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Chapter 17

Interaction Dynamics in the Mediatization of Religion Thesis

Abstract: In light of the preceding case studies, this chapter revisits the theories on the mediatization of religion and on mediatized conflicts that were outlined in the first part of the book. The focus is on the interplay between media representations of religious conflicts and the social interactions relating to the contentious issues. With a basis in general mediatization theory, it is argued that audience activity and other forms of civic participation must be seen to be an integral part of the mediatization processes.

Keywords: mediatization theory, mediatization of religion, interaction, audience activity, Scandinavia

How is contested religion transformed through media dynamics? This piece builds on and adds to the conclusions on gender and diversity in Chapter 16 by focusing a theoretical concern across the case studies. They have all been carried out against the backdrop of mediatization theory (see the Introduction and Chapters 3–4). It has been our ambition, to refine the theory on the mediatization of religion when it comes to the roles' regular media users, i.e., people play within the communication dynamic through their interpretations and interactions with representations in the media. Here, firstly, there is a section on the ways in which social interactions contribute to mediatization. Then (in 17.2) an exposé of the mediatized dynamics that are uncovered throughout the book follows. Thirdly, as mediatized expressions on religion do not necessarily have to lead to conflicts but may also help to handle and play down tensions, this is demonstrated through examples from our case studies. Finally, there are concluding notes on the ways in which the book contributes to the theory on the mediatization of religion.

17.1 Mediatization through Interactions

Mediatization implies long-term transformations of social and cultural patterns with the media as key actors in the fabric of society, although not necessarily as the causes of changes (Hjarvard 2013; Lundby 2014). 'Media' are technologies

for and social vehicles of communication. In media-saturated societies the ‘social construction of reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966) has become the ‘mediated construction of reality’ (Couldry and Hepp 2017). Mediatization research tries to capture the interrelations between media changes, on one hand, and changes in other parts of culture and society, on the other. Whether they are termed ‘mass media’ or ‘social media’, they are increasingly digitized and integrated into global communication networks. Mediatization is driven by big companies and big data, as well as by individual media users and producers. Various actors are thus involved in the mediatization of religion, from ‘above’ as well as from ‘below’ (Lundby forthcoming 2018).

Here, the mediatization perspective is employed to analyse cultural conflicts over religion in Scandinavia. Denmark, Norway and Sweden are media-rich societies where mediatization theories certainly apply. In Scandinavia, technological media of some sort are embedded in almost all social institutions and everyday relations (see Chapter 1), including religion (Hjarvard and Lövheim 2012).

The general dynamics of mediatized conflicts are important in studying when we try to grasp the media influences on the tensions and contestations over religion, which is the task of this book. Danish scholars have proposed three dynamics of mediatized conflicts which have inspired our analyses (Hjarvard, Mortensen, and Eskjær 2015). They primarily aim at the news media, but they may also apply to both entertainment media and social media. The media may, first, *amplify* the event or phenomenon that is reported or commented upon. A second dynamic is the *framing* of content by the actors performing the media production. Third, the media may *co-structure* power relations in communication and practices in institutions and among people (see Chapter 3).

Here, the theorization on mediatization and on the dynamics of mediatized conflicts is directed towards a deeper understanding of the mediatization of religion in times of contestation (see Chapter 4). The particular theory on the mediatization of religion builds on a general understanding of mediatization processes.

We explore the *dynamics* of ongoing mediatization rather than the *outcomes* of the transformations. We are thus in line with the ambition behind the *Dynamics Of Mediatization* (Driessens et al. 2017) as well as with *The Dynamics of Mediatized Conflicts* (Eskjær, Hjarvard, and Mortensen 2015). These dynamics may be studied from *above*, through amplification, framing and co-structuring in the media production processes. They may also be seen from *below*, in the manner in which the amplification, framing and co-structuring is responded to by the media users, as both citizens and audiences.

