-setting No evidence of encouragement of the public to participate in political dialogue
	<b>Normative Expectations</b>	Deviation from the normative expectations related to the democratic role of journalism
	<b>Activity</b>	Media accounts function as pseudo RSS-feed, presence of shovelware Journalistic accounts prioritise dissemination
<b>Political Information Cycles</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	Evidence of the formation of real-time genres and non-elite interventions and (minor) elite-activist interactions
	<b>Hybridity</b>	Connection of older and newer media logics in the reflexively connected areas of media and politics Also, political actors, publics and the media interact
<b>External forces</b>	<b>Setting</b>	Financial: Capitalism, Twitter as part of the global marketplace Political: Neoliberalism

Table 5d: Mapping the pragmatic sphere

## 5.5. Chapter Conclusion

The chapter incorporated the empirical findings into the related literature and discussed the emerging points. The analysis builds on two key arguments: that the public sphere concept is not static, but flexible, open and adaptable; and that the focus of the interest should not be the public sphere *per se*, but its structural transformation. Relying on this, it is further argued that Habermas' aspiration was not only to explain why the public sphere idea was realised perfectly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois society, but also to provide a measure for comparison of the reasons why it existed in different, less perfect, forms afterwards. Based on the point that the public sphere should be regarded as a metaphor, the chapter argues that the factors that led to the formation of the bourgeois public sphere and its transformation, still exist and still cause structural transformations of the spheres of political dialogue. To examine these changes, but also to map the existent spheres, it first analyses the two components (the public and the sphere) separately, and then, in combination. While it confirms that new political information cycles appear in political communication during the examined electoral period, it raises questions as to the notion of participation, by proposing an expanded definition that includes the forms of engagement that are evident on the social media platforms. Moving on, the chapter returns to the conceptual questions and confronts the public sphere through the prism of duality and its two manifestations: the normative and the pragmatic. While the first is described in detail by Habermas, the latter is analysed here, based on the two impact factors: changes in the press and the political and financial settings. A dialogue is built between the two sections: the normative public sphere provides the model for comparison for the pragmatic, whereas the pragmatic probes the sufficiency and the sustainability of the original concept. Through this process, the characteristics of the pragmatic political sphere on Twitter during the elections are highlighted, offering at the same time the basis for further conceptualization of the concept in the digital era.

## 6.0. Conclusion

The thesis focuses on Habermas' concept of the public sphere and especially on the discussions about its *potential* to be realised in a variety of different environments or circumstances - in this case, social networking sites. By developing a new theorization that relies on a new definitional approach of the digital public sphere(s) [Chapter 4], and through the systematic theoretical analysis of the related academic literature, the thesis has underlined that the enhanced social character of these platforms triggered a plethora of reactions, ranging from euphoric commentary to pessimistic predictions. These reactions not only confirm the "mythology of the new", or with regards to journalism, a well-known tendency that accompanied its adaptation to each epoch's *new media* (Papacharissi 2011: 10; Eldridge 2015), but they also concern democracy - the utopian or dystopian polarities function with the projection of hopes and fears, and affect directly democracy, journalism and the public sphere. It is highlighted here, though, that these polarizations could now be considered as obsolete, and as such a techno-centric approach is suggested.

This point also underscores the role of technology as a fundamental factor for the argumentation of the thesis, however, its importance lies primarily in its impact; otherwise, there is a risk to fall into the trap that the rhetoric of the revolutionary dynamic of the Internet has not been able to avoid effectively: that of technological determinism. As such, technology here is regarded as *architecture* - as the environment that enables users to become civically engaged (Papacharissi 2011: 10). To specifically understand Twitter's impact, the new mediated spaces are regarded in the thesis as internal parts of the non-digital world, which citizens use and inhabit (Chadwick *et al.* 2016: 24). The full integration of the digital arenas to the non-digital ones indicate the existence of an expanded global arena, where time and space restrictions are nullified, in a way that the McLuhan's global village is partly realised as much in terms of connectedness, as in terms of awareness of those others in the *village*.

With regards to Twitter, this frames the empirical research within a specific arena, and further questions whether the platform is a public space or a form of a contemporary public sphere that meets Habermas' prerequisites. As such, the initial suggested rationale was to map Twitter's characteristics, to identify the current state of the *press* in it during a political event

with high interest and decision-making implications, and to trace public sphere's manifestations on Twitter. In this process, the research questions guided both the theoretical and the empirical part of the research. Questioning how do journalists use social media to cover the elections, and whether Twitter provides a new arena where information exchange, debate and circulation of ideas take place so as to be considered a digital public sphere, captures the research aims. Without disregarding the paramount role of these questions, and by addressing them throughout the thesis, the work simultaneously followed a divergent path, as the research process brought into spotlight new elements. These are a) the normative questions that led to the redefinition of the public sphere - adaptable to digital environments - and the conceptual hypothesis; b) the deep interrelation of the three essentially contested concepts that underline the need to confront the Habermasian theory through a different prism, that of its duality; and c) the emerging discussion for its reconceptualization, that also sets the scene for future research. These three aspects defined the development of the thesis, and the structure of the present chapter.

### **6.1. Normative Inquiries, Definitional Approach and Conceptual Hypothesis**

Central to the thesis' rationale is the notion of *diachronicity*. Whether discussing the Habermasian theory, journalism, or democracy, the approach draws on *hybridity*, stressing that newness relies on its continuities with the old (Chadwick 2013: 8). This thinking is evident in the literature review, the empirical analysis and the emerging discussions. The initial contextualization of the work derives from the parallel with the Athenian Democracy. In this, Habermas' public use of reason is regarded as the equivalent of Plato's dialectics: in both, dialogue is the ultimate form of political expression that encourages the opposition of ideas and participation in decision-making processes. This parallel initiated the conceptual enquiries of the thesis, which aimed at researching the contemporary *equals* in these parallels: What is the respective Agora in the digital epoch? Is it possible to locate a contemporary analogy for coffeehouses? How are these spaces adjusted and influenced by the contemporary social conditions? If these arenas exist, what are the principles that they are built on?

Through the empirical analysis and by mapping the pragmatic public sphere, the answers to the conceptual questions of the thesis emerged. With regards to what is the respective *digital* Agora,

and whether it is possible to locate a contemporary analogy for coffeehouses, responses lie in the accompanying questions, meaning, how these spaces are adjusted and influenced by contemporary social conditions, as well as the principles that they are built on. Comparing the current arenas, like Twitter, with the coffeehouses and the Agora, it is apparent that the differences are significant: apart from the dual existence of the current models in both digital and non-digital forms, these are not restricted by topical or time limitations, and they adopt a more abstract essence. What is more, viewing coffeehouses in their literal sense, as social spaces where social gatherings took place, and where the bourgeois people engaged in rational-critical debate towards the formulation of public opinion, then the current social spaces are widely differentiated, as none of these parameters are met.

Despite these differences though, it could be argued that coffeehouses, Agora and the digital arenas are places where political deliberation could take place, and that all aim to attract people that are conscious of their role as citizens - even though in a much more organised form in the first two occasions. What is more, the extent of their differences is further questioned when these models are regarded in realistic terms and when the implied normativity of the first two is considered. Furthermore, specifying the discussion of the coffeehouses as “one of the fundamental factors in the enhancement of news consciousness and the creation of a discourse of public opinion which would shape how journalism emerged” (Conboy 2004: 50), it could be argued that, especially the first part is applied to Twitter too, leading to its consideration as their contemporary analogue. In other words, on the platform there is an enhancement of news consciousness, drawing primarily on the theorization of Twitter as an ambient news environment. However, the participation within its borders is limited as well as the conduct of critical debate, raising questions about the discourse of public opinion. Either way, opportunities and challenges are posed to how journalism is formed.

Örnebring’s argument that “the patterns of journalism established in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century still influence how we think about journalism today, and how journalists think about themselves” (2010: 68) applied in this case as well: the equivalent patterns of journalism on social media platforms - especially as emerged by the comparison between the perceptions, the self-perceptions, and the activities on the platform - influence how we think about journalism today and how journalists think about themselves, as also revealed by the interviews of the empirical research. Highfield’s argument is indicative of this tendency: “If journalism has been



previously seen as the ‘first draft of history’, then Twitter is host to ‘the first draft of present’” (2016: 71), or to expand this, Twitter could be confronted as “the first draft of journalism” (Stross 2016).

This leads back to theorization of the digital public sphere(s) and the conceptual hypothesis of the thesis. Defined as

One or more digital open-access arenas where individual citizens assemble by engaging in public conversation and debate to form a public body. Through interaction, the display of participation, and the raising of awareness within social networks, public opinion can be formed and socio-political issues can be addressed

and hypothesised as “if Digital Networked Participation can be traced on Twitter and if certain criteria are met, then a Digital Public Sphere can be formed”, it could be argued that the hypothesis is neither rejected nor confirmed; the complexity of the contemporary model, as analysed in Chapter 5, exceeds the delimitation posed by the Habermasian theory. This is also depicted in the dual perception of the public sphere, as much in normative as in pragmatic terms. Equally, and with regards to the definition, this acts as a normative framework for the current model, in the same sense that the original definition acts for the bourgeois public sphere. In other words, it poses the need for the existence of rational debate and of the formation of public opinion in measurable terms, in order to consider the pragmatic spheres as (digital) public spheres.

## **6.2. Public Sphere, Democracy, Journalism: Three Interrelated, Essentially Contested, Concepts**

Regarding the three axes of the work as “essentially contested concepts” means that public sphere, democracy and journalism, could be explained with a multiplicity of meanings that cannot be approached with dogmatism (Gallie 1956; Doughty 2014). The respective sections in each chapter highlight the existence of multiple definitions that have been given to each concept to capture its complexity. An aspect that stands out in these discussions is that the concepts are wrongfully treated as static. Papacharissi describes democracy as a “negotiable abstraction”, which is “reified singularly by each society” (2011), underlining Steel’s (2016) point for a needed reconceptualization of democracy.

Likewise, following the same mental path and drawing on the contestation of its interpretation, the thesis argues the flexibility of the public sphere concept, which is open and adaptable, as also underscored by the discussion in Chapter 5. Furthering this argument, the thesis also argues that the focus of the interest should not be the public sphere *per se*, but its structural transformation(s). Starting with the one that Habermas describes in his book, it is suggested that the causal factors that led to its first transformation are still present - as much the changes in the press, as in the financial and political setting - and as such, continuous structural transformations of the political arenas (and of the political dialogue on these) are occurring too, in accordance with the political climate and political circumstances of each epoch. The premise lies in the perception of the public sphere as a metaphor, which points to the argument that Habermas' aspiration was not one-dimensional: the public sphere is also a measure for comparing the reasons why it existed in different, less perfect forms in post-bourgeois societies; in other words, when the public sphere is materialized, it "may take several shapes and forms and adopt multiple incarnations" (Papacharissi 2010: 119).

