Music and the public sphere

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

Torgeir Uberg Nærland

Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor (PhD) at the University of Bergen

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Abstract

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

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

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

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

The fourth article is a qualitative analysis of the public reception of Karpe Diem's hit "Toyota'n til Magdi" ("Magdi’s Toyota"). This article charts and analyses the effects that this song had on public political discourse, and then discusses democratic value of these effects in light of public sphere theory.
This thesis empirically establishes that, contrasted with other musical genres in Norway, hip hop is a genre invested with political value, and that performers maintain a general commitment to addressing socio-political issues in their music, through aesthetic practices with potentially high relevance to public discourse. The thesis further elucidates how genre-specific expressive characteristics enable hip hop to function as aesthetically constituted public political discourse, and further empirically demonstrates how popular music under certain conditions may figure as an integral part of deliberative democracy by providing valuable input to discursive processes in the public sphere.

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

First of all I would like to thank my main supervisor Jostein Gripsrud, which throughout the time working with this thesis has offered me brutal but constructive criticism and good laughs, and, whose own work has been a great source of inspiration in this project. I also want to thank Jan Fredrik Hovden, my co-supervisor, for always having time for me and for offering solid and sociologically insightful considerations of my work. I am also grateful to Simon Frith, my second co-supervisor, for substantial comments on my thesis, for inviting me to stay at The University of Edinburgh, and whose writings got me interested in the scholarly study of music in the first place.

The Department of Information Science and Media Studies has throughout the Ph.D-period provided me with an encouraging and stimulating work environment. There are really too many to thank in specific, but I have over the years benefitted greatly from all the resourceful and accommodating people that makes up this department – in academic as well as administrative positions. I seem to remember that we have had some fun as well. Also, I want to thank my research group, MIK, for encouraging me to and granting me funding to organise research seminars. Last but not least, I want to thank Helle Sjøvaag for always offering sound advice, putting things in perspective and being a good friend, and, Eirik Stavelin, whom I have been sharing an office with since god knows when, for putting up with me, for good conversations and for being a superior travel companion.

Finally, I am grateful to my parents Mass Nærland and Inger Uberg, my brother Tallak and my sister Tine for always being supportive, and, to my many good friends for offering pleasant and mostly constructive distractions.

Bergen, June 2014
List of publications

All four articles that constitute part II of this thesis are single-authored by Torgeir Uberg Nærland. One article has been published, two have been accepted for publication and is scheduled to appear in the course of 2011, and one has been submitted and is currently under review. Except for some basic format changes I have not revised the article for the purpose of inclusion in this thesis.

Article one:


Article two:

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

Article three:

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

Article four:

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

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................................................
Acknowledgements
List of publications
Contents

**Part I: The Summary** ....................................................................................................................................................... 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Introduction</th>
<th>......................................................................................................................................................... 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Context, scope and case</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research questions</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Introducing the four articles</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Thesis outline</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Theoretical contextualisation</th>
<th>.............................................................................................................................................. 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Music and politics</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Music as social order</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Music as a site for ideological struggle and resistance</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Identity, the sociality of music and politics</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4 Music in social and political movements</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.5 Music policy, regulation and censorship</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.6 The public sphere perspective and the politics of music: existing contributions</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.7 The distinctiveness of the public sphere perspective</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Public sphere theory and deliberative democracy</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Habermas and deliberative democracy</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Habermas and the bourgeois public sphere</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Updating the concept of the public sphere</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4 Communicative rationality, the public sphere and aesthetics</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.3 Critique and revisions</th>
<th>....................................................................................................................................................... 41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Discourse and exclusion</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Communicative rationality and aesthetics</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 Alternative conceptions of the public sphere</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.4 Public sphere theory, expressive culture and music</th>
<th>....................................................................................................................................................... 48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 In critical defence of Habermas</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Sensitising public sphere theory to music</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 Situating music in the anatomy of democracy</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4 The cultural public sphere: the literary public sphere revised and revisited</td>
<td>....................................................................................................................................................... 53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 Hip hop music as case: relevance and key scholarly contributions ................................. 56
  2.5.1 Public outreach ............................................................................................................ 59
  2.5.2 The genre aesthetic ..................................................................................................... 60
  2.5.3 Political commitment .................................................................................................. 62

2.6 Contextualising hip hop as political expression in Norway ............................................ 63

3. Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 68
  3.1 Overall research design .................................................................................................. 68
  3.2 A process-oriented case design ....................................................................................... 70
  3.3 Choice of methods ......................................................................................................... 71
  3.4 Quantitative survey of young politicians – the audience study .................................... 74
  3.5 Semi structured interviews of creative actors – the production study ......................... 78
  3.6 Musical and lyrical analysis of hip hop music – the textual study ............................... 82
  3.7 Qualitative reception analysis – the reception study .................................................... 85

4. Findings and conclusions .................................................................................................. 88
  4.1 The political status of hip hop among audiences ......................................................... 88
  4.2 Motivations and practices on the hip hop scene .......................................................... 89
  4.3 Hip hop expressivity as political discourse .................................................................. 90
  4.4 Hip hop in public political discourse .......................................................................... 92
  4.5 Towards a ‘public discursive’ conception of the politics of music ............................... 93

References .................................................................................................................................. 96

Part II: The Articles ............................................................................................................... 107

Article 1: The audience article ............................................................................................. 109


Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 113
Musical taste and political-ideological orientation ................................................................ 114
The Norwegian political landscape: the parties and their youth wings ................................ 116
Method/data .......................................................................................................................... 117
  Participants and procedure .................................................................................................. 117
  Music preferences ............................................................................................................. 118
  Attitudes and socio-economic background ....................................................................... 120
Findings .................................................................................................................................. 121
  Diverging ideological positions – diverging musical tastes ............................................. 121
  The (mis)recognition of music’s political significance ...................................................... 123
  A political-ideological structure of musical taste ............................................................. 125
Discussion ............................................................................................................................. 126
  Musical taste and political-ideological orientation as expressions of lifestyle ... 126
### Article 2: The production article

**Hip Hop and the Public Sphere: Political Commitment and Communicative Practices on the Norwegian Hip Hop Scene**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip hop as political public discourse</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sphere theory and music: the need for a more inclusive theory</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris. M. Young and supplementary modes of communication</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip hop and public sphere theory</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political commitment</strong></td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representing the hood?</strong></td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective realism and storytelling</strong></td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hip hop greetings and the rhetoric of hyperbole</strong></td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The music as rhetorical underscore</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The democratic value of hip hop</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Article 3: The textual article

**Rhythm, Rhyme and Reason: Hip Hop Expressivity as Political Discourse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip hop and public debate in Norway</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habermas and hip hop</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical perspectives and supplementary modes of communication</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip hop music as political discourse</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mapping the lyrics</strong></td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The phatic function of killing Siv Jensen</strong></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public situatedness and emphatic imaginings</strong></td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 4: The reception article</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From musical expressivity to public political discourse proper: the case of Karpe Diem in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip hop and public discourse in Norway</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive culture, discursive democracy and hip hop</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karpe Diem: expressive characteristics and artist-biography</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karpe Diem and 22nd July</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The initial debate: FRP and Karpe Diem</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological debate</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-wing response</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of politicisation</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karpe Diem and the public sphere</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Cited media-sources</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 1: The survey

Appendix 2: Interview guide
Part I: The Summary
1. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.2 Research questions

Having now preliminarily narrowed down the overall scope of the thesis, we can concretise the research questions. This thesis asks the following research questions.
1. How does taste for different sorts of music relate to political and ideological orientation, which kinds of music are regarded as politically significant, and what is the current political status of hip hop music among audiences?

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

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

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

1.3 Introducing the four articles

Consequently the thesis consists of four independent but interrelated studies contained within separate articles, respectively addressing the following four aspects of hip hop music: audience, production, text and reception. The thesis is there for structured as follows: First, an orientational and quantitative audience study of musical taste and aesthetic sensibilities among young politicians, from here on referred to as the audience article. This is not explicitly written within the framework of public sphere theory, it is a piece of quantitative basic research in the sociology of aesthetics that serves to (1) provide a general and empirically based overview of how music align
with political positions among audiences, (2) provide insight into the musical tastes and orientations of emerging political elites and future actors in the political public sphere, and (3) empirically establish hip hop as arguably the politically most potent musical genre in present day Norway.

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

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

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

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

1.4 Thesis outline

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

The second chapter, containing five subchapters, theoretically contextualises the articles of the thesis. The first subchapter situates this thesis, and the study of the political significance of music in a public sphere perspective, within the existing body of research literature on music and politics. The second subchapter, first, provides a basic outline of the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy and of public sphere theory, and then third, outlines key critiques and revisions of this framework in terms of its grasp on expressive and musical communication, and further how these critiques and revisions relate to the studies encompassed in this thesis. The fourth subchapter outlines and discusses the relevance of the hip hop genre in a public sphere perspective, and moreover delineates which aspects of hip hop this thesis attends to. The fifth subchapter historically contextualises hip hop music as part of the tradition of musical political expression in Norway.
The third chapter first outlines the overall research design and approach of the thesis, then outlines the methodological approach employed in each separate study. The fourth, concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings of each article and then outlines how these together contributes to our understanding of the political significance of music. This is followed by Part II, which contains the articles. At the end there is an appendix that includes the survey set-up and interview guide.
2. Theoretical Contextualisation

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

2.1 Music and politics

Music and politics hardly constitutes an autonomous, fully developed research field in its own right. The political significance of music is, as John Street notes in his book *Music and Politics* (2012: 174), a concern that is only haphazardly taken into account in the mainstream of various academic disciplines, not least political science. Similarly, Keith Negus, in his book *Popular Music in Theory* (1996) notes that the politics of music is not "...a subject that can be separated off into a discrete section from other issues (...)" yet also points out that “(...) studying the sounds, words and images of popular music leads directly towards debates about dynamics of power and
As a category ´music and politics´ rather serves as a focal point for a variety of different studies and perspectives that from within different traditions and disciplines have approached the intersections between music and politics, or, more broadly speaking – music and power.

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

2.1.1 Music as social order

This is not a perspective that connects music to politics in a strict sense – as electoral, parliamentary politics or political-administrative decision-making – but rather emphasises the ways in which music has important ideological dimensions, and is connected with overarching power structures. The idea that music is intertwined with social (and political) order has been present in scholarly thought since antiquity. Early Greek philosopher Pythagoras maintained, through his notion of the “music of the spheres”, that music is intrinsically linked to the mathematical and natural order as well as the social order of the universe. Plato, who was famously sceptical to music
due to its subversive effects on the youth, maintained that music and morality is interwoven and that "rhythm, melody and lyrics shape social relations" (Street, 2007:324). The idea that music dynamically both reflects and produces social and political order also echoes in the thought of modern philosophers such as Rousseau. He argued that it is through music that individuals and collectives come to know themselves, and further emphasised the importance of music in giving expression to emotions and passions – which according to the romanticist program were key ingredients in political life (Ibid: 325).

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

Popular music thus functions as an important instrument for political domination and mass deception. According to Adorno, variety in style, new hooks and new
performers, the ‘pseudo individualisation’ of products, are all, in reality, manifestations of the ‘eternal sameness’ inherent in popular music, which then leads to a similar ‘pseudo individualisation’ of its audiences. Consequently, Adorno argues that the dynamics of cultural industry render the audiences of popular music subject to ‘infantilisation’ and social conditioning, and that, furthermore, engagement with popular music produces a conformism that contradicts the ideal of the autonomous freethinking individual. As a result, popular music becomes an obstacle to human emancipation.

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

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

In later writings Frith (1996a), similar to Adorno, argues that there lies an emancipatory potential in difficult music – i.e. music that by form negates or challenges the standardized form imposed by the capitalist system of production. By rendering the standardized form apparent, aesthetic negation could also prompt the listeners to envisage something different than that of the existing order. Whereas this was a quality that Adorno ascribed to radical avant garde music, Frith makes the case for the "unpopular popular" music. Frith (ibid: 20) argues that "The utopian impulse, the negation of everyday life, the aesthetic impulse that Adorno recognized in high art, must be part of low art too".
Jaques Attali presents a similar conception of music and social order in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (1985). Like Adorno, Attali argues that musical form has deep roots in the mode of production in a given society. For Attali, music, organised sound as opposed to noise, "(...) runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does." (Ibid: 10). Attali here connects music and social order at a very general, but also historical, level, where the organisation of sound into music produces and reflects the organisation of a particular society at a given point in history. Significantly, Attali ascribes particular importance to the role of music in political and social change, as “(..) its styles and economic organisation are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code."(Ibid: 11). Thus, Attali argues that musical style and modes of production can ‘prophesise’ new forms of societal organisation.

### 2.1.2 Music as a site for ideological struggle and resistance

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

Early writings on subculture, influenced by the emerging field of cultural studies associated with the University of Birmingham’s Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, including *Resistance through rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1975), *Profane Culture* (Willis, 1978) and *Subculture: the meaning of style* (Hebdige, 1979), focused on how style, aesthetics and music – integrated into an overall lifestyle – in various socially subordinate groups became a means to oppose, and develop alternatives to,
the dominant value systems. The politics of subculture was perhaps most clearly articulated in Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: the meaning of style* (1979). According to Hebdige music became an important means to articulate value orientations, identity positions and relations alternative to majority culture. This does not primarily involve verbal articulation of political interests and arguments per se, but rather aesthetic and style-based articulations. For Hebdige, punk music's dismissal of aesthetic norms involved a disruption of the dominant symbolic order, and hence an articulation of alternative orientations. Another key ideological aspect of subcultural practice is, according to Hebdige, how the appropriation of commodities originating from the dominant system of production functioned subversively, as a way to articulate the alternative values and identity of a given subculture.

2.1.3 Identity, the sociality of music and politics

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

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

Similarly, Born (2000: 32) points out that music function as "(..) a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities” and that it is a vehicle for engendering “musically-imagined communities” (Ibid:35). From a political perspective, the formation of a collective identity is significant on several levels. At one level, music is important in how it may contribute to the constitution
and consolidation of social groups that share political causes and interests. An obvious example of this is the significance of music in both how the African American population identified and acted, politically, as a defined social group (Garofalo, 1992b; Neal, 1999; Hanson, 2008; Kitwana, 2002). Similarly, music is also significant in constructing national identities (Weisethaunet, 2007; Bohlman, 2004) as well as a European identity (Sandvoss, 2008).

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

2.1.4 Music in social and political movements

Whereas the previous perspective focused on the ways in which music and its role in identity formation may have significant political implications, this perspective assumes a much more direct connection between music and political action in that it emphasises the role of music in groups formed around shared political or social causes and agendas. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) use the example of the American civil rights movement to argue that music and musical traditions may function as a key resource in "(..) the action repertoires of political struggle” (Ibid: 7). According to Eyerman and Jamison, the role of music within social movements has multiple
important dimensions: a social dimension, in that it facilitates collective identity formation and mobilisation; a cognitive dimension, in that it involves what they term a ‘cognitive praxis’, whereby a shared consciousness and vision is articulated through music; a cultural-historical dimension, in that musical becomes a means of remembering and reviving past political traditions; and, finally, an expressive dimension, in that music functions as a means for the public articulation of political opinion – at least at the level of slogan (See Frith, 1998a: 158-202, for a discussion of political lyrics in protest music).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rap’s cultural politics lies in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception. (..) The politics of rap music involves the contestation over public space, the meanings, interpretation, and value of the lyrics and music, and the investment of cultural capital. (Ibid: 124)
Similarly, Negus (1996) implicitly addresses key aspects of public sphere theory in relation to music, when he draws attention to the public sphere as an arena in which music connects to political causes and agendas, and further attends to the question of what sort of public communication music might constitute, in other words the ‘content’ of the arena. Negus (ibid: 191) also argues that the political significance of music relies on “(..) processes of mediation and articulation through which particular styles of music are produced, circulated, experienced and given cultural and political meanings.”. And as Negus points out, these are political meanings that can be put to use for specific political agendas, causes and organisations. Focusing on how music has created transnational and ethnically transgressive affiliations, and foreshadowing more recent critical conceptualisations within public sphere theory, Negus also argues that music gains political significance as “counter-rational” and “affective communication” that potentially produces what he calls “public knowledge”.

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

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

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

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

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

Charles Fairchild’s (2012) book Music, radio and the Public Sphere offers an interesting take on the role of music in the public sphere, which, however, does not focus on the political significance of music in a strict sense, but rather on how music – through the medium of community radio – can foster democratically constituted discursive arenas and publics. Fairchild sharply contrasts community music radio with
commercial music radio, arguing that whereas the latter is imbued with instrumental and corporate rationality and hence construct the audience as consumers, the former is organised and programmed in a way that leaves musical meaning unpredictable and open-ended for its audiences. Thus, community music radio gives shape to a public that is defined by a democratic and shared construction of musical meaning. Fairchild’s focus is primarily on how the non-corporate organisation of community music radio forges “(..) particular ‘power-free’ relationships between actors in a public space.” He further argues that community radio thus involves (ibid: 70 “(..) a fairly straightforward enactment of a classically Habermasian model of communicative action,”, inviting both aesthetic and social validation of musical output. Whereas Fairchild is primarily preoccupied with the ways in which music may progressively contribute to the constitution of public spheres, what one might call a pre-deliberative dimension of music, the primary focus of this thesis is how music itself may function as, feed into or generate political public discourse. Moreover, this thesis is not primarily concerned with how hip hop music functions as part of alternatively organised niche arenas, but rather on how Norwegian hip hop music addresses the national public sphere at large.

The remaining body of literature that explicitly frames a politics of music from a public sphere perspective has, in some way or other, focused on music as part of counter-, proletarian- or subaltern public spheres. Fornäs’ (1979) examination of the Swedish progressive music movement of the 1970s is a pioneering work in this respect. It is a study that primarily emphasises the organisational and economic aspects of musical life, rather than music’s expressive, aesthetical or performative qualities. Starting with Habermas’ account of the public sphere in *The Structural Transformation* and Negt and Kluge’s (1973/1974) concept of proletarian public spheres, Fornäs argues that the contemporary public sphere in Sweden was ultimately shaped by capitalist modes of production, both in terms of its communicative practices, therein music, and its functions and architecture. The notion of a proletarian public sphere, by contrast, emphasises the necessity of establishing public spheres constituted by their own independent means of production and distribution, parallel to
that of the bourgeois public sphere. Thus, according to Negt and Kluge, a proletarian public sphere facilitates an independent organisation of experience, and moreover, a structure in which a more independent process of identity- and opinion formation can take place. Crucially, Fornäs (Ibid: 70) finds that the politically radical and aesthetically explorative progressive musical movement was one that represented “(..) a real counter public sphere (motoffentlighet), in the sense that its identity as a movement was materially based in the extensive establishment of production and distribution facilities.” (My translation, TUN). The progressive movement had its own associations, record companies, magazines, distribution apparatus and concert circuit. Thus, as a whole, it functioned as a structure that facilitated both an alternative experience to that of the bourgeois public sphere and the formation of oppositional identity and opinion. However, according to Fornäs, due to pressures both from within and outside of the progressive movement, it constituted a rudimental proletarian public sphere, and, only for a given period of time.

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

Similarly, Hanson (2008) provides a historical account of the role of black music in the forging of a critical and politically motivated mass Afro-American public during the 1960s and onwards. Hanson’s is another account that elucidates connections between the public sphere perspective and the social movement and identity
perspectives outlined previously. In his study Hanson explores the interface between musical aesthetics and politics as it played out between popular black music and Black Nationalism as a political project, commenting that:

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

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

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

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

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

2.1.7 The distinctiveness of the public sphere perspective

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

First, the public sphere perspective fundamentally differs from Gramscian conceptions in that the former implies a role for music in consensus-oriented discourse rather than in power struggle. This does not mean that a public sphere perspective is blind to the conditions and dynamics of power, but rather that it additionally accentuates the role of music in democratic politics, a politics that
emphasises discursive processes governed by principles of reason and inclusivity, rather than a politics understood only or mostly as struggles for power.

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

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

The public sphere perspective has a broad scope in that it potentially encompasses the role of music in subcultures as well as social movements, both of which can take the form of ‘subaltern’ or ‘counter’ public spheres. Both subcultures and social movements potentially involve communicative spaces where ideas, critique and opinions are collectively articulated through processes of discursive interaction.
this perspective, music may also function as an important expressive vehicle for communicating these interests, opinions and critique into the main public sphere. Theories of the public sphere and deliberative democracy thus offer a larger framework in which to locate and understand the workings of subcultures and social movements, and how these connect to the wider dynamics of democracy.

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

publics.

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

2.2 Public sphere theory, deliberative democracy and music

Research on the public sphere has yielded a vast body of literature, encompassing a range of different dimensions and problematics that branch out into various other fields and disciplines. It is a framework that not only deals with the political and democratic organisation of society, but also addresses a multitude of questions about
the economic, communicative, technological, social and psychological aspects of how society is organised. However, this thesis departs from the body of theory of addresses the question of the role of aesthetics and expressive culture in the public sphere and in deliberative democracy.

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

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

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

2.2.1 Habermas and deliberative democracy

Bohman (1998:401) offers a general definition of deliberative democracy as: "(…) any one family of views according to which public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision making and self-government. In “Three Normative Models of Democracy” (1994) Habermas calls his own branch of
deliberative democracy the discourse theory of democracy (used by him interchangeably with a ‘deliberative model of politics’).

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

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

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

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

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

In Habermas’ view, public opinion is politically instrumental in two ways: first, through the voting channel, where discursively engendered public opinion informs their voting, which in turn leads to administrative and legislative action; second, through communication between civil society and the state. This latter process can, according to Weigård and Eriksen (1999: 253-254), be described in three steps. First, people form shared conceptions and standards of how to deal with inequality through
discourse in peripheral public spheres – public discourse thus facilitates the formation of identity and solidarity. These common conceptions are in the next step tested in rational debate, through which legitimate demands and suggestions directed at the political-administrative system, are articulated. Lastly, these demands and suggestions filter into the political administrative system, where they are discussed in institutionalised and procedurally governed forums, to be potentially realised in political administrative decisions.

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

2.2.2 Habermas and the bourgeois public sphere

Whereas the theoretical tradition of deliberative democracy is relatively new – it was developed from the eighties and onwards (Bohman, 1998; Held, 2006) – the idea of the public sphere is much older. The pre-modern Greeks had their ‘agoras’ and Romans their ‘forums’ that, amongst many other functions, also served as a space for people to assemble to exchange ideas and information. As Gripsrud, et al. (2010) point out, the emergence of the modern idea of a public sphere is closely entwined with the emergence of the enlightenment period. The concept of the public sphere,
from its initial formulations, was already underpinned by what would become pillars of enlightenment thought in that it presupposed the precedence of reason, freedom of expression and the individual autonomy of man. Thus, the public sphere was seen as important because it facilitated public exercise of reason over tradition, and was a space where autonomous individuals could meet freely as citizens in discourse. Accordingly (Ibid: 1), the public sphere in the enlightenment era was understood to be "a sphere for critical discourse, placing all established powers and truths before the tribunal of reason". For thinkers such as Immanuel Kant the public use of reason was connected to both enlightenment and autonomy at the individual level, but also to political legitimacy, holding forth that, in order to be legitimate, laws and restrictions on freedom must be subjected to public scrutiny.

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

*The structural transformation* is both a historical account of the emergence, and later decline, of the public sphere, and a contribution to political and social theory. In Habermas’ analysis, the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere is intertwined with key historic developments from the renaissance period and onwards. According to Habermas, feudal society was characterised by a ‘representative’ public sphere, where public space functioned as an arena for the king, nobility and clergy to display symbols of power and announce decisions *in front* of the people. Political legitimacy rested in tradition or God, and political discussions and decisions were taken in forums withdrawn from the people. The bourgeois public sphere however, emerges as a consequence of, and alongside the growth of industrial and merchant capitalism in eighteenth century France, Germany and Great Britain. The growth of first merchant and then industrial capitalism, called into being a new class, the ‘bourgeoisie’, which was roughly placed between the aristocracy and the workers, including the farmers.
Simultaneously, a more extensive and powerful executive state apparatus evolved, initially dominated by feudal actors – the king and the nobility. Moreover, the accelerating trade facilitated bettered communication, more traveling, sharing of stock and price information, and also a bourgeoning press.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Admission for a payment turned the musical performance into a commodity; simultaneously, however, there arose something like music not tied to a purpose. For the first time an
Thus, Habermas does ascribe significance to music, in its early ability to generate publics. Moreover, untied from its representative functions musical concerts now also invited publics to exercise their own preferences as well as discussing and testing these through discourse.

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

Clearly echoing the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers, Habermas connects this negative transformation also to the growth of the popular press and the cultural industries, which in turn has deteriorating effects on the literary public sphere, its public, and its political functions. Whereas exchange value and quality, according to Habermas, were separated in the bourgeois public sphere, culture now assumes the
form of commodities, and the laws of the market penetrate the very substance of cultural works. Tabloid and ‘pre-digested’ forms that, in effect, inhibit reflection and spontaneity, replace the classical forms of the bourgeois public sphere. This later part of his book makes clear that Habermas’ early conceptualisation of the bourgeois public sphere clearly privileges speech and writing – the world of letters – as the preferred form of discursive interaction. Commenting on the rise of mass entertainment and new media technology he write:

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

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

**2.2.3 Updating the concept of the public sphere**

Habermas offers a revision of the concept of the public sphere in *Between Facts and Norms* (1996), one that is more attuned to the complex, media driven society of late capitalism. He maintains that the public sphere is still vital to democracy, as it continues to serve as the space where problems are identified and detected, but he additionally holds that "(…) the public sphere must (..) influentially thematize (the problems), furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes.” (Ibid: 358)
Through his updating and nuancing of the notion of the public sphere from the physical spaces offered by coffee houses and salons to the space generated through communicative action, Habermas describes the public sphere thus:

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

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

**2.2.4 Communicative rationality, the public sphere and aesthetics**

We have, so far, focused on what could be called the ‘spatial’ and ‘functional’ dimensions of the public sphere, in other words the public sphere as a space for discourse, and how this space, through its connections with the state, market and the
private or intimate sphere, performs various political functions. This spatial dimension contributes to a clarification of the political significance of music, as it suggests an anatomy of democracy in which music also has its place, a point that will be discussed further in later chapters. This section, however, will address a further aspect of Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, one that is of key relevance to how we understand the role of music, namely the nature and quality of discourse, or the ‘discursive content’ of the public sphere.