Individuals have various forms of engagement with the media. While ‘engagement’ is a general term, ‘participation’ may point to democratic activity in

bottom-up civic processes (Carpentier 2011a). Media users have new participatory opportunities with the greater repertoire of personal, networked media and digital multimodal tools of expression. As media user activity, the term ‘participation’ should primarily be applied to the media production of ‘user-generated content.’ This is an active form of audience activity (Carpentier 2011b). Audiences in the contemporary cross-media landscape (Carpentier, Schrøder, and Hallett 2014) are transformed, and thus, mediatized. Individual media users do not themselves make audiences, as audiences refer to collective formations of media users (Livingstone 2005, 2014). In today’s fragmented media landscape, audiences may be made up of rather limited circles of participation and consumption relating to a shared content concern. The common social and cultural pattern of user activity or engagement are what make audiences.

The audience perspective has been surprisingly absent in mediatization studies (Lundby 2016). The focus has mostly been on ‘media logic’ and structuring frameworks in technology, organization and the symbolic horizons on the production side of communication. Kim Christian Schrøder (2017) has taken this to task, suggesting audience dynamics as co-constitutive of mediatization processes. To him, the ‘audience dynamics’ are part of the media dynamics in the mediatization processes (2017, 94, 97). He argues that audiences have an integral role as agents in the transformative communication processes. The structural power of media audiences must be included in mediatization theory.

Schrøder defines ‘audiences’ in digital, mediatized societies as ‘the people who, in their capacity as social actors, are attending to, negotiating the meaning of, and sometimes participating in the multi-modal processes initiated or carried out by institutional media’ (2017, 89). He sees ‘any citizen activity that can be seen to derive from attention to or engagement with media’ as audience activity, if it ‘can be argued to exert a formative influence on media performance or content’ (2017, 90). This is a wide definition of ‘audiences’. Rather, I consider people’s social interaction in ‘citizen activity’ that contests religion, whether this implies active participation, or more laid-back forms of engagement as crucial part of the definition of audiences.

Audience activity is *social interaction*, as is all citizen engagement. Audience activity includes the identity work in which people engage with media content in the processes of interpretation that are triggered by media consumption (Carpentier 2011b). Media consumption and participation in content creation are two forms of social interaction with the media. All smart phone users know how these two forms of social interaction overlap. Media consumption and contribution to media content both imply identity work, i.e., processes of *identification*. Identity work in relation to media content also always implies *interpretations* of the symbolic and narrative media material. These three ‘i’s:

interaction, identification and interpretation, form a triangle in audience activity, as in another citizen activity in mediatized settings. This also applies to contested religion in media dynamics. The mediatized engagement in cultural conflicts on religion include interactions, interpretations, and identifications.

People may influence mediatization processes through audience activity, i.e., when they constitute themselves as audiences. However, we start with the range of social roles in which people engage, as citizens, or act in society as 'Christians', 'Muslims', or whatever. Mediatization makes the media relevant to all kinds of social roles; and media practices become more or less integrated into the performance of most social roles. With mediatization, our different citizen roles are conditioned or co-structured by the omnipresence of media, and through activity in the various roles through which people contribute to further mediatization. This also applies to audience activity. Sometimes, people gather and act as audiences, but not always.

In this book, we understand religion as being a practice of mediation (Meyer and Moors 2006, 7), a form of social interaction within which meaning-making takes place (Lövheim 2011). In the preceding case studies, different media are intertwined with the three 'i's in classrooms, civic settings, and in the production and reception of public service programmes. We study public tensions and conflicts over religion in the interplay between representations in professional media production, on the one hand, and interactions, interpretations, and identifications in user activity, on the other.

In this book, we mostly cut short the interlinked chain of interactions, identifications and interpretations by focusing on the interactions. The interactions are conditioned by the institutional, mediatized structures against and within which they take place, but the interactions also influence the institutional frames and the ongoing mediatization processes.