Dismissing the logic of technological determinism and relying on the non-dichotomy argument presented across the thesis, it is also proposed that the comprehensive conceptualization of the Habermasian theory is better perceived within the context of the "ongoing structural transformations of the public sphere" rather than "the structural transformation of the public sphere" (in a singular tense) as Habermas initially suggests. Without disregarding the impact of the digital modalities on the concept, these pose opportunities and challenges that respectively move them closer or further from the normative type. Equally, the *press* is moved closer or further from its normative expectations, and democracy from the Athenian paradigm.

Habermas describes in depth the process of the structural transformation, discussing as much the role of the press in this, as the changes in the political and financial background, offering at the same time a point of departure for the development of the argument of the plural perception of this process. In other words, the ongoing structural transformations of the public sphere rely on these two *factors*, as detailed in Chapter 5, confirming the validity of the argument on the continuity of the process in societies after the bourgeois one. By juxtaposing the current transformation of political arenas with the one Habermas' describes, and by bearing in mind the analysis of the two factors, the following table arises:

Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere	Ongoing Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere (Twitter)
Capitalism removed the public sphere from its former basis without supplying a new one	Capitalism poses the financial setting, whereas neoliberalism the political  Twitter is a product of a capitalist era susceptible to the same forces that originally transformed the public sphere
Eclipse of rational-critical debate due to the presence of cultural consumption	Lack of debate and notably rational debate on Twitter
Commodification of the content: Spectacle	Enhanced Spectatorship: the user balances between the role of active recipient and mere spectator
Acquisition of control of media private owners	Twitter as part of the global marketplace - Owners and the developers of the popular social media should be added to the traditional holders of power
De-politicization of the public sphere	Twitter is not a political social media by definition, it is relatively generic channel that enables a wide range of topical coverage (politics an example of them)
Enlargement of the public	The public is even more enlarged: Twitter can be viewed as accelerating the reach of McLuhan's global village inasmuch as it builds connectedness, in terms of an increased awareness of those others in the village.

Table 6a: Comparison between Habermas' model and its suggested revised version

The thesis starts with the delineation of the Habermasian concept from different perspectives, offering a holistic approach to the theory. Through this process, the importance of the public sphere as the foundation of the representative democracy is highlighted, as it draws attention to “the idea of a sovereign reasonable public, nourished by the critical reporting of the press and engaged in the mutually enlightening clash of arguments” (Peters 1993: 544). This engagement is translated as a critical debate, where *Räsonnement* (people’s public use of their reason) prevails. In the deliberative process, arguments and not statuses determine decisions - the set of principles refer to the principle of public opinion as this is formatted by the rule of general accessibility, of the elimination of all privileges, of the discovery of general norms and rational legitimations: these all are the guarantees for the very functioning of the Habermasian idea (Habermas 1974: 50). The normative public sphere poses the subjectum of the feudal societies in place of the subject: the recipient of commands is the contrasting opponent in the bourgeois society (Miloni 2006). What is more, in this context, the *press* was the power that

enabled the existence of the normative type. This press had the clear role of presenting before the public political decisions and giving them the opportunity to arrive to considered opinions on publicly discussed matters (Habermas 1996: 81). However, it was also the press that led to the refeudalization and the structural transformation of the public sphere - Habermas charts this turn as a “semantic change of publicity”, when critical participation is transformed to consumerist manipulation (Miloni 2006).

The press (in the inclusive sense of the term) is central to this thesis. The reasons are explained thoroughly in Section 2.1.9, where its gravity for the public sphere is analysed. The crux of this discussion could be found in the formation of public opinion (as Habermas uses the term in his definition of the public sphere) in the arenas of public debate. Curran (1991) notes that the effectiveness of this process is profoundly shaped by the quality, the availability and the communication of information, and he further points to autonomy from the state and economic interests. Specifying this in political dialogue, the essence is captured by the term “epistemological politics”: the politics of what we know and how we act as citizens is linked to the politics of how we know (Bybee 1999: 30). Putting media at the centre of attention and confronting them both as integral part of the reality and as major historical forces, their role as critical factors of change in democratic societies is highlighted further.

Another definitive factor for the development of the argumentation is the choice of the elections as the case study of the thesis, meaning as an example of how political dialogue is conducted online, and especially on Twitter. This choice lies primarily in their significance as a democratic condition. Even though the mere existence of elections does not guarantee that a society is a democratic one, free, fair and frequent elections is a guarantee for a functioning democratic system within a society (Strömbäck 2005: 333). The linkage with the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere is that elections highlight the role of *participation* in the decision-making processes, or in other words, in contemporary societies where representative democracies prevail, elections are the epitome of democracy; they are those specific occasions that offer the opportunity for *participation* in democratic processes. What is more, electoral periods are also periods with high political interest, especially from a journalistic perspective. The latter justifies the choice of Twitter as the discussed arena of political dialogue in the thesis: Twitter, as analysed in Section 2.2.3.3, has not only an extensive journalistic dynamic, but also an enhanced aspect of social connectivity. As Maireder and Ausserhofer note, within

social networking sites such as Twitter “a public negotiation of the meaning of the political events” is witnessed (2014: 316), providing a clear connection with the Habermasian public debate and the principle of publicity.

Understanding the roots of the involved concepts is the first requirement to comprehend their systemic relationship. Developing the thinking on their common ground – participation – is the second. By researching the role of the public, diachronically through the literature review, and on Twitter through the empirical research, a new notion of the public emerged. This emphasises its perception in the plural, but also in its positive substance as a term that encompasses a democratic premise (Livingstone 2005). What is more, it underscores the reactionary element of the term ‘active recipient’ (Hermida 2012), and its leaning towards the second component: reception is more evident than action. The formatted public on Twitter, could not be considered as merely spectators, as this would dismiss the participatory premise of the social media platforms and it would not depict the result that emerges out of the current findings, which point to *some* degree of participation. As such, the thesis suggests the employment of the term *enhanced spectatorship*, which could be placed between the active recipient and the mere spectator, on a scale of participation, and which relies on the accidental exposure that is implied by the ambient news environment argumentation, but also on the accidental engagement of users in hashtagged exchanges. The term is rather inclusive: it takes into account as much the reactionary functions that depict the *social* character of the social media platforms as the findings of the research. The reassessment of participation proposed here relies heavily on the perception of political life as a composition of action (*praxis*) and speech (*lexis*) (Arendt 1998: 26) but also on the inclusion of the Aristotelian “rational animal” (*zoon logon echon*) (2006). What is more, this expanded definition of political participation highlights the need to move from strictly conventional forms of deliberation, as these rarely involve the wider public and are instead largely confined to an elite few (Steel 2016: 44).

In the thesis, the public sphere and its interconnection with the other two concepts is regarded through the lens of duality - in alignment with Baker’s words, that the appearance of a bourgeois public sphere could be perceived simultaneously “as the emergence of a normative ideal of rational public discussion from within the distinctive social formation of bourgeois civil society” but also “as the realization, or rather the fleeting partial realization, of this ideal within that society” (1992: 183). Furthering this argument, it proceeds with the mapping of the

pragmatic public sphere in comparison to the bourgeois one. Within the *polymedia* and the complex media ecology, spheres of political dialogue emerge that move closer or further from the original concept. The evaluation of these sphere(s) moves a step forward from previous proposals - Dahlgren (2005) for instance suggests the comparison between the Internet's practices and the Habermasian model of the public sphere along its three constitutive dimensions: structures, representation and interaction; whereas Papacharissi proposes the examination of its dynamic across three areas: information access, the globalization of information, and commercialization. Suggesting a more holistic reflection of the concept, this process proposes at the same time the re-evaluation of the normative model, as suggested in the following section.

### **6.3. The Public Sphere through the Prism of Duality: Re-conceptualization and Future Research**

Focusing on the normative sphere, Livingstone and Lund express their concern over whether the normative vision is "valuable, sufficient or sustainable" (2013: 93). Its value, as presented across the thesis, is not contestable; its sufficiency and its sustainability, though, are. While the latter was the main point of discussion in Chapter 5 with regards to the pragmatic sphere, the matter of sufficiency poses questions about the reconceptualization of the concept. Habermas himself recognized some of its weaknesses: in his revision in 1992, he refers both to the idealistic approach and to the issue of exclusion and writes that "he should have made it clearer that he was establishing an 'ideal type' and not a normative ideal" (in the sense of a utopian approach) (Habermas 1992: 422) and that "he underestimated the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois public spheres" (1992: 430). Evidence of anticipatory reaction exists in the introductory chapter of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* as well, where Habermas notes: "we conceive bourgeois public sphere as a category that is typical of an epoch (...) our investigation is limited to the structure and function of the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation" (1989: xvii), recognizing in a way the limitations of his theory. Interestingly, though, he does not regard the developments (e.g. the technological ones) as challenges to his idealistic approach, and he retains the public sphere as an ideal, "if not a sociological reality" (Livingstone & Lund 2013: 93). Although, it

could be argued that in Habermas' book "there seems to be an implicit understanding of how people carry on conversation and arrive at political opinions which seems strangely abstract and formalistic" (Dahlgren 1991: 5), and further underlines the need to reconsider the normative approach.

Towards this direction, the thesis embraces Dahlgren's argument that to reconstruct a conceptualization of the public sphere as an analytic category, by having Habermas' idea as a point of departure, is "productive and even imperative to retain its critical dimension" (1991: 8). In more recent work, Dahlgren (2005: 148) agrees with Kellner (2000: 12) who suggests that the public sphere could still be conceived as a site of information, discussion, contestation, political struggle, and organization that includes, among others, the new cyberspaces, but in contemporary societies it needs to be repositioned and redefined. Or as Fraser mentions, it is preferable to reformulate Habermas' bourgeois model and develop an alternative post-bourgeois conception (Allen 2012), aiming to present a more flexible concept. This need for flexibility becomes even more important when regarded through the digital challenges and opportunities, or through the prism of the pragmatic sphere.

Fraser argues that the normative type of the public sphere: (a) should exclude the principle of elimination of privileges due to the real social inequalities; (b) should take into account the multiplicity of publics; (c) should leave the boundaries between public and private open to discursive debate; and (d) should discern the strong and the weak publics, instead of a sharp separation between civil society and the state (1992; Allen 2012). These suggestions, when put under the scope of the findings of the thesis and the related discussion in Chapter 5, initiate a proposal for the development of the re-conceptualised model, but they also encourage further enquiring for future research. Starting by the elimination of privileges, this aligns with the Habermasian norm of *general accessibility*: even though in contemporary platforms, like Twitter, there are only a few access restrictions and in principle no one is excluded, there is no apparent elimination of privileges and the elites remain elites within its borders. However, if we perceive these platforms as a miniature model of society, then it could be argued that the complete elimination of social inequalities is rather utopic. The normativity of the model, though, allows for aiming towards as much equality as possible.

