Convergence Citizen: Innovative Designs of Mediated Citizenship

A Case Study of the Swedish Convergence Festival Gather

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Abstract

This thesis studies citizen identity in the context of convergence festivals. These are large-scale events, curated as interdisciplinary meetings that materialize the knowledge economy and a participatory discourse. As media text constitute subjective reality, citizenship is negotiated in and through them. The employed theoretical framework of civic cultures suggests six interrelated dimensions through which citizenship evolves. The Swedish festival Gather is studied as a case example. Two published texts designed by Gather are studied by employing a social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis. The findings advocate for a widened understanding of citizen identity as a contingent, cultural practice negotiated in everyday life. It concludes that convergence festivals are productive junctions of discourse, intertwining democratic values with the cultivation of novelty. Civic discourses converge with such of connectivity and productivity, naturalizing growth and technology as means for social change. Citizen identity is foremost found in private agency.

Keywords: Convergence Festivals, Civic Cultures, Citizen Identity, Citizenship, Mediated Citizenship Social Semiotics, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Innovation, Civic Participation, Transformational Festivals
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Abbreviations

SXSW South by Southwest
ICT Information and Communication Technology
IT Information Technology
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1. Introduction

“We are the movement, this generation. You better know who we are”: Woosh – a Dolby surround fizz freezes the melody and fashion model Kendall Jenner steps out of a cheering crowd of activists to pass the police man a Pepsi. He cannot resist. The crowd flips. “Live bolder. Live louder. Live for now” triumphs the tagline. “Want social change? Buy Pepsi”, it seems to add (“Youtube Pepsi”, 2017).

In April 2017, the ad was withdrawn due to protests against its interpretation of a picture that became iconic the year before: a #blacklivesmatter protester that faces two heavily armed police men approaching her arrest. She stands firm and tall in a light dress. The protest went viral and the campaign was stopped.

This example shows how today’s on- and offline realities constitute rather than influence each other and illustrates how symbols of citizenship can converge. The purpose of this thesis is to explore both these aspects, by studying the transforming social identity of the citizen as a process of mediated communication. Hence, it aims to contribute to a widened understanding of citizenship as a contingent, cultural practice negotiated beyond formal politics through competing agencies in everyday life.

An interest in today’s civic cultures is met by an array of tensions and inconsistencies, not seldom determined by academic discipline. Particularly among political scientists and media scholars, the evaluation of civic participation often differs. While the former tends to claim a decline (Barnhurst, 1998; Habermas, 2006; Putnam, 2002) the latter tends to observe a transformation (Castells, 2009; Dalton, 2008; Jenkins, 2006). Digital media provide widened opportunities for engagement by transforming the public to publics. They alter notions of the political and participation in it. By performing online environments as public spaces, users appropriate the digital to re-interpret what citizenship means (Jenkins et al., 2016). Despite the decline of traditional forms of political participation, such as voting or party membership, some scholars claim that alternative participation facilitated in and through the web reveals a turn from duty-based citizenship to civic engagement (Dalton, 2008, Mihailidis, 2014, Shumow, 2014). Principally, the citizen is perceived as a transforming social category, articulated in and through a variety of publics that correlate to cultural contingencies of everyday life. Grounded in a cultural approach, citizenship is recognized as a performed dimension of the self, constantly re-negotiated by sense-making agents (Burgess, 2007; Carpentier, 2011; Chouliaraki, 2010; Dahlgren, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Harley, 2010). Furthermore, the personalization and
convergence of media environments has led to increased interest in the cultivation of citizen identity in relation to other social identities (Bennett, 2012; Hartley 2010; Svensson, 2011).

One arena that potentially reveals such transforming citizen identity is the growing phenomenon of convergence festivals. These are large-scale events, curated as a meeting between diverse audiences and publics in pursuit of dialogue, inspiration and knowledge creation. A variety of genres, formats, participants and topics frames an ethos of diversity, promoting convergence, connectivity and collaboration as means for sustainable change. Convergence festivals gather sectors and spheres, lifestyles, skills and expertise – business meets state, science and the public. They constitute powerful networks of economic, social, and cultural reach. For some days, all constituents of society connect and the knowledge economy becomes tangible. The South by Southwest (SXSW) held annually in Austin, Texas, is presumably the most known example. In 2017, Gather, Stockholm’s first convergence festival was launched, hence providing a fruitful case and opportunity to investigate how citizen identity is designed in the context of convergence festivals. This should be relevant ground for studying civic cultures today.

1.2 Research Questions

The conductive research question of this thesis is: Based on the case of Gather, how is citizen identity, prompted through the articulation of civic culture, designed in the context of convergence festivals?

It entails the following sub-questions: How is civic culture embedded and developed in and through mediated texts of Gather? Which discourses do the semiotic resources materialize that shape civic culture as a socially constructed way of knowing and being?

1.3 The Thesis’ Objective

This thesis seeks to study the transforming social identity of the citizen, by examining how civic culture is articulated in media texts as resources for citizen identity. This aim is pursued by studying the designs of the convergence festival Gather. By applying the method of social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis, two semiotic units are examined: The Gather homepage and a promotion video released on social media.
The theoretical framework suggests that mediated texts are tracks and productions of civic culture in practice. Its sites, processes and designs shape civic knowledge and practice in their publicness, and in that they shape what dispositions become habituated as civic identities. Semiotic resources, including the discourses they entail are core elements of identity formation. The employed model of civic cultures (Dahlgren, 2009) suggests six interrelated dimensions in and through which civic identity evolves. The civic culture circuit is studied as multimodal discourse afforded by the designs of Gather. To investigate how the latent mediation of civic culture may transform into mediated, agentic citizenship, requires a methodology that grasps the interface between performativity of text and performance of citizenship. Social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis allows this distinction, yet linked in practice. It provides the means to research the relationship between discourse and the social.

Inspired by SXSW, “the modern and innovative inspiration conference and festival” Gather represents the phenomenon of convergence festivals. By denoting the methodological approach of one unit, a case study pursues to introduce new models and debates that contribute to the phenomenon’s exploration. This thesis intents to realize this task by aligning the study of convergence festivals with that of civic cultures. An entry to do so in a less bipolar and more intermediate fashion is to withdraw from normative claims. A more observant approach to citizenship reclaims democracy as a process requiring ongoing actualization. It realizes citizenship not as an autarkic system – healthy or ill, but as performance; a process of fluid boundaries engaged in a whole way of living. Finally, such approach highlights meaning, identity and practice. It explores citizenship as a subjective reality (re)produced in concrete settings by sense-making agents.

1.4 The Thesis’ Structure

The thesis is structured in seven chapters. The introduction includes the motivation and objective, the structure and the significance of this research.

The following chapter outlines citizenship as a concept of different powers related to norms of the political. A literature review of mediated citizenship consolidates the engaged citizen as a cultural phenomenon encountered in and through digital media. Finally, Gather is presented as the study case.

Chapter three deepens the phenomenon under research by providing an extended definition of convergence festivals, including its localization in previous research.
The fourth chapter explicates the theoretical framework of this thesis: The model of civic cultures (Dahlgren, 2009). Moreover, citizenship is discussed as a continuum of participatory practice (Carpentier, 2011).

The chapter on methodology explains and motivates social semiotics and social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis. Thereafter, the analytical procedure is presented, such as the advantages, limitations and justification of the employed method.

Chapter six presents the analysis and the results. It is divided into the field work and the analysis of each unit.

In the conclusion, the findings are critically discussed. For their potential as means of civic identity, they are argued to be a subject of wider political concern.

### 1.5 The Thesis’ Significance

As far as I am concerned, the joint study of convergence festivals and civic cultures is in itself a novelty. Evidently, the components appear remote. Yet, slightly abstracted they converge, exposing one of today’s unresolved controversies in media and communication research. Are new media technologies and the participatory practices they entail promising resources of democratization, or do they foster existing power structures and autocratic market-rule? Convergence festivals make this question tangible. They materialize convergence culture:

“Media convergence is an ongoing process, occurring at various intersections of media, technologies, industries, content and audiences. […] Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and in their social interactions with others […] extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we understand our everyday life. […] If old consumers were isolated individuals, the new consumers are more socially connected. If the work of media consumers was once silent and invisible, the new consumers are now noisy and public” (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 92, 28, 47).

Moderately, the above resonates a participatory discourse consolidating with web 2.0 and the status transitions new media afford. It conveys an idea about how a discourse of empowered consumers could evolve into a political paradigm of “participatory democratic utopia” entailing choice, voice, access and power redistribution as agents of citizen empowerment (Bennett, 2012; Couldry, 2010; Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013; Mihailidis, 2014). As “new participatory avenues for engagement, that allow for more vibrant communities to grow, flourish, and act as social change agents” social media are discussed as political facilitators (Mihailidis, 2014, p. 
The “relationship of citizens to mediated politics need no longer be restricted to sedentary interpretative sense making fare produced by professionals but […] may […] take the form of interventionist participation in communicative processes characterized by collective intelligence and collective creativity” (Jenkins in Schroeder, 2012, p. 188).

While some may, many interventions do not qualify as participatory-democratic; the political sense of the ‘floating signifier’ participation. To contribute to the democratization of democracy, participation needs to be articulated in relation to the democratic. “Participation culture needs a democratic culture” (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013, p. 269). Precisely that is what critics question as a capacity afforded by new media and social media in particular. Web 2.0 services cultivate what Foucault calls a “dual economy of freedom and constraint” (in: Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 227). In terms of power relations and decision-making processes, many sites that claim ‘community’ and participatory processes are in fact highly regulated, privately owned campaigns for individual self-expression.

“Web 2.0 sites assert ownership over what participants produce and set constraints on how this content can circulate (Terranova, 2000). […] Media produced as ‘gifts’ shared between participants becomes ‘user-generated content’ exploited for the profit of platform owners. Participants have no direct voice in governance and do not benefit from the site’s success except in intangible ways. Ultimately, they have limited power, collectively or individually […]” (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013, p. 273).

The appropriation of self-mediation by market forces supports ‘authentic’ articulations of “discourses of citizenship as recognition but also […] neoliberal discourses of consumerism” (Chouliaraki, 2010: 228). Finally, the control over discourses and genres of participation empowers to re- or unmake their meaning, as suggested by Jenkins who claims that participatory culture has partly become an empty signifier (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013, p. 266).

His restraint is crucial because, finally, convergence ‘really’ resolves as a dialectical relationship. Convergence media enable both: to partake in the creation of discourses, to empower agency, to act in solidarity and break the norm; and the commodification of the social. They reconcile the ‘democratization of technology’ with the ‘technologization of democracy’ (Chouliaraki, 2010). Convergence is an essentially contested, complex and agile concept. Effectively, no way can be declared that satisfies all (Jensen, 2010). This includes the phenomenon under research. Beyond being a practice, participation may be understood as “a set of expectations about what kind of social, cultural, economic, or political relationships might
emerge within a more participatory culture” (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013, p. 274). An innovation festival that lifts democracy, the human being and public space as central guidelines solidifies civic discourses and negotiates how they converge. Beyond materializing the expectation of participation Gather performs it. Portraying that relation in all its complexity is the purpose of this thesis.
2. Perspectives on Citizenship

The conceptualization of citizenship in relation to media has been continuously updated during the last decades (Heater 1990, p. 293; Schröder, 2012). A development that has increased over time is to understand citizenship as agency. It is indebted in transformations of political culture illustrating how the definition of citizenship and the civic is immediately intertwined with that of the political. In this thesis citizenship is framed based on a broad understanding of the political, as suggested by Mouffe (1999, p. 754):

By ‘the political’ I refer to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human society, antagonism that can take many forms and can emerge in diverse social relations. ‘Politics’ on the other hand, refers to the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that seek to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of the political.

In the following the civic is defined, as: “a prerequisite for the (democratically) political, a reservoir of the pre- or non-political potentiality that becomes actualized at particular moments when politics arises” (Dahlgren, 2003, p. 155).

The below sections serve to motivate this notion of citizenship firmly lodged in everyday life.

Each political theory on citizenship puts different emphasis on “the fact, in itself, that citizenship is anchored in the existence of constitutional political rights and freedoms, vis-à-vis the importance attached to richness of the actual participatory and deliberative practices of citizens in the exercise of those rights” (Schröder, 2012, p. 181). A liberal approach for instance conceives citizenship as a relationship between state and individual constituted primarily in legal terms. The classic liberal model suggests that the state exists to protect citizens’ freedom: “allowing them to pursue their own lives and happiness, without causing injuries for others” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 65). The central entity of this theory is the individual who pursues her interests and rights by rational choice. Liberalism, thus, differs from approaches that understand citizen as a (learned) process, and, arguably, takes for granted the quality of democratic agents. An alternative example is civic republicanism that, inspired by Rousseau’s social contract, sees citizenship as development by combining liberal aspects with communitarian ideals (Carpentier, 2011, p. 24 ff.). Public involvement is cherished as being of personal value and reward; “[t]he intrinsic value of political participation for the participants themselves” is emphasised (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994, p. 363). Within the context of pluralistic interests
the law is central, understood as limiting individual freedoms for securing shared, communal interests. Moreover, heterogeneity is thought as empowering: “the ideal of the common good, linked to the principle of universalism, must not undermine the recognition of difference” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 67).

Two major perspectives compete in conceptualizing citizenship; citizenship-as-legal-status, or full membership in a political community; and citizenship-as-activity, where the extent and quality of citizenship is a function of participation in that community (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994, p. 353). While the former resonates with the possession and exercise of political rights, institutional and structural arrangement of the political economy or politics understood in the traditional, formal sense; the latter highlights the idea of the sense-making subject by assessing and analysing modes of communication as resources for the political.

Due to its vision of citizenship as a realm of identity, agency and participation republicanism resonates with models of deliberative- and radical democracy. It ranks as particularly suitable for theorizing citizenship within the media/democracy nexus (Carpentier, 2011; Dahlgren, 2009).

Indebted to Habermas (1991) but meanwhile actualized, deliberative democracy sees sound citizenship as constituted by the collective participation in deliberative processes. Participation is rendered as deliberation; the key to grasp societal self-creation for securing reciprocity between citizens and democratic institutions (Dahlgren, 2009: 72). Though deliberative democracy galvanizes much of the reflections on new modes of participation, it is widely recognised as an abridged version of citizen interactivity (Dahlgren, 2009; Carpentier, 2011; Livingstone, 2005).

Radical democracy, a post-structuralist model developed by Mouffé and Laclau (1985/2001), distinguishes the political as defined above from politics as a formal, institutionalized arena of organized conflict. The field of democracy is radically extended by realizing the political as a dimension inherent to all human relations, resolving in the concept of ‘agonistic pluralism’ (Carpentier, 2011, p. 39). In societies with a foundation in shared democratic values and procedures, conflict is valued as resource and potential. Built into all social contexts, relations and interactions it must not be impeded, but stimulated as an ever-present potential between citizens as adversaries rather than enemies (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 99). As the ongoing political performance related to notions beyond the formal political realm, citizenship occupies a central role: “To expand the importance of citizenship, radical democracy seeks to put forward a conception of democracy as a way of life, a continual commitment not to a community or
state but to the political conceived as a constant challenge to the limits of politics” (Rasmussen and Brown, 2002, p. 175).