Interaction patterns are inherent to mediatization theory. Stig Hjarvard presents the circle between the regular mediation processes, i.e., communicative interaction with technical media, which, over time, may result in transformations in mediatization. In the next round, the structural changes that are implied in mediatization set up new conditions for the ongoing mediation and interaction (Hjarvard 2018). The institutional approach to mediatization that Hjarvard explicates, observes interactions between institutions, between individuals and between citizens and institutions (Hjarvard 2013), thus, from 'above', as well as from 'below'. The social constructivist approach (Krotz and Hepp 2013; Couldry and Hepp 2013; Hepp 2013) observes mediatization through everyday interactions from 'below'. However, as argued by Schrøder (2017, 92–98), neither of these main approaches to mediatization include a perspective on the power of the audiences.

Analysing the transformations of religion from a gender perspective (Chapter 16; Lövheim 2016) opens the door between mediatization and patterns of social interaction. So do the various case studies in the book. Against this backdrop, I ask: How does mediatization work through the dynamics of amplification, framing, and co-structuring as interaction from both ‘above’ and ‘below’?

17.2 Mediatized Dynamics in the Selected Settings

It’s a claim from mediatization theory that the media shape and mould interaction in other social domains, fields, or institutions, and increasingly become an intrinsic part of these other societal fields (see Chapter 14; Hjarvard 2013). This occurs in the encounter between framing and representations from ‘above’, and of social interaction from ‘below’. In this book, we explore this interplay in three different public spaces in Scandinavia: in public service media, in local civic settings, and in public schools. In each setting, we ask how religious expressions are thematized and enacted in the media (from ‘above’) and further articulated in social interaction (from ‘below’). The thesis of mediatization cannot be evidenced through the cases studies, but they offer empirical material for further explorations of how the theory can be improved by this closer look at patterns of interaction.

17.2.1 Public Service Media

The public service media (PSM) in Scandinavia have a strong position among audiences if compared to most other countries (see Chapter 5). This implies that they are also in a strong position to amplify, frame and co-construct tensions over religion. However, the Scandinavian public broadcasting companies continuously have to adapt to ongoing mediatization by developing their services, in particular, those on digital platforms, in order to maintain audience attention and interaction. The PSM companies could do so by introducing new and contested voices in established as well as new programme formats. The Danish television documentary *Rebellion from the Ghetto* portrays minority voices that are framed by the producers to counter dominant negative images of contested issues among the audiences (see Chapter 7). The Swedish radio programme *People and Belief* deliberately introduces new Muslim voices in order to strive for better

representation. This case demonstrates the dynamics of framing and performative agency in the internal interaction between producers within the radio company, and how they come to control the interaction with the listeners through asymmetrical relations in phone-in sessions. Despite intentions to contribute to a more nuanced public debate on the role of Islam in Sweden, the programmes' representations play into the dominant understandings and established relations between various groups in society. Despite the efforts by the producers, the programmes do not manage to challenge and change the existing co-structuring of power relations (see Chapters 8 and 16).

However, in general, the PSM companies, through their programming, exploit mediatization dynamics that co-structure the perceived conception of religion and of conflicts that are related to religion, among the audiences. Reactions from the audiences also help producers to adjust the framings of the programmes, as demonstrated in the case of *Rebellion from the Ghetto*. Being aware of the mediatized conditions of conflicts over religion, PSM companies in Scandinavia have the expertise and resources, through careful planning, to counter the entrenched positions in conflicts over religion, as the authors of Chapter 7 note.