Linking this aspect with the discernment between strong and weak publics, it raises questions as to the formation of power relations within the platforms. Either internal within the

networks, or external as part of a *polymedia* environment that is connected to political and financial forces, power relations define, to a great extent, how political dialogue at different levels is conducted, and more, importantly, which is the effect of this dialogue on decision-making processes. In other words, and by pointing back to the inclusive and extensive definition of participation suggested here, the crucial inquiry of what counts as effective participation becomes prominent. Drawing on Chadwick's (2013) work, he also poses the critical question of what counts as effective and worthwhile political action. This discussion exceeds the aims of this work, it however underlines that power relations are an important variable within the multitude of networks, and an essential element of the pragmatic public sphere(s), providing a point of departure for future research.

Returning to Fraser's proposal, another aspect that should define the re-conceptualised model is the multiplicity of publics that indicate a multiplicity of arenas. It is further suggested here that these publics should maintain their positive substance and their democratic premise. What is more, it is also proposed that their temporal character - especially when it comes to digital environments - should be acknowledged. The contemporary enlarged public that indicate a democratic broadening of the constituency of the public should not be at the cost of its internally democratic functioning, to paraphrase Calhoun (1992: 27). Lastly, Fraser's point on the open discursive debate about boundaries between public and private, is addressed indirectly by the formation of social networking sites - on Twitter, for instance, the personal and political are not mutually exclusive and given the news ambient nature of platforms like Twitter, this flow could also mean that people have the chance to be exposed to politics and information, in a way that would enhance their possibilities for accidental engagement. Even if the new forms of news media seem to encourage ever more fragmented communicative networks (Beckett & Mansell 2008), it could be argued that fragmentation "does not necessarily beget isolation or complete separation" (Bruns & Highfield 2016: 112, 124). This last point, raises also further questions for future research on the nature of the current social networking sites: do they encourage atomization with regards to neoliberalism or do they promise new forms of sociality?

While Fraser's suggestions are the basis for the re-conceptualization of the normative model of the Habermasian theory, there is a missing element: the role of the *press*. How does the press change the public(s) and their perception of it? How does it affect the democratization of



dialogue? Which is its *power* today? Does it have the “explosive” effect that Habermas describes in his work, as much in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere as its disintegration at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? How do digital developments affect its incorporation into political dialogue? Siapera writes that “political involvement is not a function of new media technologies, but a function of able and interested citizens” offering a point of departure for the last suggestion that needs to be added to Fraser’s model: that any normative model of the public sphere should highlight that it is the press’ role to enhance citizens’ ability and interest to be politically involved - or to put it within the Habermasian context, the press is the force that can encourage the public(s) to act on their conscience and capacity as citizens and not as consumers. Last but not least the press is also part of the machinery that could lead to meaningful democratic societies, the premise of which is an informed electorate. These suggestions put the normative approach closer to the pragmatic manifestations, but more importantly, through these, the normative model of the public sphere becomes a guiding map of successful deliberation, as Habermas envisioned his concept in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

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## 8.0. Appendix A.

### Chapter 4.0: Findings, Additional Tables

#### Textual Analysis - Examples

Media Account	Examples
BBC	<p><b>@BBCBreaking</b></p> <p>Three party leaders Ed Miliband, Nick Clegg &amp; Nigel Farage all resign within an hour <a href="http://t.co/jpy6wse1Rp">http://t.co/jpy6wse1Rp</a> #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/pkHvHz04pl">http://t.co/pkHvHz04pl</a></p> <p>Live now: David Cameron gives victory speech after Conservatives win #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/jpy6wse1Rp">http://t.co/jpy6wse1Rp</a> <a href="http://t.co/aOTRThluuF">http://t.co/aOTRThluuF</a></p> <p>First all-Tory cabinet meeting in UK for 18 years is held after the Conservatives' #GE2015 win <a href="http://t.co/EquxnmvUw">http://t.co/EquxnmvUw</a> <a href="http://t.co/YfR3731mxy">http://t.co/YfR3731mxy</a></p> <p><b>@BBCNews</b></p> <p>We're trying out a #ge2015 result service tonight - check out @BBCElectionBot</p> <p>Who are the #GE2015 candidates? We've crunched the numbers <a href="http://t.co/AZGJaAd66S">http://t.co/AZGJaAd66S</a> #BBCGoFigure (via @NickEardley) <a href="http://t.co/W1MkLaZfW1">http://t.co/W1MkLaZfW1</a></p> <p>Our political editor @bbcnickrobinson assesses Nick Clegg's #GE2015 manifesto speech. Listen: <a href="http://t.co/ukWJ09STgz">http://t.co/ukWJ09STgz</a> #radio4six</p> <p>Who wants to be your next MP? Check our list of #GE2015 candidates <a href="http://t.co/TTwtAoUjmk">http://t.co/TTwtAoUjmk</a> <a href="http://t.co/YHms3FkHVC">http://t.co/YHms3FkHVC</a></p> <p><b>@BBCPolitics</b></p> <p>Are parties taking things too literally as #GE2015 closes in? Our coverage: <a href="http://t.co/rif4Sdadic">http://t.co/rif4Sdadic</a> #EdStone <a href="http://t.co/LIGZT0nsui">http://t.co/LIGZT0nsui</a></p> <p>How much do you know about your #GE2015 constituency? We've got a quiz for every seat: <a href="http://t.co/3rQ1CCxJ4O">http://t.co/3rQ1CCxJ4O</a> <a href="http://t.co/Nw8im19Ls5">http://t.co/Nw8im19Ls5</a></p> <p>The Game begins. David Cameron picking up some #GE2015 tips on the set of Game of Thrones? <a href="http://t.co/YTzdEclF2S">http://t.co/YTzdEclF2S</a> <a href="http://t.co/DxgwjZ826u">http://t.co/DxgwjZ826u</a></p> <p>Good morning. Ed Miliband launches Labour's manifesto later. For continuing #GE2015 coverage: <a href="http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA">http://t.co/jsd8Jb1IYA</a> <a href="http://t.co/LxYO995Fho">http://t.co/LxYO995Fho</a></p>
The Guardian	<p><b>@Guardian</b></p> <p>General election social media: a good week for breweries and cupcakes ... <a href="http://t.co/Gtvz1asw6L">http://t.co/Gtvz1asw6L</a></p> <p>How to register to vote in the general election 2015 <a href="http://t.co/nWbuJzLDg8">http://t.co/nWbuJzLDg8</a> #RegisterToVote #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/8LUKnEjdrT">http://t.co/8LUKnEjdrT</a></p> <p>How did the challengers fare in the final TV debate? Verdict: <a href="http://t.co/9hecnHo8o7">http://t.co/9hecnHo8o7</a> #BBCDebate</p>



	<p><b>@GuardianNews</b></p> <p>Ed Miliband rules out 'confidence and supply' deal with SNP <a href="http://t.co/u0dOM6H7Xo">http://t.co/u0dOM6H7Xo</a></p> <p>Election 2015: official campaign starts as parties clash over EU referendum - live <a href="http://t.co/ZgfXRyRP3o">http://t.co/ZgfXRyRP3o</a></p> <p>Election 2015 live: Lib Dems would work with largest party, says Nick Clegg <a href="http://t.co/dYETBslTeO">http://t.co/dYETBslTeO</a></p> <p><b>@GdnPolitics</b></p> <p>At the risk of sounding like a trendy vicar, register to vote <a href="http://t.co/QAtJnzCv8h">http://t.co/QAtJnzCv8h</a></p> <p>We 'mis-tweeted' earlier - should have been ""Nigel Farage* says he'll take back control of Britain's borders by leaving the EU." #apologies</p> <p>And that's it. <b>Phew.</b> Who do you think performed the best? #BBCDebate</p> <p>And here on Twitter - which of the debaters are you talking about most? #BBCDebate <a href="http://t.co/4p8jYSGHsz">http://t.co/4p8jYSGHsz</a></p> <p>We have (<b>what feels like another, but isn't</b>) question on immigration. First up: migrant Natalie Bennett #BBCDebate <a href="http://t.co/6chbBHeR84">http://t.co/6chbBHeR84</a></p> <p>(<b>Ahem.</b> Typo apology: Here not hear!) #BBCDebate #whoops</p>
The Telegraph	<p><b>@Telegraph</b></p> <p>David Cameron: I have heard the message of frustrated Tories loud and clear <a href="http://t.co/jWqPIUtzB0">http://t.co/jWqPIUtzB0</a> <a href="http://t.co/27sxUXSlvy">http://t.co/27sxUXSlvy</a></p> <p>That's it for the #bbcqt election special. Reaction here: <a href="http://t.co/hziGbvfhN0">http://t.co/hziGbvfhN0</a> <a href="http://t.co/DKS2plD7xr">http://t.co/DKS2plD7xr</a></p> <p>Quiz: Can you tell #Labour and the Communists' election manifestos apart? <a href="http://t.co/ZXy3oDsDn1">http://t.co/ZXy3oDsDn1</a> <a href="http://t.co/WpCkCNlfSp">http://t.co/WpCkCNlfSp</a></p> <p>The rise of #milifandom - will it be the #cameronettes next? <a href="http://t.co/bfIUzhZYP1">http://t.co/bfIUzhZYP1</a> <a href="http://t.co/13qf3ccp6I">http://t.co/13qf3ccp6I</a></p> <p><b>@TelegraphNews</b></p> <p><b>Hurrah!</b> Warm weather set to continue for sunny spring <a href="http://t.co/ow1MkHdHp2">http://t.co/ow1MkHdHp2</a> <a href="http://t.co/7ZeKBPj8cG">http://t.co/7ZeKBPj8cG</a></p> <p>#Ukip sources contest Farage account of how he was re-elected. Latest: <a href="http://t.co/pakXThRggi">http://t.co/pakXThRggi</a> <a href="http://t.co/n8uIvD1VeB">http://t.co/n8uIvD1VeB</a></p> <p>The #LibDems manifesto is almost the same length as the #Labour and #Conservative manifestos combined <a href="http://t.co/e6XlCR0bzu">http://t.co/e6XlCR0bzu</a></p> <p><b>@TelePolitics</b></p> <p>Never mind #milifandom, meet the #cameronettes who can't get enough of David Cameron <a href="http://t.co/t7UONTP2Tf">http://t.co/t7UONTP2Tf</a></p>

