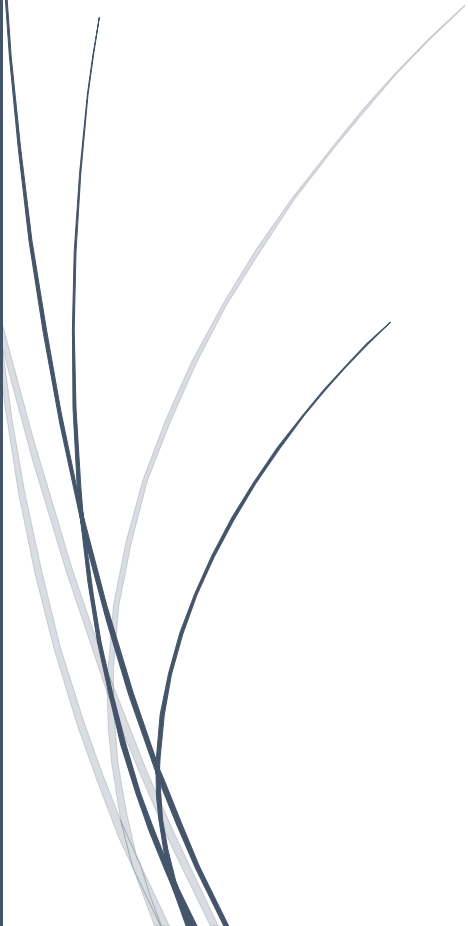




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The Role of Public Intellectual Bloggers

A study of public intellectuals and their relationship
to contemporary forms of media.



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Introduction

The public intellectual: an indefinite concept without solid boundaries or one, universal meaning. Descriptions of public intellectuals agree on certain points but differ from, and sometimes even contradict, one another on other points. As an illustration: characterisations of public intellectuals range from a small group of highly intelligent, morally inspired kings of philosophy (qtd. in Said 22) to “all men are intellectuals” (Gramsci 9). Where one definition places public intellectuals firmly outside of society, the other describes them as part of society: two contradictory interpretations. Nonetheless, public intellectuals are generally seen as people who reflect on contemporary issues in society and, through these reflections, encourage their public to act and solve those issues. The fluidity of the characterisations of public intellectuals makes them adaptable to different times and environments. In other words, the concept of public intellectuals changes along with time and society. An example of such a development is a transition from the term intellectuals to public intellectuals. The added adjective entails the assumption that intellectuals have to present their ideas to a general audience, rather than to a select public (Heynders 46). Such a change in audience, in turn, embodies certain adjustments, like the use of new forms of media with which public intellectuals are able to reach that general audience. Printed forms of media such as books or essays might limit the scope of public intellectuals, due to their availability and price. Now, public intellectuals have access to forms of media that are easier to disperse, cheaper to manufacture and simpler to keep up to date. These new ways of distributing the work of public intellectuals ascribe new traits to their definition, such as a change in the public which is being addressed and the style of writing.

One of those new forms of media are blogs. Blogs are “a new form of mainstream personal communication” (Du et al. 2), existing out of “a narrative that reflects a blogger’s own perspective, leaving the interpretation and evaluation to its readers” (Ekdale et al. 219).

They are “unique havens that combine news and information with self-expression” (Kaye 74). By distributing news, blogs adopt a function similar to that of newspapers. Newspapers are a rather special form of media, because they exist since as early as the 1600s, yet are currently known for their speed and being up-to-date, the characteristics of more modern forms of media. However, blogs are still perceived by their readers as more credible news sources than the traditional ones, such as newspapers (Ekdale et al. 219). According to Barbara Kaye, blogs come with a special readership, which exists largely of young, highly educated people with high incomes (73). This conclusion is based on a 2003 research of solely American blogs. No such research has been conducted on Dutch blogs. It could well be that there is a difference between the American readership of blogs and the Dutch readership of blogs. Furthermore, there are many different kinds of blogs which are likely to attract a different readership. Nevertheless, there are six main reasons why people read blogs: to seek information and check other media; to easily access and read the news; as a way of personal fulfilment; as a means of political surveillance; as a way of social surveillance; and to express themselves and communicate with other people (Kaye 73). The communication within blogs can be one-way as well as two-way and readers may be as actively engaged as they wish (Kaye 75). This is a remarkable difference with more traditional forms of media, which exist mostly out of one-way forms of communication. Since blogs are a rapidly growing form of media, with 12.000 new blogs coming into existence daily, many of those blogs will never achieve a wide readership (Du et al. 2). The majority of blog readers focus on a “very small group of highly successful blogs” (2). Readers select those blogs by the rate to which the posts reflect their personal opinions (Ekdale et al. 219). Since blogs are webpages, most of them are freely accessible to anyone who has access to the internet. This makes blogs an excellent medium to reach a large audience, provided that the blog belongs to that aforementioned small group of successful blogs.