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

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

Second, communicative rationality is central to Habermas’ overarching critical project. In a critical revision of Max Weber’s claim that the various domains of modern society are increasingly characterised by ‘rationalisation’, along with Horkheimer and Adorno’s claim that modernity had ultimately rendered reason instrumental, Habermas distinguishes between the ‘life world’ and the ‘system world’. The former is the domain of informal and culturally grounded understandings, and the latter the technically and instrumentally governed domains of the market, administration and government. Habermas’ key concern here is that the instrumental logic and reason of the ‘system’ is increasingly colonising the ‘life world’, thus suppressing existing forms of social integration. However, in an attempt to ‘rescue’
reason and the enlightenment project from what his predecessors held to be the inescapable conditions of modernity, Habermas establishes a differentiated concept of rationality which, as well as instrumental-practical reason, also includes moral and aesthetic reason, attaining to different domains of society. The public sphere, if it is free and inclusive, thus has a key role in balancing the relationship between the life world and the system world, particularly in countering the colonisation of the former by the latter. The public sphere, according to Habermas, therefore functions as a ‘buffer’ against the instrumental logic of the system world, enabling the imperatives of the market and the state to be contested and countered through the exercise of communicative rationality.

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

For Habermas, ‘the rational’ involves expressions that can be supported with argument and subjected to rational scrutiny. He states that "An expression satisfies the preconditions for rationality in and insofar as it embodies fallible knowledge and therewith has a relation to the objective world (...) and is open to objective judgement." (1984: 9). ‘Objective’ judgement is made possible if the expression is open to intersubjective judgement, in other words that it has the same meaning for all actors involved in discourse and can be judged by the same criteria. It is important here to note that these meanings are not absolute, and shared standards of judgements are not derived from a positivist conception of reality, but products of social and discursive interactions between people.
Habermas (Ibid: 75-102) then argues for a concept of rationality differentiated into three categories, each corresponding to a different set of validation criteria. The first category is cognitive-instrumental reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their truth-value. The second is moral-practical reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their moral rightness. Third is aesthetic-expressive reason, which validates claims in regards to the degree to which they are authentically made and held by those who utter them. A fourth validation criterion, encompassing all three types of claims, is ‘comprehensibility’, the degree to which a claim makes sense to the discourse participants. These four communicative principles normatively underpin public discourse in the public sphere; to be rational, discursive claims should be subject to these standards of validation and be oriented toward intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding and consensus.

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

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

In this somewhat enigmatic formulation Habermas can be seen to be ascribing value to critics, promoters, curators and the like, in the way that they, through argument, bring individuals to experience works of art as authentic expressions of what he calls an ‘exemplary experience’. Thus, Habermas here seems to suggest that aesthetic experience first enters the realm of communicative rationality when it is ‘translated’
into verbal language and arguments. However, Habermas here also suggests that artworks "can take the place of an argument" and "promote the acceptance" of "standards", and further argues that aesthetic experience can itself become a rational motive for “corresponding standards of value”. Habermas is here acknowledging that art may, by its own expressive means, contribute to rational discourse, but also emphasising the role of the critic in both guiding our perception of the artwork and making its authenticity apparent.

2.3 Critique and revisions

Habermas´ conceptualisations of the public sphere have yielded a rich body of criticism, encompassing a range of historical, political, philosophical and social aspects related to his theory\(^1\). The aim in the following subchapters is to outline the main strands of critique directly relevant to the question of how to understand the role of expressive culture and music in the public sphere. These criticisms mainly revolve around two interrelated issues: first, the nature and quality of discourse, and the implications for democratic participation; second, how to understand the role of discourse in relation to fundamental and problematic issues in democratic theory such as power, passion and rationality.

\(^1\) See for instance Calhoun’s (1992) anthology *Habermas and the public sphere* for a substantial contribution to the body of critical literature
2.3.1 Discourse and exclusion

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

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

This exclusionary aspect of Habermas’ public sphere has also been critically addressed by Benhabib (1996) and Young (1996), who both argue that it is a concept that, in its original formulation, is inadequately equipped to tackle gender differences and socio-cultural differences more generally. What both writers make clear is that questions of inclusion and questions of how we conceptualise democratic discourse are inherently linked. They both argue that the verbal, argumentative discourse that Habermas idealises is in itself exclusionary, in that it necessitates both a culturally and socially specific competency that many social groups do not possess. Consequently, they both call for a somewhat less strict concept of democratic discourse that allows
for other forms and modes of communication. Young (Ibid), at a general level, argues for the need to include other socio-cultural practices, commenting that "(…) a broader conception of communicative democracy requires in addition to critical argument: greeting, rhetoric and storytelling." Young's theoretical contribution is highly relevant to the theme and arguments of this thesis, and will be discussed further in article two, which explores the extent to which these modes of communication form part of the communicative practices and strategies of Norwegian rap artists, and in article three, which will investigate the extent to which the aforementioned communicative modes characterise the musical expressivity of hip hop and enable it to function as public political discourse.

### 2.3.2 Communicative rationality and aesthetics

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

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

Similarly, Dahlgren (1995: 109) comments that "(…) if our horizons do not penetrate beyond the conceptual framework of communicative rationality and the ideal speech situations, we will be operating with a crippled critical theory”. Dryzek (1990: 220) also highlights this aspect of Habermas’ theory, commenting that:
(Communicative rationality) does not speak to theatre, wit, religion, music, visual arts, play, poetry, or private experience, unless of course those activities enter into the constitution of collective choices.

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

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

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

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

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

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

45
Another commentator, Mouffe (1999), offers an agonistic model of democracy that serves as a radically different and fruitful point of comparison for Habermas’ model. Mouffe’s model elucidates important and contested issues in Habermas’ theory, such as the focus on rationally achieved consensus, the role of power, the role of passions and emotions, and, implicitly, the role of expressive culture in democracy.

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

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

\[ \text{\[2\] Important to mention, Schmitt is often considered to be one of the “dark” theorists of democracy, whose thinking involves the suspension of fundamental democratic ideals, and whose theories were also adopted by the Nazis to legitimate the Third Reich. Mouffe on the other hand, is inspired by an aspect of Schmitt’s thinking in that she shares the view that politics are inherently conflict driven.}
\[3\] See Karppinen et. al (2008) for a thorough discussion of Habermas’ and Mouffe’s positions in regards to empirical media and communication research. The authors here argue that whereas the standard readings of both theorists are often characterized by unproductive polarization, both positions can, if eclectically combined, help us reflect upon the ideals of democratic public communication. Moreover, the authors emphasize the value of Mouffe’s position as a starting point from where to critically reflect upon Habermas’ framework.
and consequently public discourse, will always be constituted by hegemonic power relations, and further argues that rather than to seek to eliminate power from democratic politics we must "(...) constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values" (Ibid:14).

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

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

2.4.1 In critical defence of Habermas

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

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

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

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

> The idea that the public sphere of communicative rationality excludes or suppresses aesthetic-affective modes of discourse is based upon a particularly narrow reading of the conception. This "rationalist" reading does not simply result from poor stylisations of the
conceptions by critics attempting to illuminate their own positions, but is also supported by Habermas' own antipathy towards aesthetic-affective modes of communication in politics.

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

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

In holding forth the reciprocal recognition of agonistic positions as the basis of democratic legitimacy, Mouffe's model is itself normative at its core. However, it assumes conflicting interest and hegemonic power structure to be ineradicable, and thus a driving force in democracy. Nonetheless, in branding Habermas' and Rawls' position as ‘escapist’, she shares a certain similarity with ‘realist’ conceptions of democracy, such as those associated with Walter Lippmann and Joseph Schumpeter (see Gripsrud et al., 2010: 23-24). Habermas does not, however, close his eyes to the role of power, but rather suggests that it is possible, through institutionalised, communicative procedures and discourse ethics, to minimise the power dimension of political discourse, something that in my view should be essential in democratic politics. Moreover, the idea of communicative rationality presupposes the meta-contestation of the conditions and premises that underpin discourse, and so
necessarily involves continual reflection on the power structures that constitute social relations. As Dahlberg (2005) also argues:

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

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

2.4.2 Sensitising public sphere theory to music

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

From the perspective of democratic theory, the public sphere must, in addition, amplify the pressure of problems, that is, not only detect and identify problems but also convincingly and influentially thematise them, furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them
in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes. Besides the "signal" function there must be an effective problematisation. (My italics, TUN)

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

Furthermore, the ‘dramatisation of problems’ also assumes a role for expressive culture and music. Dramatisation is surely a communicative mode in the domain of expressive culture; again film, literature, and drama provide a host of examples, but also music. Through the aesthetic-affective language of both music and lyrics, and what Born (2000) calls the ‘hyper-connotative’ nature of music, music can be a potent source of public dramatisations of identity, as well social and political conditions.

This thesis addresses these points at several levels; article two (the production article) asks to what extent, and by what aesthetic means rap artists are inclined to dramatise experience and socio economic conditions; article three (the textual article) asks to what extent the musical-lyrical language of hip hop facilitates such dramatisations; the fourth article (the reception article), question what sorts of effects such dramatisations may have when entering public discursive processes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In recent years, Habermas’ conceptualisation of the literary public sphere has undergone multiple revisions and discussions that help to clarify the role of music within the framework of deliberative democracy. First, the concept of the literary public sphere has been updated to the wider notion of a cultural public sphere, which is more adept to account for present day, media-saturated, conditions. On this, Gripsrud et al. (2011a:x) write:
The literary public sphere, now more adequately termed the cultural public sphere, is thus the part of the public sphere where one finds the institutions, organisations, practises and texts of arts, sports, religion and variety of leisure activities – and public discussions thereof.

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

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

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

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

The function of the cultural public sphere was in Habermas' original conceptualisation primarily pre-deliberative, in the sense that it prepares citizens – or function as a training ground - for engagement in the political public sphere. Thus, as Larsen
(2010) notes, the tradition of Habermasian public sphere research has tended to value the activity of the political at the expense of the cultural public sphere.

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

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

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

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

It should be noted that this section does not intend to cover the vast body of literature available on hip hop music. Instead, relevant scholarly contributions to research on hip hop music will be presented and discussed in the individual articles of this thesis. The aim of this section is to argue that, in comparison to other genres, hip hop music makes a particularly interesting case study for examining the role of music in the
public sphere, and also to pinpoint the particular aspects of hip hop music that the articles in this thesis addresses. As previously outlined, this thesis is concerned with the political significance of music, thus, it will primarily draw upon literature that directly or indirectly addresses the political aspects of hip hop music.

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

Norwegian hip hop can fruitfully be seen in light of processes of ‘glocalisation’. Although the hip hop acts this thesis focus on are all heavily inspired by American hip hop, they have also, to a considerable degree, adapted it to Norwegian conditions, and also to their own city and even neighbourhoods. Although to some degree these adaptations are evident at a musical level, they are particularly obvious at the vocal or lyrical level, where local Norwegian dialects create specific kinds of ‘flow’, and the subject matter is informed by the local and Norwegian conditions. Thus, the local adaption of hip hop in Norway should be viewed as a part of the more general internationalisation and hybridisation of hip hop described by Mitchell (2001) and Solomon (2009; 2011). Dyndahl (2008) also describes the Norwegian adaption of hip hop music, specifically in terms of a process of ‘glocalisation’ whereby, in contrast to
the 1980s, Norwegian hip hop in the eighties involved copying the style from the U.S., the late nineties was characterised by experimentation with rapping in Norwegian, whereas the previous decade saw the breakthrough of rap in dialect – which remains the norm today.

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

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

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

\(^4\) Personal interview with Lars Vaular og Vågar Unstad
mainstream of Norwegian popular music. Thus, the thesis will not discuss hip hop music from the perspective of a sub-cultural practice or an underground phenomenon. Although hip hop music today is still very much a part of local scenes and social groups with sub-cultural characteristics, the focal point of this thesis are the artists that engage a larger and, mainly, national public. The second article of the thesis will, however, explore the ways in which the motivations and aesthetic practices typical of the hip hop scene, informed by sub-cultural sensibilities, may equip hip hop music to function as public political discourse.

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

2.5.1 Public outreach

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

Today hip hop is one of the most popular musical genres in Norway, as measured by sales figures (VG Lista), radio airtime (Gramo-statistikken, 2010/2011/2012) and festival and concert attendance. In 2012 the music trade magazine Ballade (2012) reported "a total dominance of hip hop", showing that since 2007 hip hop and R ‘n’ B had been dominating radio playlists, as well as streaming services such as WiMP. In parallel to this growing commercial success, Norwegian hip hop music have increasingly been included in the mainstream Norwegian musical culture, as well as
receiving critical acclaim. For instance, among the most prominent artists in the Norwegian music scene, Madcon has won six Norwegian ‘Grammies’ (Spellemansprisen) over the past ten years; Karpe Diem has won a number of awards indicative of popular cultural legitimacy, including the Norwegian ‘Grammy’ award for best overall artist, Alarmprisen, Bendikprisen and P3 Gull (http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karpe_Diem; karpediem.no). Another artist, Lars Vaular, won the award for best lyricist (Spellemann.no) as well as other awards, including Edvardprisen (TONO) and Norsk Målungdoms Dialektpris, for his use of dialect. The music of Lars Vaular and the public reception of the music of Karpe Diem will make up the empirical focal points of, respectively, articles three and four of this thesis.

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

2.5.2 The genre aesthetic

The centrality of rapping to the hip hop genre makes it perhaps the most linguistically centred genre in popular music, allowing for direct commentary and critique. The hip hop aesthetic thus involves a characteristic expressive interplay between verbal and musical-rhythmical elements that is potentially highly relevant to public discourse. Frith (1998a: 165-166) reflects that, generally, in popular music “(..) a song doesn’t exist to convey the meaning of the words; rather, the words exist to convey the
meaning of the song.” Thus, for Frith, lyrics primarily have the function of conveying emotions and establishing a communicative situation between artist and audience, for example in protest songs, where lyrics “(...) don’t function to convey ideas or arguments but slogans.” Although rapping is certainly situated within an aesthetic whole, where beats and rhymes work together, hip hop is, as Anne Danielsen (2009) notes “message oriented”. The semantic and rhetorical dimensions of the lyrics are, compared to many other musical genres, of high importance in the genre’s aesthetic. Rose (1994:2) argues that “Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music.” (italics added, TUN), thus emphasizing the importance of the lyrical meaning within the musical aesthetic.

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

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

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

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

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

The two first articles of this thesis consider the status of hip hop music as a political expression in present day Norway, from both an audience and a creative actor perspective. The first article, the audience article, investigates the extent to which hip hop music in the context of present day Norway is seen to be attendant to social and political questions, and how the genre relates to specific ideological-political
orientations. The second article, the creative actor article, investigates the degree to which the general Norwegian hip hop scene is politically committed, and the sort of politics that is being championed.

2.5.4 Contextualising hip hop as political expression in Norway

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

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

Although subject to a fair deal of retrospective romanticism it is, however, during the 60s and 70s that the intersections between popular music in recent history could be seen most manifestly at play. This occurred alongside the emergence and subsequent radicalisation of global popular music, and the vital role this came to play in what is often referred to as the broader counter-culture (See for instance Garofalo, 1992b: Peddie, 2005). Regarding these developments, in their book ‘1968 in Europe: A
History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977’ Klimke and Scharloth (2008: 13) describe music as tightly interwoven with the widespread political activism that emerged in Europe from the mid-sixties onwards:

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

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

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

It was considerably politicized, reflecting in its lyrics the women's movement, the wildcat strikes, the anti-imperialistic barricades, the environmental movement and the ‘green’ wave. The musical groups themselves were generally members of the movements or appeared as artists at their assemblies and demonstrations.
In Norway, music was integrated as part of radical Marxist organisations such as AKP-ML (Rognlien & Brandal, 2009), and also less radical social democratic organisations such as the Labour party and movement. Their use of music, predominantly in the form of folk songs, is evident in the numerous volumes of printed songbooks issued by various political organisations at the political left, and also the quantity of political songs written and distributed as part of mobilisation around key political events, such as the referendum on Norwegian membership of the ECC (EU) in 1972.\(^5\)

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

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

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

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

\(^{5}\) Grepstad (1983) registered 362 unique compositions, the grand majority against membership in the EU, but notes that to collect the full number of different songs that circulated before the referendum “would amount to a life work”.
or through an expressed sympathy with the Marxist-cause (Rognlien & Brandal, 2009). Several of these artists, such as Vømmøl, Halvdan Sivertsen and Lars Klevstrand, enjoyed mass-appeal during the seventies and so establishing themselves as popular artists during this period.

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

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

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

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

3.1 Overall research design

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

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

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

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

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

By focusing on Norwegian hip hop music and its integration into public sphere processes, the ambition of this thesis is thus to provide an example of how the politics of music can be studied through the lens of public sphere theory, and moreover what kinds of results this theoretical approach might yield. In addition, the fact that public sphere theory has, thus far, only scantily been used for this purpose, and, to my knowledge, never systematically in regards to the expressive qualities of music, necessitates a case study approach where these aspects of music can be investigated in depth.
A potentially significant contribution of this thesis may thus be that it provides an example both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, by exemplifying how the theoretical framework of public sphere theory can be operationalised in order to study the political significance of other musical genres and practices. Empirically, by illuminating characteristics of production, text and reception that may be applicable to other musical genres or practices, and so will serve as a point of comparison through which the specificities of other musical genres can be brought to the fore.

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

3.2 A process oriented case design

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

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

### 3.3 Choice of methods

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

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

The research design of this thesis, comprising a variety of cases and methods, can similarly be understood in light of the bricolage metaphor, as the constituent parts of the thesis allow the researcher to present an intelligible montage that may help
illuminate the role of music in the public sphere. However, such an approach must not be confused with naïve eclecticism. In clarifying the strengths of the qualitative approach, and emphasising the centrality of mixing methods and cases, Denzin further (Ibid: 8) argues:

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

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

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

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

This thesis thus makes use of a variety of methods, including quantitative survey (the audience study), expert interview (the production study), musical-textual analysis (the textual study) and qualitative reception analysis (the reception study). This involved a pragmatic approach to methodology, where choice of method was subsequent to the selection of research questions and case studies. As Nelson et al. (1992: 2) argue, the “... choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context”. Thus, rather than approaching the research with a pre-established methodology, the research questions and cases informed the choice of
methods. According to the same logic, the case design necessitated the triangulation of methods. This is an approach that allows for comparing multiple sources of data collected by multiple methods to look for convergence of meaning (Lindlof and Taylor 2002: 240-241).

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

This thesis makes use of a mixed methods design implying the supplementing of quantitative and qualitative methods (Bergman, 2008:1). The first, quantitative, audience study supplements and supports the later qualitative efforts by empirically establishing hip hop to be a politically potent genre, and also by providing empirical background data on how political orientation aligns with a taste for hip hop music. As Christensen et al. (2011: 381) note, mixed methods are also valuable in providing both insider and outsider perspectives on a given phenomenon. Accordingly, the quantitative audience study provides an outsider perspective on the politics of hip hop music, the degree to which audiences understand hip hop to be of political significance, whereas the qualitative production study offers an insider perspective on the same thing, discussing how the artists themselves regard the politics of hip hop.
Significantly, this highlights another beneficial consequence of the mixed methods approach: that it provides multiple sources of evidence that, in turn, may strengthen the validity of the findings. In this thesis, the quantitative study of audience's tastes and attitudes, and the qualitative studies of scene-practices, expressive qualities and public reception all, in albeit different capacities, find that hip hop music entails political significance, which strengthen the validity of this finding. In consequence, this employment of mixed methods also strengthens the generalisability of the findings in this thesis.

3.4 Quantitative survey of young politicians – the audience study

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

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

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

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

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⁷ Important to mention, this study also had qualitative elements as several of the survey questions were open ended and required the respondents to formulate their own responses and.
The choice of young politicians affiliated with different and politically divergent parties was strategically motivated, because a pronounced political divergence between respondents allows for a clearer elucidation of how musical taste aligns with political orientation. Furthermore, the membership of youth wings means that respondents were of an age (generally between 16 and 25 years old) when musical interest, relative to other age groups, is heightened. Therefore, members of youth wings provide a sample population that promises a richness of information and one where the intersections between musical taste and politics can more vividly be observed and studied. This study thus provides evidence indicative of the general status of hip hop music as a political expression in present day Norway, and a point of departure for the subsequent qualitative and more detailed case studies of the thesis. This first study thus allowed me to establish the current status of hip hop music as political expression among audiences, i.e. the degree to which the respondents identify hip hop music as politically significant (both as a political expression and for their political engagement), attain an overview of how hip hop music generally aligns itself with other musical tastes and so empirically establish hip hop music as a fertile overarching research case. Additionally, this study was instrumental in identifying the hip hop artists that were the informants in the subsequent production study.

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

An important, but secondary dimension that is investigated in this study is the way in which the configurations of musical taste, political orientation and socio-economic background can be explained through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural sociology. A rich body of research (see for instance Peterson & DiMaggio, 1975; Savage 2006;
Gripsrud et al., 2011b) in the tradition of Bourdieu has demonstrated that musical taste is connected to socio-economic factors. On the basis of the quantitative data from this study, the audience study also explains the respondents’ musical tastes in relation to the broader concept of aesthetic sensibilities. These sensibilities are conceptualised as part of the respondents’ lifestyles, which in turn are rooted in a particular socio-economic background and habitus.

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

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

During the development of the questionnaire (the period April-May 2011), two informal pre-studies were carried out. First, an interview with a position-holding member of KRFU (Norwegian Young Christian Democrats) tested out an early version of the survey, and then a subsequent observation was carried out at a regional meeting of KRFU. In the early stages of the research process these preliminary studies were valuable in guiding the selection of artists and genres to be covered in the
survey. The questionnaire contained questions that surveyed: the organisation; the position within the organisation; socioeconomic background data, including gender, geographical location, parents’ occupation and education; opinion of particular political issues; level of musical interest; and, musical preferences, including genres and specific artists (see Appendix 1).

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

In implementing the survey, potential respondents and their e-mail addresses were first identified through the central administrative offices of the various political parties’ youth wings, and subsequently contacted by e-mail. The sample of participants included position-holding members at both regional and national levels. However, in the case of SU (the Socialist Youth) the email lists provided also contained the addresses of some position holding members at local level, which it was not possible to single out and so, consequently, they also became part of the data material and the final analysis. However, these were few, and did not significantly alter the general tendencies identified within SU. The survey was distributed to a total
of 451 potential participants, of which 324 responded, yielding an overall response rate of 64%.

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

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

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

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

From a methodological perspective, operationalising this research question involved empirically exploring typical motivations and aesthetic practices on the hip hop scene and discussing these in light of central concepts drawn from public sphere theory. The selection of informants for this interview-based study included five rap artists and two critics (see the Appendix for the production article for a full list, including
biographical details). The main criterion for the selection of the rap artists was that they were prominent on the national hip hop scene, in terms of either (sub-)cultural legitimacy, having played an important role in the evolution of the genre, or being at the forefront of the present scene. It was also important that the rap artists addressed a national audience through their music. Similarly, critics were selected on the basis of longevity and centrality to the scene, in order to provide substantial and historical overview. Longevity and centrality were important for the selection of both rap artists and critics, since one of the objectives of the interviews, in addition to uncovering individual motivations and practices, was also to gain more general information about the motivations and practices at the hip hop scene at large. Hence, informants had the joint status of being practitioners and experts. The interviews facilitated the collection of rich, in depth data that are indicative of dominant tendencies, but also discrepancies, in terms of both political motivations and aesthetic practices. It was crucial to supplement the accounts of rap artists with those of long established and, comparatively speaking, more ‘objective’ critics.

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

Bogner et al. (2009) clarifies that expert interviews pertain to a person’s knowledge and experiences, which result from their actions, positions or experience as part of particular institutional or social settings, which in the case of this thesis is the Norwegian hip hop scene. As such, this research was interested less in the informants’ individual biographies, but as them being experts representing the scene. Consequently, the interviews were framed to gain access to the informants’ perspectives and factual accounts, rather than trying to tease out their inner
convictions and feelings. Whereas some interview approaches emphasise the construction of meaning that occurs in the process of discursive interaction (Fontana & Frey, 2003), the approach of these interviews was more straight-forward in the sense that the informants’ responses were primarily treated as informative and factual accounts. This is an approach that has proved fruitful in previous interview-based studies of creative practitioners that I have undertaken (Larsen & Nærland, 2011).

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

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

Crucially, the form of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2 for the interview guide), and the conversational mode of data collection for the interviews in general, allowed me to test out the research hypotheses and frameworks of understanding. As a consequence, several of the themes and theoretical conceptualisations highlighted in this study reverberate in the two subsequent studies of text and reception. In terms of the explorative dimension of this case study, semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow for an open-ended response, meaning that the informants can offer their take on the different interview themes. Moreover, they allowed for unforeseen
issues or topics to be raised and explored. In contrast, a quantitative approach to establishing the motivations and practices of the hip hop scene, for example in the form of a survey, may have offered more reliable data about the scene at large, but it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to motivate national hip hop artists and critics to participate in such a survey. It would also, to a significant degree, exclude the possibility of attaining the in depth data that semi-structured interviews can procure. Another possible method could have been the observation of hip hop artists in their creative context, which, although may have yielded similarly rich and in depth data on creative practices, would have been extremely time consuming and so would necessitate a strict limitation of the number of informants and cases.