	<p>UK election candidates: who's standing in 2015? <a href="http://t.co/notiylgqAK">http://t.co/notiylgqAK</a></p> <p>General Election 2015 in pictures: 10 April 2015 <a href="http://t.co/meupqBNnUw">http://t.co/meupqBNnUw</a></p>
Daily Mail	<p><b>@MailOnline</b>  New study suggests overweight people are <b>LESS</b> likely to develop dementia <a href="http://t.co/RPkAnT7vOg">http://t.co/RPkAnT7vOg</a></p> <p>Just over an hour-and-a-half until the #GE2015 polls close. Follow @DailyMailUK for the latest</p> <p><b>@DailyMailUK</b></p> <p>Who knew these two were mates <a href="http://t.co/yxyKn3LN0C">http://t.co/yxyKn3LN0C</a> <a href="http://t.co/fWzwbqZZQK">http://t.co/fWzwbqZZQK</a></p> <p>Mums, are you still undecided who to vote for in the #GE2015? Here are parties' childcare pledges laid bare <a href="http://t.co/uFYQPkmQ16">http://t.co/uFYQPkmQ16</a></p> <p>Nick Clegg's campaign tour is anything but boring <a href="http://t.co/Tfn0SyU1WQ">http://t.co/Tfn0SyU1WQ</a> <a href="http://t.co/4waDeKnK6y">http://t.co/4waDeKnK6y</a></p> <p>If you've just woken up this is everything you need to know about the #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/wHSpkRLT95">http://t.co/wHSpkRLT95</a> <a href="http://t.co/oEtIkLQ7gT">http://t.co/oEtIkLQ7gT</a></p> <p>Miliband to <b>QUIT</b> after leading Labour to disastrous #GE2015 defeat <a href="http://t.co/NZeOvEDh5l">http://t.co/NZeOvEDh5l</a> <a href="http://t.co/HxTyj9o9rD">http://t.co/HxTyj9o9rD</a></p> <p>No selfies in the polling station (it could land you in prison) <a href="http://t.co/J5YHaQavKi">http://t.co/J5YHaQavKi</a> #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/M8XSBpmCIC">http://t.co/M8XSBpmCIC</a></p> <p>Moment BBC reporter calls Nigel Farage a c*** <a href="http://t.co/WjvPt6qB6h">http://t.co/WjvPt6qB6h</a> <a href="https://t.co/trugRGnXu3">https://t.co/trugRGnXu3</a></p>

Table 4e

Media Accounts	Examples
Buzzfeed	<p><b>@BuzzfeedUKPol</b></p> <p>Even in Ed Miliband's constituency, voters still aren't convinced by Labour <a href="http://t.co/2Kbr4XVeZG">http://t.co/2Kbr4XVeZG</a> <a href="http://t.co/LxFdUHjWfy">http://t.co/LxFdUHjWfy</a></p> <p>Massive movement on Betfair's political betting market.Gives David Cameron 85% chance of remaining prime minister. <a href="http://t.co/O9S6KHchlh">http://t.co/O9S6KHchlh</a></p> <p>The Internet Is <b>Flipping Out</b> Over Ed Miliband Carving His Pledges In Stone: <a href="http://t.co/ajJ2EbEhhi">http://t.co/ajJ2EbEhhi</a> <a href="http://t.co/56xrdJrKQM">http://t.co/56xrdJrKQM</a></p> <p>Unbelievable - David Mundell holds on. There's still a Tory MP in Scotland. #ge2015</p> <p>This girl is really regretting asking a question and is bored out of her mind. #BBCDebate <a href="http://t.co/boeoqjg2sr">http://t.co/boeoqjg2sr</a></p> <p>That awkward moment when you weren't invited to the party. #BBCDebate <a href="http://t.co/yj9iH6h2cc">http://t.co/yj9iH6h2cc</a></p>

	<p>The photographers <i>go bananas</i> as Cameron holds up manifesto. This scene will probably be on your front pages tomorrow. <a href="http://t.co/7mD1CDEstM">http://t.co/7mD1CDEstM</a></p> <p>Seven people being allowed to bore on at length, no matter how mad their views. Worst university tutorial ever. #leadersdebate</p> <p>SAD MUSIC NO MORE DEBATE #BBCDebate</p> <p>Just think. All those thousands of articles predicting the outcome of the election. Now worthless. We will remember them.</p> <p>There's four questions in this #leadersdebate. Two hours. It's basically an A-level English exam.</p>
Huffington Post	<p>@HuffPostUKPol</p> <p>Even David Cameron doesn't think MPs should get their £7,000 pay rise... <a href="http://t.co/WrESPWD884">http://t.co/WrESPWD884</a> <a href="http://t.co/7X7R7bIZIU">http://t.co/7X7R7bIZIU</a></p> <p>Who will win the general election? Our best guess... <a href="http://t.co/Jz6B0FbVYv">http://t.co/Jz6B0FbVYv</a> #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/BKHsRFiWps">http://t.co/BKHsRFiWps</a></p> <p>The <b>SEVENTH</b> contender for deputy Labour leader is throwing his hat into the ring <a href="http://t.co/pXejqKgD2i">http://t.co/pXejqKgD2i</a> <a href="http://t.co/kFzn9z0SMk">http://t.co/kFzn9z0SMk</a></p> <p>David Cameron just suffered a pretty major brain fart. #villagate <a href="http://t.co/XSV3FJcKL9">http://t.co/XSV3FJcKL9</a> <a href="http://t.co/XNFv1ZPOq">http://t.co/XNFv1ZPOq</a></p> <p>Ukip supporter's photobomb of David Cameron is <b>brilliant, but mostly creepy</b> <a href="http://t.co/GIonjm8Le9">http://t.co/GIonjm8Le9</a> <a href="http://t.co/LBYAeXVPWV">http://t.co/LBYAeXVPWV</a></p> <p>David Cameron serenaded by ukulele player singing 'f**k off back to Eton' <a href="http://t.co/qNNI5Div7E">http://t.co/qNNI5Div7E</a> <a href="http://t.co/EqmOpdg3lp">http://t.co/EqmOpdg3lp</a></p> <p>Did you see the emergence of MEGAMARR this morning? <a href="http://t.co/H2thqYru1W">http://t.co/H2thqYru1W</a> #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/HvzKW3YVCu">http://t.co/HvzKW3YVCu</a></p> <p><b>Quelle surprise!</b> Katie Hopkins alludes to Mensch #Milifandom row with cryptic 'bullying' tweet <a href="http://t.co/3Ujv8jy478">http://t.co/3Ujv8jy478</a> <a href="http://t.co/AAJtzkixmD">http://t.co/AAJtzkixmD</a></p> <p>Vote for <b>Dave</b> and he has a little gift for you <a href="http://t.co/oPiwLKJWuj">http://t.co/oPiwLKJWuj</a> <a href="http://t.co/ON9vlukQa3">http://t.co/ON9vlukQa3</a></p> <p>George Galloway was not a good loser - and Twitter was <b>NOT</b> sympathetic #GE2015 #BradfordWest <a href="http://t.co/sTCvCDD4UW">http://t.co/sTCvCDD4UW</a> <a href="http://t.co/CEWWOs5wCP">http://t.co/CEWWOs5wCP</a></p>

Table 4f

Journalistic Account	Examples
BBC @bbcnickrobinson	<p>Answer Home Sec won't give to Q on how low net migration will go = "no idea as we've limited control on who comes &amp; none over who leaves"</p> <p>Exciting election night ahead. Join @daviddimble @theJeremyVine @maitlis @afneil @bbclaurak &amp; me from 21.55 ...1/2</p> <p>Told you Exit Poll worth waiting for. In '10 I was v sceptical but it was spot on. Doesn't mean will be this time of course. Keep watching</p>

	<p>Sorry. Technical gremlins stopped my report on my interview with @David_Cameron reaching London. It will run soon and on @BBCNews at 10</p>
<p>BBC @bbclaurak</p>	<p>so, Farage is 'Toast' if he sticks to his word, so does Carswell become leader by default?</p> <p><b>whoops</b>, hope to give you a peek later on #Periscope</p> <p>just been talking to one of Blatter's former colleagues who is absolutely convinced he'll survive <b>tmrw's</b> vote because...</p> <p>Cooper says Labour was wrong to run deficit precrash even <b>tho</b> that didn't cause downturn... V interesting on Immigration too</p> <p>And labour whoops on non-doms, Balls on record in Jan warning of consequence of abolishing the status altogether.. Tricky qs for them</p> <p>PM-I will now form a majority Conseravtive govt, I've been proud to lead the frist coalition <b>govt</b> in 70 yrs, big thank you to Nick Clegg 1st</p>
<p>BBC @BBCJLendale</p>	<p><b>I am struck</b> by the graciousness of so many Labour candidates in defeat. Not sure it is being matched by all Conservative victors.</p> <p>This Tony Blair event <b>very nostalgic</b>. A member of the audience even called me "Tory scum" for asking a question.</p> <p>The shape, the personality &amp; the balance of British politics is changing before our eyes.</p>
<p>The Guardian @AndrewRawnsley</p>	<p>For David Cameron, the best answer to the Europe question is a quick one <a href="http://t.co/1sry1CdAWz">http://t.co/1sry1CdAWz</a></p> <p>The real reason David Cameron is sitting on a Commons majority. <a href="http://t.co/ghSrIWfj9n">http://t.co/ghSrIWfj9n</a></p> <p>Discussing the manifestos- and much else- at The Observer Election Countdown tomorrow night. <a href="http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v">http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v</a> #GE2015 #guardianlive</p> <p>Be great if you could join us for The Observer Election Countdown this Thursday. <a href="http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v">http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v</a> #election #GE2015 #guardianlive</p> <p>Be great if you could join me and my colleagues for The Observer Election Countdown on Thursday evening. <a href="http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v">http://t.co/gb9U8ln1v</a> #GE2015</p>
<p>The Guardian @AndrewSparrow</p>	<p>Speaker's re-election - best speech - @HarrietHarman's - <a href="http://t.co/hBxN10QcOl">http://t.co/hBxN10QcOl</a> - Harriet for next Commons Speaker anyone?</p> <p>My #EdStone analysis - <a href="http://t.co/ZduPKJer0C">http://t.co/ZduPKJer0C</a> - Sheffield Rally? No Silly! <b>If so, no sillier than</b> Tory tax lock law</p> <p><b>Superb</b> column on the inadequacies of this election campaign - Do read it <a href="https://t.co/1YeCQYOW1f">https://t.co/1YeCQYOW1f</a></p> <p>Ed Miliband's interview with Andrew Marr - Verdict from the Twitter commentariat - <b>Pretty favourable</b> - <a href="http://t.co/dF4GYmqb9D">http://t.co/dF4GYmqb9D</a></p> <p>Scottish leaders' debate - Verdict from the Twitter commentariat - <a href="http://t.co/HkRnWGKNDV">http://t.co/HkRnWGKNDV</a> - No real consensus, <b>tho</b></p> <p>3 things to note about the Telegraph business leaders letter - <a href="http://t.co/YYsqZBJJ6k">http://t.co/YYsqZBJJ6k</a> - Arguably, it's also an endorsement for the Lib Dems</p>
<p>The Guardian @pollytoynbee</p>	<p>These are the <b>agony</b> final minutes...</p>