The Facebook group following the radio magazine on *People and Belief* is more accessible to alternative voices than are the phone-ins, but there is little interaction across postings, and thus a limited counter influence on the framing that is undertaken by the producers (see Chapter 8). This is different in the Norwegian Facebook group *Yes to wearing the cross whenever and wherever I choose*, which was set up after the incident in which the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, NRK, would not allow a news anchor wear a cross pendant whilst reading the news. The careful analysis of this Facebook group, in Chapter 6, reveals a variety of attempts to frame the debate from 'below'. The interaction on this site mediatizes the debate by 'nationalizing Christianity and hijacking religion', as the title of the chapter phrases it. Despite the fact that there are more than 110,000 participants in the Facebook group, the amplification into the general public sphere of this intense interaction and audience activity from 'below' may be rather limited. However, triggered by public service programming, this study offers insight into a social media space in which people engage with each other over cultural conflicts that are related to religion, thus mediatizing a debate within the frames of the Facebook group.

17.2.2 Local Civic Settings

In local civic settings dominant media frames on religion and conflicts, mainly those relating to Islam and Muslims, form a backdrop for local interactions between various actors. These dominant frames are generally critical of the Muslim presence and of Islam as a religion; at least this seems to be the predominant perception amongst the Muslims who are interviewed in studies for this section of the book. One is the chapter on ‘Media, Muslims, and Minority Tactics’ in two Norwegian urban settings (Chapter 11). Another is the study of Danish converts to Islam in Greater Copenhagen (Chapter 12). These settings are characterized as being ‘mediatized civic settings’ to underline how various media transform the local context through the amplification of religious conflict, the negative framing of Islam and Muslims, and the media’s co-construction of a critical social and communication space on contested religion (see Chapter 9). However, as we are reminded in Chapter 12, to ‘properly understand the dynamics of mediatization in particular cases, media dynamics need to be rigorously contextualized by broader processes of historical and social change’ (page 221).

There are initiatives to create ‘counter publics’ that are based in social media networks, telling other stories from, and on, the minorities in question. Such uses of social media do not seem to fit easily into the typology of the dynamics of mediatized conflicts (see Chapter 9). However, counter publics try to amplify alternative framings and to co-construct another communication space on contested religion. Whether dominant or alternative, the mediatized setting and contested understanding of religion is played out in social interaction, the dominant from ‘above’, and the alternative from ‘below’. These moves from above and below meet in the particular setting being studied.

For those taking part from ‘below’, identifications with particular meanings or positions are always part of the social interaction. This comes through strongly in the study of the dual identity as both Muslim and Dane amongst converts in Copenhagen. In their interaction with the negative media frame, with ethnic Danes, and in their experience of Danish institutions, they are torn between their religious and national sense of belonging. Given all the negative attention they receive, they tend to give priority to their identities as Muslims. Their own interpretations of the conflicts are expressed in media engagement, in particular, in social media, which is more accessible to them than the mass media (Chapter 12). The tensions between these dual identities are thus played out in a mediatized setting.

The mediatized context also guides much of the minority-majority social interaction by young Muslims in the Norwegian cities (Chapter 11). Although they live in localities with a strong Muslim presence, they are the minority in local in-

teractions relating to religion. They have to relate to the co-structuring of the local interaction that follows from the conflictual media representations of Islam and Muslims. Participation in local interreligious dialogue fora emerges as a minority strategy through which 'to cope with, counter-, and calibrate negative media portrayals, since these actions are ways of performing belonging to the Norwegian nation and conducting Norwegian citizenship' (Chapter 11, page 190).

During the period of this research, the Norwegian government has laid down a strict policy on refugees and asylum seekers, as noted in Chapter 10. The then Minister of Immigration took a tough line, backed up by decisive and rhetorically smart media representations. Her critical public comments on religion and immigration in mass and social media, with the coining of 'sticky tropes' such as 'immigrants are carried into Norway on a chair of gold' and the denouncing of the pro-immigration camp as a 'tyranny of good', served to amplify tensions and had repercussions in everyday interactions in Norway. The Minister and her communication advisor utilized the media dynamics of mediatized conflicts to the extent that her controversial comments were always in the spotlight. Both her staging of contentious issues in public debate and her frequent reinforcement of dominant media frames in regard to Islam are textbook examples of the amplification and co-structuring of mediatized conflicts.