Deliberative and radical models are increasingly aligned in aiming to deepen the understanding for democratic practice beyond formal politics through a variety of participatory means (Karppinen, 2013, p. 10). Deliberation is realized as part of a participatory continuum that expands the political to discursive power ever-present in everyday life (Carpentier, 2011). Framed as interactive process, deliberation and participation are synthesized with the contingent performances that shape identity. In accordance to Mouffe, democratic universalism and civic quality are viewed as unfinished projects based on diversity. The negotiation of difference enters liminal domains that bend the private and the public; arenas of civic practice and learning beyond the formal political sphere. Rather than received as legal-status, citizenship is explored as achieved; a process of becoming (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 60 ff.). Such perspective allows “emphasis on the political and democratic culture, and the role played by identities, emotions, and discourses when analysing participation” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 88). Citizenship is perceived as civic agency, founded in civic identity and engaged in modes of varying participatory degrees.

2.1 Literature Review: Mediated Citizenship

The following provides guidelines for exploring how citizen identity and democratic participation are embedded in media. Media provide additional participatory spaces. They constitute arenas that host civic practice echoing the political dimensions of everyday life. Citizenship as a dimension of self, as civic identity and agency, resonates with the widened opportunities for production and participation facilitated in and through digital media. The ethos shared below is the effort to expand civic territory beyond ballot boxes into the personal, emotional realm.

Debates on mediated citizenship often reside at the relationship between public and private spheres. Accordingly, the distinction between audiences and publics is becoming blurry. Sonja Livingston who, together with Lunt (1994), introduced entertainment politics to citizenship research; explains that audiences and publics do not oppose each other although they remain two distinct analytical concepts. Despite the shrinking realm of unmediated publics, Livingstone emphasizes the relative independence of publics from mediation. Publics are defined by their involvement in social, not private activity; they are constituted by engagement
of social visibility and can hence exist beyond their mediated representation. Audiences, in turn, come into existence through media and evolve in relation to media forms. Nonetheless, the audience members are active, sense-making agents with political views. The private can indeed develop into the public, integrated by media that constitute these civic processes of coalescence. Livingstone argues for a view on audiences and publics as interconnected, yet distinguishable for “whether, when and how” their activities “constitute a form of cultural engagement that matters for the public” (2009, p. 36). This notion implies the evolution of one public sphere into a multitude of issue publics. Accordingly, Dahlgren describes it as an emergent array of interactional constellations (2009, p. 74). Engaged or active audiences identify through discursive interaction as communities, imagined communities that potentially perform themselves into publics through social practice (Carpentier, 2011, p. 65 ff.). Based on the genesis of collective identity within communities of media audiences, Dayan (2005) distinguishes meaning-making audiences from consumer audiences. However, both rely on a collective imagination of the community’s existence, ‘collective fictions’ determined by media and performed in and through them.

Bennett’s ‘era of personalization’ (2012, p. 21) feeds into the idea of identity being at the very centre of citizenship. It promotes the individual as the central catalyst for collective action via the mobilisation of her network (Kaun, 2016, p. 2). Due to social fragmentation and the decline of group-loyalty as late modern conditions, Bennett and Segerberg (2012) see ‘collective action’ progressively substituted by ‘connective action’: political engagement is increasingly organized across expressive individual- rather than collective action frames, namely via networks of digital media. Individuals are mobilized around “a rainbow of reasons to act” – a multitude of personal lifestyle values loosely joined under a discourse of inclusion and diversity, that they engage with in temporary, self-actualizing, de-hierarchical and adaptive ways (Bennett, 2012, p. 29). Rothstein suggests that civic agency “may nowadays have more to do with the individual’s deliberate creation of a specific lifestyle than with adherence to an established organized ideological collective” (2002, p. 310). Compared to duty-based civic practice ‘personalized’ politics and their participatory modes potentially resonate more immediately in people’s lifeworld. They alter, rather than oppose the organizational model of mobilisation via collective identity. In reference to Bennett, Svensson (2011) argues, that in late modern environments ‘expressive rationality’ as means of ‘identity management’ increasingly substitutes communicative rationality. Network sociability favours the formation of fluid online political communities, or issue publics as part of individuals’ efforts to create a coherent biographical narrative. In this model participation is largely dependent on users considering
online identities offered as meaningful or relevant. In other words, by participating users create together the contingent perspectives and identities with which they understand public issues. Citizenship is constituted by identification and self-creation online.

For their inability to bridge social divides personalized notions of mediated civic engagement are criticized (Putnam, 2002: 414). Bennett himself perceives their permeability as a condition that makes structural political change unlikely (2012, p. 36). Especially social media are of inherently individualist and temporary character, appropriating them for political purposes subverts the notion of the collective as a singular, unified, homogeneous and consistent unit of action (Couldry, 2012, p. 125; Kavada, 2016). With the use of social media resulting in vast corporate collections of personal data, some scholars disqualify social media as a source of civic potential (Dean, 2008). For fueling social commodification they are dismissed as a sites of “intense capitalist expansion” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 52).

As emphasized by Stolle and Micheletti (2013), consumers indeed pursue both: The exchange- and use value of commodities. They illustrate the compatibility of consumerism and citizenship, suggesting that citizenship can, in fact, emerge through consumption and commodity recontextualization. The term ‘citizen-consumer’ describes the potential of consumption as a social practice to create progressive social change: “Whereas governments and conventional political institutions might not be able or willing to adequately address various current global problems, some citizens invent and create new approaches and solutions to global-problem solving and take over responsibility themselves” (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013, p. 25). In an earlier volume Micheletti (2003) transfers consumption practice into political practice by explaining the potential political virtue of shopping as ‘individualized collective action’: As consumers ‘vote’ by buying what they personally consider to be right, e.g. fairtrade products, they influence more far-reaching policies of collective matter. This could be considered as a process of de-commodification which assists citizen-consumers in developing commitments, relationships and practices for their own and society’s sake.

Thinking citizenship as a contingent dimension of agency allows these more flexible accounts of consumerism as a mode of engagement, despite indisputable challenges posed by (symbolic) environments of commodification. In this regard, popular culture is often emphasized as a source of citizen identity formation and political participation through critical making (Burgess, 2007; Hartley, 1999, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Ratto and Boler, 2014). Hartley (1999) coined the term ‘do-it-yourself citizenship’ (DIY-citizenship) for describing active audiences that engage in civic learning and practice through the “transmodern teaching” of television (Hartley, 1999, p. 26). Television is used for representing and reflecting society and
politics while it simultaneously offers a space for political discussion and action as audiences interpret and respond: ‘democratainment’ means viewers that form political opinions on their own while talking about them with the ease of ‘just discussing TV’. Television provides an infinitive meaning repertoire of difference, cultural distinction and identities that individuals make use of in bottom-up, self-organized and informal ways. In the process of consumption of commercial pop culture, viewers engage in meanings that are beyond the time- and space bound commitments of their own life citizens (Hartley, 1999, p. 162 ff.). This constitutes so-called media citizens. Media citizens unfold and enact their civic identity “as producers of ‘imagined communities’ – and real associations – that cut across formal citizenship” (Hartley, 2010, p. 239).

New media changed the representational status of information. In line with Castells, Hartley adds the relationship between the individual and her network as significant dimension of citizenship. Web 2.0 based participatory culture entails opportunities for citizens to develop the skills and networks necessary for assuming active roles as innovative social interventionists. Articulated in and through the connective infrastructures of social media, DIY citizenship is enacted online constituting a myriad of self-organized individuals and groups who express their civic agency through a range of cultural practices. Hartley’s depiction of DIY citizenship as a “choice citizens make for themselves” (1999, p. 178) is actualized by Ratto and Boler as “[…] a twenty-first-century amalgamation of politics, culture, arts, and technology that in turn constitutes identities rooted in diverse making practices” (2014, p. 18). They emphasise the ‘critical-making’, that is practices of hoaxing, straddling, hacking, and DIY/DIT (do-it-together) -making, that reverse the hegemonic logic of technologies for social change.

Via the concept of ‘silly citizenship’ Hartley, moreover, exemplifies how making engenders civic identity as an evolving discursive practice (2010, p. 239). He introduces how children or teens, traditionally understood as non-citizens, constitute themselves as civic subjects by their unselfconscious association and effortless use of social media. Their civic identity is formed and enacted through ‘play’; comic or satiric remixes of mainstream media, that, by becoming shared and edited on social media, form part of the mediated political landscape. These informal, unconsidered practices of civic identity formation, he argues, make children “prime agents of change for citizenship” (Hartley, 2010, p. 233). They suggest to understand citizenship as the practices and experiences that constitute citizen identity; a relational identity that bends the private and the public. Different identity components relate to each other fluidly, in unconscious ways. Citizen identity is an implicit element of the reflexive self; expressed in multifaceted ways.
The gradual extension of citizenship theory up to the contemporary stage of ‘ubiquitous citizenship’ is explained by Schröder (2012). Based on reception research Schröder derives how the study of media and citizenship developed in five stages from a theory of hegemonic citizenship towards a theory of ubiquitous citizenship. Latter conceives media as inherent part of everyday life in and through which citizenship, that is civic identity and agency is often unconsciously expressed (Schröder, 2012, pp. 185, 189). As the diction suggests, this stage defines citizenship to be everywhere. It informs that “today’s media are the public sphere or a substantial and indispensable part of it” (Schröder, 2012, p. 190). A return to the beginning of this section indicates how a coherent analysis of civic identity can succeed despite its ubiquity. By analysing the resources people internalize to publicly engage, citizenship can be assessed as a distinct dimension of identity, evolving as a practice in relation to social and symbolic milieus: The mundane dimension of civic culture interconnects audiences and publics (Livingstone, 2005).

2.2 Gather

“Gather is a modern and innovative inspiration conference and festival with the ambition to create real change. The festival is held in Stockholm, September 13-16, 2017. Gather is all about connecting diverse minds, backgrounds, experiences, and ideas in talks, social gatherings, cultural events, and objective driven labs. We believe in the importance of collaboration, in creativity and in thinking differently” (“Gather”, 2017)

Taking place for the first time in 2017, Gather is Stockholm’s first convergence festival. It is structured by three components; the music festival, the conference and the labs: Gather Motivation Labs and Gather Solution Labs. In May 2017, the festival counts 46 confirmed participants, four locations and four formats. Together with the visitors, “artists, scholars, journalists, politicians, activists, philosophers, developers, scientists, inventors, and humanitarians” will “gather and create change” at Al Six, Kegelbanan, Trädgården and Nobelberget in Stockholm (“Gather”, 2017). The focus areas are democracy, human (vs. machine), city development, communication and economy. They will be explored along the central theme borders. The formats Gather Talks, Gather Social, Gather Culture and Gather Labs merge purpose because, according to the organizers, inspiration and innovation are best achieved via different means (“Gather”, 2017). Gather Talks includes discussions and panels and concerns the conference primarily. Gather Culture is a conglomerate of artistic events, next to live acts it contains performances, art exhibitions, films and clubs. The programme of Gather
Social includes yoga, outdoor activities and dinners because “innovation is driven by people that meet” (“Gather Labs”, 2017). One goal is to make this meeting versatile. Gather Labs is compromised of two initiatives that address different crowds. Nevertheless, they pursue the same goal, that is the ‘execution of ideas’ or realized innovation. The labs are open calls for applications inviting “anyone who believes they are onto something brilliant to join us and take the first step towards tangible change” (“Gather Labs”, 2017). All selected participants are rewarded with trainings provided from Adobe, EQT Ventures and FundedByMe, three of the four partners, completed by Atrium Ljungberg. Furthermore, they receive support in and through the labs. The Motivation Lab is tailored to private agents who are assisted in realizing an idea as innovation, supposedly regardless of the field (“Gather Labs”, 2017). Their support covers expert consultation, the development of a business plan, a pitch and a campaign. The participants go through a full product or service development cycle. Through leadership- and design methods participants engage in ‘a six-step innovation journey’ (“Gather Labs, 2017”). Several successful entrepreneurs, ambassadors, are employed consultants.

Gather Solution Labs recruit already existing “businesses, organizations and companies’ addressing a problem and using Gather to create a real solution, using a variety of innovation processes and the expertise of our innovation partners” (“Gather Labs”, 2017). For none of the labs selection criteria or the number of participants are published.

Finally, tickets are of substantial cost*. Startups and smaller companies may apply for a reduced price. Student and exclusive festival tickets exist in restricted amounts. While 200 tickets are available for visiting the festival only (not the conference), no more than 50 students ticket exist (“Gather”, 2017).

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* Tickets range from 4950 – 7450 SEK.
3. Convergence Festivals: A Definition

Convergence festivals will be studied as performances of transforming citizen identity. The following chapter provides a definition of the social phenomenon and informs the festival Gather as a representative case.

Civic agency and new media as its resource and domain remain embedded in the regulative regimes of the market and state. The dynamics of mediated citizenship pursue ambivalent discourses; transforming civic identity is a process of productive tension. “Crucial to [its] exploration is the interface between technologies of mediation that enable the public visibility of the ordinary, on the one hand, and the hybrid potential of democratization and control such visibility entails, on the other” (Chouliaraki, 2010: 227). In the following it will be argued that convergence festivals materialize this tension.

The term convergence festivals was coined by myself, confronted with the task to reconcile the radically extensive and perpetually growing number of formats, expertise, sectors, perspectives, topics, genres and philosophies represented – all of which increasingly converge. Gross’ and Brandon’s (2014) experience of the SXSW as “a huge and amorphous thing […] sort of like the internet itself” conveys an idea of the latitude convergence festivals meanwhile attain. SXSW is the most astonishing example of the scope and speed in which these “organizational mutants” grow in size, influence and power (Saillant, 2010; Turner, 2009).

Convergence festivals are the fusion of eventified (expert-) knowledge-sharing conferences and so-called transformational festivals (Perry, 2013). Both genres emerged in the United States in the mid-eighties echoing early digitalization, evolving creative industries and globalization. The prototype of a transformational festival is the Burning Man1, first taking place in 1986. TED was pioneering the (re)conceptualization of conferences, promoting ‘ideas worth spreading’ since 1984 (“TED”, 2017). By aligning particular aspects of transformational festivals with such of TED alike conferences, convergence festivals constitute their own genre, defined based on the outline of their carriers.

Transformational festivals are counterculture events, alluding both personal and cultural transformation through self-realization and an ethos of sustainability, sharing, co-creation, creative expression and community-building. “Despite their differences and specialties, all of these festivals share a unified goal of creating community, inspiring transformation, and

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1 Since its change into a non-profit organization in 2011 the festival was renamed ‘The Burning Man Project’ (Burning Man Timeline, 2017).
spreading positivity beyond the physical limits of each festival and its participants” (Perry, 2013). By incorporating all thinkable aspects of bohemian subculture that promote introspection, openness, and spiritual inspiration transformational festivals expand the invitation to celebrate and consume to sharing, making and healing. Among the more striking examples are the ten principles of Burning Man: Radical inclusion, self-expression, community cooperation, civic responsibility, gifting, decommodification, participation, immediacy and leaving no trace (as in waste) (“Burning Man”, 2017). The commitment to them makes festivalgoer’s perceive themselves as co-creators, as **Burners** not customers. Beyond Burning Man the participatory ethos prevails on many alike festivals, such as Wanderlust, AfrikaBurn and Fusion Festival. In the New York Times Julia Allison (2014) categorizes today’s transformational festivals as „an amalgamation of several cultural forces: the rise of electronic dance music, the maturing of the rave culture, the popularity of TED-like talks, the mainstreaming of yoga, and the YOLO spirit of festivalgoers who spread the word on social media”. Jeet-Kei Leung, a documentary filmmaker, who works with transformational festivals since years classifies them as “[…] a forward-thinking culture that is embracing social entrepreneurship, permaculture, spirituality, self-actualization and conscious living” (Allison, 2014). This conception corresponds with a commercial ambivalence of Burning Man, shining through the presentation as a “network of people […] united by the pursuit of a more creative and connected existence in the world” (“Burning Man”, 2017). Activities of the network include a global leadership conference, European leadership summits and the program area social enterprise (“Burning Man”, 2017; “Burning Man GLC”, 2017; “Burning Man Week Stockholm” 2017).