	<p>Anyone who first called the Tories the SelfServatives?</p> <p>Let this be the last Thursday one-day election: queues at polling stations at 10 a disaster. <b>Let's</b> vote all week, certainly Sat and Sun.</p>
<b>The Telegraph</b> <b>@JamesKirkup</b>	<p>Simple but still striking fact: the last time Labour won an election without Tony Blair as leader was 1974. <a href="http://t.co/COyBCQmdcQ">http://t.co/COyBCQmdcQ</a></p> <p>Not getting much attention, but Tories increasing their majority in Carlisle is seriously impressive + important result.</p> <p>David Cameron has just come close to promising another Conservative-Lib Dem coalition. Slightly wild guess: Nigel Farage will not win Thanet South. But he won't step down as Ukip leader either: party will demand he stays.</p> <p>"Cameron: strong / Miliband: stumbling / Clegg: sidelined / Audience: savage#bbcqt"</p> <p>It's OK to go to bed now. When you wake up, it'll be the same: Tories triumphant. Labour stuffed. LibDems dead. Scotland lost. #GE2015</p>
<b>The Telegraph</b> <b>@DPJHodges</b>	<p>If Nigel Farage is leader of Ukip in 2020 I'll streak naked down Whitehall again...</p> <p>May have to be some minor compromise on degree of nakedness, to avoid arrest. And spreading panic amongst innocent by-standers...</p> <p>I think Brand is an idiot. But if a guy who's been saying "don't vote, no point" changes his mind, that's a good thing isn't it?</p> <p>Even by the standards of his previous, (rare), foreign policy pronouncements, this speech by Ed Miliband is breathtaking in its hypocrisy.</p> <p><b>Loving the non-dom</b> row. Proper shoot-out. What elections are all about.</p> <p>What <b>I love</b> is the way people keep saying "keep your eye on the seats" as if there is zero correlation between seats and actual votes.</p>
<b>The Telegraph</b> <b>@IainMartin1</b>	<p>On back of Ed M Absolute Radio interview have had several requests to relaunch DUEMA (the Don't Underestimate Ed Mili Association.)</p> <p>What a long way the Cameroons have come. A big retail offer, quite a contrast with shambles of 2010.</p> <p>This edition of @bbcquestiontime is <b>so bad</b>, there's only one thing for it. Harry and Paul: <a href="https://t.co/R339L36n6w">https://t.co/R339L36n6w</a></p> <p>Enough @bbcquestiontime - <b>Ooh he's terrible</b> that David Cameron. There should be a general election, or something.</p> <p>Attention political leaders: please stop referring to "ordinary" "working people." Doesn't sound very good. <b>Really quite annoying.</b></p> <p>@montie Told you :-&gt; @RuthDavidsonMSP</p> <p>Are SNP MPs *really* going to pursuit this ridiculous seat row in the Commons? The SNP won, now be serious and get on with work.</p> <p>Kudos to @DPJHodges - right that Cameron would win and right that Miliband wouldn't.</p>
<b>Daily Mail</b> <b>@jameschappers</b>	<p>Bizarre that Clegg - veteran of @LBC phone-ins and monthly press conferences - takes ONE question from a journalist #LibDemManifesto</p>



	<p><a href="http://t.co/f8SXrMddLc">http://t.co/f8SXrMddLc</a> <a href="http://t.co/XfKaZg9HcK">http://t.co/XfKaZg9HcK</a></p> <p><b>Sadly don't think</b> Nick Clegg can compete with Ed's #milifandom. Looks like just 1 fan account @cleggidarity &amp; no tweets since 2011 :(</p>
Buzzfeed @JamieRoss7	<p><b>I'm afraid.</b> Take me back to the climbing wall. #snpmanifesto <a href="http://t.co/7CdnAu6p1q">http://t.co/7CdnAu6p1q</a></p> <p>A good five or six people have told me they're voting UKIP but won't give me their names because they don't want to be outed.</p> <p><b>CLEGG.</b> <a href="https://t.co/6nDQkY1R0C">https://t.co/6nDQkY1R0C</a></p> <p><b>Well good heavens.</b> <a href="http://t.co/ULyL0p8ggZ">http://t.co/ULyL0p8ggZ</a></p> <p>The most <b>Thick Of It moment</b> of the election so far. Murphy dances with pensioners as devastating poll news breaks. <a href="https://t.co/k7A0hw7HJ3">https://t.co/k7A0hw7HJ3</a></p> <p>I will be disappointed if the 56 SNP MPs don't arrive in London today at the same time, each in their own helicopter with their face on it.</p> <p>Political journalists saying #ge2015 has been boring reminds me of this quote from @angrysalmond. <a href="http://t.co/ZhC2i5jMLs">http://t.co/ZhC2i5jMLs</a></p> <p><b>Oh dear.</b> Cameron has just slipped up and called this "a career defining" election.</p> <p>I'll spend the next month asking every politician I meet if they're prepared to eat a hat if they lose. Surely one will eventually pay off.</p> <p><b>STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT.</b> <a href="http://t.co/bPbto0gGVE">http://t.co/bPbto0gGVE</a></p>
Buzzfeed @JimWaterson	<p>Eve of election and a <b>*Labour*</b> leader who could be PM is being snuck into events due to level of hate in <b>*Scotland*</b>. <a href="https://t.co/1cUE7FPtVG">https://t.co/1cUE7FPtVG</a></p> <p>Genuine question: has there been any political speech this campaign where the headline announcement/detail wasn't briefed out overnight?</p> <p>I <b>bloody love</b> elections. <a href="http://t.co/PUpGpKmLEM">http://t.co/PUpGpKmLEM</a> <a href="http://t.co/z6Ix88mZGd">http://t.co/z6Ix88mZGd</a></p> <p><b>Massively enjoying</b> watching political Twitter pick fights with each other at 2am after staying up too late getting tipsy watching Eurovision.</p>
Buzzfeed @dats	<p>Actually, it looks like you <b>CAN</b> still register to vote <a href="http://t.co/GcELMZxORB">http://t.co/GcELMZxORB</a></p> <p><b>Thanks, AP.</b> Nearly forgot about that one. RT @AP_Planner Tomorrow: UK General Election</p> <p><b>LOLOL</b> Ed Miliband, interviewed by Russell Brand, what a joke. Now that joke has 207,000 views on the trailer <a href="https://t.co/VYPN4tGNTs">https://t.co/VYPN4tGNTs</a></p> <p><b>ZERO DAYS TO VOTING.</b> <a href="https://t.co/1QvXV8YVfY">https://t.co/1QvXV8YVfY</a></p> <p>Jeremy Hunt stops #r4today interviewer: "I'm going to answer that, if you give me a chance!" <b>*gives Tory slogan and doesn't answer question*</b></p>

Table 4g

## #GE2015 Dialogic Exchanges

Tweet	User	Time
I wished I could vote tomorrow - years of residency - no say over what affects me #letmevote #GE2015	josephine1060	5/8/2015 0:54
Dance Workout Videos â€œ Exercise Dance Beats <a href="http://t.co/AGJigV3oyx#maypac">#http://t.co/AGJigV3oyx#maypac</a> #garlandshooting #ge2015 #yaztatiligelsede #kiamvp	FitnessMotivatb	5/8/2015 0:54
Put forward your arguments if you wish but don't patronise as if people can't make their own decision.#GE2015	jonhotspur88	5/8/2015 0:54
etominusipi: THE RECKONINGmeejahafter #GE2015 i won't even sample radio 4 any more celebrate Life & beware oâ€™! <a href="http://t.co/FR6w1tjlv">#http://t.co/FR6w1tjlv</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015 Conservatives won. It's all Thatcher's fault.	MontagueBrench	5/8/2015 0:54
Not sure i have any faith in prediction polls anymore after #GE2015 <a href="https://t.co/sTZOtVkkhL">#https://t.co/sTZOtVkkhL</a>	citybeatmaria	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: alistair_lawson: OzodaM GreenJennyJones Nobody (or very few) bought this at #GE2015 & frankly it's justâ€™! <a href="http://t.co/6fwSjDKjij">#http://t.co/6fwSjDKjij</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
1957AJB: Thank heavens the media didn't talk about council cuts during #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/D6yDKmopCX">#http://t.co/D6yDKmopCX</a> Not that tâ€™! <a href="http://t.co/NbFSvq2crA">#http://t.co/NbFSvq2crA</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
In The Wake of #indyref & #GE2015 We Need To Put The #BBC Under The Microscope To See If It Is Fit For Purpose & In Scotland's Interests	ScottieMcClue	5/8/2015 0:54
Anti-Austerity Activists Plan 'five years of protest' - #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/2x1k5DcxOm">#http://t.co/2x1k5DcxOm</a> #ScrapTrident #EndAusterityNOW <a href="http://t.co/Ssfq8CF2jQ">#http://t.co/Ssfq8CF2jQ</a>	AntiAusterityUK	5/8/2015 0:54
kgbbmx: Michael Gove Cabinet Card No2/30 from airdmckinstrie #tory #GE2015 #snpbecause #gove #GE15 #cabinet â€™! <a href="http://t.co/Vcne9YgWv3">#http://t.co/Vcne9YgWv3</a>	snpbecause	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: Election2015: #GE2015: Police warn big budget cuts will lead to 'paramilitary' force â€™! <a href="http://t.co/GkSv00iw6V">#http://t.co/GkSv00iw6V</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Cooper urges Labour business rethink <a href="http://t.co/GjJqgh6AR3">#http://t.co/GjJqgh6AR3</a> #GE2015	RelentPolitics	5/8/2015 0:54
.@JimBethell: Cameron's trying to recast UK's traditional foreign policy alliance w/ US && not just "battle buddies" #GE2015	PACouncil	5/8/2015 0:54
socialmediamond: socialmediamond: socialmediamond: Very interesting analysis of #GE2015 #socialmedia from OIIOxfordâ€™! <a href="http://t.co/hA0f2ykOaX">#http://t.co/hA0f2ykOaX</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54