This thesis makes an attempt at showing the fluid and adaptable character of public intellectuals. Furthermore, it assesses the medium of blogs as a new channel for public intellectuals to distribute their opinion. In the first two chapters, the theory concerning public intellectuals and blogs is set out as an introduction to the core of this thesis. This core is situated in the third chapter, where an innovative, systematic approach to the relationship between public intellectuals and blogs is presented. This thesis culminates in the fourth and fifth chapter, which contain the practical component and analysis of this research. In those final chapters, the theoretical outcome of chapter three is compared to four actual blogposts from four different blogs. Based on this comparison, a new definition, characterised as a role, of public intellectuals is shown in the light of the medium used, which in this case are blogs. Ultimately, this thesis proposes a novel definition of public intellectuals, in which the medium used by public intellectuals is seen as inseparable from the public intellectuals. This innovative definition is designated as the role of public intellectual bloggers.

An overall definition of public intellectuals cannot be captured within a solid, unchanging description. Rather, such a description can be seen as an inventory of features ascribed to public intellectuals throughout time. Such an inventory is made in this thesis, based on the definitions ascribed to public intellectuals by five different writers in a period of time ranging from the early 1900s to the early 2000s: Julien Benda, Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said, Dirk Lauwaert and Odile Heynders. The definitions of public intellectuals provided by these writers overlap at some points and contradict at other points. Each of them provides a series of traits they ascribe to public intellectuals. By looking at each definition separately, a chain of all the traits is made, creating a fluid profile of public intellectuals, not excluding any features yet. By using this flexible inventory throughout this thesis, the research is not impeded by a limiting definition.

Blogs are a relatively new form of media, still in the early stages of development (Du et al. 4). Since they have not had as much time to evolve as public intellectuals have, blogs are characterised by much shorter and more coherent definitions. Still, an inventory of features ascribed to blogs, similar to the inventory created for public intellectuals, can be and is established. This inventory is based on eight different interpretations of blogs, by Kristin Roeschenthaler Wolfe, Greg Meyers, Michael Chau et al., Pranam Kolari et al., Christoph Meinel et al., Brian Ekdale et al., Barbara K. Kaye and Bonnie A. Nardi et al. After a comparison of both inventories, this morphological characterisation of blogs will be integrated into the existing inventory of public intellectuals, creating a new definition, or role, of public intellectual bloggers. This role will then be compared to four blogposts of four different, actual blogs. Two of those blogs are Dutch and the other two are American. Per country, one of the blogs is conservative and the other progressive. The progressive Dutch blog is written by Arnon Grunberg and the conservative Dutch blog is written by Joshua Livestro. The progressive American blog is written by Ahmed Beenish, whereas the conservative American blog is written by Ann Coulter. The political colour of the posts is derived from the reputation of that particular blog to which they belong. The blogposts used in this research all focus on a similar subject, namely the religious extremist war in the Middle East. This is a contemporary situation that is present in both the Dutch and American society in 2016. The following examples prove the relevance of this subject: it has been predicted that it will not take long before Holland will be the target of a terrorist attack (Borst) and America has been fighting an ongoing war against terrorism for almost thirteen years now (Carasik).

In the final part of this research, separate profiles of the four blog-authors and their blogposts are created according to the role of public intellectual bloggers as established in chapter three of this thesis. These separate profiles show on which points the blogposts correspond to the role and which features appear to be missing in said role. In the final

chapter of this thesis, the role of public intellectuals as established in chapter three is assessed and statements made specifying which features are irrelevant and which features should be added to the role, based on chapter four. Thus, a more complete and up-to-date role of public intellectual bloggers is formed.

1. Public Intellectuals

A contemporary definition of public intellectuals is not existent as one, permanent description within solid boundaries. Rather, it is a concatenation of separate, developing traits ascribed to intellectuals, and later on public intellectuals, throughout time. Such a chain of features assigned to public intellectuals is created in this chapter, based on the texts of five different writers: Benda, Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders. There are many written reflections characterising the role and identity of public intellectuals. The texts by the aforementioned authors, contemplating the role of public intellectuals, were chosen since they cover a vast period of time, from 1928 to 2013, and were written by people with various nationalities. Thus, the perspective from which public intellectuals are viewed is kept as broad as possible, not yet excluding any features ascribed to public intellectuals which might be determined by nationality and time.