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

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

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

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

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

Commenting on the lack of scholarly attention to musical qualities in research on the politics of music, Frith (1998a: 159) comments that:
arguments about pop’s political and social value are still more likely to refer to pop words than pop sounds. There are mundane reasons for this – fans, academics and moralists alike are more used to dealing with verbal than with musical meaning, and find it easier to talk about (and censor).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The empirical focal point of this study was the public role of rap act Karpe Diem in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre on July 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2011, and the subsequent public reception of their chart hit ‘Toyota'n til Magdi’; (Magdi's Toyota). Karpe Diem was, at that time, the most commercially successful Norwegian hip hop act. They had a past as politically agitative rap artists and played a prominent role in the national mourning ceremonies that took place after July 22\textsuperscript{nd}. The release of ‘Toyota'n til Magdi’ approximately a year after the massacre, a song with manifestly political lyrics, generated considerable and heated public debate that also included political actors and fed into wider political discussions. Thus, this case represents, relatively speaking, highly pronounced expressive and biographical conditions, and, as this study makes evident, exceptional receptive and political conditions. According to Flyvbjerg’s (2006) typology, it can justly be described as an ‘extreme case’. A clear benefit of studying such a case is that both political and discursive dynamics are lucidly displayed, and thus readily allow a consideration from within the framework
of public sphere theory. As a result of the exceptional nature of this case, the study is not intended to produce generalisable findings. Nonetheless, it is still a case that can highlight the processes through which music can affect public discourse under less pronounced conditions.

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

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

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

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

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

4.1 The political status of hip hop among audiences

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

At a more general level, this study indicated systematic differences in regards to the aesthetic sensibilities found among young politicians on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum. Whereas the former were oriented towards more explicitly
political music, ‘alternative’ music, and music characterised by a disruptive aesthetic, the latter preferred apolitical, ‘commercial’ music characterised by a non-disruptive aesthetic. Moreover, whilst there is general endorsement of the idea that music is politically significant, and recognition of youth wings as taste communities, at the political left, at the political right these ideas are rejected.

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

4.2 Motivations and practices on the hip hop scene

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

Secondly, this study makes evident that hip hop artists today remain committed to publicly exhibiting marginalised or subaltern experiences, either based on their own personal biographies or in terms of their identification with, or adoption of, outsider perspectives. The hip hop scene at large is here also identified as being politically left leaning.
The study further showed how practitioners make use of aesthetic strategies of potentially high relevance to public discourse. First, artists typically employ a rhetoric of hyperbole, involving provocation, profanity and exaggeration, in order to command public attention. Thus, through aesthetic and lyrical disruption, hip hop artists may stimulate and facilitate public discourse. Second, the study explains how storytelling constitutes a prominent lyrical form, strategically used in order to foster empathy and solidarity for the lyrical subjects, which in turn can strengthen or facilitate public discourse.

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

4.3 Hip hop expressivity as political discourse

In the textual study, Lars Vaular’s song ‘Who shot Siv Jensen’ was analysed in regards to how its lyrical and musical elements constitute the song as political discourse. In this study both motivations and practices typical of the hip hop scene were seen to be manifest in the music through musical and lyrical text. The analysis
showed how the aesthetic and verbal elements together constituted the song as a particular yet highly potent form of musically enabled political discourse. The analysis highlights how the song entailed a set of key, musically enabled, political utterances. These includes the hyperbolic and provocative suggestion that an FRP-politician had been shot, the ridicule of the interplay between tabloid media, populist politicians and the social stereotypes of audiences, and a non-explicated statement of anti-FRP sentiment.

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

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

4.4 Hip hop in public political discourse

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

Furthermore, this study highlights the process and trajectory through which Karpe Diem and their music became publicly identified and responded to as politically significant. Although both expressive and biographical factors were instrumental in this process, this study also makes evident the importance of contextual factors in facilitating the politicised public reception of their music. This case study thus highlights how the highly particular public, political and discursive conditions following the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of July, were pre-requisites for the investment of political significance into Karpe Diem and their music.
Based on these findings, the study conclusively points attention to how the music of Karpe Diem and their music de facto entered and stimulated the multilevel discursive processes central to the framework of deliberative democracy, as laid down and substantiated in Habermas’ 2006 model of the political system. Moreover, and based on the findings, this study suggests how this model can be further sensitised, at a conceptual level, in order to account for the role of aesthetic interventions in the public sphere.

4.5 Towards a ‘public discursive’ conception of the politics of music

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

This implies what I will term a ‘public discursive’ conception of the politics of music. This is not a politics that primarily accentuates the ways in which music is used in the service of traditional political agendas, organisations or actors, neither is it a politics that accentuates the role of music in political elections, nor that stresses the ways in
which music prompts political action in a directly causal sense. Rather, it is a conception that bases itself upon the fundamental premise that the public sphere and the discursive interaction that occurs herein constitutes the modus operandi of democratic politics. Thus, music, by integrating into these discursive interactions, either as aesthetic public discourse in its own right, or by stimulating verbally based public discourse, becomes politically significant.

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

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive conceptualisation – most music and the public life it lives do not meet these criteria, which certainly do not imply that the music in question must be devoid of political or ideological significance. Rather, the conceptualisation that this thesis suggests clarifies how music can, under particular circumstances, and to varying degrees, assume political significance. It also rests upon a particular and partly normative understanding of politics. It is thus a conceptualisation that supplements established perspectives on music and politics and highlights one of many aspects of the role of music in society.
However, a key strength of the public sphere perspective utilised within this thesis is that it firmly situates music within the wider framework of democracy. Significantly, music entails democratically desirable functions as an expressive vehicle mediating between the private/subcultural sphere and the public sphere, and as a mediating vehicle between citizens and elites. When the perspectives and opinions originating from the private/subcultural sphere (as shown in the productions study), articulated through the aesthetical language of hip hop (as shown in the textual study), is posited and engaged with in the public sphere (as shown in the reception study), it assumes potential political significance. The musically engendered discourse among actors and in forums located towards the centre of Habermas’ political system (2006), where political-administrative decisions are made, brings attention to how music contributes to the sustaining of two key principles of deliberative democracy. First, music engenders discursive participation and engagement that may, second, be instrumental in political decision-making.

Finally, to briefly attend to the second principal research question of this thesis: *To what extent is public sphere theory a framework adequate to investigations of the politics of music?* I would argue that the theoretical framing, use of concepts and the findings of this thesis itself answer this question. The composite effort of this thesis demonstrates that public sphere theory is a productive starting point for such investigations. Significantly, the public sphere and the framework of deliberative democracy provide an overarching architecture of democracy in which music and the processes it is part of can be located. Yet, as many critics have rightly noted, particularly of the Habermasian version, it is a theory that privileges verbal and rule-bound communication. However, and as has been the ambition to substantiate in this thesis, it is a theoretical framework that, given the critical and eclectic use of supplementary theory and method, accommodates for a clarification of the role of expressive and aesthetical communication in deliberative democracy – therein music.
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104


Part II: The Articles
Article 1: *The audience article*

Let’s do an anti-American dance
Make the embassy a Midsummer Eve bonfire
Grab the hand of your chosen one
Burn the flag and shake your booty!
There was sunset
There was laughter, there was singing
There was summer vacation
There was the sea and there was magic

Translated excerpt from Gatas Parlament’s “Anti-amerikansk dans” – the most popular band among members of the revolutionary Marxist youth wing Red Youth (RU)

Translated excerpt from Postgirobygget’s “Idyll” – the most popular band among members of the marked liberalist youth wing The Progress Party’s Youth (FPU)

There is a growing recognition that musical taste reflects but also informs political orientation and action in both subcultures as well as wider publics. Yet, how musical taste may play part in the processes in which political actors orientate towards political and ideological issues remains an empirically unexplored area. Based on a survey conducted among the leaders (N=324) of the youth wings of five major political parties in Norway this study demonstrates systematic oppositions in musical taste, in regards to the significance ascribed to politically expressive music, cultural legitimacy, and the aesthetic sensibilities of the young politicians. These major oppositions systematically follow the ideological left-right axis of Norwegian politics. Using the cultural sociology of Bourdieu as a point of departure this article further argues that musical taste and political orientation are privileged and mutually interwoven expressions of lifestyle on the political left, where members also recognize and accentuate this connection. In comparison, the connections between musical taste and political orientation are less distinct and to a
considerably lesser degree recognized among members of the political right. Furthermore, this study argues that there are distinct resonances between musical taste and ideology, as found among the members of the youth wings.

1. Introduction

How does musical taste relate to political opinion and action, and to what extent is music invested with political significance? In the broadest sense, (popular) music has been seen as politically significant through its capacity to convey ideology (Frith, 1998; Adorno, 1973; Middleton, 1990; Attali, 1985), and as a site for ideological struggle and resistance (Garofalo, 1992; Frith, 1983) – including the role of music in various subcultures (Hebdige, 1979). Furthermore, the political significance of music has been conceived of in terms of its identity-forming and expressive function in social, political, and not least nationalist, movements and struggles (Negus, 1996; Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Peddie, 2005; Street, 2012). More recently the political significance of music has been explored in terms of its role within public sphere processes (Gripsrud, 2009; reference removed for review purposes), and as a resource for (cultural) citizenship (Hermes, 2005; Van Zoonen, 2000) and political engagement (Inthorn et al., 2012).

However, whereas studies of the politics of music have overwhelmingly focused on how popular audiences and subcultures engage with music, only minimal attention has been given to how the relationship between music and politics manifests in political elites – including the politicians who operate at the center of the political system. Although the political significance of music largely resides in its mass appeal and as a site and expressive form for popular audiences and publics it is peculiar that there are no studies investigating how politicians are engaging with music. Moreover, only scant attention has been given to the formative role of socio-demographic factors in configuring relationships between musical taste and political
orientations within different political groupings. Furthermore, little research is done investigating if music is at all seen as politically significant among political actors and how both investment of political significance in music and musical taste manifests according to the ideologically diverging positions of the politicians.

Based on data from a survey carried out on position-holding members of the youth wings of five major political parties (N=324) in Norway in 2011, giving particular attention to the ideological counterparts RU and FPU, this article firstly demonstrates how musical taste is distributed across the political left/right-axis of Norwegian party-politics and how music is ascribed with varying degrees of political significance according to ideological position. Secondly, employing data indicating key socio-economic characteristics of the respondents this article explains the social configurations of musical taste, aesthetic sensibilities and political-ideological orientations of the young politicians in light of Bourdieu’s concept of lifestyle. Lastly, this article considers the degree to which there is a resonance between the aesthetic and expressive characteristics of musical preferences and political-ideological orientation.

Political youth wings make up a fruitful research-case for several pertinent reasons. Firstly, youth wings performs a key function in the recruitment and schooling of young people into party- and parliamentary politics (Katz and Mair, 1995) – as such their members represent emerging political elites and future actors in the political public sphere. Secondly, youth wings represent a political force in their own right in issuing well publicized and often radical reprimands of both their mother parties and of parliamentary politics in general. In Norway the public impact and status of youth wings has also markedly increased following the nation-shaking massacre of 77 members of the Labour Party’s youth wing at the Utøya-Island, summer of 2011. Thirdly, the membership of youth wings are at an age (most between 16 and 25 y.o. (see appendix, table 4)) when musical interest, relative to other age groups, takes up
a privileged space – thus rendering youth wings an arena where the intersections between musical taste and politics can vividly be seen at play and studied.

2. Musical taste and political-ideological orientation

In the study of the role of music in political elites Bourdieu’s cultural sociology offers a fruitful theoretical and methodological framework because it presents an overarching perspective on musical taste and political orientation as conjugated and integrated into the complex of *lifestyle*, thus seeing these two lifestyle components in relation to underlying socio demographic conditions and habitus. The important socially differentiating function Bourdieu ascribes to musical taste and its role in the reproduction of social class is due to two main characteristics of music: its non-representational character, which in turn makes it a potent symbolic site for the inscription of social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1995: 77), and the subtlety and opaqueness of musical distinction, where the level of mastery is linked to socioeconomic conditions (Ibid: 77).

Musical taste is here seen as part of habitus – the set of (aesthetic) sensibilities and dispositions acquired through socialization – that is shaped by socioeconomic factors and the level of inherited economic and cultural capital. Moreover musical taste and the aesthetic dispositions it entails are expressed and manifested through *lifestyles*, which according to Bourdieu must be understood as the different “..systems of properties in which the different systems of dispositions express themselves.” (Ibid: 260). As such, habitus functions as the mediator between socioeconomic background and lifestyle (Ibid: 170). Crucially, ideological and political orientation is from this viewpoint regarded, alongside musical taste, as a lifestyle-expression of the dispositions and sensibilities acquired at the more fundamental level of habitus (See for instance Van Eijck and Bargeman,2004)”.
However, this conceptualization of the relationship between socioeconomic background, musical taste and ideological-political orientation has been challenged and supplemented by scholars working from within and from outside the Bourdieuvian framework. The concept of musical omnivore is a recent and important addition, and some would say challenge, to this framework, where versatility in musical taste is argued to be the key socially distinguishing factor rather than the taste for either lowbrow or highbrow music (Peterson and Kern, 1996; Savage and Gayo, 2011). Recent studies have also emphasized demographic factors such as age, ethnicity and gender (Savage, 2006) as determining factors of musical taste, while other studies has re-actualized the importance of educational background (van Eijk and Bargeman, 2004; Gripsrud et al, 2011) in the formation of cultural taste.

Employing the concept of taste cultures Georg H. Lewis (1992) offers a somewhat different conceptualization that builds upon the framework established by Bourdieu, but with a more particular focus on how political-ideological factors specifically relates to the formation of musical taste. The concept of taste cultures was originally introduced by Gans (1973) and further developed by Peterson and DiMaggio (1975) as a concept alternative, but roughly parallel to, class culture.

Arguing that socioeconomic background remains the key structuring factor in the formation of musical taste, Lewis suggests that the process whereby individuals acquire and form groups around musical taste can also be fruitfully understood in terms of three distinct but intersecting dimensions. The first dimension is demographics, comprising factors such as age, gender and locality. The second dimension is aesthetics – the aesthetic sensibilities acquired through socialization. The third is politics a dimension he defines as the relationship among musicians, music, fans, and the power structure of the larger society. Drawing on the terminology of Raymond Williams he further argues that the political dimension may yield different taste cultures that can be: (1) supportive of the power culture (hegemonic); (2) alternative (and co-existing) with the power culture; (3)
oppositional to the power culture. Complementing Bourdieu’s concept of lifestyle with Lewis’ taste culture this study shows not only how musical taste and political orientation are integrated into the lifestyle complex’ of the young politicians, but also that there are distinct resonances between the music they listen to and the political ideology they promote.

3. The Norwegian political landscape: the parties and their youth wings

In order to demonstrate how musical taste maps on to political and ideological orientation among the young politicians in Norway, and how this is relevant to the wider political context, I will first outline the key characteristics of Norwegian party politics in regards to constitutional arrangement and political cleavages. Like the other Scandinavian countries, and unlike for instance the UK and the US, the parliamentary system in Norway is organized according to the principle of proportional representation, thereby encouraging a proliferation of political parties. According to the now classic model established by Rokkan (1967), and more recent studies (Heidar, 2007), the historically most important cleavages in Norway have centered on class, religion and the power-/identity struggle between center and periphery. The left-right axis has been, and still remains, the primary organizing dimension of Norwegian party politics and electoral behavior (Knutsen, 1986; Ray and Narud, 2000), aligning the parties by their stance on key political issues such as tax-level, the level of privatization of public services and the welfare state. In terms of the left-right axis in Norwegian politics the parties can be seen to position themselves as following:

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Rød Ungdom (from here of abbreviated RU) and their parent party Rødt (The Red Electoral Alliance), inhabit the position furthest on the left of the left-right axis of mainstream politics in Norway. Ideologically RU identifies itself as a socialist, revolutionary political organization consisting of “students, pupils and young workers, whose goal is a democratic socialist revolution, leading to a society without classes – communism”\(^8\). Their ideological counterpart Fremskrittspartiets Ungdom (from here on abbreviated FPU) and their parent party the Progressive Party, position themselves at the other end of the axis. Although not unambiguously, they identify themselves ideologically as a libertarian and market liberalist organization that bases its politics on “..the individual’s right to life, freedom and property”, and whose primary goal is to “.. work towards the radical reduction of taxes, fees and governmental interference.”\(^9\). A comparison between these two ideological opposites will in the following be used to highlight key tendencies in the relationship between musical taste and political orientation in the context of Norwegian politics.

See appendix, table 4 and 5, for social characteristics of the respondents and respondents’ parents’ income and education.

4. Method/data

4.1 Participants and procedure

In order to avoid no longer active respondents and to ensure that respondents inhabited a high level of commitment to the political and ideological agendas of their respective youth wings, the survey was distributed as a web-survey to all position-

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\(^8\) RU’s homepage http://rødungdom.no/english

\(^9\) FPU’s Manifest [http://fpu.no/fpu-mener/manifest/](http://fpu.no/fpu-mener/manifest/), authors translation. p. 1
holding members of the youth wings. It was distributed to the youth wings of all eight major political parties in Norway, but only five of them are compared in this study as these five youth wings most adequately represent the left-right axis of Norwegian politics. E-mail lists provided by the youth wings’ respective secretariats ensured access to the full population. The position-holding members in the five youth wings compared in this article together make up a sample of 324 respondents. The overall response-rate was 64 percent (the total number of position holding members in these parties is 461).

4.2 Music preferences

Genre is widely recognized as a variable indicating general orientation in musical taste (Frith, 1996), and has fruitfully been employed in surveys of musical taste in both the field of sociology and social psychology, particularly in big scale surveys of musical taste in relation to social class. However, genre has its limitations as a variable as it only maps general and broad orientations in taste, thus potentially leaving out the finer but, in the context of this article, significant nuances contained within the genres. Music preferences were therefore surveyed at three different levels: preference for a selection of genre, preference for a selection of artists and preference for artists by self-reported preferences.

The selection of genres, 41 in total, was based on recent research from both Norwegian and international contexts (Gripsrud, et al. 2010; Savage, 2006), and was aimed to reflect the potential diverse music preferences of the respondents. In order to allow for a more detailed mapping of musical preference that captures distinctions within the broad categories of genre, the respondents were asked to grade their preference for 36 artists in total. The selection of artists were partly based on recent research (Ibid.) and modified and updated to accommodate for this particular age-group.
In order to survey the respondents taste for politically expressive music, the selection of artists also contained a number of artists that are popularly perceived to be “political”. However, “political” music is a muddled concept and in need of clear definition. In this respect Street (2012:44) makes an important distinction between “explicitly political music” from “ideological music”:

While all songs are ideological in the sense that they contain a perspective on the world and relationships within it, a political song, I shall assume, is one that self-consciously recognizes the ideological content and seeks to draw the listeners’ attention to it.

Street further points out three key ways in which music comes to be recognized as political: through the performer’s or composer’s intention and biographical narrative, and through social and political context. Similarly, Negus (1996:192) points out how the political “meaning” of music may be arbitrary to its formal qualities and how particular kinds of music through processes of mediation and articulation connect with political agendas and causes.

Combining Negus’ non-essential notion of how music acquire political meaning with Street’s focus on the specific processes through which music is being invested with political significance, I propose the following definition of political music: Music that either intentionally, by contextual factors or by artists’ biographical narrative assert culturally stable and socially recognized associational relationships with particular political ideologies, causes or organizations. This definition is limited in scope in that it does not accentuate the role of music in political change and action per se, but rather aims to illuminate the ways in which music is socially inscribed with political significance – the music that makes up the unofficial repertoire of what is often referred to as “political music”. Following the definition I have just given, it is the artists, bands and genres, who in the context of the contemporary Norwegian society enjoy stable and socially recognized associational relationship to specific
political ideologies, agendas and organizations that I in this analysis term “political music”, and which make up the core units of the subsequent analysis.

In order to attain a more nuanced picture of what kind of punk, hip hop, metal etc, the respondents have a taste for, and moreover which other political artists that they may be listening to, beyond the artists coded as political in the pre-given selection, the respondents were also asked to report their three most and least favorite artists. A genre such as hip hop for instance is in terms of its politics characterized by a duality as it is both associated with politically non-progressive values such as the promotion of consumer culture and stereotyped gender-views, and with radical political agitation (Rose,1994). Most genres share this potential duality and are not univocally “political” or “non-political”, hence asking the respondents to report their favorite artists were crucial in capturing these distinctions. The artists mentioned were subsequently coded and organized in terms of their relationship to the music industry, aesthetic characteristics, and their connections with political causes, organizations and agendas.

4.3 Attitudes and socio-economic background

In order to explore the ways in which the members of the different youth wings themselves may perceive links between music and politics, the survey contained a set of attitude-questions. These were questions surveying the respondents’ attitudes towards the potential relevance of music as a form of political expression and to the role music potentially has played in the political engagement of the respondent.

In addition the survey included a number of questions indicating the respondents’ socio-economic status, including questions indicating their parents’ social position, i.e. level of income, level of education and type of education.
5. Findings

5.1 Diverging ideological positions – diverging musical tastes

Preferences for genres, artists and the favorite artists by self-reporting (Table 1) demonstrate clearly that what I have identified as political music makes up a significant part of the musical taste of the members of RU, whereas political music has only minimal occurrence among members of FPU. Already in their preference for genres (Table 1, A) this tendency can be seen: members of RU hold high preference for genres that are known to allow for and encourage political expressions and interpretations such as indie rock, (hardcore) punk, protest songs and hip hop, whereas members of FPU to a higher degree indicate preference for genres considered less politically explicit and less culturally legitimate such as dance, mainstream rock and heavy metal.

The preference for artists (Table 1, C) among the members of the two youth wings solidifies the tendency suggested at the level of genre. Six out of the ten most popular artists among the members of RU are artists that are commonly associated with political ideologies, causes or organizations (Gatas Parlament\textsuperscript{10}, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, Bruce Springsteen, Vømmøl\textsuperscript{11} and Rage Against the Machine), indicating a general endorsement of political music. In comparison only one out of the ten most popular artists in FPU (Bruce Springsteen) can be characterized as political. Coldplay and U2 also enjoy much popularity in FPU, but these are bands that, arguably, are associated with humanitarian and environmental causes rather than explicitly political ones.

Table 1. Musical taste in youth wings. Percentages and rankings (* 42 genres in total. # 39 artists in total)

\textsuperscript{10} Publicly prolific Norwegian hip hop group, with a marked left wing political profile.

\textsuperscript{11} Norwegian folk rock band prolific in the 1970’s and 80’s. Their music championed anti-capitalist politics and the band were affiliated with the Norwegian Marxist-Leninist party (AKP-ML)
## Ideological orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth wings</th>
<th>RU (Red Youth)</th>
<th>SU (Socialist Youth)</th>
<th>AUF (Workers' Youth League)</th>
<th>UH (Norwegian Young Conservatives)</th>
<th>FPU (Progress Party's Youth)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Revolutionary socialist</td>
<td>Revolutionary socialism</td>
<td>Social democracy, Democratic socialism</td>
<td>Liberal conservatism</td>
<td>Marked Liberalism / Libertarianism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Parent party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Red Party</th>
<th>Socialist Left</th>
<th>Labour Party</th>
<th>Conservative Party</th>
<th>The Progress Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| N=            | 57        | 82             | 74           | 45                 | 66                 |

### A) 5 most popular genres*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indie rock (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Punk + Hardcore (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Protest songs (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mainstream Rock (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Hip hop (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B) 5 most unpopular genres *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dance (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dance band (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Eurovision (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Electronica (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R'n'B (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### C) 10 most popular artists #

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gatas Parlament (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kaizers Orchestra (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bob Dylan (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>John Mayer (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rokke &amp; Valentineren (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Røyksopp (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bruce Springsteen (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Våmmel (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rage Against the Machine (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Karpe Diem (51%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D) 10 most unpopular artists #

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ole Ivars (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kurt Nilsen (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dimmu Borgir (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>U2 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vassendutane (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>David Guetta (32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lady Gaga (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Postgigbygget (31%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### E) 10 most recurrent favorite preferences (open question)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gatas Parlament (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kaizers Orchestra (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Loop Troop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Carpe Diem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nirvana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dropkick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pavement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Talib Kweli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Patti Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ole Ivars (76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dimmu Borgir (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>My Chemical Romance (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vassendutane (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Musikal (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gatas Parlament (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mari B. Persen (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Postgigbygget (83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coldplay (77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>U2 (71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ole Ivars (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gatas Parlament (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dimmu Borgir (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Metallica (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vassendutane (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My Chemical romance (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lady Gaga (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kaiers (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kurt Nilsen (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sigurd Dagsland (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gatas Parlament (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ole Ivars (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Odd Norrstå (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dimmu Borgir (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Jay Z (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MC.R romance (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lady Gaga (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kaiers (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rage Against the Machine (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mari B. Persen (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pink Floyd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kaiers Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Skrillex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Metallica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Postgigbygget (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>AC/DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Muse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coldplay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Robbie Williams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This orientation towards political music among the members of RU, and absence of such among the members of FPU is confirmed and nuanced by the reporting (open question) of their three most favorite artists. In RU the artists mentioned on the whole can be organized into five genre-categories: hip hop comprises the highest number of artists, followed by indie-rock, punk, classic rock and to a lesser extent metal. Crucially, both the hip hop (i.e. Gatas Parlament, Loop Troop) and punk artists (Drop Kick Murphys, Patti Smith) are commonly identified as “alternative” and are generally characterized by a disruptive and explicitly expressive aesthetic. In comparison, the favorite artists self-reported by the members of FPU majorly enters into the genre-categories of classic rock, mainstream pop/rock/hip hop, heavy metal and dance music, where very few of the reported artists have a political profile.