Chapter 10 analyses some counter communication against these governmental media representations. This opposition appears in local Christian papers and in online publications in the 'bible belt' in Southern Norway. These outlets are 'religious media', one of the categories of mediatized religion alongside journalism on religion and the 'banal religion' in popular entertainment media (Hjarvard 2012). Of the three forms of mediatized religion, religious media are the ones that usually transform the religious material the least, according to media criteria. In the interaction with their in-group local audiences these religious media perform a kind of counter-mediatization against the mediatized representation and framing of the governmental policy by the Minister of Immigration. The local Christian media frame the issues differently and try to co-construct another communication space on immigration issues.

17.2.3 Public Schools

The studies in public schools are undertaken in upper secondary classes in Norway and Sweden, with field observations in classrooms during lessons on religion and ethics. The pupils come from a variety of religious backgrounds. At the outset, we knew that mediatization makes media texts into resources for so-

cial interaction, shapes the social environment and configures relationships and structures of power between institutions and between individuals. The field observations of the classroom interaction gives flesh on these bones.

The mediatization perspective appears to be highly relevant to the practice of Religious Education (RE). Media material provides references for the interactions and discussions, and they are brought into the classroom by the students as well as by the teachers. The mediatized coverage of religion and of conflicts related to religion, thus influence the interactions within the classroom in RE sessions (see Chapters 13, 14 and 15). As noted by the authors, when ‘media materials and discourses become integrated into pedagogical practice, media dynamics become relevant to how teachers and students engage with the representations of religion’ (Chapter 1, 240). Such an influence on the classroom practices is another example of the co-structuring of power relations.

Sitting at the back of the classroom, the researcher is able to see what’s on the students’ laptop screens during RE sessions. The concentration may be on entertainment and social media rather than on the topic of the lesson. The teacher fights to get attention. The ‘song’ title of the chapter is pertinent: ‘Let Me Entertain You.’ To cope with the students’ boredom and to make the teaching relevant to their mediatized world, the teacher brings in a variety of media material. A lesson on basic elements in Islam boils down to the screening of an entertainment television programme on Islam. The availability of physical media and the wide use of media material make media dynamics an inherent part of classroom situations. The media representations and the media use extensively condition the engagement with religion in Norwegian public schools (see Chapter 14). The media co-construct the learning and teaching setting in religious education.

The framing of religion in the media which focuses on conflicts, makes it difficult to teach the basic structures of religions. This is demonstrated in Chapter 15. In lessons on Islam, the amplification into the teaching of news coverage that frames Islam through terrorism and conflict, co-constructs the classroom into a mediatized meeting-place. Despite teachers’ intentions to nuance and correct the media representations of Islam, the outcome of the extensive media references may be to confirm the media depictions of Islam.

17.3 Playing Conflicts Up or Down

Amplification, framing and the co-construction of and over religion may also offer resources with which to handle tensions. Religious symbols, artefacts, and claims put forward in the media may also work to manage, soften, and nuance what is otherwise contested.

The Danish TV production *Rebellion from the Ghetto*, offers an example of how careful production planning has reduced conflicts around the Muslim presence – by downplaying the term ‘religion’ (Chapter 7). In Scandinavia, in recent years, social and cultural conflicts have easily tended to be labelled ‘religious conflicts’. This, for example, occurs when immigration from countries with a Muslim-majority is linked to conflict and terrorism. However, a person coming from a country where Islam is strong does not need to be a practicing Muslim at all. He or she may even be fleeing religious domination by emigrating to secular Scandinavia.