southkirk: Morrissey shame is the name for the British government #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/Gs1JmTsLhw">http://t.co/Gs1JmTsLhw</a> <a href="http://t.co/bMaXs1fNAX">http://t.co/bMaXs1fNAX</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Tired from grappling with the idea that humans are fundamentally awful. Taking my leave from caring for the foreseeable future. #GE2015	foxmakesthings	5/8/2015 0:54
NewPakistan2020: #GE2015 #NHS #Labour #Tories #Conservatives #UK #CameronmustGo #Britain #England #Elections #Lonâ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/KE5qffK8L3">http://t.co/KE5qffK8L3</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
newsappuk: MPs gather in the House of Commons for the first time since #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/Xkp06n45Qr">http://t.co/Xkp06n45Qr</a> via â€¦ <a href="http://t.co/RhZxwkBG8y">http://t.co/RhZxwkBG8y</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Margaret may be knownas the school milk snatcher,we've got a flat we ownthanks to Mrs Thatcher. :)#economics#GE15#GE2015	sonshineonline	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015: #UKIP Still Trying To Organise Post-#election Drinks Celebration In Place Thatâ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/Gq3IsC5j63">http://t.co/Gq3IsC5j63</a> <a href="http://t.co/8lefaDaEay">http://t.co/8lefaDaEay</a>	Election2015	5/8/2015 0:54
Election2015: #GE2015: The Observer view on how #Labour must work out why Britain stopped listening  â€¦ <a href="http://t.co/Lay4tS7p6p">http://t.co/Lay4tS7p6p</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015: John Bercow reelected as Speaker of the House of Commons <a href="http://t.co/3P1vV3q2Yo">http://t.co/3P1vV3q2Yo</a> <a href="http://t.co/h6RWD1N2d3">http://t.co/h6RWD1N2d3</a>	Election2015	5/8/2015 0:54
Following #GE2015 And #indyref The #BBC Have Demonstrated That They Cannot Serve Two Masters @theSNP @Conservatives #unionists #nationalists	ScottieMcClue	5/8/2015 0:54
<a href="http://t.co/ymj7d4dYjB">http://t.co/ymj7d4dYjB</a> #life #lifestyle #fashionblog #fashionblogger #ootd #outfit #look #Hawks #GE2015 #freethenipple #Directioners4Music	MoehNykomentia	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015: Unite expected to debate breaking link with #Labour - Politics live <a href="http://t.co/uPB1zRx4u8">http://t.co/uPB1zRx4u8</a> <a href="http://t.co/Ld4LE4F6UW">http://t.co/Ld4LE4F6UW</a>	KatieGlaysheer	5/8/2015 0:54
Aaaah now #GE2015 is out of my system I can once more read the soothing tactical tones of @Zonal_Marking again <a href="http://t.co/pZtAo1b5k">http://t.co/pZtAo1b5k</a>	Michael140688	5/8/2015 0:54
MPs back in the @HouseofCommons today following #GE2015. Looking forward to working with all to ensure #ESG continues to be on the agenda.	UKSIFFergus	5/8/2015 0:54
katethecrab: Here's a little wearecohesive blog I wrote last week on the #tech sector in the wake of the #GE2015 râ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/gAcYcUrkd0">http://t.co/gAcYcUrkd0</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
In Praise of Anger - Reverend Ray Gaston   VERY GOOD blog from @RevdRay #GE2015 #Conservatives #protest #graffitti <a href="http://t.co/e4n1PHnI5b">http://t.co/e4n1PHnI5b</a>	Ekklesia_co_uk	5/8/2015 0:54
Wow. Harriet Harman is distanced...don't think she realises most people who turn out for #GE2015 don't wanna micro-transact their interests	janemcconnell	5/8/2015 0:54

"To be fair, I voted @Conservatives and I've signed 3 petitions against them since they came to power." #GE2015 10 days in.	sarahhillsays	5/8/2015 0:54
My post about the #MachineLearning models we built during Election night for @timesredbox #GE2015	StefioCeccon	5/8/2015 0:54
Let's all #voteukip to shake up the establishment! #GE2015 #VoteUKIP2015 #LeaveEU to #RejoinWorld <a href="http://t.co/G3FrLNZLVb">http://t.co/G3FrLNZLVb</a>	ukiplover456	5/8/2015 0:54
@VoteRoehampton Agree! But I thought the Lab/Con/Lib #GE2015 campaigns were all strongly based on fear and occasionally, hate	greenputney	5/8/2015 0:54
@giles_fraser Nothing better shows Left's contempt for ordinary people than its reaction to Tories winning #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/6aVl27ax1t">http://t.co/6aVl27ax1t</a>	cmj1953	5/8/2015 0:54
Looks like the revolt against the government has already begun ðŸ™ª #GE2015 <a href="https://t.co/Qfekldl6uU">https://t.co/Qfekldl6uU</a>	sunathanlater	5/8/2015 0:54
Just 1 in 4 voted for Cameron's @Conservatives in the 2015 general election. 11 million Tory votes versus 33 million for the rest. #GE2015	TheMurdochTimes	5/8/2015 0:54
So Miliband, Farage and Clegg resigned... On the bright side looks like top gears got three new presenters ðŸ™ª, ðŸ™ª, #GE2015 #topgear	___C_o_d_y___	5/8/2015 0:54
In the aftermath of #GE2015, I am developing an urge to move to Scotland.â€¦ <a href="https://t.co/40gwrBBBor">https://t.co/40gwrBBBor</a>	dafuloth	5/8/2015 0:54
@juliamacfarlane #GE2015 has made me more right wing than I've ever been in my life. Feel like I've stepped off a plane in another country.	DerekMorrison19	5/8/2015 0:54
Why does there appear to be a media blackout concerning the #londonprotest @BBCNews @SkyNews @itvnews #GE2015	sibugg	5/8/2015 0:54
The 24% figure the #ToriesOutNow crowd are using is cute as well. There was a chance for voting reform and turnout was worse than #GE2015	theDanWalk	5/8/2015 0:54
@cjbll_london Not at all shy just not shouty like so many loudmouth lefties in this election campaign #GE2015 #ConservativeVictory	0604Steel	5/8/2015 0:54
Its the fucking weekend after a 6 week #GE2015 campaign. Even news agencies take a bit of time off. why cover #londonprotest #ToriesOutNow	EdRedonion	5/8/2015 0:54
Nice that The Revolution is going to put an end to DC's cunning plan to rush through all the oppressive legislation in weeks after #GE2015	CalgacusMacA	5/8/2015 0:54
@LouiseeeKelly did you know police and ambulance staff were injured today during that riot? #GE2015 #riots #rude #joke #disgusting	NatalieMatilda	5/8/2015 0:54
1UZAIRSAIED: Michael Gove ruined education now going to ruin the justice system. #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/CFBsEbUbsU">http://t.co/CFBsEbUbsU</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54

Anti-Tory demo outside Downing Street. #generalelection #ge2015 #election #conservatives <a href="https://t.co/OjVeZviKEo">https://t.co/OjVeZviKEo</a>	RickFindler	5/8/2015 0:54
2 things stick out... The union is in grave danger and scrapping FPTP maybe the best way to save it!Should have been done years ago #GE2015	mambojambo89	5/8/2015 0:54
Protesting because you don't like the results of a democratic vote is like protesting against democracy itself. #GE2015	PerMannequin	5/8/2015 0:54
Good listening to @ZacGoldsmith @bbc5live #GE2015	Dumlekogbara	5/8/2015 0:54
<a href="http://t.co/CXesuQsGvy">http://t.co/CXesuQsGvy</a> once #politics matters- @theSNP will wreck #Union given the chance. @David_Cameron legacy is #Union or NOT. #GE2015	skingers	5/8/2015 0:54
Oh good, glad it wasn't just me... #GE2015 #Manchester <a href="https://t.co/wbb8RQuzrO">https://t.co/wbb8RQuzrO</a>	amyglendinning	5/8/2015 0:54
Yes! @tomkatsumi is live stitching the #ge2015 results.	SomersTownGreen	5/8/2015 0:54
Anyone up for a deposit whipround for the #libdems? Anyone? Bueller? Bueller? #ge2015	thiefotime	5/8/2015 0:54
Watching #AsTimeGoesBy as I cba with the #GE2015 coverage right now, with little coming in what's there to watch?	DaRkDaN89	5/8/2015 0:54
@Bangernomics Indeed mate. Need details after #GE2015 please :)	The_ChrisShaw	5/8/2015 0:54
Quiet before the storm? #GE2015 #Glasgow <a href="http://t.co/uRIRrWJxJf">http://t.co/uRIRrWJxJf</a>	robyrobbieroby	5/8/2015 0:54
As the results come in, the Greens are always up on their previous numbers. #GE2015	kate_prentice	5/8/2015 0:54
@crooksiephil It's why I keep flipping back to Jeremy Paxman on @Channel4 #GeneralElection #GE2015	kledon	5/8/2015 0:54
Why are they so slow to get to the declaration so we keep missing a bit? Very irritating #GE2015	missanna9	5/8/2015 0:54
Mr Blay also said, "I want to get my country back. I think UKIP is the best way to do that." #GE2015	robpowellnews	5/8/2015 0:54
I AM A KNOBHEAD!! Is this the only option for the next Government or will the exit poll t... <a href="http://t.co/PI0vuhxsxe">http://t.co/PI0vuhxsxe</a> #ge2015 election2015	Neil_Eastwood77	5/8/2015 0:54
Why are the #greens candidates predominantly significantly better looking than the rest? How peculiar. #bbc2015 #GE2015	KeiranZolanski	5/8/2015 0:54
Christ. I wish ONE single MP could just answer a bloody question. No wonder so many people don't vote. #GE2015	jamiefewery	5/8/2015 0:54
Thanks, #SNP. Fuck. Wrong Miliband, #Labour. #GE2015 #ExitPolls	intrepidblue	5/8/2015 0:54