In general, hip hop stands out as the musical means of (left wing) political expression par excellence. Among the self-reported favorite artists on the left it is the genre that counts the most explicitly political artists, and it is also the genre that is most heavily invested with political significance – both measured in which bands the respondents are considering to be “political” but also in the respondents’ responses to questions about potential changes in musical taste as an effect of joining the youth wing.

5.2 The (mis)recognition of music’s political significance

Whereas members of RU make clear connections between their engagement with music and their political engagement, the members of FPU do so only minimally or even actively reject such connections. 63% of the members of RU agree with the statement “It is important for me that music contains social critique” (Table 2, C), whereas only 15% of the members of FPU do the same. Similarly, the two youth wings also hold polarized views on the importance of the political opinions of
musical performers (Table 2, B). Whereas 59 % of the members of RU either disagree “somewhat” or “strongly” with the statement “An artist’s or band’s political opinions are not important as to whether I like them or not”, 70 % of the members of FPU agree “strongly” or “somewhat” with the same statement. Indicating that members of RU invest music with political significance, or even agency, 63 % of them answer affirmatively to the question “Would you say that music has had any influence on your political engagement or on your opinion about a political issue?”. In comparison 85 % of the members of FPU answered negatively to the same question. Lastly, indicating that the members of RU constitute a taste community, as well as political community, 55 % of the members answer affirmatively to the question “Have your musical taste changed as an effect of joining the youth wing? In comparison 88 % of the FPU-respondents indicate a negative answer to this question, suggesting that matters of musical taste is of a far lesser importance to them as a group. The respondents were also asked to specify what kind of music they had started listening to after joining the youth wing. Consistent with the taste-preferences of the members of RU, all answers here emphasized either hip hop, punk or protest songs.

Table 2: Views on politics and music. In percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological orientation</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth wings</td>
<td>RU</td>
<td>SU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) “Would you say that music has had any influence on your political engagement or on your opinion about a political issue?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, that has never happened</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, that has happened</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, that has happened many times</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) “An artist’s or band’s political opinions are not important as to whether I like them or not”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither disagree nor disagree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) “It is important for me that music contains social critique”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly/somewhat agree</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) “Have your musical taste changed as an effect of joining the youth wing?”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, to a very high degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, to some degree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, it has not had any significance</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 A political-ideological structure of musical taste

In summary the musical tastes and attitudes of the members of RU and of FPU tend to gravitate towards opposite sides of the following dichotomies (Table 3), which are here employed to systematically illuminate key differentiating tendencies among the youth wings. Importantly, these dichotomies do not only highlight differences in taste and attitudes between RU and FPU, they also highlight what seems to be a structural dimension in the orientation towards political music that runs through the whole ideological left-right political spectrum, as represented by the five youth wings in this analysis.

In terms of preference for genre (Table 1 a), the genres considered to allow for and encourage political expressions and interpretations drop as one moves from the left and towards the right of the political spectrum. This tendency becomes more accentuated in the members’ preference for artists (Table 1 c). Whereas the preference for political artists is almost as high in SU (the y.w. of the Norwegian Socialist Party) as in RU, the preference is lower in AUF (the y.w. of the Norwegian Labour Party) and drops further in UH (the y.w. of the Norwegian Conservative Party), where Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan are the only high-preferences artists coded as political. Another clear tendency is that the further right on the left-right axis the party positions itself the more mainstream and chart-based musical taste gets. This is evident both in the members’ preference for the listed artists and in their mentioning of their favorite artists (Table 1 e). Similarly, the taste for music entailing a disruptive or noisy aesthetic, most evident among the members of RU, decreases the further to the right the youth wings position themselves. However, this is not a tendency that follow the left right axis consistently, as the taste for music entailing an aesthetic of ease and non-disruption is most evident amongst the members of UH, not FPU furthest to the right.
Table 3, A political ideological structure of musical taste

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideological orientation</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attributes of musical taste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of political explicitness</td>
<td>Explicitly political</td>
<td>A-political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherence to music industry</td>
<td>“Alternative”</td>
<td>“Commercial”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic mode</td>
<td>Disruptive</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards music and politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music as politically significant</td>
<td>Endorsement</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly expressed politics</td>
<td>Endorsement</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists political-biographical narrative</td>
<td>Endorsement</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth wings as taste communities</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further evidence of this structural dimension is found in the attitudes towards music and politics held by the members of the five youth wings. The degree to which music is held to be politically significant is consistently decreasing from the left to the right (Table 2b). There is also a consistent decrease from the left to the right in the extent to which members value music that expresses social critique (Table 2b). A similar decrease is evident in the degree to which they place importance on performers’ (political) biographical narrative (Table 2C). Lastly, the recognition of the youth wing as a taste-community also decreases the further to the right the party is positioned.

6. Discussion

6.1 Musical taste and political-ideological orientation as expressions of lifestyle

Studies of young people’s recruitment into political organizations in Norway emphasize that participation is itself to a considerable degree conditioned by a high socio-economic background (Wollebæk, et. Al. 2000:108). Other studies (Ødegård, 2010) have found that the political color of young people’s political engagement is
further conditioned by what sort of background-resources they inhabit, connecting politically right-leaning engagement to mercantile-technical middle class strata and left leaning engagement to social-humanist middle class strata. In line with these findings the sample of youth wing-members can at large be characterized as typically middle class, but with diverging combinations of economic, cultural and political capital – which in turn are important factors in the configuration of the various mixes of musical taste and political-ideological orientation as displayed in the lifestyles by the young politicians.

In terms of parents’ level of education (appendix, table 5) both FPU and AUF stand out as lower than those of the other youth wings, leaving SU as the youth wing with the highest score and UH second. In terms of parental income the differences are not huge, although RU stands out as the youth wing whose parents have the lowest income and UH as the youth wing with the greatest proportion of fathers earning a high income (600.000 NOK or more). In terms of parents type of education the parents of the respondents on the left gravitate towards humanities/social science educations and the respondents on the right towards mercantile/technological educations.

A striking similarity, which must be understood as an effect of the overall socioeconomic homogeneity of the sample, is that the musical taste found in all the youth wings is almost exclusively confined to popular music. There is only minimal preference for or mention of classical music, jazz or traditional music. When taste for traditionally legitimate music appears, it is mainly among the members of SU – whose parents both enjoy the highest level of education and score highest on humanities education in the sample. Other taste-commonalities that testify to this socio economic and cultural homogeneity is the unisonally shared preference for rock bands such as Kaizers Orchestra and the equally unison distaste for low status-genres such as dance bands and boy bands. The common distaste for the two latter
genres must, however, also be considered an exclusionary effect of age in addition to class.

The taste-disparities among the youth wings *within* the field of popular music must be understood in relation to parents’ level and type of education. The preference for legitimate popular music such as indie rock, protest songs and also canonized artists such as Tom Waits and Elvis Costello is highest in the youth wings on the left, SU in particular, where humanities and social science types of education are more common. Genres enjoying little legitimacy, such as dance music, mainstream pop and heavy metal are more popular among the members of the youth wings on the right, FPU in particular, whose parents to a larger degree have mercantile/technological types of education.

This is a finding consistent with tendencies found in recent studies of cultural taste and social background among Norwegian university students (Gripsrud, et al, 2011:20) showing that there are systematic relationships between students’ inherited cultural and economic capital and their political orientation, thus supporting the argument that musical taste and political-ideological orientation, and the relationship between these two, as found in the youth wings can fruitfully be conceived as interrelated lifestyle-expressions rooted in habitus. The diverging aesthetic sensibilities typical of the left and the right may also be explained in terms of parents’ educational background. The endorsement of explicit expressiveness and aesthetic disruption found on the left can be seen to concur with the prevalent, and largely modernist, aesthetic values in Norwegian arts and humanities-education. Reversibly, the endorsement of an aesthetic more directed towards ease and pleasure, most markedly articulated in UH, may be connected to mercantile/technological educational backgrounds where aesthetical objects to a greater extent are likely to be valued in terms of their functionality as musical décor or commodity.
However, in terms of the aesthetic sensibilities typical of the different youth wings there are particular intersections and ruptures that problematize the notion of a straight continuum between disruption and noise on the left and ease and décor on the right. A comparison between the young conservatives, UH, and FPU furthest out on the ideological axis, shows that whereas members of the former have a common distaste for heavy metal and also frequently report to dislike “noisy” music in general, members of the latter share a significant taste for heavy metal and to some degree also aggressive electronic music. As such the taste for the latter genres in FPU can be seen to entail an aesthetic sensibility that to some degree overlaps with that entailed by the shared taste for punk in RU, on the complete opposite end of the ideological axis. This circular, rather than linear, logic gets more accentuated if one takes into account the musical practices in political organizations positioned in the margins outside mainstream politics. Eyerman’s (2002) comparative study of musical practices within anarchist groups and within extreme right wing groups in Sweden shows that central to the political engagement of both of these, in ideological terms diametrically opposed, groups is the centeredness around generically identical super-aggressive hard-core punk. What might be the case here is that the further away from the ideologically hegemonic – and socioeconomically speaking privileged – centre of the political landscape one gets, the more extreme, noisy and disruptive aesthetic sensibilities and musical expression get. This is a finding that resonates with Attali’s (1985) argument that the way music – as organised sounds – are conceived to constitute either “music” or “noise” is reflective of power structures.

6.2 (a) politicised aesthetics

Moreover the findings suggest that the political left maintains a generally politicized aesthetic, where music is good because it is political and in opposition to what is perceived to be the established power structure. Similarly, this tight and self-
conscious fit between musical taste and political-ideological orientation found on the left can be seen as a continuation of the politicized lifestyle that was molded in the context of the Scandinavian radical left in the 70’s. There has been a shift from the relatively speaking organic and gentle sounds of folk and rock to the more aggressive sounds of (hardcore) punk and electronically programmed beats of hip hop. However, the taste for punk and hip hop does suggest an aesthetic sensibility, consistent with that of the 70’s, in that it is directed towards works of art that are explicitly politically expressive, as opposed to art merely serving a decorative function, or in musical terms – muzak.

Why is it then that the preference for political music and the degree to which music is invested with political significance is only minimal among the members of the youth wings on the right? The simple answer may be that there is not much of a political tradition of music to mobilize or renew at the political right in Norway – neither in terms of a repertoire of artists or songs, nor in terms of lifestyle. The absence of a right wing repertoire of political music is for example seen in that when the right wing respondents were asked to name three artists they consider to be “political”, the overwhelming majority of artists named are associated with ideology, causes or organizations of the political left! As such, political music in the Norwegian context appears in fact to be synonymous with “left-wing political music”.

Furthermore, the findings suggest a lifestyle at the right where musical taste and political orientation are significantly less coherently fitted together. In fact, a good proportion of the respondents from the right actively reject the notion that these two components of lifestyle bear any relevance to each other. Similarly, the high preference for mainstream music and music characterized by a pleasant and non-disruptive aesthetic suggests an aesthetic sensibility less oriented towards explicit expressiveness and more towards an aesthetic of ease and comfort. However, this is not to say that the right does not engage with ideologically charged music – the
popular music of their preference clearly is – but that they refuse to recognize their musical engagement as bearing ideological significance.

6.3 The resonance between musical taste and ideology

Georg S. Lewis’ (1992) suggestion that the processes whereby individuals acquire, and form groups around, musical taste also entail a political dimension, comprising taste cultures that are either supportive, alternative or oppositional to the dominant order, offers further explanation of how musical taste and political-ideological interrelates among the members of the different youth wings. This dimension can be seen at play both in terms of the young politicians’ preference for (political) music and in terms of their endorsement of other musical attributes.

The musical taste found among the members of RU and SU, but also to some degree in AUF, can be seen as indicative of an oppositional taste culture. For one thing, the taste found in these youth wings comprises a number of artists that are either expressively critical to the dominant power structure or who by popular association are connected to left wing ideologies, causes or organizations. For another, they emphasize in their attitudes both the importance of agreeing with the perceived politics of both music and artists, and the importance of social critique as part of the musical expression. Moreover, the high preference for genres and bands that are profiled as indie or non-mainstream, is indicative of an oppositional taste culture as these, at least in their idealized form, are positioned outside and in opposition to the established music industry. Lastly, the taste for music entailing an disruptive and noisy aesthetic, such as that of the (hardcore) punk bands or the agitative hip hop groups, are indicative of an oppositional taste culture because of the challenges this kind of aesthetic may pose to dominant conventions of aesthetic pleasure and quality.
The musical taste found among the respondents of youth wings of the right, UH and FPU, is on the other side is indicative of a supportive taste culture. Firstly, there is minimal occurrence of artists that are expressively critical towards the dominant power structure or that is popularly associated with ideologies, causes or organizations promoting radical change of status quo. The music typically listened to in these two youth wings may rather be characterized as ideological in the way that John Street (2012: 44) employs the term; “..the perspective(s) of the world and the relationships within it..” offered by this music are generally characterized as hegemonic. The rejection of the idea that music should entail social critique, evident in their attitudes and the high preference for "mainstream” and chart based music entrenched in the music industry, gives further indication of a supportive taste culture. Lastly, preference for music characterized by an aesthetic of ease and comfort, what one might call a pop-aesthetic, is also indicative of a supportive taste culture as it does not challenge or interfere with dominant discourses of aesthetic pleasure and quality.

This resonance between taste culture and ideology can also be seen to support Simon Frith’s (1996:272) argument that deriving pleasure from a piece of music, and in turn acquire a taste for it, involves an agreement with its ethics. Similarly, the findings suggest that the acquirement of taste among the members of the youth wings involves an agreement with the politics of the music. This agreement might tend towards being self-conscious and explicit as in the case of the youth wings at the left or less recognized as in the case of those of the right.

6.4 The politics of musical distinction

Lastly, I want to draw attention to what I in the case of the youth wings would term the politics of musical distinction. Elaborating on Bourdieu’s conception of the socially differentiating qualities of music Bryson (1996) argues that musical taste is a particularly potent reinforcer of symbolic boundaries between individuals and the
categories of people they might want to differentiate from (Bryson’s focus was on class and ethnicity). Bryson further emphasizes the significance of musical dislikes (negative preference), both in the actual constitution of these boundaries and in terms of how to methodologically uncover such boundaries. I here argue that music might also function as the symbolic material for political differentiation. The reciprocity of musical distaste between the two ideological opposites, RU and FPU, suggests symbolic boundary making that works along political-ideological lines. At the level of genre (Table 1 B) the members of RU indicate significant negative preference for dance-music – a genre that enjoys a high level of popularity in FPU. At the level of artists (Table 1 D) the members of RU indicate significant negative preference for U2, Lady Gaga, Postgirobygget and David Guetta, all of whom enjoy high preference in FPU. Reciprocally the members of FPU indicate significant negative preference for Gatas Parlament and Rage Against the Machine which both enjoy high preference in RU. Given the comparatively high importance of music among the members of RU, both in terms of lifestyle, the politicized musical traditions of the past, and what seems to be a high degree of musical identity, it can be hypothesized that they are more inclined to use musical distinction as a means of symbolic boundary making than the members of FPU. However, ethnographic research of politicians in their social and organizational settings, or interviews, would shed further light on how such musical-political differentiating practices are actually played out.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates systematic relationships between the taste for (political) music and political-ideological orientation, where the differing and distinct interrelations between these two components of lifestyle, as found across the left-right axis of Norwegian politics, must be understood in relation to the socio-economic background of the members of the youth parties. Furthermore, the
members of the left and the right display divergent aesthetic sensibilities and musical tastes which are informed by where the members are positioned in relation to the ideologically hegemonic – and socioeconomically speaking privileged – centre of the political landscape. Moreover this study suggests that music may function as the symbolic material for political differentiation among young politicians.

However, in order to arrive at a clearer and more finely grained understanding of how (musical) aesthetics and politics are integrated in the young politicians’ lifestyle(s), and how matters of musical taste might manifest in their political actions and engagement, in depth interviews should prove a fruitful course for further research. A bigger and certainly no less important question that is largely left unanswered by this study, is how music is put to work for particular political ideologies, agendas or organizations, or more broadly stated: how music enters processes of political transformation. Music can in the case of the youth wings be seen as a resource for recruitment, social identity formation, electoral mobilization and oppositional critique, but future empirical studies of how, and under what conditions, music enters processes of political opinion-formation – either as a means to inspire or inform public discourse or as an autonomous part of discourse itself – are here key to our understanding of the role music may play in political transformation.

References


Appendix

Table 4. Social Characteristics of the respondents (in percentage)

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Article 2: The production article
Hip Hop and the Public Sphere: Political Commitment and Communicative Practices on the Norwegian Hip Hop Scene

In terms of its booming popularity and public outreach, lyrical thematisations of society and adherence to politicised tradition, hip hop as a form of expressive culture may in significant yet largely unexplored ways enter the framework of democratic politics as laid down in Jürgen Habermas’ theory of the public sphere. Based on in-depth interviews with key actors on the Norwegian hip hop-scene, this article explores and discusses political commitment, the degree to which Norwegian rappers can be seen to draw public attention to subaltern experience, the communicative strategies typical of the scene, and how these strategies might be relevant to public discourse. Furthermore, by highlighting recent examples of the mainstream media’s reception of hip hop music, this article shows how songs, lyrics and performances specific to the hip hop genre have entered public discourse, and further argues that hip hop music should be seen as an integral part of democratic public sphere processes.

Introduction

How does one conceptualise and understand the role of musical practice and reception in a deliberative democracy? In models of democracy that champion rational and argumentative communication between citizens as the core of legitimate political discourse, the role of music has come to be seen as a particularly
elusive case among the arts. One reason is the generally non-referential nature of musical communication, another is what is regarded as music’s appeal to the heart and the body rather than the mind, and yet another is what came to be seen as the ideologically mainstreaming and mind-numbing effects of (popular) music – most sharply formulated by early critical theorists such as Theodor Adorno (1973) and, later, political economists such as Jacques Attali (1985). Yet there is a strong and general acknowledgement among audiences, critics and scholars alike that music forms part of public life, and in significant and potentially progressive ways may enter into processes of political and social transformation.

In recent years a number of scholars have forcefully argued that public sphere theory is a fruitful framework in which to make sense of the role of expressive culture in democratic politics (McGuigan, 2005; Goodin, 2003; Van Zoonen, 2000), therein music (Gripsrud, 2009; Love, 2006; Street, 2007, 2012). Yet given the focus on communicative rationality and deliberation, there is scholarly acknowledgement (Dahlgren, 1995; Bohman, 1998; Karppinen et al., 2008) that the public sphere framework needs to be developed further in order to gain a better understanding of how expressive culture could be seen as forming a part of democratic public discourse. By investigating firstly the level of political motivation among established Norwegian hip hoppers and how inclined they are to contribute to public discourse, and secondly their communicative practices and strategies, this article provides empirical evidence of how hip hop, by means of its genre-specific characteristics and practises, may enter public discourse. By employing established theoretical models of the public sphere, this article further argues that hip hop music in significant ways must be considered relevant to deliberative democracy.

**Hip hop as political public discourse**

There are several distinct reasons why hip hop makes up a particularly pertinent case for the study of music in the public sphere. Firstly, it has in the past ten years
transformed from a relatively marginal subcultural phenomenon into the most popular genre among young people in Norway as measured in sales figures (Ballade, 2012), radio airtime (Gamo, 2011) and festival/concert attendance. Accordingly, hip hop-performances, hip hop songs and the activities of hip hop artists have become frequent fixtures in Norwegian mainstream media and the object of wide public interest and occasionally (critical) debate. One recent example of the latter is Lars Vaular’s chart hit “Kem skjøt Siv Jensen” (“Who shot Siv Jensen”), which lyrically depicts a fictive scenario where the leader of the Norwegian Progress Party is assassinated. The lyrics of this song became the object of discussion and critique in a number of national television, radio and print media outlets, fostering wide public discussion not only about the quality of the song, but also about other issues such as freedom of speech (see Appendix 2). Another recent example is Karpe Diem, a group, which through public musical performances played a key role as national spokespersons for multicultural coexistence in the aftermath of the 22 July massacre. They subsequently had a major chart hit with a song that lyrically portrayed sex with a well-known parliamentary politician, which consequently sparked wide public debate about a range of issues including freedom of speech, attitudes to women and the ethics of the political left in Norway (see Appendix 3).

Secondly, the centrality of rapping within the hip hop genre makes it perhaps the most linguistically centred genre in popular music, allowing for direct commentary and critique. This is the simple aesthetic reason why hip hop music, lyrics and performances may in significant ways enter public political discourse.

Thirdly, although certainly not unequivocally or without contradiction, hip hop has historically been politically relevant in terms of explicitly and publicly voicing political and social critique (Rose, 1994; Neal, 1999). In the Norwegian context research into musical taste in political communities (reference removed for review purposes) shows that hip hop stands out as being perhaps the most politicised musical genre within Norwegian popular music. This is both in terms of the political meaning
invested in it by members of the political community, and in terms of the role hip hop plays as a means of political expression among the active members of the ideological left. Fourthly, hip hop has historically functioned as an important means of public representation for socio-demographic groups which are otherwise underrepresented (Pough, 2004; Quotrep Jensen, 2008).

**Public sphere theory and music: the need for a more inclusive theory**

Public sphere theory as formulated by Jürgen Habermas, first in *Structural Transformation* (1971) then revised in *Between Facts and Norms* (1992), promises a theoretical framework in which the role of music in democracy can be understood. In Craig Calhoun’s (1992: 41) words, it “(...) offers one of the richest, best developed conceptualisations available of the social nature and foundations of public life.” In Habermas’ conceptualisation of discursive democracy the public sphere is of vital importance since this is the social space where private people come together as a public and where public opinion by means of deliberation is formed, a process which, along with voting, forms the basis of legitimate political decision-making.

The multilevel, bottom-up, top-down laundering system later proposed by Habermas (2006) provides a model that is more sensitive to expressive culture and where expressive culture can also be meaningfully located in the anatomy of democracy. Although upholding a steady focus on the importance of traditional political journalism, a distrust of market-driven entertainment and turning at least one blind eye to the democratic role of expressive culture, Habermas here presents a model of the public sphere which also acknowledges that political communication may “(...) take on different forms in different arenas” (Ibid, 415), and “need not fit the pattern of fully fledged deliberation” (Ibid). He locates the public sphere in the periphery of the political system as opposed to the institutionalised discourses at the centre, where it may “...facilitate deliberative legitimation processes by ‘laundering’ flows of political communication through a division of labour with other parts of the
system” (Ibid). He further contends that the public sphere is “...rooted in networks of wild flows of messages - news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, and shows and movies with an informative, polemical, educational, or entertaining content” (Ibid). Commenting on Habermas’ 2006 model, Gripsrud (2009: 210) argues that;

It is (...) striking how Habermas manages to say so much about the public sphere without ever directly commenting on the role of television documentaries, lifestyle magazines, popular music, movies, soap operas, sit-coms, novels, musicals and stand-up comedy [...] Still, I think Habermas here contributes to a framework for a clarification of the roles of music and other arts – whether ‘serious’ or ‘popular’ – in deliberative democracy.

Locating music in the “wild” part of the public sphere, Gripsrud further argues that music must be considered an important means of expressing ideas or experiences, which are filtered into and “laundered” in the “serious” part of the public sphere before actual political decisions are made.

A number of scholars have similar to Gripsrud, called for a more inclusive theory in terms of which communicative modes, sites and topics that should be considered part of the framework. One line of criticism has emphasised the need for communicative forms other than verbalised, rational discourse to be included as part of democratic communication. Arguing that the practice of deliberation is culturally and socially specific and excludes people who do not possess the ability to partake, Sheila Benhabib (1996: 6) states that Habermas “…cuts political processes too cleanly away from cultural forms of communication”. Similarly, maintaining that (popular) art does in significant ways become integrated in public sphere processes, Jim McGuigan (2005) suggests that public and personal politics may also be articulated through what he terms “affective”, “aesthetic” and “emotional” modes of communication. This article will take Habermas’s conception of the public sphere as a starting point, but employ both critical and supplementary concepts from democratic theory in order to elucidate how music in general, and hip hop specifically, may perform a democratic role.
In line with the call for a more inclusive notion of democratic communication, political theorist Iris Marion Young (1996) suggests three communicative modes, supplementary to rational argument, which may contribute to political discussion. Although Young initially focused on speech, these modes can, as argued in this article, also fruitfully be employed to illuminate the ways in which the practice of hip hop music may contribute to public discourse. The first mode Young calls *greeting*, by which she means a “moment of communication” that has no specific content, but which is important in terms of establishing the communicative situation itself. This mode closely resembles Roman Jacobsen’s (1960) *phatic*, and essentially social, communicative function which captures the workings of communicative acts that open up for discussion; by so to speak saying “Hello, we are here and we can talk – if you like”. The second mode is *rhetoric* which refers to the styles and forms of communication which ensure both the capturing and holding of an audience’s attention, but also the effectiveness in addressing issues and putting forward arguments. She argues that “Humor, wordplay, images and figures of speech embody and colour arguments, making the discussion pull on thought through desire” (Ibid, 130). The third mode is *storytelling* or narrative which supplements argument by its capacity to exhibit a subjective experience to other subjects and thus foster understanding of another’s values, culture and priorities. The importance of storytelling in deliberative democracy is also emphasised by political theorist Robert Goodin (2003) who argues that (mass mediated) narratives are necessary engines for the “empathetic imagining” among citizens and a prerequisite for a functioning deliberative democracy.
Hip hop and public sphere theory

The public sphere perspective is latently present, yet not explicated, in early writings on hip hop, such as Tricia Rose’s seminal *Black Noise* (1994). She writes that;

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

Similarly, later writers like Kitwana (2002) contend that it is through hip hop that the African American experience is drawn to the public’s attention and critically illuminated.