In *Rebellion from the Ghetto* the producers portray the young minority participants in the documentary without labelling them as religious. The participants in the programme were allowed to step forward as persons with a wider repertoire of experiences. Instead of a focus on their religious beliefs the documentary took on issues like homosexuality and the freedom to choose your partner. This conscious producer strategy resonated in the interaction with the audiences. Minority actor’s voices were heard in printed press and broadcast radio discussions. The proportion of minority voices was also high on the Facebook page of the documentary. The strategy to downplay ‘religion’ as a main marker seems to have encouraged minority voices to step forward and to avoid an aggressive debate. The authors conclude that the dynamics of mediatized conflict – amplification, framing and co-structuring – can ‘be mobilized to support a more sensitive and nuanced debate about controversial issues (Chapter 7, 132). Satire may offer a similar contribution to counter the dominant negative framing on religion in news media, as seen in the Danish comedy show *Still Veiled*, with four Muslim minority actresses poking fun at Danish stereotypes and prejudices (Hjarvard and Rosenfeldt 2017).

On the other side, entertainment may also be used to play up conflicts or controversies that are related to religion, as pointed out towards the end of Chapter 16. This applies, for example, in classroom sessions in Religious Education (see Chapters 13 – 15) and in social media debates on public service programming (see Chapter 6). These are examples of mediatization, the transformation of social and cultural practices through social interaction by the use of various media in the said settings.

Whether conflicts are played up or down also depend on the structural frames. The study of participation in the Swedish radio programme *People and Belief* (Chapter 8) shows how the structure of operation conditions – and limits – the scope of interaction and diversity in the programme, particularly with regard to invited guests. Similar structural limitations are discussed in Chapter 9 which focuses on civic settings for social interaction over contested media representa-

tions. Mass media as well as social media co-construct and condition social interaction (see also Chapter 16).

17.4 Contributing to the Theory on the Mediatization of Religion

What do the case studies in this book teach us about the dynamics of the mediatization of religion from the perspective of social interaction and of audience activity in particular? As stated in Chapter 16, a main presupposition in our research is that media audiences actively engage with media stories and events, and are affected by dominant media frames. Nevertheless, they cannot be reduced to uncritical recipients. Our studies take a broader approach to social interaction with the media, as discussed above (in 17.1).

The theory of the mediatization of religion is presented in Chapters 3 and 4, in which further references are also given. In brief, the mediatization of religion concerns the dynamics within which religious expressions, practices and institutions are influenced, or re-shaped, through their involvement with various media in a media-saturated environment. We delimit ourselves to the public aspects of religion. The claim is that religion in public spaces, over time, is transformed in its interplay with the media (Lundby 2013, 2017). As stated in the Introduction, we are concerned with media producers, but more so with the roles that media users play through their interpretations and interactions with media representations – and with how these user patterns in turn work on religious practices and religious institutions. The mediatization of religion depends on the interplay between the particular form of media and the religious setting (Lövheim 2011). The various case studies in this research inform the understandings of the mediatization of religion from various viewpoints.

As we look for controversies and conflicts that are related to religion in mediatized public settings, we go beyond individual user experiences. We consider patterns of media use in collective formations, amongst the audiences, and through agency in various social roles. The aim to contribute to the theory on the mediatization of religion through patterns of user interaction thus represents an ambition to contribute to the theory from the perspective of audience activity, as well as from civic activity in engagement with media.

The interaction aspects of mediatization encompass more than audience activity, as indicated in Chapter 3 and in Section 17.1, above. Media institutions condition the social interaction and meaning making. Here, the question is, how do various patterns of audience and civic engagement mould the processes of the

mediatization of religion? What do the case studies in the three selected settings tell us? The answers concern specific conflicts and controversies about religion, but that may inform the theory on the mediatization of religion in general.

First, the audiences and media uses in the researched public spaces are very diverse. People who relate to outlets from the selected public service media are the closest to being considered media audiences. In the public schools, the students in the classroom make a small-scale audience in their interaction with their teacher and with all the media material that is brought into the classroom. In the local civic setting, the media users may gather as small, local audiences, as when the grass-roots Christian communities relate to national policies through parish publications (Chapter 10), or when Muslim youth try to cope with the dominant negative media framings of Islam (Chapters 11 and 12).