Their nationality, political stance and the time in which public intellectuals live are of great influence on their work. Benda (1867 – 1956) was a French philosopher who is known for his hope for a united Europe. He aspired a Europe “cleansed of passion and particularism” and he called upon the intellectuals to achieve this goal (Müller 125). Benda wrote “one of the most uncompromising visions for a united Europe” (Müller 125) some ten years after the first World War ended. Consequently, since Benda was French, it is not surprising that he vowed for a return “from essentially Germanic modernity” (Müller 128). Furthermore, Benda’s hope for a united Europe might also be attributed to the division the First World War brought Europe. Gramsci (1891 – 1937) was an Italian Marxist, activist, journalist and philosopher on politics. Being a Marxist implies that Gramsci believed the economic system in society to cause tension between the different societal classes. He was imprisoned by Mussolini from 1926 until 1937 (Said 21). Gramsci is best known for his *Prison Notebooks* in which he discusses, among other things, “the nature and task of the political party, and the historical

role of Italian intellectuals” (Cammett xiv). Said (1935 – 2003) was a Palestinian-American literary theoretician, who is best known for his lifelong argument with the politics and culture of the West and the Arab environment. During his lifetime he lived in many different countries, such as Israel, Egypt and the United States (Ali). The Six Day War of 1967 spurred Said’s political engagement (Ali). This war caused many Palestinians to flee Israel. Said became member of the Palestinian National Council and combined his passion for culture with his political activism in his works (Ali). In his most famous work *Orientalism*, Said displays the Western view of the Arab world (Ali). Lauwaert (1944 – 2013) was a Belgian writer, who was greatly influenced by French culture. He was interested in film, literature and politics and his views were largely in conflict with earlier societal values. He felt the need to dismantle taboos, much like an intellectual (Meuleman). Lastly, Heynders is a professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. She specializes in literature, current media and the public intellectual (*Experts and Expertise*).

Heynders is the only writer of the aforementioned five who discusses public intellectuals¹. The other writers are referring solely to intellectuals. Throughout this thesis I will refer to public intellectuals, rather than intellectuals, since I consider contemporary intellectuals to be public when using the medium of blogs. The scope of the internet is equivalent to an extremely wide audience. Texts written on blogs are most likely meant to be read and understood by a universal audience. When discussing the works of Benda, Gramsci, Said and Lauwaert, I will follow their vision and use the term intellectuals.

In order to keep a clear structure throughout this chapter, the works are not discussed separately. Rather, this chapter is divided into three subjects, which are components of public intellectuals: who are public intellectuals; what do public intellectuals do; and the relationship

¹ According to Heynders, the adjective public is used for intellectuals who have to present their ideas to the general audience, rather than to a select audience (46).

between public intellectuals and the media. Subsequently, the different features ascribed to public intellectuals, belonging to one of the three subjects, by Benda, Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders are listed under these subjects. Concluding this chapter, three comprehensive lists of features, linked to the three subjects, are composed and merged into one inventory of features ascribed to public intellectuals.

1.1 Who Are Public Intellectuals

The identity of public intellectuals involves a contradiction. Public intellectuals are part of society but are at the same time situated above or outside said society. Benda, Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders acknowledge and discuss this internal conflict extensively.

In *The Treason of the Intellectuals*, Benda refers to intellectuals as a small group of highly intelligent philosophers (47). He describes them as people who “seek their joy in the possession of non-material advantages, and hence in a manner say ‘my kingdom is not of this world’” (Benda 47). Thus, these intellectuals are not part of society, but are situated outside and even above society. Contradictory to that position, modern intellectuals have a desire to be part of a nation or race and be determined by it, according to Benda (56). In other words, they long to be part of society. This feeling of nationalism makes intellectuals xenophobic (Benda 52): they detest everything and everyone that does not belong to their part of society. Benda is quite extreme in his ideas concerning intellectuals. His discourse might be seen as an attack on intellectuals. However, I believe it is Benda’s intention to clarify what he feels to be the true role of intellectuals. He speaks hyperbolically in order to explain and emphasise his stance on the matter. This is actually one of the characteristics Lauwaert ascribes to intellectuals (10). Therefore, Benda is performing the role of an intellectual himself. Furthermore, some of his rather extreme notions, for example concerning nationalism, are a result of his experiences with the First World War.

In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci, contradictory to Benda, places

intellectuals firmly within society: “all men are intellectuals ... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (9). Gramsci measures the extent to which one is intellectual according to the ratio of “intellectual elaboration and muscular-nervous effort” (9). Thus, the balance between a person’s intellectual thinking and physical activity determines said person’s rate of intellect. However, whereas one activity might be less intellectual than another “there is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded” (Gramsci 9). Although someone might be less of an intellectual than someone else, it can never be claimed that someone is a non-intellectual (9).