Although far from confined to hip hop culture, the concept of a “Black Public Sphere” (The Black Public Sphere Collective, 1995; Neal, 1999; Hanson, 2008) much inspired by Fraser’s (1992) concept of subaltern public spheres, involves the reformulation and expansion of Habermas’ original concept in order to accommodate the vernacular practices, forms of expression and institutions specific to the African American community. This literature highlights both how hip hop culture constitutes (micro) counter public spheres where collective African American experiences and values can be contested and negotiated – upholding “the hood” to be an important communicative space (Neal, 2003) – and also how hip hop music plays a key role in bringing African American experiences and concerns into the eye of the wider public.

Echoing the infamous declaration by Chuck D of *Public Enemy* that *Public Enemy* functioned as the “black man’s CNN”, Pough (2004: 27) writes that “The fact is, some of the most humanizing and accurate accounts of life in impoverished ghettos come from rap songs and not the network news”. Pough further contends that the hip hop-specific communicative practice of directing and managing public attention by means of disruptive spectacle, boasting and overstatement is key to understanding
the way hip hop may play a progressive role in the wider public sphere. Pough’s emphasis on the attention commanding aspect of hip hop practice is consistent with Young’s call for *greeting* to be included in the framework of public sphere theory.

The struggles and aspirations of the largely underprivileged and voiceless African American community and the role of hip hop music therein do not map so easily on to the more homogenous economic and cultural conditions in Norway. However, hip hop does function as a privileged means of expression for the immigrant youth population (Knudsen, 2008; Sandberg, 2008; Vestel, 2004) who otherwise have little or no access to the public sphere, and also for young adults in the general population who either come from relatively underprivileged socioeconomic conditions or identify with them and hence adopt the perspectives of the marginalised.

**Method**

Rather than treating hip hop as a public cultural representation of any single demographic or socioeconomically based collectivity or as one homogenous musical subculture, this study regards hip hop as a *scene*, defined as “...the systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that link text, industry and audience” (Neal, 1980: 19). It focuses on the creative and interpreting actors of the scene, namely rappers and critics: the former because they are suitable to bring out information concerning the aesthetic-communicative practices and political commitment typical of hip hop musicians; and the latter because critics, in their capacity of monitoring and interpreting musical and ideological-political developments on the scene, provide an overview and historical context. Given the multitude of smaller and local sub-scenes and subcultures within Norwegian hip hop today and how these are interwoven with other musical scenes and subcultures, the intent of this study – rather than to arrive at generalising conclusions about the scene as a whole – is to explore cases which will illuminate how the motivations and
practices of some of the key actors on the scene might be relevant to public discourse.

The main criterion for the selection of informants was a high level of significance on the national hip hop scene, either in terms of being important in the evolution of the genre in Norway or being at the forefront of the scene today (see appendix for list of informants). Criteria for the selection of rappers included commercial success, subcultural legitimacy and centrality on the scene. In order to obtain balanced data, rappers representing different and competing aesthetical discourses and different degrees of political involvement were selected. Critics were selected on the basis of their longevity and centrality on the scene. Rappers were recruited through their management, critics or by direct contact.

The interview guide included a set of questions focusing on different aspects of hip hop practice. In the interviews the informants’ role as either rapper or critic determined how much emphasis was placed on the different kinds of questions. The questions focused on five main issues: (1) the degree to which the hip hop scene is committed to remaining politically and socially relevant, (2) communicative strategies and practises, (3) the hip hop scene as a counter public sphere, (4) mediation between the hip hop scene and the wider public sphere, (5) informants’ self-understanding and experience as actors in the public sphere.

Findings

Political commitment

Whereas explicitly political hip hop in the U.S. reached its peak around 1989-1992 with highly popular yet politically agitating and conscious artists such as Public Enemy and N.W.A, the explicitly political hip hop in Norway, heavily inspired by their American predecessors, peaked during the first years of the following decade with groups such as the Marxist-rooted Gatas Parlament and Samvirkelaget. Both the
American and the Norwegian groups were explicitly political in terms of musically and lyrically expressing direct social and political critique and lending themselves to radical political and social agendas.

Contrary to popular claims of the depoliticisation of hip hop and its full scale demise into misogyny and glorification of violence and excessive consumption, the interviews suggest that the Norwegian scene at large is characterised by an enduring commitment to staying relevant to the social and political reality of present day society. However, this commitment is markedly different in nature and, indeed, generally opposed to that of the earlier days. Vågard Unstad’s (rapper in A-laget) statement exemplifies the general sentiment against earlier, explicitly political hip hop:

All political rappers in Norway can go fuck themselves, they can’t rap, they can’t make music and they are all communists. And honestly: who the fuck is a communist in 2012?!

Leaving aside the fact that the tone of address at the hip hop-scene hardly resembles that of the literary salons of the bourgeois public sphere, this statement is illustrative of prevalent sentiments on the scene in two significant ways.

Firstly, it is illustrative of a general dismissal and desertion of what is considered to be overly didactic and politically agenda driven hip hop. With the exception of Gatas Parlament, who themselves remain the main proponents of the explicitly political, and today relatively marginal, tradition within Norwegian hip hop, all of the informants express dislike of what they consider to have been the “preachy”, “pushy” and overly simplifying style of the past. Rapper Lars Vaular describes the scene at large as “allergic” to any affiliation with this style. Further testifying to the demise of explicitly political hip hop, critic Martin Bjørnersen comments that;

Most of today’s rappers want to distance themselves from what is being considered ‘political rap’ because they don’t want to identify themselves with the stern AKP (ML)1-like thing it was in the past.
Secondly, Unstad’s statement paradoxically illustrates that whereas the explicitly political style of the past has largely been abandoned and is out of vogue, the scene still largely, albeit through different and less explicit modes, remains politically engaged. Unstad is, after all, rather crassly and overtly opinionated about communism and communists – which in itself must be regarded as political engagement. All the informants, artists, critics and producers alike contend that hip hop artists, although not rooted in specific ideological or political programs or agendas, have largely remained committed to critically thematising political and social conditions. Also, several of the informants maintain that the scene is characterised by a shared hostility towards Norway’s right wing populist party, The Progressive Party. Critic and journalist Øyvind Holen comments that;

*There has always been some kind of politics running through Norwegian hip hop – one has always been in opposition and taken some kind of political responsibility. There haven’t been many rappers who have exclusively been into partying and bullshit. (...) Today you see many political songs but very few all-and-all political bands.*

Both rappers, Vaular and Borgersrud, and the critic Holen locate the typical hip hop performer as being on the left in the Norwegian ideological-political landscape.

**Representing the hood?**

The extent to which Norwegian rappers can claim to authentically represent socially marginalised experience has been a much-disputed issue since the establishment of the scene and a regular fixture in the critical reception of hip hop. This is also a question of vital importance to hip hop –authenticity, in which afro- and ghetto-centric discourses are dominant (Dyndahl, 2008). Danielsen (2008) comments that there is an inherent tension within Norwegian hip hop between middle class living in Scandinavian welfare states and a musical form tightly connected to the underprivileged conditions of black men from American urban ghettos, and further
argues that the thematisation of similar destitute conditions in the Norwegian context remains problematic.

According to several of the informants questions about authenticity, ‘what counts as “real” hip hop’, has been the single most disputed issue within the scene throughout the years. These disputes over “realness” have mostly included questions regarding identity and aesthetics, for example whether rappers rap in English, Norwegian or dialect, and adherence to aesthetic orthodoxy – style of rapping, the use of singing in the chorus, which beats are used, etc. – but also the question of how closely rappers should conform to afro- and ghetto-centric notions of hip hop authenticity. Moreover, the informants appear divided as to whether Norwegian hip hop can be seen to authentically represent socially marginalised experience or not. Critic and producer Martin Bjørnersen contends that the self-understanding on the scene as representing the underprivileged is “false” and that the scene is dominated by ethnically Norwegian actors.

*Hip hop isn’t an outsider culture today, but keeps itself with an image of itself as one – this is of course a false self-image.(...) One has always wanted hip hop to represent immigrants, but the reality is, at least in Oslo, that hip hop is pretty segregated. Particularly the political hip hop scene – it isn’t exactly multicultural.*

Others again contend that they, in capacity of themselves being outsiders, whether a posture or not, inevitably end up promoting outsider-perspectives. Rapper Aslak Borgersrud, for example, describes the typical hip hopper as follows: “One comes from the bottom or the margins, one is a petty criminal, one is a tough guy, an outcast and a thug”. Yet another take on this problematic, represented by rapper Lars Vaular, emphasizes the speaking on behalf of others;

*I’m very preoccupied by telling the stories about those who struggle and those who haven’t gotten what they deserve. As such, I have a classical hip hop perspective on things – teaming up with the outsiders and telling the stories of those who aren’t allowed to do so themselves.*
What remains typical of the informants’ perspectives at large is an identification, real or contrived, with outsider positions in Norway. Whereas hip hop in the US is tightly connected with race, class and urban locality, the reoccurring notion of “the outsider” among hip hop artists in Norway is more vague and may draw on a social and stylistic sensibility rather than an actual socio-demographic affiliation. However, this identification can be seen to allow for and, to some degree, commit rappers to lyrically or performatively expressing and exhibiting the perspectives of outsiders. This is not to say that hip hop by necessity publicly brings forward subaltern or marginalised experiences; rather, that it lies within the genre’s discursive make-up to do so.

Giving evidence of this identification with outsiders, Knudsen (2008) draws on ethnographic studies of amateur hip hop production in Norway to show that hip hop artists identify as “underground” – an identity position constructed in opposition to “mainstream” and the majority-society. Similarly, Perry (2004: 39-42) claims that hip hop is an art form attendant but not reducible to substantial socio-political ramifications and issues, and further argues that although hip hop may entail a celebration of the status quo, it also manifests a radical commitment to otherness.

**Subjective realism and storytelling**

Confirming the general antipathy towards the politically explicit tradition within Norwegian hip hop, many of the informants report that most lyrics are centred around a set of “classical” hip hop themes such as partying, sexual conquests, love, drugs, the police, and also boasting about the supremacy of their particular style, neighbourhood or town. The lyrical thematisation of these subjects are often rooted in the rappers’ daily life experience and often carried out in a descriptive manner. This heavy reliance on personal subjective experience, as both a lyrical source as well as the source of authenticity, is one of hip hop’s defining characteristics and a constituent part of hip hop discourse (Perry, 2004: 38).
Furthermore, many of the informants emphasise how the lyrical tradition in hip hop has a direct approach to subject matter; for example, Lars Vaular describe hip hop as allowing for a more “straight to the matter” approach than other musical genres. Similarly, rapper El Axel describes his lyrical approach as “hardcore reality rap” which, according to him, means to lyrically picture his personal life as truthfully and realistically as possible, an approach which is consistent with the ideal of “radical honesty” (Perry, 2004: 6) within the hip hop tradition.

However, critic Øyvind Holen comments that whereas most lyrics are primarily of a thematically mundane nature, the genre, by matter of stylistic convention, often implies a lyrical scope that extends beyond the private lives of the rappers.

There is such an amount of lyrical content in hip hop that you will inevitably end up saying something about the society around you. There aren’t any rappers who make vague lyrics about poetry and love. It’s very much about describing one’s life. Hip hop songs are not party programs, but are very often problem oriented and very often towards everyday problems. And everyday problems are in a sense highly political.

Whereas there has been a number of hip hop songs in recent years (including songs made by some of the informants) with an explicit focus on larger structural problems such as poverty, inequality and the rise of right wing populism, most of the informants contend that the political value of hip hop primarily lies in its expressive capacity to bring to an audience their own and other people’s everyday experiences, hence implicitly thematising, actualising and sometimes problematising social and political questions. Rapper Vågard Unstad comments that;

I’d think, for instance, that if you rap about drugs and portray it in a good way but at the same time depict the dark sides, you will communicate much better than, for instance, artists who make a «legalise drugs»-song or songs that are explicitly supportive of a more liberal drug policy. Do you get my point? At once it gets banal,
it loses its effect, but when it’s related to real human experience and problematised, then it can become politically significant.

Unstad’s comment exemplifies both a common communicative practice as well as a common conception of the political that recognises subjective everyday experience as an important source for politically and socially relevant musical-lyrical expression.

Furthermore, many of the informants highlight storytelling, either based on their own experiences or other people’s, as a key lyrical mode in hip hop. Thus, Norwegian rappers adhere to the lyrical traditions of hip hop as moulded in the U.S., where storytelling is perhaps the predominant lyrical mode (Alim, 2004). Echoing Goodin’s emphasis on the democratic importance of “emphatic imaginings”, Unstad comments:

*By telling stories, or as in rap, telling about your own life – how you experience things – you can make people think. Through that process of thought people might become engaged in the lives of other people in the society. In this way one becomes political in the classical sense of politics.*

Rooting the storytelling tradition of hip hop in African American oral tradition Smitherman (1997) further emphasise the rhetorical aspects of storytelling as a means of both explanation and persuasion – aspects that may also enable hip hop as an alternative form of public discourse.

**Hip hop greetings and the rhetoric of hyperbole**

The informants highlight the importance of gaining public visibility through performative style, lyrics and musical traits, and the importance of declaring “here we are” and this is “who we are”. Rapper Aslak Borgersrud comments that;

*I think it is important to Norwegian rappers to position themselves in society. Their ethos, or point of view, is very important to communicate – who you are, where you come from and from which background.*
However, in Iris Marion Young’s conceptualisation of *greeting* she emphasises politeness and virtuousness as a way of motivating discussion between two parties. Hip hop “greetings” are, in contrast, rather crass and, by stylistic convention, directly opposed to politeness. Rhetorically, hip hop music may establish communicative situations in a disruptive rather than virtuous manner by employing a *rhetoric of hyperbole* where provocation, profanity and exaggeration are used for emphasis. Another related feature typical of the ways in which rappers (publically) present themselves lyrically or through performance is self-aggrandisement, or in Smitherman’s (1997) terms, “hip hop braggadocio”.

Marxist hip hop group *Gatas Parlament* has a number of times in the past entered the news (including the BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera) as a result of its songs, performances and stunts. Aslak Borgersud, rapper in *Gatas Parlament*, contends that in some of these cases they strategically used provocation and exaggeration in order to draw attention to particular issues and to open up for further discourse.

*I think we have placed issues on the political agenda that otherwise would not have been there. And we have been a voice that has made way for other voices. By being the craziest guys, saying the most outrageous stuff, we have opened up a space for other people where they can talk about other stuff.*

Similarly, *Karpe Diem* (of which both rappers are from immigrant backgrounds) included in their number one chart hit “Toyotaen til Magdi” a much discussed line about receiving oral sex from a parliamentary politician from the Progress Party, and thus employed the tactics of shock and profanity to ensure attention. Crucially, both the rappers themselves and other members of the publicly underrepresented immigrant community in Norway consequently became engaged in public debate about the song’s lyrical style and content as well as other issues related to immigrants’ conditions in Norway. In this case the lyrical use of sexually explicit rhetoric typical of hip hop can be seen as an important contributing factor in
establishing public discourse between social groups with an otherwise democratically problematic communication deficit.

Also Lars Vaulars “Kem skjøt Siv Jensen” (“Who shot Siv Jensen?”) is an example of the clever use of exaggeration and provocation as a means of drawing attention to the song’s message. In the song that was partially intended as a critique of tabloid media logics, Vaular styled the title of the song as a tabloid newspaper headline, anticipating that it would attract considerable media attention due to its explicit nature.

I wanted to use the title of the song as a means of showing how people only read headlines and make choices on the basis of headlines. The song was a social experiment; I used populist logic here, also because it sells. (...) The title made the song live its own life in the papers, in social media and in the heads of people.

The media commotion that followed included, among other things, airtime on NRK Television’s main news programme, the full lyrics printed in two national newspapers and public accusations by FrP-Politicians that the song was encouraging political violence.

**The music as rhetorical underscore**

The primary focus of this article is on hip hop as a lyrical practice; however, the musical qualities specific to hip hop are also key to understanding how hip hop addresses the public as well as how it demarcates itself from other lyrical forms, such as poetry or novels, and musical forms, such as folk or jazz. These include the beat, samples, programming and the tonal, timbral and rhythmical qualities of the lyrical delivery itself, which must be seen as constituent parts of hip hop’s rhetorical appeal and ability to command attention. Rose (1994: 2) defines hip hop music as “(...) a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music”. Further emphasising the importance of the beat, musicologist
Danielsen (2009: 204) points out that “Even though rap is communication- or message-orientated in the sense that lyrical content and shape is central, the rhythmic fundament that is being rapped over is of utmost importance to the song as a whole”.

In addition to setting the mood of a song, the beat is an important rhetorical device for both directing attention to the lyrical content of a song and, importantly, maintaining this attention. Walser (1995: 204) points out that rappers’ engagement with the beat “produces dialectic tensions” where rhythm supports textual argument. Therefore the lyrical delivery and effectiveness of rhetoric in hip hop are both fully reliant on the flow: the relationship between the beats and rhymes in time (Ibid: 204; Alim, 2004: 550).

The practice of sampling is one of the aesthetic characteristics of hip hop that also contributes to its rhetorical appeal. This can, for instance, be seen when Lars Vaular includes a sampled gunshot to both rhythmically and rhetorically underscore the chorus in “Who shot Siv Jensen”. Danielsen (2008) ascribes great importance to sampling in hip hop, claiming that it often functions as a reality effect, anchoring the lyrical message in a geographical and socio-political location. The frequent use of beat samples and melodic or lyrical themes from funk, jazz or past hip hop songs further anchors the lyrical message in a musical discourse which, historically, has opposed dominant power structures.

**The democratic value of hip hop**

It should be stressed that the rappers’ rhyming stories, reflections and messages, as well as the rappers’ own socio-political locations, would probably gain very little publicity at all were it not for the musical form in which the lyrics are delivered. It is, for example, most doubtful that they would have any comparable public outreach had they been expressed through poetry or literature. At this constitutive stage of
public discourse, mediated hip hop songs and performances phatically and by means of genre-specific hyperbolic rhetoric and disruption may function as a vehicle for establishing communicative situations and the possibility of public discourse between parties that may not otherwise have interacted.

Moreover, hip hop can be seen to perform an important democratic function since it gives shape to private, subcultural and sometimes marginal experiences and brings these into the public sphere. Thus, hip hop music and performances function as vehicles for the mediation between the private and public sphere. In the public sphere, at the periphery of the political system and as shown in the various examples of media reaction to hip hop, the stories, provocations and reflections brought to the fore by hip hop are scrutinised, discussed and validated or invalidated – a process which may facilitate the formation of (considered) public opinion. Hence, these values, practices and perspectives brought to the public’s attention by the music and performances potentially become integral parts of the multilevel, bottom-up top-down, *lauderung system* described by Habermas (2006). In line with Habermas’ emphasis on the bottom-up top-down process, rappers from marginal or subcultural positions respond to political and social conditions – the focus of government and administrative bodies – and throw their interpretations of these conditions back into the public sphere, where these ideally are laundered and filtered further towards the centre.

The level of authenticity ascribed to rappers is therefore of vital importance in this process. The degree to which the rapper is seen to master musical traditions, deliver the message in a convincing way, and through personal biography appear truthful is crucial in terms of the leverage a song or a performance gains in public discourse. A similar point is also made by Habermas (1981: 15) who argues that a main function of aesthetic/expressive discourse is to support validity claims with authenticity or truthfulness.
By becoming part of public discourse, hip hop can be seen to enter what Weigård and Eriksen (1999: 253) term “the political circuit of power” (“Det politiske maktkretsløpet”) where public opinion formed in the public sphere, the formation of will in political parties, trade unions etc and the decisions made by “strong publics” are all responsive to each other. Although it is very rarely possible to pinpoint the concrete impact of a particular musical performance or song, or to track its trajectory from the periphery to the centre of a political system, the example of Lars Vaular’s hit “Who shot Siv Jensen?” provides some evidence of a certain responsiveness to mass mediated music among members of the political elite. The debates following the release of the song particularly focused on whether or not it is acceptable for artists to joke about killing politicians. The party leader, Siv Jensen, herself responded to this by declaring in an interview that Vaular’s lyrics were within the boundaries of what should be accepted in a liberal democracy.

**Conclusion**

This study shows that hip hop performers share motivations which are prerequisite for progressive contributions to public discourse in two significant ways. Firstly, evidence is given that among Norwegian hip hop artists there remains a commitment and inclination to be politically relevant by means of thematising and problematising every day, private experiences, and bringing these into the public eye. Although today’s hip hop artists largely do not identify with the explicitly political traditions of the past, there is also an inclination to lyrically thematise social and political conditions. Secondly, the study shows that hip hop artists today remain committed to publicly exhibit marginalised or subaltern experience, either through their own personal biographies or in terms of their identification with and adoption of outsiders’ perspectives.

The interviews and examples of media coverage referred to further demonstrate that Norwegian hip hop artists, by means of genre-specific lyrical practices such as
provocation, profanity and exaggeration, and what can generally be termed a rhetoric of hyperbole, command public attention, thus publicly highlighting experiences that otherwise would not be given coverage. Hence, hip hop music, may under certain circumstances, stimulate public discourse by means of disruption rather than virtuousness and establish communicative situations that potentially allow for further public discourse. Moreover, the widespread use of storytelling as a lyrical form in hip hop, often from an outsider’s perspective, may also serve a democratic function as it facilitates what Goodin terms “emphatic imaginings” among citizens, which in turn may strengthen the quality of public deliberations.

I would here further argue that hip hop may enter public sphere processes in four significant ways. Firstly, it phatically establishes communicative situations, thus having an initiating function for public discourse. Secondly, it mediates between the private and the public sphere. Thirdly, in doing so, it provides what Dahlgren (1995) terms “symbolic raw material” for public deliberation, where songs and performances themselves become the object of public debate and generate further debate about political and social issues related to the songs’ lyrical content, the style and context of performance, the performers’ background, or any combination of these elements. Fourthly, in terms of their expressive capacity to address politically and socially relevant issues, hip hop songs and performances may also under certain circumstances function as contributions to ongoing public debates in their own right.

In the anatomy of democracy as modelled by Habermas (2006) hip hop songs and performances are part of the communicative processes in the public sphere that are located on the periphery of the political system. This model further makes probable how the narratives, perspectives and reflections brought forward by hip hop music are laundered and filtered from the periphery further towards the decision making institutions at the centre of the political system. Henceforth this article argues that
hip hop-music, although in a peripheral role, should be considered part of this system.

However, in order to explore in more depth how hip hop music enters public discourse and forms part of the public sphere further empirical studies are needed. One pertinent route for further research is to carry out closer analysis of hip hop songs with regard to what kind of stories, perspectives and reflections they communicate, how these are communicated, and how the songs may or may not bring forward arguments. Another pertinent route for further research would be to conduct systematic analysis of the public debates generated by or related to hip hop music, with regard to where these debates take place, who participates, which issues are raised and last, but not least, how the rhyme and rhythm based stories and reflections of hip hop songs are taken up in debates.

References


Appendix 1

List of informants:

Martin Bjørnersen: rapper, critic and DJ. Writes regular columns and reviews about hip hop music for Morgenbladet, Klassekampen and a range of other other printed or online publications.

Aslak Borgersrud: rapper in Gatas Parlament.

Øyvind Holen: journalist, critic and author. Has for the past few decades regularly written columns and reviews about hip hop for a range of national print and online publications (Including Dagens Næringsliv and Ballade). He is also the author of two books about Norwegian hip hop.

Gunnar Greve Pettersen: former rapper in Spetakkel, now manager for various hip hop artists including Lars Vaular, Tommy T and Vinni. He is also currently one of the judges for the Norwegian Pop Idol television show.


Vågard Unstad: rapper in A-Laget, columnist and public debater.
Appendix 2

Selected examples of critical media coverage of Lars Vaular’s “Kem Skøt Siv Jensen”


Appendix 3

Selected examples of critical media coverage of Karpe Diem's “Toyotaen til Magdi”.


Article 3: *The textual article*
Rhythm, Rhyme and Reason: Hip Hop Expressivity as Political Discourse

Using Norwegian hip hop as an example, this article argues that public sphere theory offers a fruitful theoretical framework in which to understand the political significance of music. Based on a musical and lyrical analysis of Lars Vaular’s ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ (Who shot Siv Jensen) – a song that recently became the subject of extensive public political discourse in Norway – this article first highlights how the aesthetic language specific to hip hop music constitutes a form of political discourse that may be particularly effective in addressing and engaging publics. Further, the analysis brings attention to how hip hop music is characterised by phatic, rhetoric, affective and dramatic modes of communication that may be of value to democratic public discourse. Lastly, this article examines the expressive output of ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ in light of Habermas’ concept of communicative rationality. In conclusion, the article contends that the dichotomy between (“rational”) verbal argument and (“irrational”) musical expressivity constructed within public sphere theory is contrived, and moreover, that hip hop expressivity under certain conditions does conform to the standards of communicative rationality.

Introduction

Can music as an expressive form contribute to public and political debate? Moreover, can the expressive output of music be seen to provide arguments that engage publics? Public sphere theory as most pertinently molded by Jürgen Habermas offers, in the words of Craig Calhoun (1992, p. 41), ‘one of the richest,
best developed conceptualisations available of the social nature and foundations of public life’, and hence provides a convincing framework in which to understand the democratic potential of various communicative practises. John Street (2012, p. 8) argues that it is when music makes the transition from the private to the public sphere that it becomes politically significant. He further calls attention to the value of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere as a means by which to understand the role of music in political participation. Similarly, Keith Negus (1995, p. 192) emphasises the public dimension of political music, arguing that music may gain political significance through ‘processes of mediation and articulation through which particular styles of music are produced, circulated, experienced and given quite specific cultural and political meanings’. Also, David Hesmondhalgh (2007) highlights the importance of the ‘aesthetic public sphere’ in assessing the democratic merits of music. These writers provide valuable insight into the ways in which music becomes politically significant through mass mediation and public exposition, not least in emphasising how talk about music may be vital in political participation and action. However, they do not examine how music by means of its expressive properties may itself function as a contribution to on-going public debate. Neither do these writers examine the tension between the aesthetic expressivity of music and the centrality of verbal argument and communicative rationality inherent to Habermasian public sphere theory.