The reinvention of conferences into conference-happenings could be described as the cultivation of a drastically changing media ecology; from mass media towards the information society. Digital and mobile communication technologies changed the representational status of information. Originating in a media environment based on senders and receivers, digital media revolutionized the organizational dimensions of knowledge sharing and creation: from one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many, and all of that in both synchronous and asynchronous ways (Jensen, 2010, p. 71). Accordingly, regional and topical conference restrictions were superseded by an ethos of interdisciplinary knowledge-sharing, determined by the parameters of connectivity and spreadability. Conference formats manifest this shift, performing ‘talks’ rather than speeches, framing environments stimulating convergence of knowledge, sectors and participants. Events are customized to collaboration emerging as meetings in which ‘ideas’ (as innovations) are conceptualized jointly. Initially, the ‘communities’ or business networks
forming were tailored to the cultural industries, indicated by the founding father’s name TED – technology, entertainment, design. However, with the yearly extension of topics grew the reach of networks, nowadays “showcasing important ideas from any discipline, and exploring how they all connect” (“TED”, 2017). Although subjects could be divided roughly into business, technology, entertainment, governance, science, education, health and psychology; the variety of subfields is so comprehensive that gaps are exceptions (“TED”, 2017)². Furthermore, they increasingly merge, indeed intended as “attendees and speakers from vastly different fields can cross-fertilize and draw inspiration from unlikely places” (“TED”, 2017).

Finally, the new conferences proactively adopted a paradigmatic shift in cultural production: Increasingly, recipients transformed into active users, significantly involved in the selection, (e)valuation and sharing of information, producing their own content (Wünsch, 2016). Entertaining sections alternating with expert-talks and empathetic presentations – short inter-active storytelling – echoed the Zeitgeist. They pleased and fostered the public demand. Today, conferences promote ‘knowledge-recycling’ by providing users with livestreams or recordings of past event. ICT controversies, including data storage and privacy rights tend to be explicit part of the conference programme (“Re:publica”, 2017; “The Conference”, 2017).

Transformational festivals and this new type of conference share certain values. Both promote transformation, the sharing culture, community-building, co-creation and difference as resource for doing joint good. However, while transformational festivals embed them through cultural and artistic aspects, conferences pursue them via a professional context.

Convergence festivals reconcile these two approaches, by using an equation: To inspire to work. Therefore, the artistic and cultural aspects of transformational festivals are employed to inspire the professional context based on the topics and techniques of conferences like TED. “To make it possible for people to work with joy” (Radziwill and Benton, 2013, p. 8), spectacular exhibitions of various artistic genres are intertwined with the debate, the display, the making and the development of knowledge through innovation and latest technology.

Different modes of entertainment together with group activities that nudge interaction confer a sense of community and social values – meaningfulness – that enhances participants’ joy of work. Individual inspiration, leaning on the virtues of transformational festivals, engenders productivity. Nevertheless, are convergence festivals business events. Oriented at

² Obviously, a selection exists which suggests ideological orientation. A critical analysis of TED topics and fellows would be intriguing but a different project. A small thought experiment must suffice at this point: Slovoj Žižek never talked at TED.
idea generation, team formation, emergent leadership and innovation realisation, they pursue the full product development cycle compressed into the short period of the festival being (Radziwill and Benton, 2013, p. 8). The adaption of the context and spirit of transformational festivals entails their aura of social responsibility and cultural transformation. Its convergence with the professional, collaborative elements suggests the core intent to build responsible, sustainable and innovative future models and (social) enterprise. Today’s biggest convergence festival was also the first of its kind:

“The South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference & Festivals celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film, and music industries. Fostering creative and professional growth alike, SXSW is the premier destination for discovery” (“SXSW”, 2017).

Started in 1987, SXSW is unprecedented in influence and growth. It takes place annually in Austin, Texas, providing attendees with ten days of keynote panels, workshops, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking opportunities. While founded as a music and film festival, SXSW Interactive (media) was added in 1999. Nowadays, it registers more visitors than the other two together (Gross and Griggs, 2014). “SXSW proves that the most unexpected discoveries happen when diverse topics meet” (“SXSW”, 2017). Indeed, SXSW is famous for showcasing novelty: “SXSW is still where some of the digital world's smartest people come to talk about ideas that will guide agendas for years to come. It's where trends crystallize and where nascent startups take flight” (Gross and Griggs, 2014). Beyond awarding Twitter and thereby catapulting the brand’s global success, SXSW Interactive featured countless ‘digital stars’ including: the co-founders of Craigslist and Wikipedia, Marc Zuckerberg, Julien Assange and Edward Snowden (“SXSW”, 2017). At the “intersection of art, technology, inspiration and surprise” the category interactive media happens to include subsections as health, food, social impact and government (“SXSW”, 2017). Latter goes beyond the politics of online-privacy. In 2016 president Obama joined the discussion. However, according to a German journalist, Obama’s visit was disappointing: “Eventually, old power relations were confirmed. Even if not being resolved, they should be discussed at the festival. Regulations and laws must no longer be decided behind closed doors in Washington, but in a dialogue with the industry and in best case citizens and users. Proper engagement so to say” 3 (Kühl, 2016).

3 Translated from German to English.
Convergence festivals provide a timeline of the evolution from the cultural- to the creative industries. Surprisingly precise, they articulate the modus operandi of today’s global economy. The gradual transcendence of discourses cocooning the former cultural industries – a “shortlist of the arts and entertainment technologies” – embedded the association of the creative industries that emerged during the nineties with the Western myth of the genius artist. “Still represented by an essentially religious attitude to the operation of the mystery cultural [or creative] production is therefore defined as the expression of a transcendental genius [or talent] that is elevated both beyond the human and beyond analysis” (Fowler 1997, p. 46). In the global, knowledge-based economy, barriers to the reproduction of ideas and products have become rare. Individual talent and innovation – two productive elements of creativity, are crucial in an economy based on ideas. Accordingly, Bilton explains, the signified creativity morphed into an ambivalent economic term, meaning both a tendency towards talent-based innovation of the economy in total; and a “specific branch of [it], where ideas, images and individuals form the raw material for a burgeoning media and entertainment industry” (2007, p. 163). The inclusion of the software sector in the creative industries artificially inflated their economic significance. It aligned the arts with high-performance claims of the information society and because intellectual property is an integral part of all commodities “the creative economy has become virtually synonymous with the economy as a whole” (Bilton, 2007, p. 160). Innovation, generated through talented agents’ design and programming capabilities, became core to economic performance and set free a global flow of information and commodity exchange. In the knowledge economy, innovation has become the one remaining source of competitive advantage (Bilton, 2007, p. 168).

Bilton asserts that innovation requires contexts of collaboration and interdisciplinarity, because “ideas and products [...] are not simply the spontaneous outpourings of gifted individuals, [but] follow a complex evolution through interaction, diversity and adaption” (2007, p. 171)⁴. Convergence festivals cultivate genius through panels and favour the global circulation of goods. But above all, convergence festivals seem to have managed the innovation of innovation itself.

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⁴ Part of this section is cited from a former work: “Creativity as Meritocratic Motor” (2015).
3.1 Literature Review: Convergence Festivals

As the term convergence festival was devised by myself, studies of similar phenomena are found by means of different terms. Particularly transformational festivals are a popular research field of research, studied across disciplines as a social phenomenon of cultural and political implications (Chen, 2009; Gilmore, 2010; Hauptfleisch, 2007; Wünsch, 2016). The present contributions investigate cases bordering convergence festivals as defined above. While avoiding fatalism, they are critically explored as productive sites of economic and social evolution.

Fred Turner’s (2009) inquiry of the affinity between Google and the Burning Man appears as most obvious because it explores the festival as a cultural infrastructure for media production. The text is highly relevant for the study of civic culture because it reveals how discourses may engage powerful networks that entail enormous social and economic capital. As opposed to studies that empathise the DIY and sharing character of Burning Man (Gilmore, 2010), Turner (2009) dismantles the festival as an infrastructure that legitimizes and effectively drives Google’s productivity and prevailing corporate culture. Hereby, Google serves as an example of the business culture in Silicon Valley. Through archival work, interviews and field observation Turner’s presents how the ethos expressed in the Burning Man principles converges with Google management strategy: mutually reviving each other yearly in and through the reputed dedication to community and the ethos ‘don’t be evil’. The ‘transformational’ elements promoted at Burning Man – sociotechnical commons, participatory co-creation, creative experiment, self-expression – are also hypersocial manufacturing techniques, suggesting social value creation as individual performance. Google cultivates these techniques as productive methods for sparking digital innovation. Beyond this structural service, Burning Man provides ideological drive to a living model hypothetically based on meritocracy and common-based production. Stimulating, nurturing and maintaining that belief is essential in itself: For adding meaningfulness to otherwise undeniable norms of (self-) enrichment, user-exploitation and the tremendous accumulation of wealth and power, ideology is a productivity resource. Turner concludes by suggesting Burning Man as a potential factory of innovation, networks and ideology, producing an elite that depends on self-delusion (Turner, 2009).

Social scientist Nora Schulte-Römer (2013) turns to festivals that are less devoted to the production of reproducible artefacts than to the representation and presentation of novelty. Due to their fair character and cognitive overflow they emerge as the simultaneous and collaborative
consumption, production, positive recognition and valorization of innovation. The Transmediale, a Berlin-based festival for media art and digital culture serves as one of two empirical examples. Drawing on studies in science, technology and culture (STC) Schulte-Römer departs from the idea that appreciation for the new is a meaning-making process of valorization emerging in networks and through framings or an ‘investment in form’. The social-material setting of festivals highlighting openness, discovery and joint production together with ‘magical’, crafted appearance frame innovation as meaningful and valuable for all actors involved. Effectively, fair is employed in its double sense: Festivals like the Transmediale offer a fair space for the open, horizontal and simultaneous discovery, display and valorization of the new, “produced by performers, curators and audiences, and by innovators, intermediaries and consumers alike” (Schulte-Römer, 2013, p. 151). This openness marking the festival situations allows for overflowing encounters with the new. The overflows become manifest in spectators’ reactions or interpretations, that, in turn, make innovation because a stage reserved to producers no longer exists: “The fair space of the festival provides the arena that counts and allows for the simultaneous production and consumption of the new” (Schulte-Römer, 2013, p. 160).

Novelty-fascination is enabled by an ethos of openness produced through aesthetic overflow and the convergence of heterogeneous groups of participants. The surprising, emergent and stimulating side-effects this includes may contribute to innovation-making for sparking creativity and invention. Hence, “festival goers profit from the festival experience and their encounters with the new as they form opinions and new ideas, but so do producers, artists and mediators who create and present their work at festivals” (Schulte-Römer, 2013, p. 154).

Based on urban studies Weller (2013) examines the L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival as an example for hybrids that combine the celebratory ethos of local festivals with the economic value creation of marketing events and the network functions of trade events. For linking entertainment and open sales, Weller too, assigns them the status of a fair, however explicitly referring to former commodity fairs. Drawing on Lefebvre, she defines space as a generative process. For combining spatial affordances of capitalist production and emergent, practiced space created through human activity, Weller calls the festival “an inherently spatialized form of participatory economy” (2013, p. 285). Orienting at Terranova’s “Producing Culture for the Digital Economy” (2000), the participatory economy is explained as an economic system to harness the free labor of dedicated knowledge communities. The festival’s value creation is found in the integration of joy and work, including volunteer work, that regenerates both the social and physical public spaces because of the way participants perceive and experience commodities. The notion of the participation economy explains how spaces of
enjoyment fold into spaces of capitalist accumulation; how the “events create spaces dedicated to the production of surplus value, but also and simultaneously produce spaces of celebration, community and enjoyment” (Weller, 2013, p. 2857). Finally, Weller concludes that in the context of the new commodity fairs, monetary value generation maintained by cultural mobilization resolves as a contradiction: While the festivals “harness the emotions of festivity for commercial ends, they also produce the city, reconfigure its industries and reconstruct its public spaces” (Weller, 2013, p. 2853). The transformation of public space through ‘participatory’ workings of modern capitalism is far from partial.
4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Civic Cultures as Continuum

The civic was defined as encompassing the broad terrain of the public realm on which politics and the political eventually arise (cf. Dahlgren, 2009, p. 58). The involvement of an individual in public life emerges out of civic agency, that is the circumstantially contingent initiative citizens take themselves due to realizing themselves as citizen. In other words, civic agency is practice through which social actors reproduce, reorganize or challenge the status quo: It is the “capacity to make a difference” (Giddens, 1984, p. 14), as in acting on political, economic and social structures to promote social change (cf. Kaun, 2016, p. 2). The foundation for this capacity is to be aware of it – civic identity: “people’s subjective view of themselves as members or participants of democracy” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 118). Civic identity is not simply given but contingently evolves in relation to meaning-making, practice and the symbolic milieu of everyday life. This notion adds the dimension of composite identity as a key concept in citizenship theory. The self as a reflexive project unites multiple identities in response to the social forces of everyday life (Giddens, 1991). Different sets of knowledge, assumptions, roles and discourses constitute a sense of belonging in specific contexts. Civic agency, hence, requires particular experiences and skills which develop and perform anchored along relational, yet distinguishable dimensions of everyday life. “[A]gency, involving the capacity to make decisions and act in accordance with a coherent sense of self, or identity, can never emerge in a vacuum; it must be an integrated and dynamic part of a larger cultural environment that has relevance for politics” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 102 f.).

With the civic cultures model, Dahlgren (2003, 2009) developed an analytical framework that demarcates relevant conditions that constitute civic cultures as a constant process of contextual interplay. The model explores citizenship as a dimension of the self. By integrating citizenship into a larger context of cultural patterns in which civic identity and the foundations of civic agency are embedded in, emphasis lies on the process of becoming a citizen. While the term civic has been explained, culture will forthcoming be understood as a way of living. It provides behavioural orientation at a contingent and unnoticed level in everyday life. Identity is shaped and reshaped in response to the sociocultural currents in an ongoing process. While on the one hand being a structured ‘taken-for-granted’ domain, culture is a structuring variable on the other. Hence, civic identity and agency relate dialectically to civic cultures whose
potential encompasses both: preservation and transformation. Eventually, culture can be defined as transitional patterns of communication, practices and meaning, that as internalized and intersubjective resources of orientation suggest patterns of doing and thinking. Culture is a state of process that operate on the level of the everyday lifeworld. It is context-bound and contingent. Investigating civic cultures highlights those cultural patterns that serve as a precondition for people’s participation in public spheres (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 104). Citizens and civic cultures condition each other: “For citizens the ongoing development of civic cultures can be seen as collectively generated resources to be used when politics and the political arise” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 106).

Because civic cultures are integrated into everyday life they encompass an array of factors connected to social- and institutionalized power structures. Among them, contemporary media ecology seems particularly relevant, both for its rearranging powers and its own evolving state. Dahlgren’s model provides a framework for analysing civic cultures in relation to the media by differentiating between six relevant dimensions, or conditions of mutual reciprocity: knowledge, values, trust, practice, space, identity. While the model allows to empirically map the conditions in a schematic and circumstantial way, they become productive intertwined. Citizens can affiliate to several civic cultures that are defined by varying emphasis and infliction. While their diversity becomes evident by means of their dimensions, their common base is a minimum of shared democratic commitment (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 108 ff.).