These media users exert an influence on the conceptions of contested religion in their respective mediatized environments. The Muslim youth in the Norwegian urban context exert an indirectly formative influence on media performance or content, as with Zunair through a counter film project, or through involvement in dialogue work that may later be channelled into media representations (Chapter 11). The Muslim converts in Copenhagen, rather, exert their influence through their resistance to what are perceived to be the hostile media, and this may be picked up by news media and elaborated in social media (Chapter 12). The local Christians in the Norwegian 'bible belt' exert audience influence through their support for, and use of, the local publications that criticize national immigration policies (Chapter 10). In the classrooms in upper secondary schools the boredom or conflictual media discussions on Islam change the content of the teaching (Chapters 13–15, see also Chapter 16).

The three cases from public service media relate to three different countries, one focusing on radio, another on television, and a third on a Facebook group. The phone-in sessions and feedback through social media to the Swedish radio magazine *People and Belief* document the programme's audience activity. However, the structure of the phone-in sessions, with a gatekeeper host, made it difficult for listeners to react directly to the representations within the programme (Chapter 8). The producers of the Danish TV documentary *Rebellion from the Ghetto* managed to engage the audience through careful planning, letting the audience reactions inform the crafting of the programme (Chapter 7). The establishment of the Norwegian Facebook group *Yes to wearing the cross whenever and wherever I choose* was an audience reaction to incidents in public service news practices. Participants taking different positions in these ongoing debates influence the conception of these contested issues on religion and nationality (Chapter 6).

Second, in most cases the audience and civic activities played back on, and influenced, the institutions that framed the media material. The exception is the said Facebook group, which did not manage to change the broadcasting guidelines. However, even in this case, the interaction within the Facebook group shaped the conceptions of the contentious issues at play. In the Swedish PSM case, *People and Belief*, the audience activities had a limited influence on the representations in the programme due to the established production structures. The producers grasped the audience's sentiments, but they were trapped by the traditional ideals and formats of public service radio. Different production structures make it difficult to compare, but in the Danish programme *Rebellion from the Ghetto* such discrepancies were avoided by the careful planning of the ways in which audience voices should be included in the programme set-up. In the local settings, the audiences of young Muslims had a limited and indirect feedback to the media institutions that portrayed them but, as they lifted their voices, they could be heard. The readers of the local Christian publications, in contrast, had a direct influence of these online and offline outlets within their communities, but possibly had a limited influence on national policies. In the public schools, the audience activity among the students clearly influenced the representations of Islam and other issues in Religious Education. The media materials that were drawn into the classroom by the teachers, as well as by the pupils, did make the teaching about religion more conflictual and contentious than had originally been set in the curriculum.

Third, the above examples indicate that the theory on the mediatization of religion (and on mediatization theory in general) should encompass interactions, interpretations and identifications among the audiences as part of the theory. As Kim Schrøder puts it: 'audience dynamics should be seen as an integral part of the ongoing processes of building the media logics that govern the media institutions' encounter with other societal institutions in overall processes of mediatization'. Media logics have to include 'audience logics' (Schrøder 2017, 102). However, our case studies also demonstrate that an audience perspective alone does not capture the variations in mediatized influences from 'below'. We need a broader grasp on social interactions in audience activity, as well as in wider civic activity, the co-construction from below of power relations.

The media construct the ways in which contested religion becomes represented in the public realm. However, the representations are informed by the ways in which citizens interpret the religious dimensions of social conflicts. Together, the media institutions, the audience and civic activities have a considerable influence on how conflicts on religion are amplified and dramatized. The amplification, framing and co-structuring of the communication in mediatized

conflicts on religion have to be studied from ‘below’, as well as from ‘above’. The theory on the mediatization of religion must accommodate this interplay.

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