In analysing rapper Lars Vaular’s ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ – a song that recently generated considerable public political debate in Norway – the aim of this article is threefold. Firstly, to examine how the lyrical and musical elements of the song constitute the song as political expression. Secondly, to examine the song’s potential democratic relevance in light of central concepts from Habermas’ theory of the public sphere and subsequent revisions of this theory. Lastly, this article considers hip hop expressivity within the parameters of communicative rationality. It is thus a study that both employs public sphere theory in order to examine the
political significance of hip hop music, and a study that addresses and discusses a fundamental theoretical problem of public sphere theory in relation to music.

**Hip hop and public debate in Norway**

Lars Vaular’s (2010) hit ‘Kem skjøt Siv Jensen’ (Who shot Siv Jensen) makes up a particularly relevant case for the study of music's role in the public sphere because of its public outreach, the controversy it caused and the expressive features of the song. In general hip hop music is today one of the most popular musical genres in Norway, measured in radio airtime (Gramo-statistikken, 2011 and 2012), record sales (VG Lista), and presence at music festivals. Vaular is presently one of the most commercially successful as well as critically acclaimed hip hop artists in Norway. ‘Kem skjøt Siv Jensen’ was one of several hits on his 2010 album *Helt om natten, helt om dagen* (Hero at night, hero at day).

Upon its release, the song was subjected to a highly politicised public response (see Appendix for selected examples). The song, for instance, made headline news in the NRK’s (the public broadcaster) late night newscast (airing excerpts from a live performance of the song), was publicly commented upon and condemned by a range of politicians from the Progressive Party (FRP) and assessed by the Norwegian Police Security Service. Moreover, the release was widely covered in most national newspapers. The public debate generated by ‘Kem skjøt Siv Jensen’ focused upon highly topical social and political issues, such as artistic freedom of speech, multiculturalism, right wing populism and the relationship between the cultural field and the political left wing in Norway. Crucially, not only did the song become the focal point of discourse in the public arenas specific to the hip hop scene, it was also widely discussed in the cultural press, as well as by actors affiliated with the political public sphere.
A key factor in the media commotion the song generated is the song’s lyrical
depiction of the fictional assassination of Siv Jensen – the female leader of the
Progress Party (FRP), who became, after the 2013 elections, Minister of Finance.
Representing a considerable political force in Norway, and being the second largest
party in the present right wing coalition government, the FRP sit on the far right in
the landscape of Norwegian mainstream politics, championing a political agenda
characterised by economic liberalism, moral conservatism and right wing populism.
Their political views include a restrictive stance on immigration and an integration
policy of cultural conformity – which are issues that the song addresses.¹

**Habermas and hip hop**

Habermas’ conceptualisation of the public sphere is a promising, albeit
underexplored, framework in which to understand the democratic role of music. By
introducing the notion of “the literary public sphere” in *The Structural
Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1971) Habermas gave aesthetics a central
function, as both a means to articulate critique and as an organizing force of critical
publics. The key role Habermas ascribes to the public sphere in the makeup of
deliberative democracy is that it functions as the actual or symbolic space where
citizens collectively negotiate important matters, public opinion is formed, and
critique against the state can be articulated. Furthermore the public sphere is vital to
democratic legitimacy as it facilitates a mutual responsiveness between citizens and
political-administrative decision-makers.

Hence, discursive articulation and interaction operate at the core of Habermas' theory of deliberative democracy. Crucially, this has implications for musical
communication. Firstly, because music is an expressive form that potentially involves
an articulation of specific identity positions as well as lifestyles, and as will be
brought to attention in this case-study, explicit political critique and commentary.
Secondly, as the public response to ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ makes evident, music is an
integral part of public life, where musical articulations may be discussed, interpreted and criticised. Thus music may enter discursive processes vital to deliberative democracy. Thirdly, musical communication often involves the articulation of private or subcultural experiences and perspectives, which are posited and engaged with in the public sphere. Thus, as this study highlights, music may function as a mediating vehicle between the private and the public sphere.

Although giving prominence to linguistic forms of communication and the importance of traditional political communication, Habermas (2006) proposes a multilevel, bottom-up, top-down laundering model of the political system that entails an enhanced sensitivity to musical communication. Here Habermas presents a conceptualisation of the public sphere which also acknowledges that political communication may ‘take on different forms in different arenas’ (2006, p. 415), and ‘need not fit the pattern of fully fledged deliberation’. He further contends that the public sphere is rooted in networks of ‘wild flows of messages’, which include media with polemical or entertaining content, and by implication also music. In this model the public sphere is located at the periphery of the political system, as opposed to the institutionalised discourses at the centre, where the public sphere may ‘facilitate deliberative legitimation processes by “laundering” flows of political communication through a division of labour with other parts of the system’ (2006, p. 415).

As such this model offers an anatomy of democracy where musical communication also has its place. Locating music in the ‘wild’ part of the public sphere, Gripsrud (2009) argues that music must be considered an important means of expressing ideas or experiences, which are filtered into and ‘laundered’ in the ‘serious’ part of the public sphere before actual political decisions are made. Moreover, as argued in more depth elsewhere (Nærland 2014), this model highlights how politically committed hip hop and the public response it sometimes generates may involve a
democratically vital bottom up, top down responsiveness between citizens and elites.

Thus, whereas the public sphere provides a spatial framework in which music can be meaningfully located, the nature of music as communicative content is more problematic. Given the fundamental role Habermas ascribes to the notion of communicative rationality, his theory of deliberative democracy can be seen to privilege speech and verbal modes of communication at the expense of aesthetic forms of communication, not least music.

Perhaps the most important reason why music has been considered an inadequate form of democratic communication is that musical language is widely understood to be essentially non-referential. Consequently, musical utterances have not been regarded as precise enough for them to be contested through rational public discourse. Therefore, any thorough discussion of music as political discourse, within the framework of Habermasian public sphere theory, requires a consideration of musical communication in relation to communicative rationality.

Central to Habermas overarching theory of communicative action is the idea that human communication is a medium of a rationally binding character that hence has the capacity to coordinate human action. Here rationality is not grounded in a positivist conception of reality or in the Cartesian subject, but is a product of the communicative interactions between people. Incorporating the insights from the philosophy of language of Austin (1962) and Searle (1975) into his own theory of communicative rationality, the fundamental premise is that our communication through language can be regarded as speech acts – or equivalent nonverbal communicative acts – that constantly presuppose judgement in terms of implicit standards of rational validation. The concept of speech acts is here central as it assumes a function of language that transcends its purely referential dimensions and emphasises the performative character of language, i.e. how we engage with each other, symbolically act and make propositions through the medium of language.
In continuation of Kantian enlightenment ideals and in response to the early Frankfurt School’s pessimistic account of modernity, Habermas (1981, pp. 75-102) establishes a concept of rationality differentiated into three different types, which corresponds to a set of different criteria of validation. These are: (1) cognitive-instrumental reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their truth value; (2) moral-practical reason, which involves claims that can be validated in terms of their moral rightness; and (3) aesthetic-expressive reason, which can be validated in terms of the utterer’s truthfulness in making a claim and the authenticity of his/her convictions. A fourth validation criterion, that encompasses all three types of claims, is comprehensibility, i.e. the degree to which a claim makes sense to the participants in discourse. Crucially, communicative rationality normatively underpins our public use of reason – which forms the normative bedrock of Habermas’ theory of discursive democracy.

This article examines the extent to which the expressive output of Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen is at all susceptible to assessment within the parameters of communicative rationality. Consequently, and based on the analysis of the song, a key set of musically and lyrically constituted communicative acts are identified and discussed in light of the differentiated criteria of rational validation postulated by Habermas. Such an examination allows, firstly, for a clarification of the extent to which hip hop expressivity and communicative rationality speak to each other, i.e. if these communicative acts invite judgement in terms of implicit standards of rational validation and thus may contribute to the public exercise of communicative rationality. Further, it allows for a critical assessment of ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ as an example of musically constituted public political discourse in light of the normative framework offered by Habermas.
Critical perspectives and supplementary modes of communication

Habermas' focus on verbal communication has led a number of scholars - in both political theory and communication studies - to call for a public sphere theory with a better explanatory and normative grasp on other communicative sites, modes and topics than those associated with political discourse proper. Crucially, these subsequent theoretical revisions and critical perspectives also render public sphere theory more adapt at explaining the democratic role of hip hop by introducing communicative modes supplementary to verbal communication.

Addressing the exclusionary aspects of strict verbal deliberation, Sheila Benhabib (1996, p. 6) argues that Habermas ‘cuts political processes too cleanly away from cultural forms of communication’, and hence may exclude cultural and demographic groups which do not have the competence required to participate. Thus, Benhabib brings attention to the ways in which hip hop expressivity may involve a more inclusive discursive practise. Accentuating the significance of emotions in public political discourse, Jim McGuigan (2005) argues that public and personal politics may also be articulated through ‘affective’ and ‘aesthetic’ modes of communication, which both are modes inherent to hip hop music. Pointing out the need to supplement verbal argument, political theorist Iris Marion Young (1996) suggests three communicative modes of which all may be salient in hip hop music. The first mode Young calls greeting, by which she means a ‘moment of communication’ that has no specific content, but which is important in initiating discourse. This mode closely resembles Roman Jacobsen’s (1960) phatic, and essentially social, communicative function, which captures the workings of communicative acts that open up discussion, by so to speak saying ‘Hello, we are here, and, we can talk – if you like’. The second mode is rhetoric which names the styles and forms of communication that capture and sustain the audience’s attention, and that are effective in addressing issues and making arguments.
Young’s third mode is storytelling or narrative, which supplements argument by its capacity to exhibit subjective experience, and foster understanding of the values, culture and priorities of the other. A similar argument is also forcefully brought forward by political theorist Robert Goodin (2003) who argues that (mass mediated) narratives are necessary engines for the ‘empathetic imagining’ among citizens. He further argues that:

For democracy to be truly deliberative, there must be uptake and engagement – other people must hear or read, internalize and respond – for that public sphere activity to count as remotely deliberative (Goodin 2003, p. 178)

An interesting question is thus how hip hop music may facilitate such ‘emphatic imaginings’. Consequently, I examine the extent to which these different modes can be seen at play in the lyrical-musical text of ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’, and how these modes may enable the song to function as political discourse.

**Hip hop music as political discourse**

The public sphere perspective is latently present, yet not explicated, in early writings on hip hop, such as Tricia Rose’s (1994, p. 124) statement: ‘Rap’s cultural politics lies in its lyrical expression, its articulation of communal knowledge, and in the context for its public reception’. Similarly, later writers like Kitwana (2002), Pough (2004) and Perry (2003) contend that it is through hip hop that the African American experience comes to the public’s attention and is critically illuminated. Although not confined to hip hop culture, the concept of a ‘Black Public Sphere’ (The Black Public Sphere Collective, 1995; Neal, 1999; Hanson, 2008) much inspired by Fraser’s (1992) concept of subaltern public spheres, involves the reformulation and expansion of Habermas’ original concept in order to accommodate the vernacular practices, forms of expressions and institutions specific to the African American community. Although these studies are valuable in highlighting the political significance of hip
hop music’s public outreach in the context of American society, they do not problematise the concept of the public sphere and its inherent tensions in relation to musical expressivity. Neither are these studies directly applicable to the comparatively more affluent and socially homogenous conditions of the Norwegian society.

Hip hop music has several qualities that, perhaps more than any other popular musical genre, renders it a musical practise apt for articulations of politics. Rose (1994, p. 2) offers the following short definition of hip hop music: ‘Rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music.’¹, thus emphasising the importance of the verbal and semantic aspects of hip hop. The importance of the verbal articulation in hip hop is also highlighted by Danielsen (2009, p. 204) who contends that hip hop is ‘message-orientated, in the sense that lyrical content and shape are central’. Moreover, linguists such as Smitherman (1997) and Alim (2003; 2004) root the practice of rapping in the African American tradition of everyday speech, and further emphasise how repetition, the poetic use of metaphor, simile and hyperbole define hip hop as a lyrical-musical practise. A similar argument is made by Van Leeuven (1999, p. 2) who points out that hip hop is one of those musical genres where the interplay between music and speech is most vividly evident. From a democratic theory perspective, rap’s rootedness in everyday speech is significant because this, according to Habermas (1981, p. 86), is where our capacity for communicative rationality naturally resides.

The musical characteristics of hip hop - such as sampled drum patterns, layered with additional sounds from drum machines and synthesisers - accommodate political articulations as these combined form the often rhythmically complex and bass heavy, but stable, platform for the rapping (Walser 1995, p. 200). Moreover, in the perspective of political discourse, the structure and composition of the groove and the melodic phrases are key in that they provide poetical organisation for the verbal delivery. Crucially, according to Walser (1995), these musical features also serve the
function of rhetorically aiding the effective delivery of the lyrics as well as investing these with affective force. This is not to say that the beats, melodic hooks, samples and compositional structure of ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ do not convey any (political) meaning in their own right; they do, but the analytical position adopted in this particular reading is that these elements are meaningful as part of an expressive whole in which the rhymed delivery of words occupies a privileged position.

A central aspect of hip hop music, that encompasses both the musical and verbal element, is flow, which Alim (2003, p. 550) defines as ‘the relationship between beats and rhymes in time’, or which more generally could be described as the way that the rapper rhythmically engages with the beat. The flow is a defining characteristic of hip hop as political discourse. According to Krims (2000) it is vital in ensuring both the persuasive and the aesthetically enticing delivery of the lyrics. The interplay between rhythm, rhyme and performance must be seen as a significant aspect of what makes hip hop a potent form of political public discourse. When good, hip hop beats reinforce the rhymes as well as enhancing the role of the rapper. Hence, the lyrical message of the song is ‘amplified’ and the rapper is established as (public) speaker.

**Method**

The ambition of the following analysis is to provide apt descriptions of the song under scrutiny, and by combining analytical resources from rhetoric and musicology, to elucidate the meaning *potentials* which lie in this song – which ultimately may or may not be realised in their performative and receptive contexts. However, the politicised reception that this song received in the Norwegian media and hip hop’s generic attentiveness to political and social matters, inform the hermeneutical position of this analysis. Consequently, it is mainly concerned with the ways in which this song functions as political expression. Furthermore, in assessing how hip hop music may entail qualities relevant to public political discourse, the analysis is
concerned with the ways in which affective, rhetorical, phatic and dramatic modes of communication emphasised in democratic theory can be seen at play in ‘Kem skjøt Siv Jensen’ (from here abbreviated as KSSJ), and how these enable the song to function as political discourse.

First, this analysis provides a descriptive outline of the lyrics, highlighting lyrical themes, style, tone, narrative as well as lyrical context. Based on the descriptive outline, the analysis next highlights key rhetorical, affective and narrative characteristics of the lyrics. The analysis does not follow any elaborate analytical framework of lyrical poetics. The scope of the analysis is rather to examine the ways in which political meaning is established and how the song addresses its listeners. In doing so the analysis makes use of key concepts from rhetorical theory that illuminates both affective and persuasive dimensions of the lyrics and how the lyrics are rhetorically situated in the public and socio-political context of present day Norway.

There follows an analysis of the groove in terms of its rhythmic, melodic, compositional and timbral qualities. It highlights how the assemblage of these elements constitutes the platform for the rapping, ensures the poetical organisation of the lyrics and establishes the mood of the song. Moreover, the analysis examines the dramatic, affective and rhetorical functions of these musical elements, and how these accommodate the particular political expressiveness of KSSJ.

A notational scheme of the basic grove sequence (Figure 1) is here employed to elucidate the groove’s key features, and as a means of presenting evidence for the interpretation of its dramatic, rhetorical and affective meanings. The notational scheme, adopted from Machin (2010, pp. 127-132), is not suitable for minute or exhaustive explorations of musical groove. However, a strength of this scheme is that it allows for a presentation of the groove’s constitutive parts that may also be intelligible to non-musicians and non-musicologists. Furthermore, the analysis of the musical text is aided by the provisional inventories of musical and aural meaning.
potentials provided by Van Leeuven (1999) and Machin (2010), as well as the ‘phrase book’ of emotional signifiers provided by Cooke (1959). Lastly, departing from Krims’ (2000) conceptualisation of flow, the analysis considers the rhetorical and aesthetical functions of the flow particular to KSSJ, and how these may enable the song to function as a form of political discourse. The separation of analysis into lyrics and music is necessarily contrived. However, a continual attention to how these to modes constitute each other is maintained.

In order to support the reading with contextual data, a semi-structured, personal interview with Lars Vaular was conducted (Oslo, 3 September 2012). The interview focused on his own creative intentions behind the song, his understanding of the political significance of his own musical work and his account of the public reception of the song. Moreover, a set of key musically and lyrically constituted, and politically themed, communicative acts are identified. These form the basis for the subsequent consideration of hip hop expressivity in light of Habermas' concept of communicative rationality.

**Analysis**

*KSSJ* is a fictional and comical story about the identification of suspects and the ‘solving’ of the shooting of Siv Jensen\(^1\), stretched over a vague linear time frame, and could therefore be characterised as a combination of comedic narrative (Perry 2003, p. 78) and political satire. The song neither musically nor lyrically adheres to the more confrontational and aggressive tradition of political hip hop associated with ‘hardcore rap’ (Potter, 1995) - a tradition Vaular himself refuses to be associated with (personal interview). It is nevertheless a piece of explicitly political hip hop as the thematic focus of the lyrics is wholly on public and political matters, including the lyrical hostility to Siv Jensen and the FRP, and also public bodies.

Whereas the personal experiences of the rapper in hip hop often form the most prominent source of lyrical material (Rose, 1994), also in Norway (ADD), there are in
KSSJ no direct references to actions, conditions or places of the rapper’s own life. Although the rapper himself is present as the subject *Eg* (in English: *I*), the lyrics are not explicitly centred around classic hip hop themes such as the rapper’s own identity and location, but unfold entirely within the context of Norwegian society and its mediascape. The public context of the lyrics is established through anonymous but typified figures such as *asylsøkeren* (the asylum seeker), *han som falt utenfor* (the one who fell through), *politiet* (the police) and *statsadvokaten* (the public prosecutor), or well-known figures from Norwegian public and political life such as Eli Hagen (politician’s wife with a high media profile), and Jens Stoltenberg (former Labour prime minister).

**Mapping the lyrics**

The song begins with the chorus consisting of four meters repeated once.

**Chorus:**

*Kem skjøt Siv Jensen? Vet du ka han heter?*  
*Who shot Siv Jensen? Do you know his name?*

*Fra syv og en halv meter*  
*From seven and a half meters*

*No e snuten ute å leter*  
*Now the cops are out searchin’*

*De spør, de spør, men vet du ka han heter?*  
*They ask, they ask, but do you know his name?*

The placement of the chorus at the very beginning of the lyrical composition establishes a dramatic focal point (the assassination of Siv Jensen), as well as posing the central rhetorical question (who did it?) of the song. In the subsequent verse a number of socially disadvantaged groups, often framed by the media as the ‘usual suspects’, are quizzically suggested. These include asylum seekers from Afghanistan,
a manic depressive, a drugged or angst-ridden social outcast, an immigrant from Damascus or Chechnya and a well-known scandalised Norwegian black metal rocker. After the chorus, the second verse abandons the suggestive mode of the first verse in favour of a more proclamatory tone. The first couplet explicitly derides the competency and decency of the police by proclaiming:

*Snuten burde holde seg til å lage veisperringer*  
*De mistenkte bare gamle kjenninger og utlendinger*

The cops should stick to setting up roadblocks  
They suspected only the usual suspects and foreigners

The following couplets jokingly propose how specific Norwegian politicians and public figures would have done it, including also the suggestion that it could have been a sexually closeted female lover of Siv Jensen. The last but narratively significant couplet, where it is revealed that she was not in fact killed, proclaims:

*Men eg bry’kkje meg om kem det va*  
*For hun va så tjukk I hodet sitt at kulen bare prellet av*

But I don’t care about who it was  
Caus’ her head was so thick that the bullet just bounced off

Then follows an interlude, in a conversational mode of delivery, joking about how Siv Jensen is both *steinhard* (rock hard) and *iskald* (ice cold) – qualities here also ascribed to her politics – to such a degree that shooting her was like ‘throwing a marble at her forehead’. The chorus is then repeated before the song’s outro, where the rapper in conversational mode concludes that the only thing that could kill Siv Jensen is garlic, hence jokingly comparing her to a vampire.
The phatic function of shooting Siv Jensen

In loudly, yet ironically, suggesting that Siv Jensen was assassinated, the song makes rhetorical use of shock and sensationalism. Here a rhetoric of hyperbole typical of hip hop can be seen at play, where hyperbole and moral transgression are used as a means of commanding attention and publicity. As the public reception of the song makes evident, the apparent shock quality of the lyrics served an important phatic function (Jacobson, 1960) in that it provoked and invited response. In so doing, and consistent with Young’s (1996) notion of greeting, the song initiated public discourse. Not only did the song provoke response in terms of its lyrical acceptability, it also became the focal point of public debates about general political and cultural issues, involving a range of different actors – including Vaular himself.

In addition, and rather cleverly, the hyperbolic rhetoric was here intentionally used as a means of provoking the same kind of public kneejerk responses that the song indeed satirises. Vaular contends that:

*Although the song has many messages ... it is most of all a critique of the media and of populist politics, and how politicians exploit sensationalist headlines that are blind to the complexity of things. In a way the song was a social experiment where I played at the same populist strings – in order to gain my own creative project ... By using such a song title I wanted to show how people only read headlines and make choices on the basis of headlines.*

(Personal Interview)

Hence, managing media reception by means of hyperbolic rhetoric was in fact part of Vaular’s creative project, where lyrical sensationalism was also used to establish himself as a public discursive actor.

Public situatedness and emphatic imaginings

A prominent quality of the song that enables it to function as political discourse is socio-political relevance and actuality, or its situatedness in public discourse. The
The song functioned as a response to what by many perceived to be an enduringly problematic aspect of public life in Norway, namely how the interplay between sensationalist media, populist politics and the audience operate by ethical and social stereotypes. The regular manifestations of this interplay in the Norwegian media, prompted what can be seen as a rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) in which Vaular seized the opportunity to respond by means of the lyrical-musical language of hip hop. The extensive and immediate public response that the song provoked also makes evident a familiar and rhetorically significant dimension of the song, namely its timeliness, or in rhetorical terms the way in which the song seized kairos. Hence KSSJ was situated in public discourse in that it thematically responded to critical conditions in Norwegian society, and by musical-expressive means provoked further public discourse.

The song’s potential relevance to public discourse is further enhanced by the lyrics mode of address and persuasive strategies. A key theme in KSSJ is how the public’s reaction to sensational events – in the song staged as the fictional assassination of a profiled politician – are governed by negative social and ethnic stereotypes. The problem responded to here is one of collective mentality, rather than a concrete social or political event; nonetheless, it is a collective mentality which has very concrete social and political ramifications. It is manifest in the lyrics that the authorities (police and public prosecutor) operate with negative stereotypes, but in addressing the listeners directly (Vet du ka han heter? Do you know his name?), the lyrics also suggest that our reactions as a public might be governed by similar kinds of negative stereotypes. Vaular himself indeed contends that the song was meant to address people in general (personal interview). Thus, by holding this collective mentality up to critical attention, the lyrics also attempt to persuade us that these are wrong.

Furthermore, these socially disadvantaged groups, that by collective kneejerk reaction are routinely suspected in criminal events, are in the lyrics described in
ways that call for an understanding of their situation as well as evoking sympathy on their behalf. The Afghan asylum-seeker is for instance described as *truly scared of the Taliban* (livredd for Taliban), and the social outcast as one who fell *outside the safety net, anxiety, drugs and cold sweat* (utenfor fallnettet, angst, dop, kaldsvette). Although Vaular here speaks on behalf of others, the exhibiting of the experiences of these groups may foster what Goodin calls *emphatic imaginings*. Such imaginings are potentially vital in facilitating public discourse, in this case not least about issues involving immigration, social problems and crime. The sympathy and understanding that the song potentially evokes may motivate socio-economically asymmetric and ethnically diverse groups to speak to each other in the first place. Furthermore, these emphatic imaginings may foster a discursive climate more informed by mutual understanding, thus strengthening the quality of deliberation. As Vaular is here not mobilising the classical hip hop ethos of the ‘radically honest’ exposition of his own personal experiences (Perry 2004, p. 6), his perceived authority to speak of these matters is more a question of Vaular’s authenticity as a hip hop artist and where the audience locate him within the field of tension between hip hop as a socio-politically aware and oppositional subculture and hip hop as a commercialised style.

*Mapping the beat*

The analysis of the groove shows how the rhythmic, melodic and timbral qualities, and the overall composition of the song, not only function as the poetic organisation through which political expression can take place, but also in various ways invest political expression with energy, emotion, drama and rhythmic punch. It also shows how these qualities rhetorically accentuate central lyrical points. As is typical of most hip hop grooves it follows a four/four rhythm, where the chorus stretches over eight bars, each verse over sixteen, and the interlude and outro over two bars each. Initially a mechanical sounding sample of the loading of a gun is heard, thus denotatively and by means of what Danielsen (2008) terms ‘musical reality effects’,
immediately places the song within the context of an assassination, as well as aurally providing a sense of mechanical hardness. The sampled gun loading is also significant in alluding to the street-hard and gloomy universe of gangsta rap, which is here mobilised with a sense of irony that underpins the song’s satirical dimension.