Beyond being the very focus of this thesis, civic identity is the centrepiece of civic cultures (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 119) as it functions to link them to a sense of agency that engages people to participate in the public. The perception of the self as a member of democracy is not produced subjectively but relational and practice-based. As mentioned, citizen identity compromises but one part of an individual’s identity, which moreover “tend[s] to reside at the fringes of people’s self-conception” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 125). It is often neither consciously experienced, nor verbally expressed. Instead, it is cultivated through the engagement with semiotic resources. The goal of this thesis is to analyse how citizen identity is prompted through two semiotic resources designed by Gather, including the discourses they entail. Two dimensions of civic identity can be distinguished; the individual notion of feeling empowered as a civic agent, and a sense of belonging to a shared civic commonality; the affiliation to a (political) community (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 121). Citizen identity poses the key interest of this thesis; the dimensions of civic knowledge, values, trust, spaces and practiced will be analysed as its conditions of mutual reciprocity.
Potentially the most obvious resource for citizenship is a base of civic knowledge. Knowledge stretches beyond the state of pure information by becoming appropriated; made sense of in relation to personal experience. Information becomes meaningful by citizens interactively integrating it into their own referential frames. Knowledge is therefore discursive, contingent and circumstantial. Media play an indispensable role in knowledge generation, dissemination, organization and negotiation. Access to knowledge is immediately intertwined with access to different media, as suggested by the term literacy. The ability to make sense of acquired knowledge works accordingly. Among the prime aspects for classifying mediated civic knowledge are the constellation of actors who disseminate it, the learning climate created, and the manifestation of information itself.

“The civic values can function as taken-for-granted background horizons that can give meaning to the political world and its events; yet they can also be thematised, invoked rhetorically, and debated” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 124). As mentioned, civic cultures are based on a minimum agreement on democratic values. They provide the common communicative culture that serves as a fundament for pluralistic antagonism. They can be explicitly expressed or implicitly referred to. Civic values are anchored in everyday life, their naturalized status is institutionalized to varying degrees; stretching from law institutions to the design of communicative setting. These frames organize how values are performed. They inform about patterns of dominance, emphases, and sanction mechanisms that, for their part, potentially insinuate ideological character (Dahlgren, 2003, p. 156).

The dimension of trust is constitutional for citizenship and democracy, working along different axes. The most obvious relation concerns the citizen-subject trusting the state-object. Interpersonal trust is the relationship between citizens. It becomes especially relevant in terms of civic identity, not least in relation to new media having myriad effects on social capital. Social capital, that is social networks and the norms of reciprocity associated with them (Putnam, 2002, p. 3). It is a form of social connectivity, productive both on an individual and social level, for shaping the integration of networks into politics (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 113). As trust facilitates (civic) identities in relation to the social, it is a condition for civic participation. Naturally, there is a scaling of trust. Among other things, it relates to the heterogeneity of a group. Putnam proposes a continuum from thick to thin trust, corresponding to the degree of familiarity with the addressee. Thin trust, the “expectation of reciprocity that we accord to people we don’t know […] becomes the salient mode for the loose bonds and network relationships of civic participation” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 122 f.). In this regard, the notion of ‘network society’ becomes relevant as these bonds and networks are constantly expanding in
and through new media. The term subsumes how digital technologies became prime organizers of society. Trust and social capital are increasingly established in and through digital networks which complement and replace face-to-face communication and mass media as traditional pillars of civic organisation (van Dijk, 2012). Castells argues that, because relationships of production, power, and experience are increasingly organized around networks, “power in the network society is communication power” (2009, p. 53). Civic cultures provide a framework to investigate how networks emerge as civic spaces.

Civic spaces provide communicative access and action frames for citizen-encounters. They perform the “accessibility of viable public spheres in the life-worlds of citizens” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 115). These domains, in which citizens jointly develop the political, increasingly emerge online. Physical and virtual civic spaces are, however, often linked, and new media include the ability to maintain social networks across vast spaces. The connections between these spheres need to be investigated, not least in relation to constituting space as private, public or something liminal between (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 124). As explained, civic spaces are increasingly shaped as networks (Castells, 2009). Access to them is, hence, a key subject. The changed relationship between citizens and media, from clearly marked by boundaries towards convergence, could in itself be regarded a generic civic (cyber)space. However, the participation in such surroundings requires civic knowledge and skill.

Participation is practice, that is learned experience. Engaging in practice contributes to skill and has an empowering effect. Agents generate personal and social meaning through practice-based experience. Identities are constructed corresponding to them. Civic skill is developed through interactive, pre-political and routine everyday life practice. Recurring civic practices relevant in concrete settings, finally constitute democracy. Civic practices are an inherent and contingent element of all other civic cultures dimensions. For their expressive capacity, they may, however, be most immediately linked to civic identity. Civic skills traditionally include communicative and social skill. While new media empower new civic practices and spaces, they also demand new competences. Identifying, researching, analysing, and not least, connecting issues of engagement becomes increasingly important. The analytical, organizational and rhetoric capacities necessary to develop networks of issue lattices, entail the question of literacy required to participate (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 117). Which practices and competencies are advocated how is of interest regarding the connected norms and sanctions. Initiated action frames and their response suggest different levels of empowerment and intent. Finally, such emphasis may inform ideological potential: “In this practical perspective of the
pursuit, cultivation and advocacy of issues, ideologies become the ‘connecting tissues’ cementing networks and coalitions engaged” (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 117).

Participation could be described as democracy’s principle practice. It is inherently political because it captures power relations manifest in struggles over decision-making in all social spheres. Nevertheless, it involves varying intensities. In his examination of media and participation as a site of ideological-democratic struggle, Carpentier (2011) defines democratic participation as a continuum between minimalist and maximalist poles that determine if and how citizens participate. It is oriented at five key categories opposing degrees of representation vs. participation, unidirectional vs. multidirectional participation, micro-levelled vs. macro-levelled participation, heterogeneity vs. homogeneity and finally consensus-orientation vs. conflict-orientation. These systems of difference are informed by the definition of the political because participation is structured through institutional, legal and cultural logics (Carpentier, 2011, pp. 28, 16). While a minimalist notion corresponds with spheres of formal democracy, maximalist modes of participation resonate with less normative and schemed dimensions of the political. Declaring the personal as political, maximalist notions see daily participatory practices as constituents of institutionalized politics. The relevance of participatory practice is found in itself, for providing individuals with opportunities to influence their surroundings and thereby contributing to a strong participatory culture. Because it facilitates to schematize participation in a synergetic way, Carpentier’s continuum enriches the analytical inventory: Processes of civic identification cohere with the design of communicative frames. The “genesis of participation” is the “political-ideological, communicative-cultural, and communicative-structural context” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 23).
5. Methodology

To repeat swiftly, this thesis explores the transforming social identity of the citizen. Based on the case of Gather, it asks: How is citizen identity, prompted through the articulation of civic culture, designed in the context of convergence festivals? The research question that entails are: How is civic culture embedded and developed in and through mediated texts of Gather and which discourses do the semiotic resources materialize that shape civic culture as a socially constructed way of knowing and being?

5.1 A Social Semiotic Approach to Multimodal Communication

Social semiotics examines communication as the use of communicative means to accomplish the communicator’s interest: meaning-transferal in a specific social situation. Modes do not signify due to their specific code but as an overall ‘grammar’ of social and cultural imprint; they signify due to their cultural and material affordances that entail apt choices for accomplishing interest. People orchestrate meaning through the selection, combination and the design of modes. Meaning becomes message as a sign-complex, interpreted according to interest, experience and the social environment. Meaning-making is an ongoing process of purpose-driven semiotic work adapted to social encounters: the production, dissemination, interpretation and transformation of semiotic resources. These bear culturally specific meaning potential: “It is the social which generates the cultural and, in that, the semiotic. Cultural resources being meaningful are semiotic resources” (Kress, 2010, p. 14). There is no meaning without its ‘framing’ (Kress, 2010).

The term ‘semiotic resource’ highlights that signs are not fixed. They are constantly (re)made in their realization and materialization in and through modes of communication, including their selection, combination and arrangement in certain contexts. Modes as semiotic resources possess regularities through their use. For according representational means to what people do with them, modes are culturally made. “This is fundamentally important, since semiotic systems shape social relations and society itself” (Mavers, 2017). Modal choice, combination and configuration is political. It requires a rhetorical approach (Kress, 2010).

A multimodal model of communication meets it by taking agency and cultural imprint into uncompromising account: Its core, the concepts of ‘rhetor’ and ‘interpreter’ features communicators as political and prospective producers of their identities and worlds (Kress,
2010). The model is motivated in communicative conditions; multimodality, unpredictability and environmental instability. These circumstances require semiotic resourcefulness, embodied in design (Kress, 2010: 26). It asserts that “individuals act in communication, prompted by and in a social environment, with social-cultural resources” (Kress, 2010, p. 35). The process is divided between the rhetor, the designer (often the same person) and the interpreter. Communication unfolds as cycles of interpretation, representation and rhetoric. The stages complement each other. Communication is joint, reciprocal sign-making. There is no communication, without interpretation (Kress, 2010, p. 44). The segmentation is theoretical. In practice the stages are instants and the roles liminal. Rhetor labels the sign maker of the message that initiates a sequence and becomes the ground for an interpretation. She does the ‘ground work’, providing the sign-complex that serves as a base for interaction; the message. For doing so she assesses all aspects of the communicative situation: her interest, the audience, the semiotic requirement of the issue, resources available for apt representation and the best dissemination means. The other sign-complex is resulting from the interpreter’s selection of an element from the message and its framing as prompt according to her interest; she interprets or transforms the prompt by her own means. Prompts are elicitors of interaction, they correspond with social and personal experience. Interpretation hence features the semiotic ground or prompt initiated by the rhetor and its framing with the resources brought by the interpreter (Kress, 2010, p. 35 ff.). Meaning is made twice: inwardly productive (interpreted) and outwardly productive (realized/materialized sign making) Interpretation can entail the making of a new, outwardly productive new sign-complex (Kress, 2010, p. 108).

Rhetoric sign-complex: Stage 1

Sign-complex (based on interest, sense for the audience and context characteristics) \(\rightarrow\) message intended as prompt \(\rightarrow\) audience attention and engagement with message \(\rightarrow\) potential response

Interpretative sign-complex: Stage 2

Message \(\rightarrow\) interest \(\rightarrow\) attention \(\rightarrow\) engagement \(\rightarrow\) selection \(\rightarrow\) framing \(\rightarrow\) transformation \(\rightarrow\) new (inner) sign \(\rightarrow\) potential new sign-complex making

Rhetor and interpreter have different interests. While the interpreter’s interest lies in critical selection and framing, the rhetor strives to disseminate her message, enticing the interpretation of a particular audience. This interest is linked to power. Rhetoric is a skill or capacity employed to reach interest: “[S]emiotic work of interaction is always socially productive, projecting and
proposing possibilities of social and semiotic forms, entities and processes which reorient, refocus, and go beyond, by extending and transforming what there was before” (Kress, 2010, p. 34). The relation to politics as the regulation of social circumstances by means of power is evident5. An interpreted prompt results out of a sign-complex, that is a meaning though form(s). Design is the process of materializing the politically oriented interest of the rhetor. In full awareness of the available resources’ potential, the designer ‘translates’ her assessment of the situation into semiotically shaped material (Kress, 2010, p. 108). Designs shape representations for their production and dissemination. Often, rhetor and designer are one and the same. Nonetheless, their roles differ. While rhetoric is oriented politically, design is a semiotic task; “to mediate that what is communicated with the resources and characteristics of the audience” (Kress, 2010, p. 49). Design centres around the apt modal choice and arrangement as means of realizing an individual’s interest in the world. The world is addressed by producing and disseminating messages prone to review, comment and recontextualization. This positioning is generative and agentive. It differs from communication anchored in convention. Design is knowledge production on sites of appearances and dissemination; it is an intent to affect the future rather than the past. Design is prospective. Rhetors design the world by semiotic work (Kress, 2010, p. 27).

Aware of the communicative situation, the audiences and the modal affordances available rhetors design and produce the world they address. This implies a serious shift in how knowledge is produced. “Makers of representations are shapers of knowledge” (Kress, 2010, p. 27). Meaning is produced in use; the skill to arrange modes as meaning resources which afford agency through cultural imprint. Semiotic work shapes what is engaged with, the processes of engagement and, as a result, social and individual dispositions or concepts. It links the individual and the cultural though practice, knowledge and identity.

The productive tension between the cultural imprints of semiotic resources and the rhetor’s agency in her apt modal choice, is where the epistemological potential of social semiotics solidifies for the analysis of civic cultures and identity: By identifying and inventorizing the semiotic resources available and relating them to purposeful choice in particular contexts, conclusions about the socio-cultural context and the identity of its agents can be drawn (see Fig. 1).

5 The name ‘rhetor’ is itself a rhetorical choice. The making of meanings is political. Rhetoric is as much the art as the politics of communication (Kress, 2010: 44 ff.).
5.2 Social Semiotic Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis is based in a social semiotic theory of communication. Semiotics or Semiology, that is the “science that studies the life of signs in society” (Sassure in van Leeuwen, 2005: 3). ‘Semeion’ (Greek), the sign, is its fundamental entity and theoretical concept. During the late nineteenth century Ferdinand de Saussure’s developed a semiotic inventory that remains seminal in its principles. Its core idea is that meaning is interactively made through messages consisting of signs that are structured in grammar. In Saussure’s terms a sign is the arbitrary conjunction between a signifier; a form, and a signified, the meaning. For its role in constituting intersubjective reality, language, both verbal and written, was treated widely as the prime resource for semiotic research. With the concepts of denotation and connotation Roland Barthes (1977) widened this linguistic legacy. His rejection of communication as a linear process, contextualizes Stuart Hall’s (1980) adaption of the semiotic inventory to unmask misconceptions of coded (mass) communication. To an extent their work embeds the trajectory of social semiotic as an enquiry of communication as multimodal, context-based signifying practice.

Theoretically, methodologically and analytically the word ‘discourse’ is used to describe different approaches; e.g. linguistic or idea-historical ones. This thesis is framed as a social
semitic multimodal discourse analysis, which draws on a methodological inventory of multimodal semiotics and builds on the theory of discourse being a productive recontextualization of practice (van Leeuwen, 2008). Rather than approaching discourse in linguistic terms; as the “extended stretch of connected speech and writing”, discourse is understood as social cognition; the “socially constructed knowledge of some social practice” developed in and according to specific social contexts (Foucault in van Leeuwen, 2008). Discursive tensions, e.g. between participatory and neoliberal discourses of citizenship outlined in this thesis’ significance, are not textual, but evidence of social struggle and competition between empowering and regulative dimensions of agency. Discourse as institutionally produced knowledge is met as a social category for the social origins and the social effects of power that discourse has on social practice (Jewitt, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, Kress and van Leeuwen establish discourses as “socially constructed knowledges (of some aspects of reality) […] developed in specific social contexts, in ways which are appropriate to the interests of social actors in these contexts […]” (2001, p. 4). The present concern is to examine civic culture as discourse, respectively how it is articulated; articulation being the “practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Mouffe and Laclau in Carpentier, 2011, p. 176).