Some very glum looking faces in the Labour camp here. Counting process has now begun #RandHW #GE2015	RuglenReformer	5/8/2015 0:54
Figures from Westfield in Fraserburgh put @theSNP and Whiteford at 70%, Tories around 25%. Lib Dems...2%. More at @pressjournal #GE2015	JoshKing_PJ	5/8/2015 0:54
Sophie give us back our teddy's head #GE2015	Farce1111	5/8/2015 0:54
If Miliband does worse than Gordon Brown then that is truly truly staggering #GE2015	GAlexBrowning	5/8/2015 0:54
There's a nasty, sneaky cat in my neighbourhood. I've named him Peter Mandelson #GE2015	ClaraHara	5/8/2015 0:54
Justine Greening into Putney at a canter with 23,000 #GE2015	Harlesy96	5/8/2015 0:54
Exit polls were accurate in 2005 & 2010, but choosing right booths to poll is key. Good explainer <a href="http://t.co/kmjaBr2LcX">http://t.co/kmjaBr2LcX</a> #GE2015	paulkildea	5/8/2015 0:54
Peter Kellner says some Lib Dems now expecting fewer than 20 seats. Getting grimmer and grimmer #GE2015 @BBCElection	bbckamal	5/8/2015 0:54
Once all of the papers are verified, we'll count the votes cast in the three Sandwell constituencies. #GE2015 #SandwellElection #LE2015	sandwellcouncil	5/8/2015 0:54
Labour lamenting the high turnouts. Shamefully undemocratic in their pursuit of power. #GE2015	tot_777	5/8/2015 0:54
Veteran Labour member told my colleague at Glasgow count: "I'm away for a cup of tea. You get a cup of tea at funerals." #GE2015	KatrineBussey	5/8/2015 0:54
@bcbradio I'm with you in spirit! ! #GE2015	michellemapf	5/8/2015 0:54
Yvette Cooper popping up on ITV now - always send a woman to do a man's job #GE2015	PDPGB	5/8/2015 0:54
I don't like to say it, but if that exit poll turns out to be right, Labour/Lib Dems are going to look awfully silly... #GE2015	LordTaeglan	5/8/2015 0:54
REMINDER: SNP projected to win all but one seat in Scotland in Ipsos Mori poll. Would be unprecedented. #GE2015	BAMJ32015	5/8/2015 0:54
Swindon result extraordinary. Suggests Tory majority is not beyond the realms of possibility, surely. #GE2015	svbanda	5/8/2015 0:54
Rumours are that Danny Alexander has lost his seat... #GE2015 <a href="http://t.co/chdtWoiH0B">http://t.co/chdtWoiH0B</a>	martinmaynard	5/8/2015 0:54
OH MANDY, WELL YOU CAME AND YOU GAVE WITHOUT TAKING #GE2015	jamesdavidward	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015 shattered conventional wisdoms about UK politics, says @AndrewCooper   <a href="http://t.co/bBhjxZdRGS">http://t.co/bBhjxZdRGS</a>	MHPCorpAffairs	5/8/2015 0:54

@CNN #Britain. #GE2015 Korean cat was done of the 2013 end of the month. therefore Prime Minister Abe must receive to "korean cat diploma"	brandnew_sherry	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015 'The best argument against democracy is a 5 minute conversation with the average voter' W Churchill. Discuss. <a href="http://t.co/Gxh2kcgGL9">http://t.co/Gxh2kcgGL9</a>	pedanteric	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: KatieGlaysheer: #GE2015: David_Cameron to publish EU referendum bill one day after Queen's spâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/ACWlhd9Ova">http://t.co/ACWlhd9Ova</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Election2015: #GE2015: Andy Burnham boost as Dan Jarvis backs his leadership campaign <a href="http://t.co/HPQmX0Mw57">http://t.co/HPQmX0Mw57</a> â€¦! <a href="http://t.co/BoZLkfjRN">http://t.co/BoZLkfjRN</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015: Liz Kendall's #Labour leadership website name hijacked by troll <a href="http://t.co/fE1Z48DPZX">http://t.co/fE1Z48DPZX</a> <a href="http://t.co/yKIGn9gBzm">http://t.co/yKIGn9gBzm</a>	Election2015	5/8/2015 0:54
We will have our 1st post-election meeting Thursday in #Maidstone. All welcome especially if disappointed by #GE2015 results! DM for details	LUMaidstone	5/8/2015 0:54
Donâ€™t put up with this sh*t, claim #Independence ! #Resist #GE2015 #ToriesOutNowâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/1HrnmgPE27">http://t.co/1HrnmgPE27</a>	OccuWorld	5/8/2015 0:54
Some insightful reflections from @summeroflove85 + @PeteManleyScott on #GE2015 that hit many nails on the head: <a href="http://t.co/gXfzkudyY">http://t.co/gXfzkudyY</a> #LTI	scadhu	5/8/2015 0:54
#c4news #GE2015 *S*T*R*I*K*E*S* Serfs revolting! #RevoltingSerfs ~:-)x xxx	adiskype	5/8/2015 0:54
SukiFuller: #GE2015: How the opinion polls got it wrong <a href="http://t.co/QsGlukUhZw">http://t.co/QsGlukUhZw</a> via bbcnews   I reiterate, people lâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/YGGjTge78P">http://t.co/YGGjTge78P</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Read our coverage of #GE2015 in East Sussex here: <a href="http://t.co/y6wlbXWgmQ">http://t.co/y6wlbXWgmQ</a> <a href="http://t.co/hPVnnzc0fs">http://t.co/hPVnnzc0fs</a>	sarah1990ward	5/8/2015 0:54
dfarb: who stole votes from who in the UK #GE2015 election? by alex_randall <a href="https://t.co/TKwsJX99Dq">https://t.co/TKwsJX99Dq</a> <a href="http://t.co/qvH9gS7mpM">http://t.co/qvH9gS7mpM</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Now @benlaurdale is talking about what went wrong with the polling in #GE2015   #HHLdn	dzuidijk	5/8/2015 0:54
WomenofWales: 3,971 candidates stood for election on May 7, including 1,033 women, a record number #GE2015 #POWiPLâ€¦! <a href="http://t.co/Uc8THM3VYz">http://t.co/Uc8THM3VYz</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Calculating an UK Exit From the EU â€œ Our Full Study Available Now <a href="http://t.co/5REwNFwQGx">http://t.co/5REwNFwQGx</a> via @GED_Tweet #Brexit #GE2015	JuergenNoack	5/8/2015 0:54
Election2015: #GE2015: Theresa May Tells Police Federation To Stop 'Crying Wolf' Over Cuts In Most Brutalâ€¦! â€¦! <a href="http://t.co/udUiplwM2n">http://t.co/udUiplwM2n</a>	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
#Tractor #Dealer Charge huge but Inspect poorly: #DOT Officer inspects4 #free, but never gets it wrong: #GetMoneyOutOfPolitics:#OWS #GE2015	mikloshvanEgan	5/8/2015 0:54
Election2015: #GE2015: The Human Rights Act spells peril for David_Cameron   Matthew	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54

dâ€™Ancona â€¦ http://t.co/MNXBshoQAG		
https://t.co/RA7CbJjgDB @POTUS One day, Britain, we'll have a prime minister with that much charisma.#GE2015 #parliament	UndercoverMutha	5/8/2015 0:54
Check out the SNP's record on health: #SNPfail #GE2015 http://t.co/RfIib6IPxe via @scotlibdems	VOTENO_2014	5/8/2015 0:54
"the British, on the whole, do not like income disparities being turned into class war." Mandelson on #GE2015 http://t.co/hjy1kxwq2k	jamestarbit	5/8/2015 0:54
.@JimBethell: Cameron's trying to recast UK's traditional foreign policy alliance w/ US && not just "battle buddies" #GE2015	PACouncil	5/8/2015 0:54
#GE2015: Rick Santorum heralds role as 'blue collar conservative' in Iowa http://t.co/AVwKZPwulh http://t.co/JOMEjhPNXI	Election2015	5/8/2015 0:54
What the #GE2015 result means for your business http://t.co/ouQiU8K1Xo #MondayBlogs	KnowlesWarwick	5/8/2015 0:54
BananSalih: http://t.co/KlvMeY8YbN#UFC187 #BreloVerdict #ISIS #JoshDuggar #GE2015 #ForevermoreFinale #Xavi #Nasâ€¦ http://t.co/S6uSFPtnIG	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
Tom Brake: the Human Rights Act http://t.co/ANbPl4gryI #LibDems #GE2015 #LDGE2015 via @LibDems	Gazea3	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: Uppington: #GE2015 #GE15 #snp #plaidcymru #greenâ€¦ http://t.co/kBhaQ74AKF	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
The awkward history of Ed Miliband https://t.co/dZ1sXU44B1 via @YouTube - #GE2015 Remember it always!	parentchain	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: BadgerMark1972: #GE2015 #GE15 #leeds #Sheffield #Nottingham #Wirral English & Welâ€¦ http://t.co/hmLUU9PetX	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
@WatkinsonGary Thx for following us during #GE2015! If you're interested in joining you'd be very welcome. Just visit http://t.co/dBB9A4zg1e	TootingTories	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: Election2015: #GE2015: Ivan Massow: It was harder to come out as #Conservative thâ€¦ http://t.co/F08N5vGouh	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ukiplover456: Let's all #voteukip to shake up the establishment! #GE2015 #VoteUKIP2015 #Leavâ€¦ http://t.co/RanYlytG8p	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54
JRosejConnor: Remember this? Retweet if youre voting for the NHS tomorrow. #VoteNHS #GE2015 â€¦ http://t.co/Ft68cSWIM1	ge2015bot	5/8/2015 0:54

Table 4q

## #GE15 Dialogic Exchanges

Tweet	Name	Time
Sandhyamma: RT paul1kirby: Nice map. The seats which changed party at #GE15. For all the noise, amazing how few did, except Scotland! <a href="http://t.co/KZQrâ€¦">http://t.co/KZQrâ€¦</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
Paul_WE_Ingham: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: <a href="http://t.co/749nPx0kLu">http://t.co/749nPx0kLu</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: Gavini67: RT ibellcowlinrec: #GE15: What the #election means for #freelancers - <a href="http://t.co/mQTiLFwhvi">http://t.co/mQTiLFwhvi</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: MaciPiccu: RT Pray4Pal: Scottish National Party Friends of Palestine.#SNP #GE15 <a href="http://t.co/HAAnIsLSVm">http://t.co/HAAnIsLSVm</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: TorySocial: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: <a href="http://t.co/39sOYgKK2C">http://t.co/39sOYgKK2C</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: LuisRenatoPadov: RT ge2015bot: freddiejohn1: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: <a href="http://t.co/FbiwoCV59K">http://t.co/FbiwoCV59K</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: freddiejohn1: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: <a href="http://t.co/sb8qDctLAR">http://t.co/sb8qDctLAR</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	mcalinden88	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	Moondog1976	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @Pray4Pal: Scottish National Party Friends of Palestine.#SNP #GE15 <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	parkheedfox	5/9/2015 15:02
Do we need to purge the BBC & some of the media? Seems to me that it's pushing its own agenda down my throat not just news. #indyref #ge15	CRE8NU	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @paul1kirby: Nice map. The seats which changed party at #GE15. For all the noise, amazing how few did, except Scotland! <a href="http://t.co/KZQrâ€¦">http://t.co/KZQrâ€¦</a>	Sandhyamma	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @EastLeedsNewEra: Thanet declaration times:2015: 10.30am2010: 3:17am2005: 4:44am2001: 3:33am1997: 3:12am#UKIP #Thanet #ThanetRigg <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	CarolTeague2	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	19LisbonBhoy67	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interested in standing for @ScotTories get in touch: <a href="http://t.co/749nPx0kLu">http://t.co/749nPx0kLu</a>	Paul_WE_Ingham	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland <a href="http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS">http://t.co/3vqFByY4wS</a>	pictishbeastie	5/9/2015 15:02