The basic groove sequence (Figure 1) then sets of (without rapping), consisting of four bars which are repeated with only minor variances throughout the song, thus constituting the rhythmic backbone of the song as a whole (including the verses, chorus and interlude). The highly accented snare drum on each downbeat, which runs consistently throughout the song, and the shaker on each eighth note, combine to anchor the groove in a steadily unfolding four beat. The kick drum and the bass syncopate the groove by simultaneously playing on the first note of each bar and slightly before the third note, thus creating a sense of energising tension. Moreover, the bass line, layered on in a p-funk style anchors the groove in a four beat by marking the rhythm in the first note of each bar. The plucked bass notes are added either two or three times per bar on the offbeat, which further adds to the syncopated tension as well as giving the groove a sense of organic looseness. The result is a chopped up, slightly bouncy, but steadily moving funky groove that invests the song with a certain ‘cool’ assertiveness. This contributes to the feeling of laidback insistency, rather than anger, which characterises the mode of lyrical delivery. The offbeat bass-plucking itself connotatively signifies ‘funk’ as it is popularly associated with the style of p-funk. Such rhythmic cool is indeed central to what marks out hip hop among other forms of political discourse. It involves an aesthetic articulation of politics that potentially evokes pleasure, involves modes of discursive, emotional and, not least, physical engagement that transcends the confines of traditional political engagement. Hence, the song addresses audiences who may otherwise be excluded from traditional forms of political discourse.
The melodic qualities of the groove are essential to the overall mood of the song. A heavy low-pitched minor piano chord is played with sharp attack at the first note of each bar, at the same time as the bass and the kick bass (which are hardly discernible from each other), thus creating an effect of booming graveness. The combined heavy accent on the first beat, in funk terms on ‘the one’ (Smith, 2012), also gives the groove an assertive and forward moving quality. The bass line is ascending in pitch, which, according to Cooke (1959), may express a sense of energy and extrovertly directed emotion. However, as the groove is rooted in a minor key, the pitch ascendance helps constitute the context of alarm and tabloid outcry in which the lyrical message is situated. This effect is enhanced by the synthetically sharp-sounding keyboard line, melodically phrased like the bass line, but in a higher octave. In the fourth and last bar the melodic line of the bass and synthesiser is altered into a four note figure where the first three notes are descending but the last note ascends in pitch, thus bringing closure to the groove sequence yet suggesting there is more to come.
Drama, affect and musical satire

The melodic, timbral and compositional elements are key in providing the song with affective force and a sense of drama. In the chorus the sense of sensationalism and tabloid alarm achieves full expression by means of musical devices. Firstly, the double-voiced rapping in a slightly elevated pitch accentuates the tabloid quality of the chorus. This sense of sensationalism is further underscored by the insertion of a highly accentuated sampled gunshot at the same time as the first note of the second bar, and immediately before the lyrical line Fra sju og en halv meter (From seven and a half meters). The high-pitched and rapidly fluctuating synthesiser sound resembling sirens – layered into the background of the soundscape – further underscores this effect. Moreover, the sense of alarm is enhanced by applying extra accent on the synthesiser carrying the melodic line.

In the chorus the lyrics and musical effects come together as a political anthem. Crucially, given what Stefani (cited in Middleton 1990, p. 232) terms axiological connotations, referring to the ‘moral or political evaluations of musical pieces, styles or genres’, Norwegian hip hop music is popularly understood to have political left leanings. The explicit critique of Siv Jensen’s policy and persona in the lyrical verses, where she and the police are established as the antagonists, anchors the meaning of the song in an anti-FRP political universe. Therefore, at this level the song functions as a political anthem where a general anti-FRP sentiment is energised and given affective force by means of rhythmical, melodic and timbral effects.

There is, however, a much more subtle yet highly significant dimension to the booming sense of alarm created by the various musical and lyrical elements of the chorus: these also function as rhetorical devices necessary to constitute the satirical dimension of the song as a whole. These elements combined convey hysteria as well as alarm. In rhetorical terms, one could say that the song addresses its audience with such overstated musical pathos that the ironic dimension of the lyrics becomes
apparent. Moreover, the musically constituted hysteria firmly locates the song in the realm of satire. However, an ironic interpretation of the song is partly dependent on a minimum level of musical and generic code competency (Middleton 1990, pp. 172-176). Some of the public critique that the song provoked indeed appeared to be informed by a lack of such competency. One example was prominent representatives from the FRP who, in op-ed articles (see appendix), accused Vaular of ‘encouraging political violence’.

The political rhetoric of flow

The flow in *KSSJ* is essential to how the song function as political discourse. Not only does the flow invest political discourse with aesthetic pleasure in terms of rhythmic dynamism and playfulness: the way Vaular rhythmically engages with the beat is also rhetorically important in accentuating and energising key lyrical points as well as sustaining the listeners attention. The style of Vaular’s Flow can best be described in terms of what Krims (2000, p. 49) coins the ‘sung rhythmic style’. Vaular keeps within the rhythmic framework of the beat – he does not spill over the meter and the couplets are rapped with regularity. Vaular is on the beat throughout the song. Hence the song attains a distinct ‘old school-feeling’. This ‘sung style’ is accentuated by how it contrasts to the more conversational interlude and outro. There are, however, passages, towards the end of each verse, where the flow is better characterised in terms of what Krims’ (2000, p. 51) terms ‘percussive effusive style’. In these passages Vaular uses his voice more percussively, in that he rhythmically accelerates and concentrates an increased number of syllables within the same meter. This creates a sense of rhythmic saturation that breaks with the rhythmic framework.

These shifts in style and the rhythmic acceleration create what Walser (1995, p. 205) terms ‘larger scale rhetorical flow’. The accelerating shift from sung rhythmic to percussive effusive style in each verse is significant for the unfolding of the
narrative: it creates an increasing sense of energy that supports the more aggressively proclaiming tone with which Vauler ends each verse. Also the conversational and rhythmically less intense interlude and outro have the rhetorical function of providing rhythmic rest – thus accentuating the more expressively significant chorus and verses.

The variations in voice pitch, number and accentuation of specific words and syllables within each single couplet also have rhetorical functions in that they produces what Walser (1995, p. 204) terms “a dialectic of shifting tensions”. As well as investing the song with energy, this dialectic of shifting tensions supports the textual argument by highlighting certain lyrical points and sustaining the listener’s attention. In the chorus, for instance, emphasis is placed on KEM skjøt Siv JENSen (WHO shot Siv JENsen), thus accentuating the questioning modus of the chorus. This is further enhanced by the use of an ascending pitch in the last word of the line, which also produces rhythmic suspense. Similarly, the repetition of the phrase de spør, de spør (they ask, they ask) in the next line creates rhythmically attractive suspense as well as underlining the inquisitorial mode of address.

One of many examples of the rhetorical use of variance in vocal accent and punch is also evident in the following couplet:

Kanskje en som falt UTENFOR, UTENFOR ruten vår  Perhaps one who fell OUTSIDE, OUTSIDE our scheme
UTENFOR fallnettet, angst, dop, kaldsvette   OUTSIDE the safety net, anxiety, drugs and cold sweat

Here repetition and the repeated accent on the same single word is used rhetorically to emphasise the point that the usual suspects are socially marginalised, as well as creating novel dynamism in the flow.
Hip hop expressivity and communicative rationality

We have now seen how the lyrical and musical elements of KSSJ together constitute the song as political expression, and furthermore how the song make use of rhetoric, affective, dramatic and phatic modes of communication that in light of recent revisions of public sphere theory may render the song a vital supplement to traditional verbal political discourse. However, an important remaining question is the extent to which the song addresses its audience with messages that invite or may prompt communicative action, i.e. comprises communicative acts that lay themselves open to rational validation in terms of the differentiated standards of rational validation that underpin the concept of communicative rationality.

Although Habermas locates aesthetic/expressive validity claims in the subjective sphere of the speaker, which renders such claims subject to validation in terms of truthfulness (i.e. the degree to which the speaker is sincere), it can be argued that this confinement of aesthetics to the subjective sphere is dependent on the type of aesthetic expression in question. Hip hop, unlike ‘autonomous’, self-referential or abstract forms of artistic expression, is also committed to saying something about the world by means of language. Thus hip hop music also lays itself open to validation in terms of the two other criteria of rational validation inherent to communicative rationality: truth and moral value. If we regard KSSJ as comprising a set of key musically enabled communicative acts (it is clearly intended as such), this allows us to assess the expressive output of the song within the parameters of communicative rationality.

Firstly, the sensational suggestion that Siv Jensen is assassinated entails a communicative act that subjects itself to moral contestation, in terms of the moral acceptability of just voicing such a suggestion. The public reception of the song makes evident that this was indeed an aspect of the song that stirred response. However ironic or jokingly the shooting of a particular politician is presented, the artistic portrayal of political assassinations remains a sensitive subject in Norway,
particularly after the Utøya massacre. By means of hyperbolic rhetoric and moral transgression, Vaular and many other rappers deliberately challenge the conventions of public conduct and artistic freedom of speech, not least in regard to the depiction of political violence.

Secondly, the song’s ridicule of populist logics and social stereotypes entails a proposition that can be summarised as follows: ‘Our responses to sensational media events are governed by a certain set of negative preconceptions’. Firstly, the question of whether our responses are governed or not by certain preconceptions is both contestable and justifiable in terms of its truth value. Secondly, the normative aspect of this question – are these preconceptions negative? – is also contestable and justifiable. Thirdly, the ways in which Vaular utters this proposition can also be contested in terms of his truthfulness and authenticity as a performer. Thus, this is a communicative act that lays itself open to assessment in light of all three standards of validation.

Thirdly, the communicative act at the level of political anthem can be assessed in light of similar criteria. If we accept that the song, in the context of its reception, is heard, engaged with and also enacted as a non-explicated musical statement of anti-FRP sentiment (in verbal terms something similar to ‘Fuck the FRP!’), it constitutes what Searle (1975) calls an expressive speech act in that it conveys a generally hostile attitude and aggressive emotion towards Siv Jensen and the FRP. It is, however, not a communicative act susceptible to all three of Habermas’ validity standards; there is no truth value to assess, but it lays itself open to scrutiny both in terms of the normative aspect of this utterance and the truthfulness of its performance. Crucially, reasons for opposing the FRP are given by means of lyrical explication in several of the song’s couplets.

However, if we proceed to consider these communicative acts in light of the fourth validation standard, namely comprehensibility which is tightly connected with the level to which their meanings are manifest (Weigaard and Eriksen 1999, p. 59), the
limits of hip hop expressiveness within the parameters of communicative rationality become apparent. These communicative acts are not clearly explicated in adherence to established conventions of language, as for example in the format of a political speech or a newspaper column. Neither does the song present one clear argument, but makes several statements about the world which are both embedded in and a product of the expressive relationship between words, composition, rhyme patterns, vocal intonation, beats, melody and timbre. Consequently, a certain degree of (sub)cultural or musical code competency – or, more generally speaking, pragmatic competency – is required to identify and interpret these utterances in their performative context.

Nevertheless, given the public reception of KSSJ, it is evident that these meanings are in fact actualised within the receptive context of the Norwegian public sphere. However veiled and obscured musical communication is thought to be, KSSJ evidently speaks to some in a manner open to intersubjective (in)validation. And, although hip hop music primarily addresses the social, aesthetic and physical sensibilities of the audience, not least by evoking fun and pleasure, it is not the same as saying that the expressive output of (hip hop) music is inherently ‘irrational’ or that it denies scrutiny by any significant standards of rational validation. As this analysis bring to attention, hip hop expressivity and communicative rationality is not as alien to each other as one would first assume. Moreover, given that audiences have the necessary pragmatic competency, hip hop music may also be seen to conform to the ideals of communicative rationality as it may involve musically and lyrically enabled communicative acts that invite contestation and validation. Significantly, this case thus highlights how music under particular circumstances may contribute to the public exercise of communicative rationality that lies at the heart of Habermas’ framework of deliberative democracy.
Conclusion

As recent revisions of public sphere theory have shown, there is a need to include communicative modes that do not narrowly limit political discourse to verbal argument. As this analysis shows, these modes are inherent to ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’, and have qualities that enable the song as a form political discourse. Firstly, the song facilitates public discourse by commanding public attention through the use of hyperbolic language and, and as examples from the public reception of the song make evident, it has phatically initiated public conversation about political matters of current importance. Secondly, the lyrical and musical language of ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ is characterised by rhetorical qualities of high relevance to public discourse. The song employs lyrical and musical devices in order to effectively address and engage the audience, and also to convince the audience of the song's political messages. Moreover a significant function of the song's flow is that it rhetorically emphasises, energises and draws attention to key lyrical points. Thirdly, by means of both dramatic and rhetorical devices ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ exhibits the experiences of socially and politically marginalised groups and evokes sympathy for these. It thus potentially fosters emphatic imaginings crucial in motivating as well as strengthening the quality of public deliberations. Fourthly, the dramatic, melodic and rhythmic qualities of the music are highly significant as they invest political discourse with a sense of drama, humour, affective force and energy, all of which may engage audiences beyond the increasingly limited readership of traditional political journalism.

The case of Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen further illustrates how hip hop may function as a means of the aesthetical and affective, but also rational, articulation of private perspectives on political matters. In giving public expression to Vaular's private or subcultural perspective on politics, ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ serves as an example of how music may serve as a mediating vehicle between the private and the public sphere. The critical public response that the song was subjected to further highlights
how hip hop music may enter discursive processes central to the public sphere, which play a peripheral yet indispensable role in the anatomy of the political system outlined by Habermas (2006).

Does ‘Kem Skjøt Siv Jensen’ constitute a form of political discourse able to convince people of its message(s)? This is primarily an empirical question, but some approximations based on the expressive features of the song can be made. Most significantly, I would argue that the song invests anti-FRP sentiment with a sense of rhythmic cool as well as (sub)cultural legitimacy. It even provides the vehicle for physically enacting anti-FRP sentiment through dance. Although this involves a kind of persuasion primarily induced by social and aesthetic factors rather than by fair argument, it is plausible that engagement with the song enchants and thus solidifies anti-FRP sentiment among those already of the same view. It may also render this sentiment more attractive to others too; young people in particular. Moreover, in elucidating the interplay between tabloid logic, populist politics and public response through musical satire, the song may also make audiences aware of this interplay and thus prompt further reflection and action.

The argument made here is not that musical expression can substitute verbal argument in discursive democracy – it neither can nor should – but rather that (hip hop) music should in particular cases and under particular circumstances be considered as a potentially vital *supplementary* vehicle for democratic political communication. A necessary course for further research would, however, require systematic analysis of the public reception of hip hop music, both in regard to scale, media location and the degree to which the political expressiveness of hip hop is identified and engaged with as public discourse.
References


Appendix: Selected examples of national media coverage of Lars Vaular’s “Kem Skøt Siv Jensen”


Discography


Spotify: Lars Vaular – Kem skjøt Siv Jensen

Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecwQfw_3FIc (Downloaded 27.05.2013)
Article 4: *The reception article*
From musical expressivity to public political discourse proper: the case of Karpe Diem in the aftermath of the Utøya massacre

Musical communication is widely understood to be too elusive and abstract to have any discernible significance for political public discourse. However, in the aftermath of the Utøya-massacre there have been several instances where hip hop music and performances have been subjected to politicised debate in the Norwegian public sphere. Based on a qualitative case study of the media reception of the Norwegian hip hop group, Karpe Diem, this study finds that their music both provoked, and fed into, extensive public debates concerning topical cultural and political issues. Moreover, this study outlines the process through which Karpe Diem and their music came to be publicly identified, and responded to, as politically significant. Based on the evidence of the findings, this article further argues that hip hop music fills a peripheral (yet significant) function in the model of the political system as outlined by Habermas (2006).

Hip hop and public discourse in Norway

How might music, as an expressive form, enter public political debate? Music is a means of expression frequently charged with political and ideological values and messages – which by means of commercial outreach and multiple mediations, is posited and engaged with in the public sphere. Meanwhile, musical communication is widely perceived to be too elusive and abstract, and too concerned with style, rather than clear, verbalised opinion, to have any discernible and traceable
significance for public political debate, or to be meaningfully conceptualised within the theoretical framework of discursive democracy. However, the public role of Karpe Diem in the aftermath of 22nd July, 2012, when political extremist Anders Behring Breivik massacred 77 people (the majority of whom were young members of the Labour party’s youth wing (AUF)) and detonated a bomb in the governmental quarter, comprises a particularly pertinent case for the study of how music enters public political discourse.

Firstly, both the prominence of music in key public events post 22nd July, and the discursive and political climate in the subsequent period, led hip hop artists to receive unforeseen politicised public attention. The most striking example of this was when the hip hop-act Karpe Diem (who had been collectively hailed as national icons of multi-cultural coexistence in the public mourning ceremonies), released their single ‘Toyota’n til Magdi’ (‘Magdi’s Toyota’). This song included sexually explicit lyrics about a female politician from the liberalist and populist Progressive Party (FRP). As this study demonstrates, the release of the song was pivotal not only in terms of generating a critical response to the song itself, but also in re-actualising explicitly political songs Karpe Diem had released in previous years. Furthermore, it subjected the political merits and role of Karpe Diem after 22nd July to extensive public debate.

These public debates transcended strictly musical concerns, as Karpe Diem became the discursive focal point for a number of topical political and cultural issues. These issues included artistic freedom of speech, the political left’s relationship to the cultural sphere and meta-debates concerning the discursive climate in Norway more generally. Crucially, these debates were not limited to the cultural press and reviews located in the cultural public sphere. They also engaged a number of commentators, journalists and political actors affiliated with the political public sphere, who responded to Karpe Diem’s music as political utterances, and to the artists as political actors.
Secondly, hip hop music has expressive and generic characteristics that are of considerable relevance to public discourse. The centrality of rhetorically poignant and precise verbal points and narratives through rapping, accentuated and organised by heavy beats and melodies, makes it one of the most adept vehicles for a musical articulation of politics (Walser, 1995; Rose, 1994). Perry (2004:39-42) justly describes hip hop as an art form *attendant but not reducible* to substantial socio-political ramifications and issues. Although the socio-economic reality of Scandinavian social democracies is hardly comparable to that of the marginalised Afro-American ghettos, or destitute French *banlieues* (conditions and locations popularly held to be pre-requisites for a socially and political relevant hip hop scene), the attendance to socio-political matters is also characteristic of Norwegian hip hop. Empirical studies of the Norwegian hip hop scene reveal that among Norwegian rap artists there is a high level of commitment to addressing issues of social and political conditions through music, at both a professional (Nærland, 2014), and amateur level (Vestel, 2012; Knudsen, 2008).

This qualitative case study first examines the role of Karpe Diem in the public mourning processes subsequent to 22nd July. Then it provides a descriptive analysis of the public reception to which Karpe Diem was subjected in the Norwegian national print and online media, subsequent to the release of their single ‘Magdi’s Toyota’. The analysis pays particular attention to which kinds of socio-political themes of debate their songs and performances either raised or fed into, and the key ideological-political positions encompassed within the discourse. Thereafter, focusing on the interplay between aesthetic, as well as cultural, discursive and political conditions, this article outlines the process through which Karpe Diem and their music became publicly identified, and responded to, as politically significant. Lastly, this article considers the democratic value of musical public input, by discussing the findings in light of Habermas’ (2006) model of the political system.
Expressive culture, discursive democracy and hip hop

There is a growing recognition among writers within democratic theory that forms of public communication other than those considered as ‘rational’ or argumentative are also important to democratic politics (Benhabib, 1996; Young, 1996; Dahlgren, 1995). This recognition has led to a call for the inclusion of aesthetics and expressive culture into the theoretical framework of deliberative democracy (Goodin, 2003; Gripsrud, 2009; Hermes, 2005). McGuigan (2005) updates Habermas’ (1971) concept of the ‘literary public sphere’ to the broader ‘cultural public sphere’ and further suggests that public and personal politics may also be articulated through what he terms ‘affective’, ‘aesthetic’ and ‘emotional’ modes of communication. By implication, this highlights the potential importance of musical communication.

Van Zoonen (2000) similarly argues that popular culture and music may be of vital importance to public political communication either in the form of political fiction, as a stage for political actors, or as a political practice in itself. Also Christensen and Christensen (2008) demonstrate that musical events may generate what they term an ‘ephemeral communicative space’. By this they mean a symbolic space facilitating episodic public and discursive negotiations of topical issues that feeds into, and layers onto, existing discourse.

In parallel to this, there has been growing recognition among scholars writing on the politics of music that it is through public mediation and engagement that music might potentially gain political and democratic significance. Street (2012:8) argues that: “It is where music forms a site of public deliberation, rather than private reflection, that we talk of music as political”. Similarly, Hesmondhalgh (2007) argues that musical value-judgements entail democratic significance as part of what he terms an ‘aesthetical public sphere’. Emphasising the importance of mediation, Negus argues that music becomes politically significant through:
...processes of mediation and articulation through which particular styles of music are produced, circulated, experienced and given quite specific cultural and political meanings. (Negus, 1996:192)

Although withholding a steady focus on political journalism and exhibiting disdain to markedly driven popular culture, Habermas (2006) provides a model of the political system that entails sensitivity to expressive culture. It also establishes the ways in which the public exposition of expressive culture may provide valuable input to public sphere processes (Gripsrud, 2009). Employing Habermas’ model, Nærland (2014) argues that hip hop-music, although in a peripheral role, should be considered as part of this system. The narratives, critiques, and reflections brought forward by hip hop-music are discursively laundered in the public sphere (i.e. in the periphery of the political system) and filtered further towards the decision making institutions at the centre of the political system. Using the case of Karpe Diem, and the public reception of their music, this study empirically demonstrates the ways in which hip hop music enters the discursive processes vital to the public sphere, as laid down in Habermas’ model.

Furthermore, the public exposition of hip hop music may fulfil four important democratic functions. Firstly, by means of genre-specific hyperbolic and moral-political transgressive lyrics and performances, hip hop may phatically (Jacobson, 1960) establish communicative situations, thus having an initiating function for public discourse. Secondly, hip hop music mediates between the private and public sphere. Thirdly, in doing so, it provides what Dahlgren (1995) terms ‘symbolic raw material’ for public deliberations, where songs and performances themselves become the object of public debate and generate further debates. Fourthly, in terms of the expressive capacity to address politically and socially relevant issues, hip hop songs and performances may also, under certain circumstances, function as contributions to ongoing public debates in their own right. As will be demonstrated, all these dynamics can be seen at play in the case of the public reception of Karpe Diem after the massacre of 22nd July.
Karpe Diem: expressive characteristics and artist-biography

Karpe Diem is made up of Cirac Patel and Magdi Abdelmaguidwere – the former of Indian, and the latter of mixed Egyptian/Norwegian, origins. At the time of the release of ‘Magdi’s Toyota’ (from here of abbreviated TTM) they were, according to sales figures, radio play and festival attendance, indisputably one of the most popular groups in Norway (Gramo, 2010; 2012; 2013). TTM was released as one of the singles of the record ‘Kors på halsen, Ti kniver i hjertet, Mor og Far i døden’ in 2012 and earned them a Grammy-award. From the start of Karpe Diem had established themselves as politically-oriented rappers through lyrical attacks on the political right and in particular the populist right wing FRP. Moreover, they have also identified their left leaning political sympathies through their close affiliation with the revolutionary Marxist hip hop/activist group Gatas Parlament and with the anarchist/Marxist Blitz-milieu.

Sandve (2013) emphasises the musical-lyrical play with identity positions with regard to ethnicity and gender as one of Karpe Diem’s defining characteristics. This is also the case with TTM, which lyrically thematises the private worlds of the rappers and their various concerns. However (and key to the media commotion that the song provoked) the song includes lyrics portraying receiving oral sex from the highly profiled FRP-politician Mette Hanekamhaug in the back of the car. In the following, she is also referred to as a ‘bitch’ (’merr’). Although being one among a multitude of lyrical points and concerns, the song thus expresses a non-explicated, yet unmistakeable, antipathy towards the FRP.

Method

Chronologically this analysis first provides an outline of the initial circumstances that gained Karpe Diem a prominent position in Norwegian public life, through their role
in the public mourning process in the months subsequent to 22nd July. As will be demonstrated, these circumstances accommodated the politicised public discourse to which Karpe Diem was later subjected. Thereafter, the analysis examines the public political discourse that erupted in relation to the release of TTM, which took place approximately a year later. A main objective of this study is to descriptively analyse the ways in which the reception of Karpe Diem and their music fed into the national public discourse concerning political, cultural and social issues. Consequently articles published in newspapers or popular journals (both in print and online) with a national readership, were selected. These include the national press and major regional newspapers along with major Norwegian cultural and political magazines. Local press and niche media were excluded. However, when utterances and debates originating from the local press, niche-media or online debate-forums became the focal point of discussion in the national press, these articles and debates are referred to. This qualitative case study-approach has previously proved fruitful (see Christensen and Christensen, 2008), in examining the public reception of musical and cultural events.

Only articles explicitly relating Karpe Diem and their music and performances to political, cultural and social issues have been selected. These include reviews, interviews, commentaries, chronicles and opinion pieces where music, performances or artist are the focal point of politicised attention, or a point of reference in a discourse concerning general political, social or cultural questions. In order to chart debates as they evolved over time, relevant articles issued between 22nd July 2011 and first of March 2013 were selected. The total number of articles was 101.

In order to identify and chart arguments, perspectives and positions, as they were presented in the various articles, a descriptive and non-elaborate analytical approach was employed. The articles were examined with regard to the following aspects: (1) What kind of political messages the music was construed to convey; (2)
How these messages were responded to; (3) Which debates the song either raised or fed into; (4) How the songs were construed as significant within these debates; and (5) The actors, opinion-positions and arguments that emerged at the level of reception. The discursively central articles, along with those that exemplify general characteristics of the debate, are referred to directly in the analysis (see Appendix).

Relevant articles were identified and retrieved by using Atekst. This is a media archive monitoring and digitally storing all editorial content from national, regional and local print and online media in Norway. Atekst allows for detailed thematic searches in media-content and is frequently and successfully used in research for both monitoring and analysing media-debate and coverage in Norway.