As a particularly structured semiotic resource, discourse articulates meaning which is altered by the process of articulation in and through the structures itself. As the “material site of emergence of immaterial discourse(s)” (Kress, 2011, p. 35) texts are traces of those involved, which can be read in terms of their interest, their purpose and response. Texts materialize articulations. As distinct entities, they are an essential category of discourse analysis. Sociolinguistics research the textual ‘traces’ power relations leave in language, using critical discourse analysis to scrutinize this process through the study of the link between (environment of) language in use and features of the used language (Kress, 2011, p. 35). Critical discourse analysis is used as a tool to gain knowledge about social and cultural contexts inscribed to the ‘code’ or grammar of language: “The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of how language works and why it works in such a way” (Gee 2010, p. 9).

The metaphor ‘text’ suggests that different threads are interweaved to transfer meaning coherently. Multimodal discourse analysis commits to this metaphor fully, by asserting that meaning is made through a multimodal ensemble of signs beyond language (Kress, 2011). ‘Language’ or grammar outreaches the written or verbal word as ‘mode’; each mode of communication is available through cultural imprint, more or less appropriately used in a specific situation due to its affordances in materializing meaning. In fact, language is a key
aspect of multimodal discourse analysis, but as embedded within a wider semiotic frame (Jewitt, 2014, p. 2).

Multimodality from a social semiotic point of view adds the enquiry of apt modal choice to critical discourse analysis, including its arrangement or design as generative for coherent and prospective meaning-(re)making. Modes can be understood as an outcome of the cultural shaping of meaning. They are resources whereby meaning is made material, shaped by the daily social interaction of people in context (Kress, 2010). As discussed above, these changes contribute to the recognition of agency as representational texture; weaving together the potentialities of culture and communication as change potential for a prospective social. Discourse participants are recognized as affective and interest-driven: Thereby, social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis moves against the “seductiveness of twentieth-century generalizations and abstractions (in much of linguistics for instance) toward a full account of the impact of humans […]” (Kress, 2011, p. 46).

5.3 Material Collection

The analysis was divided into three consecutive steps. A participatory field observation served to establish and embed the semiotic resources analysed. In a second step these resources’ articulations and configurations were collected and inventorized in a multimodal analysis. Finally, the insights from both previous steps were integrated into a social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis, by feeding the data into a rhetoric model and examining how the semiotic resources articulate civic culture.

The intermediate stages of the research design enabled a structured approach to the tenuous enquiry of how civic culture as discourse prompt and embed citizen identity.

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*Table 1: Research material*
5.4 First-Step Analysis: Participatory Field Observation

Step one of the analysis consisted of visiting and evaluating the first Gather Session that provided a map of orientation in search of the rhetorical intentions and the according design. The visit was held as a background study to inquire why, for whom and in which ways Gather is taking place.

![Gather Session: Email invitation](image)

**Figure 2: Gather Session: Email invitation**

Gather Sessions are a series of events that introduce Gather to a selected amount of people. It could be considered a prime prompt for the Gather audience to emerge as a future public. The invitation was sent via private email, requiring a newsletter sign-up. Moreover, visitors had to reserve one of few cost-free ticket, signalling that those present responded immediately, showing key interest in Gather. As the first Gather Session, emphasis lied on explaining the festival’s structure, purpose and goal. The session appeared as a Gather preview; in a highly staged environment the audience was given “a taste of Gather Festival 2017” by “inspirational talks and performances” and a live act (see Fig. 2). Thus, the formats were much alike those of the festival; Gather Talks, Gather Culture and Gather Social. Moreover, three of the festivals key speakers, prepared interactive presentations. Thus, the session served as ideal ground for a
pre- or background study pursuing to contextualize for whom the festival is made, how it is motivated and which topics and formats will dominate.

The founder of Gather, opened the session with a speech explaining why Gather is needed and how it will work. He is also the CEO and founder of a Stockholm-based communication agency with a strong profile in event marketing and branding through popular culture as well as the founder of the night club and cultural centre Underbron’/”Trädgården, co-founder of the annual music festival Way out West in Gothenburg and chairman of Refugees Welcome Stockholm. The founder embodies the role of the rhetor most generically. He has an interest in communicating Gather based on his assessment of the political situation he is part of, the audience characteristics and the context of Gather. However, the role includes others as well, such as the key speakers that presented themselves as much as the festival.

The field work was conducted in a semi-open way as the founder and parts of the audience were familiar with the research project, while other participants were not. After a personal introduction, the founder was aware of the ongoing investigation, which was participatory as in being fully involved in all activities. The setting was informal. Due to the location, its staging and the programme, visitors interacted at ease. The session’s design, both in terms of dramaturgic build-up and presentation, served as favourable means for studying rhetorical priorities, as the conversation on significant subjects in the context of Gather was led by its makers themselves. Furthermore, the casual- and afterward mingle setting encouraged audience participation and prompted the rhetors to deliberate their view regarding the festival’s context, aim and purpose. The overall comfort and conversational ease allowed the observation of field-internal dynamics, topics and metaphors.

The main objective was to collect a stock of background information that would facilitate, narrow and legitimize the integrated analysis by considering the rhetorical conceptions of the audience and the festival’s environment. Subsequently, they would serve to embed the communicational environments, modes and means of dissemination chosen to engage. With the prime goal to introduce and structure the second analytical step, the field work fulfilled a double function: First, the findings provided the criteria for selecting the material. Secondly, the multimodal discourse analysis departed from the communicated festival motivations, its purpose and aim. As it disrupted the immediacy between the material and its interpretation, the observational anchor both structured and legitimizes the following. Eventually, the first-step analysis was employed to avoid fatalism or blissful ideals. Convergence festivals are a complex phenomenon. Its portrayal, including its contradictions, requires a critical but respectful and not least hopeful approach. Such “is a very necessary intellectual strategy for the understanding of
social realities, and, in the long run, one that supports the participatory democratic utopia” (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013, p. 267).

5.5 Material Choice: Gather Promotion Video and Gather Homepage

The field work served to embed the development of analytical criteria that, in turn, determined the choice of the semiotic resources for the following analytical step. These criteria were: Aim, purpose and motivation. They resolved in the decisive criteria reach.

During the Gather Session, the purpose of the festival became clear: actually realized (social) innovations. To guarantee that as far as possible, Gather Motivation Labs and Gather Solution Labs were emphasised. Latter address innovative problem-solving within companies, business and organizations that already exist, Gather Motivation Lab addresses anyone who wants to realize an idea. Motivated by interdisciplinary and the promotion of social inclusion, the aim is to include applicants both from inside and outside the established innovation industry. Reach, thus, became the determining variable for choosing the texts. It is rather likely that Gather Solution Labs attracted industry-internal applications whose owners are part of the wider network of those directly involved. Hence, they are prone to having followed the launch of Gather Festival from the very beginning, as, corresponding to the aim mentioned above, the communicational reach of Gather was divided from the start.

Among the first appearance of Gather was a promotion video functioning as a teaser released on Facebook in December 2016. Obviously, this video only reached active Facebook users, but beyond that it circulated within a particular network of people either being ‘friends’
with Gather makers or implicit part of their algorithmic reach. Those who subsequently searched for Gather found a relatively blank homepage prompting them to sign-up with name, email and company to receive further information. Presumably, these sign-ups were the first components of the newsletter which still serves to reserve particular information to a selected audience group. Because the promotion video represents potentially the first significant prompt sent to this group, it was chosen to be the first text of analysis.

Based on the reach-criteria, the Gather homepage is the second semiotic resource selected. The selection is logical because the homepage constitutes the prime meaning resource for anyone who is not informed through more exclusive channels nor affiliates with the prone sectors and the networks they operate. Given the announced motivations and aim, the homepage is selected for being the most radically available unit. It provides a digital interface to the future Gather public, least restricted because it reaches interpreters beyond social media.

5.6 Second-Step Analysis: Multimodal Analysis

While the first analytical step was employed to localize Gather as a rhetorical interface, the second step pursued to examine its modes as semiotic interface.

Modes are used by the designer to make knowledge material, meaning evident. They are relational semiotic resources, chosen and composed for their modal affordances. The term affordance refers to the qualities of a mode that enable and suggest a certain way of expression and representation. Multimodal analysis highlights the material, it evaluates how affect and cognition coincide. The ‘bodilyness’ of those who make and remake signs is considered productive part of purposeful design. The purposeful choice of modes, according to interest and situational assessment, is called aptness.

Both semiotic resources were examined as an ensemble of apt choices based on modal affordances and their combination. Accordingly, each of the resources was transcribed into multimodal data which facilitated to collect, document and inventorize the modal affordances and their combination. The results served as a base for the integrated, final analysis.

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6 Gather Sessions serves as an example of both; the communicational design and its rhetorical interest; the reach of a ‘privy’, industry-internal group.

7 Further also referred to intra- and inter-modal affordances.
5.7 Third-Step Analysis: Social Semiotic Multimodal Discourse Analysis

In the third and last step, the insights from the previous analyses embedded an integrated social semiotic analysis of civic culture as multimodal discourse. The multimodal analysis of each text was transferred into the analysis of the meaning-transferal as a design of civic culture that prompts citizen identity.

As aptness means the purposeful choice of modes according the designer’s assessment of the situational requirements, messages are products of aptness. Aptness shapes the characteristics of prompts which are interpreted in response. Modal choices that embody aptness were applied as means to derive rhetorical interest from each semiotic text. Their design shapes a coherent message that was analysed regarding the discourses entailed. Beyond the opportunity to re-contextualize the insights from the field work, this step allowed to consider reactions to the texts (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4: A social semiotic model of civic meaning-making
5.8 Advantages, Disadvantages and Limitations of the Chosen Method

Social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis was selected as the research method because it appears to be the most effective means for answering the research question and achieving the research goal.

Beyond being a method, social semiotic multimodal analysis entails a perspective on communication that highlights the significance of agency in context, within a prospective framework. As such, the method corresponds with the employed theory that highlights civic culture as process. The advantage of a theory-affine method is that it facilitates analytical focus in terms of the material’s theoretical grounding and theory building. Multimodal texts are intricate, dense ensembles of semiotic resources. Their analysis may encourage descriptive surplus that extends the clear outline of the inspective goal and the making explicit of questions it seeks to answer (Jewitt, 2014, p. 29). By suggesting clear boundaries in an otherwise infinite pool of meaning-potential, the close link between method and theory is a precondition for countering deflection.

Besides theory-choice and implementation, social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis inevitably relies on the subjectivity of the researcher in text interpretation. Nevertheless, researchers are accountable for an impartial and fact-based examination. As many object the overall existence of objectivity, certain techniques support minimizing bias and reduce the never completely avoidable risk of missing certain aspects. Among them is the mediation of precise and transparent analytical tools that provide readers with means to find evidence for the presented conclusions (Paltridge, 2006). In this thesis, the model of social semiotic meaning-making serves as an example. Additional aid in epistemology-driven interpretation lies in the deliberate filtering of material through the perspective of those investigated. As the emphasis on context-motivated sign-making is relatively high in social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis, participant involvement, e.g. through the Gather Session, is increasingly popular in multimodal analysis (Jewitt, 2014, p. 39). For introducing scholars to the aspects of contexts they examine but may not yet be acquainted with, e.g. language, perception, thought and appreciation schemes, they serve as disruptions between the material and its immediate classification. The incorporation of purposes established by others supports the extraction of ‘secure’ analytical meanings from matters as contextual, fluid and flexible as semiotic resources (Jewitt, 2014, p. 29).

A disadvantage of the chosen method lies in multimodality being a comparatively young research field showing gaps in the methodological and procedural inventory (Jewitt, 2014, p.
Social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis is time and labour extensive. For its consistent complexity, the analysis of mode ensembles could at times be overwhelming. The degree of initiative researchers take in filling such gaps depends on their experience and confidence. Even so, contributing to the establishment if not development of an emerging research field is above all engaging, rather than discouraging.

Furthermore, the researcher’s position as in- or outsider requires comment. The circumstance that a non-Swedish author is conducting a study on civic culture in Sweden could be regarded as both adverse and beneficial. The potential to miss peculiarities that insiders may notice exists. However, presumably, outsiders are more sensitive towards what appears as natural\textsuperscript{8}. Besides, convergence festivals address international- rather than strictly local crowds\textsuperscript{9}. Despite each festival’s embedding in a generic civic culture, their designs likely include widely accessible meaning potentials.

Finally, an advantage of the chosen method is that audience reactions potentially form part of the analysis. However, regarding the interpreter response, ideally this analysis would have been conducted closer to the physical festival. Presumably, participants interact more actively once an event is immanent. Long- and medium-term engagement is typically assumed by the event designers. Taking latter together with the aspects that this research investigates only one case, the findings may not suffice for effective generalizations. As social semiotics focuses on sign-making in specific environments and occasions, the transferal of insights is – in any case, only possible to limited extent. Furthermore, this work was explicitly framed as explorative. Rather than to generalize one view in particular, it aims to inventorize a more contextual approach.

5.9 Justification of the Chosen Method

This thesis evolves around civic practices that may appear unorthodox at first. As discussed above, expressions of civic identity and agency are of crucially different shape today than they were before. Motivated by a changed media environment, the availability of discursive participation is growing by means of reach and form. Silly citizenship (Hartley, 2010) demonstrates how those not yet of age can and do communicate themselves as citizens, engaging beyond formal political discussion: their civic expression neither creates a direct link

\textsuperscript{8} Arguably, common sense is the most effective ideological work of discourse.

\textsuperscript{9} Intentionally, as the wide use of English suggests.
to politics nor do they necessarily discuss. In other word; most teens do not write debate articles. While some might, others may comment or respond to such articles by uploading a (potentially ironic) gif, a video or a snap. Extended participation enabled through digital media includes the extension of modes. Digital authorship breaks with language as the dominant semiotic domain.

A social semiotic multimodal perspective provides the means to meet such development. By embedding analytical contexts beyond the written word, a multimodal enquiry provides researchers with the opportunity to break with established power relations and discover agency where it may not be expected. This thesis pursues challenging the approach towards citizenship as foremost carried out by duty. The methodological choice corresponds with its intention to promote citizenship as a contingent, cultural practice negotiated through competing agencies in everyday life.

The search for transforming citizen identity embedded in a cultural approach corresponds with relational identity, contingently evolving in correspondence with social. Identity contingency lifts subjectivity, agency and participation. It highlights the individuals’ role in the making of their identity, by “working with the building blocks available within the social, (re)articulating and performing them, struggling against them and adapting them” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 178). Textual meaning is performative, bringing into being the identities it seeks to name (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 229). Social semiotic multimodal analysis is a means to accredit that, presently by examining how citizen identity is prompted through the designs of Gather.
6. Analysis

6.1. Results of the Participatory Observation

To repeat swiftly; the participatory field observation at the Gather Session provided an orientation regarding the purpose, the aim and the motivations of Gather and embed the following analysis. The following is an outline of the event and presents the conclusions drawn.