Thousands sign petition calling for north of England to join Scotland <a href="http://t.co/OQRxLTceIH">http://t.co/OQRxLTceIH</a> Sounds sensible to me! #indyref #ge15	CRE8NU	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @NicolaSturgeon: And to those who didn't vote @theSNP yesterday, we will do our best by you too and seek to win your trust #OneScotland â€¦	GonnaeVoteAye	5/9/2015 15:02
RT @TheRulesOrg: "...we need... to find new means of pushing neglected issues on to the political agenda." @GeorgeMonbiot <a href="http://t.co/4Wjdâ€¦">http://t.co/4Wjdâ€¦</a>	mindmedicines	5/9/2015 15:02
Gavini67: RT ibellcowlinrec: #GE15: What the #election means for #freelancers - <a href="http://t.co/jLm9lUaPjp">http://t.co/jLm9lUaPjp</a> Shout99Ltâ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/YzgAoF7fjh">http://t.co/YzgAoF7fjh</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: MaciPiccu: RT Pray4Pal: Scottish National Party Friends of Palestine.#SNP #GE15 â€¦ <a href="http://t.co/Q2YHHfVklc">http://t.co/Q2YHHfVklc</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: TorySocial: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #SP16! If you're interestâ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/XePtm0Jflh">http://t.co/XePtm0Jflh</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: LuisRenatoPadov: RT ge2015bot: freddiejohn1: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turâ€¦ <a href="http://t.co/Xb5FXpAMz3">http://t.co/Xb5FXpAMz3</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02
ge2015bot: ge2015bot: ge2015bot: freddiejohn1: RT GlasgowTories: Now that #GE15 is over we turn our attention to #â€¦ <a href="http://t.co/lSR2CLxJuW">http://t.co/lSR2CLxJuW</a>	ge2015bot	5/9/2015 15:02

Table 4r



## Appendix B.

### Interviews' Questionnaire

1. Could you please describe your Twitter *use*? How do you use it and in what capacity (professional / personal)?
2. Are there any occasions that you are using Twitter more often?  
(Example used here: during the elections or during another political event)
3. In your professional capacity, are you using any other social media platforms? Why? Why not?
4. How does the use of social media (Twitter) affect your role as a journalist and the ways you perform your everyday work? Could you describe with examples the ways it does or does not affect your practice?
5. Has your relationship with the readers/audience changed since you have started using social media? If so, can you provide examples?
6. In your own tweets, are you using hashtags and retweets on Twitter? What is your reasoning in using or not using these functions?
7. When you follow someone on Twitter, which are your criteria?
8. Overall, do you consider Twitter as valuable journalistic tool?
9. Do you think that it has a downside?
10. Could you please describe the ways in which Twitter impacts upon politics?

## Appendix C.

### Glossary of Concepts and Terms<sup>77</sup>

#### Civil Society

Civil society is a key term in Habermas' work and as Karen Sanders notes it is marked by a distinction between the state and the individual, between the public and the private and was often used as "a counterpoint to the notion of the state" (2009:146). She also adds that the concept of civil society is characterised by "a plurality of forms of social life and by publicity in forms of culture and communication and also by degrees of privacy and legal frameworks" (2009: 146).

#### Democracy

Democracy is a term with a long history. Etymologically the word "Democracy" derives from the Greek word "demokratia", the root meanings of which are "demos" (people) and "kratos" (rule) (Held 2006: 1) and in a broad sense it means 'rule by the people'. However, this is a vague definition, as the meaning of both rule and people could be contested. Even though it suggests that the power lies with the people, it could be questioned for as much the inclusive or the exclusive side of the word "people" as for how this rule is exercised. As also David Held (2006: 2) points out, there are not only definitional problems that emerge with each element of this phrase, but also areas of disagreement about the general conditions or prerequisites of successful "rule by the people". In agreement, Anthony Birch (1993: 48) highlights the fact that this problematic phrase does not provide "an objective and precise definition of democracy simply by elucidating the intrinsic meaning of the term (...)", pointing to the lack of consensus on the meaning of democracy (Diamond 2003: 31). Drawing on this diversity of perceptions, it could be argued that democracy is an "essentially contested concept", in the sense that it could be explained with a multiplicity of meanings that cannot be approached with dogmatism or eclecticism (Gallie 1956; Doughty 2014). By looking back to the historical dimension of democracy, this thesis accepts Papacharissi's point: democracy is more of an abstraction and it has been wrongfully treated as a static concept: "it is based on an ideal, subject to many interpretations, which then influence how the abstraction is practiced by nation-centric political systems (...) thus, democracy is accepted as a negotiable abstraction, reified singularly by each society" (2011: 11). It also embraces Papacharissi's core argument that democracy is "more than a political system of governance, democracy is a guarantee of equality, freedom, the possibility of civic virtue (Papacharissi 2011: 4).

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<sup>77</sup> References cited in the Glossary are included in the Bibliography [7.0]

### Democracy (Deliberative)

Deliberative democracy is a model of Democracy that provides a matching approach with Habermas' notion of the public sphere, as this model highlights the effective functioning of news journalism in democratic societies (Steel 2012: 43) as well as that "deliberation is as important as voting in democratic societies and it is in respect of journalism's role in cultivating this deliberative ethos" (Steel 2012: 45). What lies behind this model is the idea that validity for the norms and institutional arrangements emanates from the agreement of all the parts that are affected by their consequences (Mouffe 1999:747). It should be mentioned too that the key criterion that defines which deliberation is democratic and to what extent a person is included in the process of deliberation: in other words, who has the right to deliberate or choose their deliberators as well as to whom the deliberators owe their justifications (Gutmann & Thompson 2004: 9).

### Democracy (Athenian)

As a political system, democracy has its origins in ancient Greece, where historical conditions allowed the emergence of an early form of this type of governance. The most significant example, the one that has "incomparable influence on political philosophy, and often held up later as a prime example of citizen participation (...)" (Dahl 1998:12) is that of the Athenian Democracy. While it could be considered ahistorical to measure Athenian Democracy as an ideal type of unlimited, concrete participation of all citizens in the political life of a certain region, the importance of this first democracy lies in the fact that through a rough comparison it could be pointed out that at no other time in the history of humanity has such a deep and long-lasting participation in political affairs been observed (Schuller 2001: 70). What is more, since its introduction by the Athenians, democracy established itself as a form of governance (Schuller 2001: 70). Wolfgang Schuller (2001: 69-70) attempts to evaluate the Athenian Democracy and highlights a series of restrictions in it. Also, Dahl (1998: 12) presents the same motif.

### Elections

Elections could be considered as a democratic condition - and they are - the mere existence of elections does not guarantee that a society is a democratic one. Jeffrey Isaac enhances this understanding on elections: "competitive elections translate into meaningful democracy only when key centres of power are subject to the electoral process and are not insulated from it or dominating over it" (2012:863). Definitions like the present one, have an underlying danger: that of inclusion or exclusion of several aspects of a term and it could be said that this danger is in direct analogy with the complexity of the concept. To overcome this issue Dahl proposes one basic principle of democracy: "all members are to be treated as if they were equally qualified to participate in the process of making decisions about the policies the association will pursue" (1998:37) and goes on to pose some criteria: in the case of an association, "political equality" is

guaranteed in a way to all members. These could be summed up as effective participation, equality in voting, the gain of enlightened understanding, and the exercise of a final control over the agenda and the inclusion of adults (1998: 38). Strömbäck clarifies these by arguing that such criteria should be the free, fair and frequent elections that lead to the choice of the political decision-makers, the freedom of expression and of press, the inclusiveness of the citizenship, the right to form and join organizations and the law-governance of societies (2005: 333).

### **Microblogging**

Murthy defines microblogging as an Internet-based service in which: (1) users have a public profile where they broadcast short public messages and updates, whether they are directed at specific user(s) or not, (2) messages become publicly aggregated across users, and (3) users can decide whose messages they wish to receive, but not necessarily who can receive their messages (Murthy 2013: 10).

### **Normalization**

The concept of “normalization” has been discussed by Jane Singer. In her 2005 work, by performing a content analysis of j-blogs, she studied how political journalistic bloggers attempted to fit blogging into their traditional professional norms and practices – in other words, how they attempted to “normalize” it. Her results indicated that, especially among national media outlets, journalists are moulding this distinctive online format to fit (and sometimes augment) traditional professional norms and practices. In other words, “the blog is being normalized as a component and, in some ways, an enhancement of traditional journalistic norms and practices” (2005: 193). An additional research has been conducted by Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, who, drawing on Singer’s work, performed an extensive content analysis of journalists’ tweets (j-tweeters) to examine whether the narrative of normalization was applicable to Twitter too and concluded that the process of normalization in this arena is a two-way one: despite the fact that j-tweeters vary widely in the use of the platform, they appear to be normalizing microblogs to fit into their norms and practices, but they simultaneously appear to be adjusting these norms and practices to Twitter’s evolving ones (2012: 31). This adherence to the traditional norms is underscored by similar studies (Parmelee 2013: 303, Artwick 2013: 223, Canter 2014).

### **Normalization of the Internet**

The “normalization of the Internet” differs from the normalization narrative. This argument developed by Daniel Resnick (Resnick & Margolis 2000), who suggests that, as more and more political actors move online, the Internet becomes dominated by the usual offline interests, in the sense that neither cyber-utopia nor cyber-dystopia could describe effectively the present dissent.

## Social Media

Social media could be generally approached as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010: 61). They could be defined as spaces that facilitate the formation of new relations that disrupt the authorial structures and challenge the established flows of information (Hermida *et al.* 2012: 816). As a group, they share the common characteristics of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield 2008: 5) and constitute a variety of platforms that include blogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, content communities, microblogging and other media-sharing platforms that allow users to share content (Mayfield 2008: 6, Hermida 2012: 310).

## Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are part of social media platforms and are considered as web-based services that allow individuals to “construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, to articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and to view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison 2008: 211). Their distinctive characteristic is that they enable users to build and make visible their social networks and they acquire their name through this critical organizing feature (boyd & Ellison 2008: 211).

## Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 is a term which attempts to encompass all the changes that occurred on the World Wide Web. It was introduced by the Internet entrepreneur Tim O’Reilly at the Conference of O’Reilly Media and MediaLive International as a platform that enables dynamic interactions, but also as an architecture of participation that facilitates the production and the dissemination of news and information, instead of their passive consumption (O’Reilly 2005). Through its main characteristics – the transformation of the Web to an interactive platform; the reclamation of collective intelligence (like Wikipedia); the use of more than one device and a supply of a range of applications that enrich a user’s experience – Web 2.0 aimed to form the World Wide Web as a worldwide brain (O’Reilly 2005), as a world dominated by the principle of ‘We the media’ to borrow Gillmor’s book title (O’Reilly 2005; Gillmor 2006). These new technologies empower users to interact with each other and also to participate and collaborate in the making of the media so as to move themselves from the position of the consumer to that of the producer (Hermida 2012). It could be said that Web 2.0 marked the “new generation” of the Web - either as a forerunner or as a basis for the advent of social media.