**Analysis**

*Karpe Diem and 22nd July*

The tragedy of 22nd July brutally shook Norwegian society in several profound ways. Public life during the initial phase was characterised by shock, bewilderment and grief, and a struggle to make sense of the events. The incomprehensible and meaningless manslaughter of 77 people (most of whom were politically engaged teenagers) evoked a strong sense of collective grief (Hylland Eriksen, 2011). At the same time, it also profoundly challenged, and momentarily destabilised, what Norwegians collectively imagined their own society to be. Prior to these events, the Norwegian *social imaginary* (Taylor, 2004) was one involving ‘the inherent goodness’ of Norwegian society (Witoszek, 2011), peaceful multicultural coexistence and high levels of interpersonal and institutional trust (Wollebæk, et al., 2012), and public safety (Fimreite et al., 2013). The ideologically motivated massacre of aspiring politicians, and the bomb attack on a key democratic institution (the government quarter) caused serious disruption to this social imaginary. The fact that the attacks
were carried out by an ethnically white, and seemingly well-functioning, Norwegian citizen, did not fit into any pre-established conflict-narrative.

Public life in Norway in the months after 22nd July was characterised by a number of publicly staged national ceremonies. These events, in which Karpe Diem played prominent roles as performers, facilitated the processes of public mourning, as well as the re-imagination of Norwegian society. The ceremonies, most notably the national memorial concerts in Oslo Cathedral (three days after the killings), and Oslo Spektrum (a month after the killings), must be understood as media events (Katz & Dayan, 1992; Brurås, 2012; Toldnes, 2012). They were staged by actors external to the media (i.e. the government and Oslo Municipality), they possessed a distinct ceremonial character and they involved a marked and extraordinary break from media routine. Moreover, these were highly affective events, characterised by reverence and by emotionally charged speeches and performances. As in Dayan and Katz's (Ibid, 8) conceptualisation, these events “celebrated not conflict but reconciliation” and were ceremonial efforts aiming to ‘restore order’.

As such, these mass mediated ceremonies were key arenas for what social anthropologist Hylland Eriksen (2012:1) characterises as the “profound expressions of a compassion shared, it seemed, by the entire population”, which also involved a mode of audience reception not as passive spectator, but as ceremonial participants. Crucially, Karpe Diem’s part in these media events catapulted them into the role of national icons of the multi-cultural future of Norway. This icon-status is, as will be shown later in the analysis, indeed key to understanding the politicised public reception Karpe Diem and their music were subjected to when they released the single ‘Magdi’s Toyota’ a year after the massacre.

Media-coverage and commentary of these events gives rich evidence of both the exceptional position Karpe Diem had acquired, as well as the both elevated and affectively charged tone that characterised public discourse in the first month after 22nd July. One commentator (Vårt Land, 02.08.2001) argues that Karpe Diem’s song
‘A Thousand Drawings’ (‘Tusen Tegninger’) was the single most powerful performance at the Oslo Cathedral ceremony. The commentator further points out that: “Some people hold this to be the utmost important song in recent years”. Moreover, surviving young politicians from Utøya, along with central Labour politicians, jointly issued a comment in the highest selling Norwegian newspaper, Verdens Gang (13.08.2011), quoting lyrical experts from Karpe Diem’s performance. Here they contended that Karpe Diem’s lyrical visions are ‘the answer’ to the future challenges of Norwegian society. A commentary from Verdens Gang, headed ‘This is Norway’ (22.08.2011), proclaimed “This is Norway: the rappers of Karpe Diem is a piece of our rich multi-cultural future”. Further testifying to the exceptional status of the group, this commentator quotes Bjørn Eidsvåg, a well-known Norwegian musician, tweeting: “Karpe Diem is presently perhaps the most important band in Norway”.

Although there was a general fade-down of the conflict-level in the political public debate in the months subsequent to 22nd July (Wiggen, 2013), these ceremonies did at the time provoke debate concerning the selection of artists and the judgments underpinning this. One commentary, by media scholar Jostein Gripsrud (Dagens Næringsliv, 27.08.2011), emphasised that in its privileging of Anglo-American popular music, the selection appeared ‘mono-cultural’, i.e. it did not include much of the Norwegian repertoire of jazz, folk or classical music. Accordingly, nor did contributions musically reflect the ethnical diversity of Norway. In response to this critique, the inclusion of multi-ethnic Karpe Diem was mobilised as a key counter argument by several debaters, including Hege Duckert, the head of culture in NRK responsible for the selection (Dagbladet 30.08.2011) and Verdens Gang’s commentator Stein Østbø (02.09.2011).
The initial debate: FRP and Karpe Diem

The public discursive climate was normalising once more when Karpe Diem released their single TTM approximately a year later, which coincided with the one-year memorial ceremony for 22nd July. The debate was initiated when Christer Kjølstad (a member of The Progress Party’s youth wing) accused Karpe Diem of being ‘leftist glorifiers of violence’ in a letter to the editor of Dagbladet (02.08.2012) entitled ‘Rapping about torture and murder’. In the letter, Kjølstad calls attention the newly released TTM for being sexually offensive towards a female FRP-politician, but also earlier releases from Karpe Diem, which included lyrics about killing Carl I. Hagen, the former leader of FRP, and setting fire to members of the Progress Party’s youth wing. Kjølstad’s main argument was that Karpe Diem’s status as national icons of multicultural tolerance was altogether false and misplaced, as they lyrically encouraged both political violence and misogyny. In a follow-up interview in Dagbladet (02.08.2012) Kjølstad emphasised that FRP is an easy and convenient target for attack from musicians, given the party’s position on the outskirts of the ideological spectrum.

Bringing up the heat in the debate, Peter N. Myrhe, a national FRP-profile and MP, followed this with an interview entitled ‘Boycott Karpe Diem!’ (TV2.no, 08.08.2012). Here Myhre argued that it was incomprehensible and unacceptable that Karpe Diem performed at national memorial ceremonies staged by public bodies ‘when their lyrics had proved them to be political extremists’. Moreover, Myhre argued that Karpe Diem would never have achieved the same status had they agitated against members of the Labour Party’s youth wing. In the interview, Myhre also urged the public to boycott the Øya-festival where Karpe Diem were one of the headliners, as well as demanding a public apology from Karpe Diem to FRP. Subsequently, local and regional FRP-politicians echoed Kjølstad and Myhre’s critique and urged audiences and concert arrangers to boycott Karpe Diem (Rogalands Avis, 10.08.2012; 15.08.2012).
The heated response from the FRP-politicians must in part be explained by the discrepancy between Karpe Diem’s seemingly a-political role as nationally embraced figures of unity during the initial memorial ceremonies, and the politically and sexually explicit anti-FRP message of TTM. It must in part also be understood as a consequence of the combination of FRP’s subdued role in the time after 22nd July – due to Anders Behring Breivik’s brief affiliation with the party – and the high level of self-imposed consensus that characterised public life subsequent to the massacre. Although party-political issues were toned down, the commemorative celebration of the Labour Party’s youth wing were at centre of public life in the months subsequent to 22nd July. Hence, when the initial period of reconciliation was over, Karpe Diem became an opportune target for FRP politicians, then in opposition, who wished to question the close interplay between left wing artists and the labour party, then in government, during the mourning process.

Patel and Abdelmaguid of Karpe Diem responded to the critique in an op-ed in Dagbladet (11.08.2012). In the response titled ‘When did we start to interpret all lyrics literally?’ they argued that their use of explicit lyrics, including exaggeration, irony and sarcasm, are linguistic devices used to express a "deep disagreement" with FRP-politics, and must further be understood within the context of the hip hop genre. Moreover, they concluded the op-ed by suggesting that the accusations were informed by wilful misreading and publicised in order to score points in the upcoming election. Curiously, Hanekamhaug (the female FRP-politician portrayed as performing oral-sex in TTM) proclaimed herself (TV2.no, 12.08.2012) to be a fan of Karpe Diem, further stating that everyone has the right to their own political opinion, and that their lyrics were acceptable and non-offensive.

The exchange of opinions between these parties was widely reported in various national media outlets, including Dagbladet, Side.2, NRK.no, Nettavisen, TV2.no and Aftenposten. Although expressing reluctance, Karpe Diem defended and elaborated on their position in several interviews in the subsequent period. In Dagsavisen
(20.09.2012) they emphasised that they are musicians and not politicians playing “that politicians’ game”, but did also recognise that people were taking their lyrics seriously. Similarly, they argued in Aftenposten (20.09.2012) that their lyrics “are not debate-contributions”. In a lengthy and critical interview in the politically conservative magazine Minerva, somewhat ironically entitled ‘Rock solid moral compass’, their moral and political integrity was questioned. Here, Abdelmaguid repeated the arguments made in Karpe Diem’s op-ed, but further emphasised that morally and politically transgressive utterances made by musicians must be understood within their own artistic context aided by a minimum of genre-competency. However, although maintaining that the lyrics of TTM were acceptable, Abdelmaguid admitted that the situation after 22nd July called for a careful consideration of lyrical content.

The release of TMM and the following response from FRP-politicians also provoked responses from members of the public representing different interests groups. Mina Adampour and Linda Alzaghari, from a minority interest organisation and a think thank concerned with anti-racism, published an op-ed in Dagsavisen (04.09.2012) where they defended Karpe Diem as responsible albeit “reluctant idols in the age of migration”. Furthermore, they criticised FRP for trying to politically capitalise on the national grief and Karpe Diem’s role therein. From a feminist perspective, Trine Østreng (from the feminist collective Madam) criticised Karpe Diem for sexist bullying of Mette Hanekamhaug (Dagbladet, 14.08.2012). Also, homosexual Labour politician Ragnar Kværness (Aftenposten, 14.08.2012) accused Karpe Diem of being both misogynist and of promoting contempt towards homosexuals. Other commentators, such as political scientist Svein Tuastad, commented that the Karpe Diem controversy was one of that summer’s major public debates. He further deemed the FRP-politicians’ efforts to boycott Karpe Diem as ‘McCarthyism lite’ (Mandag Morgen, 26.0812). However, he did point out that it was democratically healthy that FRP politicians subjected the songs to public critical attention.
Tuastad (along with a range of other commentators) ridiculed FRP-politicians for their lack of hip hop-code competency and, in consequence, overly literal readings of Karpe Diem’s lyrics. *Aftenposten’s* (12.08.2012) review of Karpe Diem’s performance at the Øya-festival (of which FRP-politician Peter N. Myhre had urged a boycott) also focused on the ongoing debate. In the review, entitled ‘Karpe Diem’s Revenge’, the reviewer argued that the concert promoted multi-cultural coexistence and tolerance, and that the critics from FRP had “spectacularly and fundamentally missed their target”.

**Ideological debate**

Whereas the initial critique from FRP-politicians (along with Karpe Diem’s response and the media coverage of the public discourse) focused mainly on the acceptability of Karpe Diem’s lyrical efforts, public discourse subsequently gained a more ideological dimension. The following debate revolved around deep running ideological conflict lines in Norwegian society, and involved discursive actors of divergent ideological standing.

In these debates Karpe Diem and TTM figured as either the focal point, or as a point of reference, in a number of commentaries and opinion pieces debating: (1) artistic freedom of speech; (2) the ethics of the political left; (3) the relationship between the political left and the cultural sector. A set of political-ideological positions emerged during this discourse. Most significantly, writers, politicians and publications on the liberal-conservative side of Norwegian politics issued attacks on the political left. Writers, journalists and publications associated with the political left (although often with less pronounced political affiliation than those on the right) used Karpe Diem as a point of reference in their discursive engagement with these themes, and in response to the attacks from the political right.
For commentators positioned on the political-ideological right, Karpe Diem and TTM became a point of reference and a focal point in discussions concerning what is perceived to be the cultural hegemony of the ideological left in Norway. The argument fronted by the political right is that both the media (not least the public broadcaster NRK), the press and the cultural sector, are infused by left wing ideology and populated by actors with left-leaning, hence causing an imbalance in the symbolic representation of matters of political and ideological significance. This has been an enduring cultural-political issue in Norwegian public and political discourse for the past decades, and not least ardently mobilised as part of the populist Progress Party’s anti-elite rhetoric.

A number of commentators ideologically positioned on the right called attention to Karpe Diem as an example of how the political left, the media and the cultural sector allows for, and also celebrates, explicit and offensive artistic critique of the political right, while condemning the same level of offensiveness when issued against left wing politics and politicians. With reference to Karpe Diem's political and sexual explicitness, these commentaries highlight the way in which the left’s conception of (artistic) freedom of speech is informed by virtue ethics and is, in effect, hypocritical.

Didrik Søderlind of the politically conservative Minerva (17. 08, 2012), rhetorically asks:

how can (Karpe Diem) rap about shooting and setting fire to political opponents, receiving backseat oral sex from a young female politician they don’t like, and at the same time get appointed poster boys of tolerance?

He further polemicises against those arguing that the explicit lyrics of hip hop are acceptable because hyperbole, irony and exaggeration are lyrical devises inherent in the genre, when the same devices are in fact just as inherent to politically non-acceptable genres, such as Nazi-rock.
These commentators further argue that the left’s conception of artistic freedom of speech is conditional: explicit and offensive artistic expressions are only acceptable, and of aesthetical worth, when these agree with the left’s causes and values. Moreover, these contributions argue that the acceptance and celebration of Karpe Diem and their music was a manifestation of the self-complacent lifestyle-ethic of the political left, and that their conception of artistic freedom of speech is informed by habitual group thinking, rather than by principle and honest reflection. In effect, TTM is argued (Minerva, 14.09.2012) to be symptomatic for both the left’s elitist fear of the FRP and the left’s habitual inclination to symbolically bully FrP. In response to the media’s celebration of Karpe Diem, Bård Larsen under the heading ‘Intellectual leftists of today’ (Minerva, 26.01.2012) argued that:

*the fact that verbal abuse and harassment of the political right, or of what is often referred to as ‘the common people’, has become so acceptable, is probably caused by a sort of virtue-ethical custom. A left wing orientation is associated with the good, and the right wing is intuitively associated with stinginess, tightness and to a certain degree low class racism.*

Similarly, the NRK’s promotion (and, in effect, endorsement) of Karpe Diem and their music, was among these commentators heralded as evidence of how left wing virtue ethics infuses symbolic representation, even at the level of public institutions. Larsen (Ibid) does not only explain this imbalance in symbolic representation in terms of a cultural hegemony of the left, but with reference to his book *The idealists: The Norwegian Left’s Flirt with Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism* (Larsen, 2011) argues that the left’s sanctioning of artistic utterances they do not agree with is a symptom of the left’s illiberal and totalitarian past.

*Left wing response*

Karpe Diem also figured as point of reference, or a focal point, in commentaries concerning these same issues, issued by publications and commentators more
loosely associated with the political left. Several of these commentaries were partially responses to the attacks launched by the publications and commentators of the right. However, whereas the critique and commentary from the right were both aggressive in tone and issued by those either affiliated with the FRP or the conservative think tank \textit{Civita}, the response from journalists and commentators with more loose affiliations with the left were less confrontational in tone. This discursive dynamic of an aggressive and attacking right, and a more aloof yet defensive left, may itself be indicative of the hegemonic balance on the cultural field. In Bourdieuan terms (1984), the left wing values and sensibilities can be seen as \textit{doxic} at the cultural field, i.e. self-evident and therefore not in need of explication. The political values and the aesthetical sensibilities of the right, on the other hand, are \textit{heterodoxic}, and therefore in need of more amplified explication.

The two commentaries issued in \textit{Dagbladet} can be seen as exemplary of this dynamic. The comment by journalist Asbjørn Slettemark entitled ‘The sound of revolt’ (14.08.2012) sympathetically placed TTM in the tradition of political hip hop, relating Karpe Diem to canonised political rap acts such as Public Enemy and NWA. The FRP’s public response to what the commentator refers to as the ‘colourful depiction’ of one of their female politicians is here furthermore described as ‘comically touchy’. Similarly, commentator Geir Ramnefjell (\textit{Dagbladet}, 08.12.2012) celebrates Karpe Diem as politically conscious artists with both considerable commercial success and credibility and further polemicises for the increased involvement of artists in topical political issues, due to the political engagement it might prompt. However, this commentary also recognises the political right’s increasing efforts to discursively destabilise the left’s cultural hegemony, and further held them to be indicative of the politically revitalised popular cultural scene in Norway after 22nd July.

Charlotte Myrbråten, a commentator from the socialist newspaper \textit{Klassekampen} (21.01.2013), also recognises the cultural hegemony of the left. She uses Karpe Diem
as an example of how the acceptance of aggressive artistic rhetoric is, in effect, reserved for artists with left wing sympathies. However, she remains convinced that artists like Karpe Diem are a vital source of political engagement. Explaining this imbalance in symbolic representation, and perhaps implicitly confirming the sort of virtue ethics of which the left is being accused, Myrbråten argues that “Karpe Diem is allowed artistic freedom because we know them as good and well behaved guys, who also carry positive attitudes”. Similarly Mimir Kristjánsson, a commentator of the same Klassekampen (10.08.2012), agrees that there is a higher general acceptance for artistic attacks on right wing politicians and politics than attacks on the left. However, alluding to the Utøya murderer Anders Behring Breivik’s short past as a member of the Progress Party’s Youth Wing (FPU), Kristjánsson suggests that this imbalance must be understood in light of the fact that “it was not a member of AUF (The Labour Party's Youth) that recently killed 77 people at the FpU’s summer camp”.

The process of politicisation

A key concern in this study is to explain how and why specific pieces of music are publicly identified, and responded to, as politically significant (in the sense of signifying ideas, institutions, processes or conditions associated with politics in a strict sense), and thus enter the public political discourse. Street (2012:44) provides the following clarification of the term “political music”

While all songs are ideological in the sense that they contain a perspective on the world and relationships within it, a political song, I shall assume, is one that self-consciously recognizes the ideological content and seeks to draw the listeners’ attention to it.

Thus, Street here draws attention to the importance of the performer’s or composer’s intention in encoding music with a political message and the degree to
which the political message is manifest. Street (Ibid: 44-45) further argues that music may also be inscribed with political significance by means of *context*, i.e. how social, political or cultural conditions may invest music with political meaning, and, by means of the performers’ *biographical narrative*, i.e. the degree to which the performers themselves are associated with political causes or agendas.

All these three factors can be vividly seen at work in the case of Karpe Diem in the aftermath of 22nd July. Both TTM, and the older songs that were re-actualised in the debate contained politically provocative and hyperbolic lyrics deriding the FRP. Thus, there is a clear and manifest political tendency in these songs that rendered them subjectable to political criticism. Furthermore, Karpe Diem had a well-established affiliation with Marxist/anarchist groupings within the Norwegian hip hop scene, where they began their careers. Through interviews and performances they made it explicitly clear that they were of a politically left wing orientation. As such, the biographical narrative of Karpe Diem locates them on the political left, which in turn may prompt political readings of their songs and performances. However, there are in Norway, and elsewhere, a multitude of hip hop artists that have more direct affiliations with political organisations and who makes far more politically explicit music, but which have none the less not been subjected to the same level of public political debate. This brings to attention the importance of contextual factors.

Firstly, there were discursive conditions and dynamics that accommodated the politicisation of Karpe Diem and their music. Whereas the initial commemorative phase after 22nd July was politically non-conflictual, and also involved the suspension of Karpe Diem’s politics, the following phase of public life in Norway was characterised by high political intensity – not least in terms of Anders Behring Breivik’s political-ideological motivations, and who were to blame for these. This discursive climate of high political intensity was also characterised by a readiness to address certain conflictual issues and to invest symbolic material with political
significance, and must hence be seen as a precondition for the politicised reception of Karpe Diem.

Secondly, and interwoven with this change in the discursive climate, there were also political conditions that prepared the ground for the politicised reception to which Karpe Diem was subjected. From a right wing perspective, the media events following 22nd July could, in certain respects, be regarded as a manifestation of the cultural hegemony of the left, involving the temporary ‘sanctification’ of left-leaning artists such as Karpe Diem. Hence, in the following and more conflictual phase, and the rhetorical situation that subsequently arose, Karpe Diem became an opportune focal point for the political right’s challenging of the cultural hegemony. In this process, Karpe Diem and their music also more generally functioned as a symbolic site for the contestation over more general political merits and values between the left and the right.

The identification of Karpe Diem and their music as political, and the subsequent public response, are, as this process highlights, also very much a matter of what is being invested into the music by the listener. The politicised public reception of Karpe Diem can be understood in light of what German literary reception theorist Jauss (1982), in his writings on the dynamic relationship between reader and text, terms a ‘horizon of expectations’. Such horizons of expectations, involving both expectations linked to the genre as well as the biographic aspects of Karpe Diem and their perceived role within the actual socio-political context, must be seen as informative of how their music and performances were interpreted. Moreover, the public reception entails a generative aspect in that Karpe Diem and their music was invested with further political significance through the politicised debate, which in turn layer and add onto the horizon of expectation they may be met with in the future.
Karpe Diem and the public sphere

After having outlined the process through which Karpe Diem became subjected to public political discourse (i.e. how their music became a focal point for public debates involving political or ideological questions, comprising politically divergent actors and views), this article will conclude by considering the democratic value of musical public input and the ways in which this might be located in the anatomy of the political system modelled by Habermas (2006). In this multi-level, bottom up, top down, ‘laundering’ system, Habermas locates the public sphere at the periphery of the political system, as opposed to the institutionalised discourses at the centre. According to Habermas, the public sphere may “facilitate deliberative legitimisation processes by ‘laundering’ flows of political communication through a division of labour with other parts of the system” (Ibid, 415). Thus, in mediating and ensuring a mutual responsiveness between citizens and decision makers, the public sphere facilitates the formation of public opinion. This, in turn, is the basis for legitimate decision-making.

The case of Karpe Diem gives empirical evidence of the ways in which music may, under particular circumstances, both stimulate and feed into these multi-layered discursive processes outlined by Habermas. The hyperbolic, profane and provocative musical articulations of anti-FRP sentiment were here subjected to public contestation in terms of their acceptability. Hence, both the expressive output and the mode of delivery of songs and performances can be seen to have been subjected to discursive ‘laundering’.

Significantly, the case of Karpe Diem demonstrates that their music and performances were debated and filtered through several discursive arenas, mediating between the periphery and the centre of the political system. The songs and performances were subjected to discourse in the cultural public sphere, including reviews and cultural commentaries, located on the periphery. They were then further filtered into discursive arenas, comprising actors, publications, and
journalistic formats located closer to the centre of the political system. Moreover, this case empirically allows for a more detailed conceptualisation of how such a laundering and filtering process may apply to music. The process can be described in three stages. The first involves *aesthetic assessment* by cultural journalists, the second *moral-political assessment*, mainly by political actors, of the acceptability of the merits of Karpe Diem. The third is *ideological debate*, mainly carried out by political commentators, where the merits of Karpe Diem are elevated to a more principle level.

Furthermore, this case demonstrates that the public discursive process, of which Karpe Diem and their music were part, entail important interpretative dimensions. Both songs and performances were subjected to various interpretations, where politically conflicting discursive actors ascribed divergent qualities and values to the songs and performances. Crucially, this interpretative process generated new questions and issues that were taken up in further discourse. Hence, the songs did not only function as general anti-FRP statements, but also, as termed by Dahlgren (1995:148), in the context of television, *symbolic ‘raw material’* for public deliberation. This case suggests that it is perhaps not so much the manifest political meaning of the music that matters, but rather that music posits a symbolic object in the public sphere that invites both interpretation and response. As argued above, this interpretation and response will be informed by both contextual factors, such as the discursive and political climate in Norway post 22nd July and the horizons of expectations at the level of reception.

**Conclusion**

The democratic role of aesthetics in general, and music more specifically, represents both an empirical and theoretical lacuna in public sphere research. Consequently, this article has addressed the following two overarching questions; how and through which processes may music as aesthetical expressivity be significant to actual public
political discourse, and, how may we make sense of musical expressivity within the framework of deliberative democracy.

Empirically, this study demonstrates the ways in which popular music may, under particular circumstances, both stimulate and feed into important cultural and political debates. In the case of Karpe Diem post 22nd July, it is evident that the expressive features of their music and performances fed into long enduring ideological debates concerning artistic freedom of speech, the political left’s relationship to the cultural field and meta-debates concerning the discursive climate in Norway more generally. In bringing in new actors and perspectives into public discourse, these debates involved a more nuanced discourse about key issues in the Norwegian society. Moreover, these debates partly played out in media addressing young people and audiences of popular music, thus involving a democratically desirable enlargement of public discourse. Significantly, these debates did not only take place within the cultural public sphere, but also encompassed a range of political actors, topics and discursive arenas associated with the political public sphere.

In describing the various aesthetic, biographical, contextual and receptive factors that led to the politicised reception of Karpe Diem and their music, this study also highlights the complex process and the trajectory through which the aesthetical expressivity of music may enter public political discourse. Based on the findings, this study demonstrates the ways in which musical communication may generate and provide input to discursive processes vital to deliberative democracy as modelled by Habermas (2006), and in addition suggests how this model can be further conceptually sensitized to explain the democratic role of music.

The public role of Karpe Diem and their music in the aftermath of the Utøya-massacre is a case where the intersections between music and politics can be seen vividly at play. Not only does this case demonstrate that music as an aesthetical form of expression may provide democratically vital discursive processes with politically
pregnant input, it also highlights how the Habermasian framework of public sphere theory offers a theoretically fruitful starting point from where to understand the political significance of music.

However, this study also actualises the need to further rethink and develop theoretical concepts of the public sphere, ones that are better suited to both explain, and normatively value, the democratic merits of music. However, in order to enhance our understanding of the role of expressive culture in public political discourse, a fruitful course for further research would be to study the ways in which music becomes subjected to public political discourse in national, discursive and political contexts other than that of the highly particular and trauma coloured context of Norway after 22nd July.

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229


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Appendix 1: The Survey
Appendix 2: Interview guide