![Interactive presentation, Gather Session](image)

*Figure 5: Interactive presentation, Gather Session*

From beginning to end, the three-hour long session was structured and staged as an exceptional experience – an overflow – marked by openness and the unexpected encounter of the new (Schulte-Römer, 2013). Approximately forty visitors were driven to the unpublished event venue in a touring bus that raised expectations. The location itself was rather spectacular: the underground halls of the company Atlas Copco, one of Sweden’s oldest engineering companies. After crossing a gloomy tunnel exhibiting illuminated tools and compressor rooms, the crowd reached a demounted open space ‘crafted’ as a cinema. A movie screen separated the room in two, one of them being furnished with red cinema seats. Provided with popcorn and earplugs, the visitors sat down accompanied by a booming sound, suggesting either a heartbeat or the regular collision of a hammer meeting mine. The average participant was fashionable and mid-thirty. Many knew each other. The atmosphere was relaxed and curious. After an interactive intro that made participants act ‘to question’, ‘to collaborate’ and ‘to think differently’ (see, Fig. 5) the festival founder welcomed the audience in a casual and familiar manner, motivating and embedding Gather\textsuperscript{10}. He was followed by Skype- and onsite

\textsuperscript{10} The session was held in Swedish.
presentations, which interactively outlined the festival’s purpose and means. Far from formal, professional expertise was shared almost privately, as if speaking to friends. The session phased out with a mingle that included the opportunity to consult the organizers, refreshments and a life act. After circa thirty minutes the visitors were taken back to the initial meeting point.

The session certainly echoed Schulte-Römer’s remarks on fair spaces, characterized by “an openness that is facilitated by their specific socio-material settings and interactions of heterogeneous groups of participants and technical artefacts” (2013, p. 160). Furthermore, a spirit of collaborative making was evoked, as the participation ethic expressed in the invitation was maintained through the presentation techniques. By fusing social and professional interaction, the audience’s sense of a social unit was evoked, devoted to co-create the project Gather (Turner, 2009: 85).

The purpose and aim of Gather were explicitly expressed during the speeches. Gather was presented as a festival “for those actually working with change”\textsuperscript{11}, a “community space for making business enjoyable”, with emphasis on “actual effects” (presumably realized innovations). A note implying that, eventually joy is what makes all the hard-work meaningful, recalls Turner’s suggestion of convergence festivals as ‘safe-spaces’, in which Creatives celebrate the ideals of collaborative and creative peer-production, despite all contradictions that entails (2009, p. 81). In reference to Skype and Spotify the purpose of producing innovation was highlighted as a means towards global, environmental and societal problem-solving. That the pursue of innovation equalled that of social innovation was handled as implicit premise, an unspoken requirement, apparently common sense. Two speeches motivated and explained the distinct formats of Gather Labs; communicating the aim to make ground fertile for innovation within connected industries, and outside of them, opening a context of meritocracy. It remained blurred which industries were meant exactly. To avoid the segregation of society and sectors was informed as both shared interest and responsibly – eventually, interdisciplinarity is a core resource for innovation (Brown, 2009). Gather Motivation Labs were introduced as a democratic platform for anyone to realize their ideas, regardless of the area these would concern. The priority of the speaker was to create a “mötesplats”, a meeting place. Highlighted as a space that would provide particularly socially disadvantaged individuals with opportunities to fulfil their ideas, an ethos of empowerment embedded the speech. For their tendency to stand out, the mentoring of those usually unseen is a powerful, innovative resource. To think differently is a condition for finding the new. Thus, Gather Motivation Labs would feed back

\textsuperscript{11} Translated from Swedish to English.
into society, operating a form of “social recycling”. A visitor’s question, how the aim for diversity corresponds to the homogeneity of the present group was answered after initial difficulties to understand what she meant. Admittedly, a more diverse public was described as desired and a core future challenge – indeed considered but unresolved yet. An apology, that this year’s festival was just the beginning, a first “attempt” with room for improvement, received large audience support. It seemed as if the actors “reimagine[d] themselves collectively as autonomous creators and restore[d] to their labour […] the sense of social value” (Turner, 2009, p. 188).

A professor for innovation technique at Mälardalen University¹² introduced Gather Solution Labs as a method to solve problems. He explained the connotation of innovation and ideas as misleading because, above all, innovation relates to finding problems and their resolution. Drastically tightened, iterative processes based on interdisciplinary collaboration significantly increase the probability to realize innovations. Hence, within Gather Solution Labs two Innovation Races will take place: one is centred on city development, one on democracy. The topical choice illustrates the advocacy of innovation as a social investment. My question, how social innovation can be scaled, was answered by a broad definition of innovation; “a novelty that reaches the market.”

6.2 Results of the Multimodal Analysis: Gather Promotion Video

This section presents the analytical results drawn from a multimodal analysis of the chosen research material. The applied transcription technique allowed to approach both the intra- and intermodal affordances of each text, that is “describing the ways in which modes interact together in different circumstances, and in different combinations but also describing how different modes are constituted, and the differential function of their constituents in different sites of representational activity” (Jewitt, 2014, p. 46). The findings will be presented by discussing relevant affordances of the single modes first, followed by those of the mode ensembles. Together with the participatory observation they constitute the base for the final analysis. By asking why the semiotic resources found are designed in a particular way, they are embedded as discourses that relate the context of Gather to civic culture.

¹² He is also an acclaimed entrepreneur and a TEDx speaker (“Youtube: TEDx, 2013).
The video analysed was among the very first online appearances of Gather. It was the third upload on Facebook and the second on Instagram. In terms of likes and shares it is the post that most resonated on social media (“Gather Facebook”, 2017; “Gather Instagram”, 2017). First published nine month before the actual event\textsuperscript{13}, it functioned as a teaser that introduced Gather and encouraged curiosity among the potential festival public. The video is thirteen seconds long and presents Gather auspiciously through a list of verbs culminating in the festival’s key data: “Participate. Enjoy. Question. Collaborate. And think different. Gather Stockholm, 13 – 16.9.2017”. An invisible narrator speaks the words parallelly to their display. Her voice is mechanical, matching the instable picture that alternates between the words and a virtual space\textsuperscript{15th December 2016}

\textsuperscript{13} 15\textsuperscript{th} of December 2016
The transcription of the visual effect included the aspects of the editing, montage and camera perspective of pictures. The high-pace montage of images partly moving themselves establishes a transitory but infinite space the interpreter is part of. The movement of the net-animation remains potentiality: Unclear if lifting or lowering the interpreter is stripped of her orientation, left with the sense of dissolving into a soft, virtual and living space. Constituted by tight and regular meshes, the net is the all-encompassing connection of nodes, solidified at certain junctions and resiliently yielding into an invisible force. It seems to be breathing; at times organic, then again intense, accelerated by cuts evoking a too quickened pulse. Shots of black and white introduce the night as a motive. Strobe-effects merge into skyscrapers, round edges transform a mirror ball into an urban globe. In split seconds the nightscape alternates with the net: The matrix becomes more manifests. Time and space seem to compete. The logics of time and space crucially organize meaning making. Certain modes are more effective in transporting meaning over time (e.g. moving picture), others succeed in mediating knowledge across space (e.g. the written word) (Kress, 2010). The video’s visual effects combine both modes into a space-time as there is a sequence in time through the movement and the background as a still space. This evokes an experience so close to reality that the interpreter immerses with what is being displayed. Despite all difficulty to locate the self, the interpreter
embodies the comprehensive intensity mediated. She experiences herself as central, having the mandate to re-orientate, here and now. A sense of urgency is growing: time is pressing the night is short.

Figure 8: Gather promotion video: Colour

The colour spectrum is reduced to the complementary colours of red and green and black and white. Complementary colours are applied for the simultaneous stimulation of cognition and affect. In swift succession, they can cause optical reinforcement or colour dissolution. Their effective arrangement entails that the interpreter’s experience shifts rapidly between disorientation and moments of intense focus. The complementary alternation hence establishes a state of liminality. The interpreter is adrift, yet in a state of alert. The alarming colours almost overstress her eye. Red, conventionally used to indicate emergency, meets a neon-green less traceable for its contextual variation. Due to its natural presence green signifies growth, emergence, freshness. The green used is, however, quite unnatural. For its capacity to stand out from almost any background the colour seems to glow. In countless (pop-)cultural references it indexes poison, burning whatever it touches\(^\text{14}\) (Breaking Bad 2008; The Wire 2002). A whole genre codifying the applied green is Sci-Fi (Star Wars, 1999; The Matrix 1999) appropriating only parts of the original signified: as a source for future growth nature is replaced by culture; intellect and the artificial are catalysing the new. In contrast to the accelerated sequences of changing green and red, black puts the senses on hold. It has a grounding, instantly calming effect. Although black is also complemented by white seeming light, the viewer’s eyes can rest. Hence, black as the predominant background colour makes the viewer feel safe albeit her disorientation. Eventually, the final black surface contributes to an experience of arrival.

\(^{14}\) Radioactivity in specific.
Written word is used as a resource for pooling meaning. It establishes a space-time set in the present and integrates the viewer into a process that designates change. Speech is based on the logic of time for being organized in sequences. In turn, the written words links time and space by appearing as image; simultaneously present elements arranged in one frame, while signifying as a sequence as well: it is spatially displayed while leaning on the speech logic of time (Kress, 2010, p. 81 f.). Despite its disruption, the framing of displayed words creates a surface; the link between word and picture. The spatial logic of image becomes equally adapted. Therefore, the written word in the video affords the interpreter’s localization in the here and now. Placed at eye level it captures the attention. Her conscious focus is set on just one signifier. The unadorned graphic design, bold capital letters in a fond comparatively free of décor, is a signifier of intensity; directly accessible. The words are reduced. One result, the affordance to immediately make sense, cause the interpreter’s cognitive emergence with the text. Beyond feeling addressed she feels part of it. She experiences the verbs as literal prompts; “participate”, “enjoy”, “question”, “collaborate” and “gather” are instructions more than anything else. Beyond their present tense, they signify actualized process; doing or interacting with others at present. Hence the written word establishes change as actionable principle. Even to reach stability, as the format of flickering frames suggests.

Written and verbal language are mainly synchronized in the video. By leading the interpreter through them, the speaker indeed seems to bridge all modes. The faceless voice directs the words with consistent pace and certainty, an English speech act between narration and command. Who speaks remains unclear. Neither certainly human, nor clearly machine, the depersonalized determination of the vocal quality suggests a female agent. However, the directed intonation and insularity of spoken units resembles points of orientation, remaining clear despite all influence. To that effect, gender seems irrelevant. Through her guidance and
certainty, the agent is selected as the interpreter’s partner. Aware of the interferences she fears to lose contact.

The impossibility to clearly identify the agent as human or machine is due to a soundscape that integrates the video’s route. The audio configures a frenetic journey, a search driven by an acute lack of time. Reverberant, high and echoing noises collide into a multi-layered variety of mechanical, stubbornly interfering pitches: the ongoing search for a frequency of secure contact. Associations of a ‘Werk’ or factory arise, of production process moving forward in and through countless technologies. The unmistakable noise of wireless transfer alternates with the consistently interrupted but conjuring vocals. Thereby, the audio conditions the existence of alternating spheres, while, simultaneously, it denies them a clear distinction. Instead, it establishes and supports the in between, a meeting of the virtual and real, instable but of productive friction. However, the overlapping layers and rhythms also create a roaring, almost threatening sound-space whose adaptive narrowness seems to tighten the interpreter’s leeway. Like a spiral, it seems to accelerate in correspondence to surrounding factors out of sight. At its peak a light, ambient sound arises that thwarts the auditory grip. Finally, the interpreter is released into a single soft, light and planar sound. She has arrived.

The evaluation shows a potent constellation of semiotic resources. The composed inventory constitutes a mode ensemble in which meanings are produced through the inter-relationship between and within the inventoried data sets. Literally and metaphorically, they allow the researcher to ‘zoom in’ on fine grained details and pan out again, to permit a broader, socially and culturally situated perspective (Jewitt, 2014, p. 49).

![Gather promotion video](image)

**Figure 10:** Gather promotion video

The modal density and a spectacular speed of intermodal configuration, combination and translation result in what could be described as a receptive state of frantic stagnation. The perpetual movements on multiple levels, the comprehensive stimuli of sensory perception,
motion, sound, the voice conjuring her with words of presence, amount into alarming immediacy immersing the interpreter into the text. The flickering, the overload, the optical tricks deny a clear identification of space. What withstands, however, is her feeling part of a process localized in between the softly moving net-animation and its potential trigger, the pulsing, at times threatening void. Both constituted and obscured by the idea of a diffuse night-and cityscape, the void manifests a sense of liminality, suggesting that, finally, there is no either or: Virtual and real, nature and culture, human and technology are two sides of one coin, mutually effective, mimicries of the other. It’s all a matter of perspective, the video seems to suggest. The perspective, however, remains unstable, effectively fostering search as a principle and the unknown as potential. The varying depths and levels play the interpreter’s sense of orientation, in her time-travel she consistently feels a step behind. The suffocating powers of the accelerating sounds indicate she is losing time. Although adding to the sense of urgency the interpreter finds comfort in the agent’s words. Next to their concreteness, they mean she is not alone. By following the instructions, she might escape the threat and fuse what belongs together.

Her mission becomes to stabilize contact. Out there is a community that participates, enjoys, questions and thinks different. To gather means unity, safety and arrival.

6.3 Results of the Social Semiotic Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Gather Promotion Video

The concluding analysis consists of evaluating the modal inventories of each text as sign complexes that mediate discourses constitutive for civic culture in the context of Gather. Which discourses became material in and through the textual design will be examined regarding their function for civic culture. Finally, the analysis discusses the articulation of civic culture in the context of Gather as resources of citizen identity.

To repeat swiftly: Social semiotics departs from the rhetor’s interest to disseminate messages that entice the interpretation of a particular audience. Currently, the rhetorical interest lies in the audience’s identification and self-creation as a future public. It is motivated as a resource for the identification of and with an imagined community, that, by discursive interaction, performs into a public by visiting Gather (Livingstone, 2005). As discussed, the video was among the very first public prompts, reserved to a selected audience group. The video is a text of significance because of this particular reach. Its design is crucial for the mediation of the rhetor’s interest. Beyond interpretation, the design pursues to trigger its interpreters’
agency. Based on the assessment of the audience and its members’ characteristics, it becomes a valuable resource for extracting the discourses it makes material, as those meanings that viewers presumably resonate with most. The multimodal analysis of the promotion video allowed to extract the latent meaning potential concealed in modes and their configuration. Deciphered, they are discourse.

Above all, change is the leitmotiv; it is the narrative frame embedding all other discourses to identify (with). The entire formal and literal language presents change as both medium and means in and through which discourses emerge. These can be categorized as alarm, transition, network, action and the city globe.

Alarm refers to the mediated urgency and pressure of time that suggests external forces and threat, an implicit reference to climate change. The omnipresent green that contrasts the obscure city-scape and the experienced immersion in a breathing organism, combines the logics of accelerated time with that of space. The space alternates between a green, harmonic virtual environment and a megacity by night. In direct comparison, latter appears dark, manmade and potentially threatening. Simultaneously, the interpreter experiences acceleration and increasing pressure of time. The mode ensemble suggests the interpreter to have a choice between the healthy and resilient space or an urbanized globe of darkness. In case she chooses harmony, she needs to act fast. Beyond this connotation, it is never explicit why change is needed in relation to what. The object of participating, enjoying or thinking differently remains veiled. Without a concrete object the words are empty signifiers. ‘To gather’ appears as a resolution because it integrates all other activities as an umbrella term. As it remains blank why to gather, the interpreter is prompted to fill in the answer herself; in relation to her overall sense of alarm and the cryptic connotation of climate change. Acceleration, hence, appears paradox, both intimidating – a race against time, and productive – the only way forward. The meaning potentials of search and production promote change as the solution to unite the alternating levels and thereby create harmony. Both implicitly and explicitly the interpreter is briefed to act now. She is instructed to engage in practices conventionally associated with the civic; as to participate and question and in the rather consumer-oriented practice to enjoy. Indicated by a mere fraction of a pause, to collaborate and to think different are added as meaningful hybrids naming a once political but increasingly corporate signified. The text effectively nominates the interpreter as a change agent, optionally co-worker, as she is immersed both cognitively and emotionally. By traversing the meaning of Gather and climate change her agency is embedded; becoming a prompt for the initiative to realize herself as a citizen by visiting Gather. Hence, Gather is established as a civic space of convergence, transitioning from virtual into a physical civic.
space. By providing users with communicative access and action frames for encounters as citizens, but also as professionals and consumers, the imagined community produced constitutes citizenship as something liminal in between private and public spheres (Dahlgren, 2009, p. 124).

Transition is another discourse constituted in and through the multimodal design. Again, change is the underlying principle, productive as the sign complex of ‘process’. The interpreter is established as an agentive part of it, co-working the connection between present and future. This transition, it seems, can only succeed by establishing contact. Through contact the chaos of the present can be followed by a more stable, a sustainable future. Networking becomes a technique for significant impact: A civic practice for reaching change. The media citizen is addressed by the obvious pastiche of the Matrix (1999): “If only you woke up. You need to act now”, it seems to say, casting the hero as ‘Neo’, ‘the One’.

As the liminal space bridging the tempi, the network signifies both the transition towards and the manifestation of future growth and harmony. As resource for sustainability and civic participation technology is promoted as a civic value. The network is a sign of discursive potency. Besides the signified transition and futurism, its shape manifests the networked society. The even connection of individual nodes becomes an all-encompassing (societal) organism. The equal distribution and horizontal connection of nodes constitutes strength, it inherently secures the networks agility and resilience. Mediated as an organizer of the democratic, sustainable and global society, the network is engaged as a sign for equality, accessibility, decentralization and horizontality. These are civic values that entice identification and trust. Trust that is transferred to technology, appearing both neutral and alive. Naturally as it seems, it connects the private and the public.

The narrative of change is framed as actionable. As mentioned, the interpreter is prompted to take initiative, but not without guidance as the female suggests. The agent, partner, guardian or leader entails various meanings. Next to contributing to the naturalization and neutralization of technology, the voice norms leadership as female. The choice to cast a woman as pilot-like instructor crystallizes representational power as both reference and constituent of civic knowledge, identity and values. Eventually, she could be identified as ‘Trinity’, another quote of the Matrix (1999). Trinity is a gifted hacker who first contacts and supports Neo. Again, this meaning potential entices the interpreter as ‘the One’ decisive force. She is designed as the catalyst for action. Her agency is lifted and embedded to interactive activities. Her goal is to secure contact in a constantly self-actualizing environment by participating, questioning, enjoying, collaborating and thinking differently. To gather is introduced as an integrating
action-frame that connects the interpreter and her mandate to others. Embedded in meanings that edge climate change, threat, sustainability and action as impact, to gather is advocated as a civic practice, an engagement that, as the equivalent to networking in virtual space, leads to needed changes in the ‘real’ world. As the very cause for change remains latent, to gather simultaneously retains a clever ambiguity that embeds the diverse identities, interests and issues mentioned as compatible. Civic agency and identity fluidly resonate with other parameters of the daily. At least partly, they are mobilized around personal lifestyle values. The video fosters the assertions that connected action is trending engagement. Interpreters are mobilized along personal action frames, loosely joint under universal discourses that enable the alignment of civic knowledge and values with their corporate equivalent. Such alignment effectively initiates an exchange of value: The use value of civic agency is transferred to agency overall and the exchange value of e.g. entrepreneurial agency is induced to civic agency and action. Entrepreneurship serves as a prompt for citizen identity. Engagement corresponds with personal agency that is empowered through a strong network. Civic engagement is personalized, established an integrated, self-actualizing part of everyday life.

The pulsating globe that makes the virtual a reality appears as a pastiche of McLuhan’s famous global village (1962/2002). While adopting much of the signified, the village appears as a city, in fact, a sustainable city. Again, the network is a central signifier for linking the civic discourse of sustainability to connection despite distance. It claims that the city seen is global if changing perspective. Thus, the engagement of a global network paves the way for reaching the calm and sustainable state the virtual sphere suggests. Again, the interpreter is appointed to act: to alter prospect into prognosis. The reference to the global impact of climate change and the equally shared, global interest and responsibility to act upon it, exemplify how the video simultaneously empowers and permeates civic values as universal. English as written and spoken language fosters diversity as natural and needed, the capacity to understand becomes civic knowledge and skill. Beyond the literal understanding, a cosmopolitan ease in handling the other appears as required for meaningful exchange. Latter advocates inclusion promoted by verbs: To participate, question, enjoy, collaborate and think different are process-driven, open-ended and accessible words that stimulate agency as there is no way to fail. For the lack of an object – think different from what? – they naturalize as values rather than isolated acts. To reach sustainability, it suggests, requires to join forces; it entails a political, as much as cultural and technological debate. Dissent is embedded rather than denied. In fact, ongoing interferences establish friction as a productive driver. Hence, all criteria of maximal participation are represented. Heterogeneity and difference are embraced as natural, and, much in line with
pluralistic antagonism, friction is valorized as means to effectively reach change. The mediation of the interpreter as both citizen and beyond naturalizes the private as political. Micro-levelled and multidirectional participation are advocated beyond the civic dimension as universal values for progress. Participation is assigned “a more powerful and continuous role, which potentially coincides with citizen empowerment” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 23).

Potential coincidence is the core of civic culture as mediated by the text. As it suggests agency, deliberation, and maximal participation as means for general or global, progressive change, citizenship is mediated as a dimension of identity that integrates dispositions of work, technology and culture into a liberal value set. While citizen identity is empowered on the one hand, it loses contour on the other: The naturalization of technology contributes to a vanishing definition of what is private or public, social or professional, rendering corporate incentives as social engagement. Beyond being created online, citizenship is perpetually actualized and commercially embedded online. In terms of how to reach political change, the audience indeed seems to think differently: Superseding the citizen-consumer, the video addresses the citizen-produser; a user who converges her civic self-creation with an overall investment of self-efficacy. By investing her agency and ideas she co-creates the social, commodity-based but approximate to her values and ideas. Finally, the civic agent performs the centre stage of the mediated civic culture.

The manifest reactions show that interpreters identify as such, as they clearly select the intended prompts. It is striking that a text which promotes networking as a civic practice, is outwardly re-acted to by 31 Shares and one comment consisting of another person’s tag. The 106 received Likes also resonate the rhetorical success. The video effectively initiated communication. By means of newly made sign-complexes the audience emerges as an issue public, re- or rather co-creating the civic meanings made.

6.4 Results of the Multimodal Analysis: Gather Homepage

Gather’s website is hosted by the Swedish content management system Confetti that is specialized on events (“Confetti Events”, 2017). The domain was acquired in September 2015, and the latest update took place in March 2017 (“Whois”, 2017). On the top of Gather’s homepage, a menu offers navigation between the relevant items. Gather Labs is a different site and domain, the pages Location, Partners and Contact are not on the frontpage, yet on the main site. In turn, the sections What is Gather, Participants, Tickets are what Knox (2014) calls the
editorial face of the website, the home- or frontpage. Presented in a long page layout it serves as entry points for users. “From an infinite informational world [they] carve out familiar group interests and identities in concentrated visual space” (Fishman and Marvin in Knox, 2014, p. 442). Organized in five sections, the homepage will be analysed top down.

**Figure 1:** Gather homepage: Heading section

The heading section is a visual intro to Gather, embedding what follows as the interpreter scrolls down. The interpreter is suggested an overview of the festival as the section size, defined by colour and the visual motive, is customized to fill the screen. The visualization constitutes the middle ground and shows a graphic meeting of green, pipes or wires. Its edges are cut, suggesting that the interpreter sees only part of a bigger picture. What it is that the wires connect remains out of sight. The association of a node arises. Black lines of consistent thickness compose an even shade, solidifying into edges that give the wires varying depth and physicality. A meeting space is created suggesting room to explore. The interpreter is met on eye-level. Rather than immersing with the space she gazes into it. The limitation to insight is supported by the underlying logic of space: all elements of the picture are simultaneously present and relate to each other, arranged in one framed surface. This arrangement in one space becomes a principle means for signifying (Kress, 2010, p. 81). The regular pattern and the consistency of the lines maintain an overall coherent impression, despite the layering of look-alike wires on top of each other. Nonetheless, the lines’ varying density results in a puzzling effect of doubting
if what is seen is two or three dimensional. Finally, missing shadows prevent a 3D effect. However blurry, the space created remains two dimensional. In fact, duality emerges as organizing principle both in terms of colour and content. The top frames placed at the left and right corner establish a binary structure that, although less strictly is kept by the frames below. Frames create the section’s visual rationale. Their arrangement structures the information provided. Overlapping the wires, two groups of frames constitute the centre: the left one listing speakers, the right one musicians. While the left frames are coloured in the wires’ background green, the right ones are pink. Clearly demarcated from the wires, the musicians are the focus. The colouring suggests the interpreter to read the frames as lists, each consisting of five top down frames. This logic is, however, interrupted by the first ‘musicians’ frame’, that is placed centrally and serves as a bridge of content and form suggesting horizontality. This abeyance further adds to the difficulty of clear distinction between back- middle- and foreground. Through colour coding the integration proceeds. Both the fond of the speaker’s description and the element ‘+ many more’ are held in the same pink as the musicians’ frames which empathises their relation or commonality. Due to this signifier, it is unclear if more musicians, genres or professions will be added. The section’s colours are reduced to black fond, visual pattern and contours, lush green of the wires and a light artificial pink. Due to this artificiality latter is associated with pop, emphasised further by the high saturation of colours mediating the clean, graphic, almost glossy surface of pop art. The pink background suggests that the base of the event is pop, as in fun. It embeds the rest. The durability and permeability such texture suggest advocates essence and coherence supported by the design of the written language (Djonov and van Leeuwen, 2011). Apart from the ‘Gather Labs’ menu item, all writing shares the same fond. Almost consistently, bold, capital letters are used, highlighting basically everything written. Hierarchy is indicated by varying letter size, led by the festival description and the participants’ names. The latter are equipped with acronyms of their nationality, branding diversity. The acronyms’ design appears distorted – a quote of early web design, still more prone to error. It represents what seems to be the section’s theme: The smooth accommodation of slight difference. By using a limited amount of modes in a fashion that is principally familiar, but with detailed exceptions, a sense of difference is created that feels structured nonetheless. Notably, this notion is demonstrated by the emblem connecting this section to the next. Besides the key dates, its round shape contains a minimized version of the wires presented on top, but from a larger distance and in more detail. The extract above is embedded as a holistic organism. In contrast to the top, the small wires softly integrate into each other and their green is nuanced by
shadows. Effectively this results in the interpreter’s idea of a three dimensional, organic, or real version of Gather. Gather becomes alive (see Fig. 11).

Figure 12: Gather homepage: What is Gather?

Neatly distinguished by two horizontal lines, the second section introduces the interpreter explicitly. Its modal range is comparatively reduced. Clearly structured the parallel layout of text and image evolves conventionally from text on the left to image on the right (Kress, 2010, p. 89). The entire mode ensemble is designed in a traditional, linear fashion. Meaning transferal is regulated by means of unwritten rules, passed on between generations (van Leuween, 2008, p. 134). Such semiotic arrangement favours accessibility: the interpreter engages in a stable, static and stilled sense-making process. She is guided through ‘cues’ like the heading “What is Gather” in bold capital letters followed by the key festival data (see Fig., 12). Beyond being a headline, this arrangement evokes the idea of a letter head. The following text is marked by a small sign signalling the paragraph as cohesive, discursive union. The background colour is a pink slightly darker than the one used in the previous section. It constitutes a slick and even surface, ruptured only by the emblem. Lines, text and parts of the photograph are black. The remaining image is coloured in pink slightly brighter than the background colour. The bare difference maintains the overall coherence and prompts the interpreter to concentrate. Image and text are not explicitly separated from one another, the interpreter makes sense of them as
belonging together. However, due to convention, she will presumably start by approaching the text to the left. The paragraph introducing Gather is dominated by enumerated nouns that constitute a nominal style (Fig. 12). As opposed to the flexibility and aliveness of a verbal styles, a nominal style mediates a static state of affairs. Two out of four sentences are enumerations listing nouns that could roughly be categorized as bridge-signifiers (inspiration, importance, collaboration), interlinking a human (mind, backgrounds, experiences, festival, gatherings) and a professional context (event, lab, talks, power). All of them are object to the text’s subject: “the real change” (see Fig. 12). That change is, however, never elaborated or explained. The nominal style prompts the interpreter to accept the ambiguity regarding what is changed for valorising that it is real. In other words, the lack of further description establishes the described state as merely being real. This turns most of the listed nouns into empty signifiers as they are relational but what they relate to remains open. Especially the bridging signifiers, such as ‘collaboration’ or ‘inspiration’, prompt identification in all sorts of context. It would be exceptional if the interpreter would not identify with them. The compression and reduction of meanings thereby functions as a prompt for trimmed value induction: Accommodating everything means that anybody can identify. The image illustrates the claim of ‘real-ness’. Moreover, it adds the notion of discovery to it, discovery by means of human meeting machine. The X-ray image of a human brain signifies to see or discover what usually remains obscure: It means to see life from another point of view. Primarily, the image illustrates the text: The logo ‘connects’ the ‘diverse’ parts of the ‘mind’ shown, and ‘thinking’ ‘differently’ is, implied in the negative effect which also translates meanings of ‘lab’ and ‘object-driven’. Attention is prompted by the small capital letters highlighting different parts of the brain. Rather than integration they suggest a meeting, the meeting of difference that – taken together, forms the word Gather (see Fig. 12).
The ticket section stands out as the largest and central section of the homepage, demarcated by a grey background. The interpreter is approached personally. After the headline, it says: “You choose when and how much you want to engage actively in Gather by your choice of ticket. We provide the possibilities” (see Fig. 13). Both the personalization and the choice of words highlight initiative rather than purchase as decisive for visiting Gather, leaving it up to the interpreter how much of an engaged person she is. To engage actively is a pair of signifiers normally used in a different context, summarized by the term political engagement. By “providing the possibilities” (see Fig. 13) Gather appears as a facilitator of precisely that.

The ticket section has a grey background. The cultural connotations related to grey are those of intellect, knowledge and neutrality, suggested by phrases such as ‘the grey lady’ in reference to the New York Times, or the ‘grey matter’ brains are composed of. For its neutrality, grey is a suitable background colour, it accommodates information particularly well. Principally the section is organized through colour coding and a vertically arranged layout. Divided into columns, the content is organized top down, a form of materialized hierarchy. The arrangement and size of columns indicate a different importance or power of the content/tickets they embed. Additionally, the relative space and the amount of explanation filling each column constitutes hierarchy, mirroring the numbers of lowering prices. Due to its position, its size and its white, exposed colour the interpreter is prompted to focus on the column of the conference ticket (4950 SEK). The conference ticket is present twice. A large column to its right merely repeats its

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference Ticket</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4950 SEK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3950 SEK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2650 SEK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13: Gather homepage: Tickets
price. It is followed by the tickets for smaller size companies and startups (2540 SEK). Finally, student tickets (1250 SEK) and festival tickets only (750 SEK) constitute the lowest end. Next to the narrowed fond of the festival tickets, colour code contributes to its relative invalidity. White, pink and black are used to organize the columns. While the conference, startup and student tickets include all three colours and are thereby classified as belonging to one group, the festival ticket and the price column join each other in containing little information and lacking the colour white. The price column is mere repetition. Through saturation the ticket appears scaled, soon to be significantly increased (see Fig. 13).

**Figure 14: Gather homepage: Participants**

In the participant section, pink returns as a background colour converging with the participants’ profiles. Thereby, all of them – “artists, scholars, philosophers, journalists, politicians, activists, developers, scientists, economists, advisors, musicians, inventors and humanitarians” (see Fig. 14) – become equally associated with the fun platform Gather. The plural-use of the anyhow extensive selection of professions suggests that a major quantity of personalities attend. The apt choice of naming professions rather than disciplines results in an overall personalization of the fields, prompting the interpreter to expect a vast range of topics as well. Overall, personalities rather than content are paramount, appearing accessible because of the catalogue-format introducing them. The alphabetic organization of participants neglects hierarchy to a certain extent, participants and their disciplines seem equally relevant. However, for a lack of description in the musician profiles, a hierarchy between them and the speakers is
established nonetheless. Speakers are presented through a summary of what they do and who they work(ed) for. The link to a profile picture as a visual genre evokes social network sites for professionals, e.g. LinkedIn: Accomplishments, work experience, skills and endorsements are readily available for the interpreter’s interest, need and choice. Participants are advocated for their interdisciplinary efforts, illustrated by the presentation of Barakat Ghebrehawariat: “An entrepreneur within communication with democracy as his compass. Also known as the Democracy-Agent. A speaker advisor and teacher with long experience from working with communication from a perspective of diversity” (see Fig. 14). Such descriptions reveal that most participants identify with more than one of the professions listed above which puts the number of representatives and topics into a less global perspective. Furthermore, the descriptions particularize the covered themes, yet not enough to deny the holism claimed: Clearly, Ghebrehawariat works in the creative industries. Yet, judging from the description he is a committed humanitarian. This twist brands the participants as people to look up to while remaining comparatively vague about what for. Participants from “all over the world” become role models for being (professionally) committed; global and interdisciplinary. By advocating all kinds of people with all sorts of functions “inspiring and challenging” numerous subjects by their “projects, theories and knowledge” no identity is spared (see Fig. 14). By not assigning the participants to definite categories; e.g. (Social) entrepreneurship, IT and design the interpreter is invited to identify fluidly. Instead of classifying one identity, the participants represent many. Beyond boundaries the interpreter extracts what is relevant for her.
Overall, the final section’s differs from the rest. It is smaller, its background is predominantly black and the recurrent sign complex of the heading, the letterhead and the paragraph mark is minimized and framed. All this indicates limited relevance. The only slightly more concrete explanation of Gather as a curated conference with a theme and five focus areas appears uncoupled from the rest. The formats that constitute the festival-framework are listed in one grey field. Signifiers of intensity are comparatively reduced; the interpreter is prompted to interpret Gather Social, Gather Cultural, Gather Talks and Gather Labs as integrated within a holistic knowledge context, pursuing the joint goal “to gather and create change” (see Fig. 12). “Innovation and inspiration” (see Fig. 15) anchor sense-making of where the promiscuous change may lead. They suggest the focus areas as resources towards the discovery, display and valorization of newness both in terms of production and consumption. The festival theme Borders is emphasised by being the single white word in capital letters, placed on top of the five focus areas. Rather cryptic, it serves “to connect the present to the future and give the focus areas context and direction”. Despite this metaphysical scope, the focus areas are further explained. The visualization does not resolve that either. In fact, it adds a contradiction, because the sign ‘borders’ is the only space permeating the otherwise stringent lines. Neither a border nor integration becomes manifest: The image means that the areas meet.

In sum, the Gather homepage serves as a space for the interpreter to literally get an overview. The saturated, colourful background materializes as a sleek surface which cohesively transfers meanings without looking conventional. The comparative restriction of modes allows focus; the constraint free interpretation of the displayed. Furthermore, the limited selection of
modes affords to relate and distinguish meanings just enough to emphasise their meeting. The homepage elevates duality as a design principle. Eventually the other provides reasons to connect (see Fig. 16).

6.5 Results of the Social Semiotic Multimodal Discourse Analysis: Gather Homepage

In comparison to the promotion video, the website materializes the rhetorical interest by prompting interpreter agency more subtly, by means of identification. Nevertheless, prompting agency remains central both to encourage ticket purchase and, maybe more fundamental, to motivate identification with the imagined community that is designed. By suggesting shared meaning-making, the homepage works on the interpreter’s self-realization as part of the Gather public. Citizen identity is an advocated part of the Gather lifestyle designed. The focus on identity expresses, maintains and redefines civic discourses as meaningful and relevant prompts for agency: “Citizens are motivated by a will to express, perform, create and recreate identities and their meanings” (Svensson, 2011, p. 49).

The theme Borders appears implicitly in the recurrent juxtaposition of two dimensions, binary meaning resources integrated into modes. At times converging at times contrasting, their distinction relies on their relation. Thereby, the mode ensemble affords a meaning transferal of borders into signs for fluid boundaries. Introduced by the early prompt to question if the interpreted is two- or three dimensional and increased by the somewhat mystic emblem and unresolved number of wires, a state of unfinished ‘realness’ is created. The lack of shadows and e.g. sound reduces the encountered to spatial meaning-making. In fact, a space is suggested that already exists, but incomplete. Next to musicians it hosts speakers from all over the world, based in ‘Design’, ‘Architecture’, ‘Art, Fashion, Tech, Body’ and the ‘Panama Papers’. An ensemble of prompts mediates the global and queer meeting of difference and knowledge as a promising invitation to those who identify with a slightly camp, yet mainstream culture (Sontag, 2009, p. 322). ‘Gay’ colours and edgy artists are resources of distinction in a pool of global identities. They represent a rhetoric of equity and meritocracy. The information provided requires either a very particular knowledge set, or an ease in researching and identifying how the issues and agents presented might connect. Search as assumed practice for most interpreters advocates curiosity as a prompt for identification. The capacity to engage entails either being
already part of the ‘community’ represented or the analytical, organisational and rhetoric skill to connect issue lattices to the manifest lifestyle (Dahlgren, 2009).

By adding the meaning ‘Panama Papers’, the spectacular unveiling of global-scale tax betrayal through leaked documents in April 2016, locates Gather as space that also accommodates civic discourses. Rather than explicitly performing a civic space, the civic is presupposed, a natural element of the rest. Citizen identity fluidly interacts with prompts to identify through taste, interest and profession. The presentation, thus, underlines that citizen identity compromises just one part of identity shaped in relation and as a form of community membership practice. This community unites interpreters around cultural and professional interests, a set of knowledge and tastes. In other words, civic identity is embedded in the skillset to filter prompts that unfold in a common way of meaning-making. It is mediated as a tendency “to reside at the fringes of people’s self-conception” (Dahlgren, 2009) and embedded in an “ethos of diversity and inclusiveness defined by tolerance for different viewpoints and even different issues linked across loosely bounded networks” (Bennett, 2012, p. 21 f.) This ethos, a condition for personalized politics, articulates the homepage’s twist: While prompting identification with a particular lifestyle, it materializes an overall promotion of the global which prompts all sorts of identities. The vast range of topics and people represented, expanded through tactics that suggest even further reach, prompt Gather as a holistic platform for “participatory communities that help each other to find their personal and collective voice and provide a context through which they can articulate their common interests and shared values” (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 153). The plain and empty explanation of Gather assumes meaningfulness through identification with the egalitarian ethos described – composed of classic civic values. Collaboration as a means is rationalized according to a product or service ratio, expressed by the ‘innovative’, ‘object-driven’, ‘modern’ pursue of ‘real’ change. Thereby, ‘wanting to actively engage’ customizes political engagement to all sorts of contexts; e.g. Gather Talks, Gather Social, Gather Culture and Gather Labs. Agency as taking (entrepreneurial) initiative once again becomes synonymous to civic agency which brands personal ambition as the prime resource for civic action. Private and social identities converge into that of the civic entrepreneur; “also known as the Democracy-Agent” or “an entrepreneur within communication with democracy as his compass” (see Fig. 15). Self-centered interests are promoted as principally interlinked with altruistic goals, striving for private ambitions by improving society at large (Turner, 2009). Against the overall suggestion that the interpreter’s active engagement is a matter of wish, choice and initiative, Gather “provides the opportunities” (see Fig. 13) via ticket purchase. The appropriation of activist language puts peculiar emphasis
on the notion that engaging is literally made a matter of financial means. Further, the price scaling evokes the reinterpretation of ‘Act now!’ to ‘Buy Now!’

However, presumably the interpreter longs to engage. Next to the prompts described, this tendency is due to the mediation of Gather as a fair, open and accessible platform for a community of liberal, young and hip change-makers, which she herself appears to be already part of (Schulte-Römer, 2013): As described the participants are introduced to a format that entails connotations of social media for professionals. The result is both the accessibility of the presented role models and instant identification as the interpreter connects them to the current social practice of LinkedIn. Like an identity catalogue, the interpreter scans the participants as if they already belonged to her network. Interpreter and role-model converge through affective mutual reach. The diversity and interdisciplinary represented model all sorts of identities; displayed role model appear as the ‘significant other’ (van Leuwen, 2008). ‘To engage’ becomes a matter of self-control, resonating that becoming a (civic) role model is a purchase-based choice: “Something is provided for all, so that none may escape” (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1991, 123).

The blurred explanation of theme and focus areas at the end of the page point towards the mediation of civic identity, agency and practice as a matter of network membership: Eventually, the lack of meaningful description signifies. It indicates priorities and at this stage the focus areas do not qualify. Instead, the event, the meeting, innovation, collaboration and convergence materialize as values and conditions for the ‘co-creation’ of civic culture, prompted as real through innovation and technology. Civic values are anchored in everyday life, their naturalized status is institutionalized in the design of communicative setting as frames that organize how values are performed (Dahlgren, 2009). The homepage informs about a pattern establishing connectivity and network membership as catalysts for civic agency. Connectivity and membership embody the means for identification, self-realization and expression for assessing political participation. While they constitute the citizen as the subject of a social practice, she constitutes herself as a subject of technological practice (Svensson, 2008, p. 49).
7. Conclusion

To explore transforming citizen identity this thesis has studied Gather as a case example of convergence festivals. Such have been defined as tangible means of tension that materialize the knowledge economy and the participatory discourses that entails.

Based on communication theories that claim media texts as productions of subjective realities, a participatory observation of the first Gather Session was followed by the multimodal analysis of the Gather homepage and a promotion video. Both procedures have facilitated the final analysis, a social semiotic multimodal discourse analysis of the material. In doing so, the theoretical framework has been employed to extract discourses that articulate the dimensions of civic culture. The map of prompts obtained, reveals how citizen identity is designed in the context of Gather, that is as convergence citizens.

In sum, convergence festivals have been identified as productive junctions of discourse, intertwining an emphasis on democratic values with the cultivation of novelty. Articulated as a value set of universal rank, civic culture is embedded and developed as a resource which facilitates an ethos of meritocracy that integrates private, professional and public domains. Civic discourses converge with discourses of connectivity and productivity, naturalizing growth and technology as means for social change. Citizen identity is found to be designed first and foremost in prompts for personal agency.

The results suggest an overall vanishing of boundaries that is relevant for civic cultures because discourses typically associated with the civic are appropriated by other domains. Diversity, sustainability, equity and actionable change are effective social reminiscence, appropriated as means to promote entrepreneurial engagement. As a result, meanings that traditionally marked the private sector and sphere appear as ‘epicenters’ of social change. Technology and innovation are transformed into civic values that connote, facilitate, stimulate – inspire political engagement. Political engagement becomes a business model. Politics sells! Those involved in the discovery, development, design and application of the new civic values, logically appear as change-makers – change-agents engaging networks accurately described as civic spaces (Castells, 2009). Also, they are a key cultural infrastructure for producing novelties that reach the market. Civic culture inspires, emerging as a psychological, social and material resource (Turner, 2009, p. 76).

As the “genesis of participation” lies in the “political-ideological, communicative-cultural, and communicative-structural context” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 23), altogether the encountered
agency-enthusiasm is desirable. An overall encouragement of voice and involvement favours an ecology of mutual empathy that may result in the willingness to assume charitable responsibility. To promote agency is a constructive means to increase civil, political, and economic resilience, and yes, it is an opportunity to bridge them, too. Nonetheless, more distinct classifications of agency are necessary in the pursuit of preventing a progressive commodification of the public dialectically promoted by ‘civic’ agency. If failing, individualization strikes and the once change-driven agenda equals void. Clearly, the apparently non-ideological empowerment of agency resides close to the neoliberal domain. A devout convergence of the formal political and the private-corporate bears the risks that political engagement becomes a subject to personal capacity, ambition and performance (too). The fragmentation of political decision-making favours a denial of formal political responsibilities, among them the assurance of equal opportunity. To shelter the private more decisively is a means to get there. That is, however, not a commercial concern. That is a political task.

There is indeed room for policies that restrict the convergence. Currently, the literacy to wonder if and why innovation is needed occurs on private terrain, too often restricted to an educated middle-class. Rather than adapting marketable and apparently often empty buzz words, a potential for political claims and revaluation lies in substantiating the gaps that exist. Digital innovation offers solutions for all sorts of problems, but for the ones it implies: e.g. the tremendous amount of energy required for data storage, the consequent exploitation of natural resources, further shortened circles of production and increased consumption and material demand. Data may be immaterial but information technology is not. Next to fighting the myth of the digital as eco-friendly per se, public awareness for privacy must rise. This requires a debate of privacy value. Privacy is a condition for a healthy democracy. To keep something private means to protect it from control.

Media are not only epiphenomena accompanying citizenship, “but constituting moments for the possibility and impossibility of citizenship and public spaces […]” (Kaun, 2013, p. 11). Beyond critical accounts of the internet as a non-neutral sphere it remains an unprecedented domain of experimental self-mediation and, by that, political potential. Agency as Selbstwirksamkeit defines the genuine human need to participate through active contribution. As a comprehensive context, as a more or less concrete experience, citizenship means agency. Thanks to the internet, the latter is becoming an increasingly universal experience of purpose. Online, everyone is entitled to author and voice herself; to collect and document, (re)arrange and comment, to ask and to give answers. These are scopes of resonance and recognition. Their value is essential and nuanced beyond right or wrong. They embody a civic core: design or
Design is a competence that can be learned, that is radically cultivated online, but so far without formal political anchor.

Authorship is political because it signals confidence in self-expression because that matters. Convergence culture revolutionized authorship (Jenkins, 2006). While its exchange value is readily exploited, its use value remains at the margins of formal politics. Svensson sees the “lack of recognizing the prominence of identities and processes of identification for making participation relevant and meaningful” as “the major problem in the communicative as well as the instrumental account of civic participation” (2008, p. 51). If civic spaces are increasingly shaped as networks, access becomes key: Participation is determined by the skill to accommodate, decipher and (re)code lifestyles, habitus and their respective aesthetics. More than ever people express their solidarity through symbols. Social bridging today, requires comprehensive semiotic literacy. Knowledge and interest complement each other. The more people know about a context, the more they want to find out about it. The more feedback they receive, the more motivated they get to engage further (Rogg, 2016). Convergence citizen need capacity in critique. Democracy means schooling citizens to perceive and express themselves as such, to feel responsible and consulted. That includes empowering citizens with the competence to distinguish a sense of belonging and trust in their own critical making from lifestyles and fear of failure. The internet as the perpetual performative exhibition of the positioned and thereby political self, animates authorship and voice. Agency, in turn, needs to be reclaimed as a political mandate.
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