Said, in *Manifestaties van de Intellectueel*, states in agreement with Gramsci that intellectuals are individuals who fulfil a public role in society (28). Moreover, intellectuals are not just playing a role in society, they are part of that society. One cannot be seen as separate from society because every person is controlled by a society (88). Thus, when one speaks of intellectuals, one speaks of their nationality and culture at the same time (44). This focus on nationality and culture might be connected to Said’s experience with life in many different cultures. However, even though Said places intellectuals within society, he also describes them as individuals, separate from that society. According to Said, intellectuals are situated between loneliness and conformity, they are the discrepancy between the mass and the individual (40). Nonetheless, the distanced position of intellectuals is not one of elevated proportions, as Benda describes it, since intellectuals are not servants of the government (105). They have to doubt and even undermine authority (110).

In “Portret van een Rol: De Intellectueel”, Lauwaert agrees with Said and Gramsci on the fact that intellectuals are part of society. However, he mentions intellectuals to be residing above society at the same time, agreeing more with Benda (6). Heynders, in “Individual and Collective Identity – Dutch Public Intellectual Bas Heijne”, mentions the contradictory position of public intellectuals as “the intriguing tension in the discussion on public

intellectual thinking and writing” (46). Heynders explains the discrepancy as the necessity of public intellectuals to, now and then, leave their isolated and universal position in order to clarify their ideas to a general audience. In this way, public intellectuals are situated within a public sphere they once in a while have to remove themselves from (46). Thus, according to Heynders, public intellectuals do not have a solid place in society but move between society and a detached sphere. This position is translated to “a mediating position to serve the function of transmitting knowledge in the society to which they feel committed” (46). Heynders charges the position of public intellectuals with authority. She explains the contradictory position as the fact that “the public intellectual is supposed to have cultural authority and is considered to be a generalist” (48). This authority Heynders mentions is begotten by a “combination of aesthetics and politics” (53). Public intellectuals convey a political message in an understandable and agreeable manner. However, public intellectuals might express a political message but they are never politicians, since that would make them lose their detached position (53).

According to Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders, public intellectuals are connected to society. However, the parts of society to which public intellectuals belong are specified divergently. According to Gramsci, “every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals” (5). Thus, every social group that has an economic function comes with its own intellectuals. These intellectuals are “specialisations of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence” (6). In other words, the tasks of intellectuals are elaborations on the already existing aspects of a certain group. Gramsci provides an example of the groups in society which have their own kind of intellectuals. The urban intellectuals are, logically, more connected to the industry, whereas the rural intellectuals are connected to

the country (14). Yet, although each social group has its own intellectuals, there does seem to be a continuous group of intellectuals throughout history as well (6-7). An example of such a group would be the ministers of church (7). These intellectuals are supposedly autonomous and do not depend on society. The division Gramsci makes between different groups in society might be connected to his Marxist beliefs. Said reduces the categories in society to which intellectuals belong to, first of all, the weak and voiceless people in society (40). However, subsequently Said describes intellectuals to side with that part of society to which they feel like belong (118). This includes each category of society and does not automatically mean merely the weak and voiceless. Public intellectuals may just as well feel connected to a stronger part of society. Both Lauwaert and Heynders agree with Said that intellectuals belong to that part of society to which they feel connected. Lauwaert refrains from specifying that category any further. He just mentions them to be equals (7). Heynders, on the other hand, gives three specifications: “educated people” (45); “those whose use of words prevents them from speaking out convincingly in public” (53); and “a broad audience” (48). The first and second explanation appear to be contradictory, whereas the final definition is quite general. These differing specifications might imply that the part of society to which public intellectuals belong depends on the nature of those public intellectuals.

Lauwaert and Heynders discuss the position of authority intellectuals take. Lauwaert states that intellectuals are people who are tempted by and to authority. They speak the language of political responsibility and, instead of solely being curious, are searching for completion. However, intellectuals are never aristocratic (8-9). Lauwaert implies that, although intellectuals are tempted to and might seem to hold a position of authority, they are never haughty. Rather, intellectuals are middle-class figures who move amongst their equals in society (15). Heynders notices the aristocratic tendencies of public intellectuals as well. She mentions that they are often connected to the words “pretentiousness, arrogance, self-

dramatization and hubris” (45). However, although Heynders, other than Lauwaert, does assign public intellectuals a position of authority, she agrees with him on his claim that this position is not one of haughtiness. Moreover, public intellectuals have “cultural authority” in “addressing a non-specialist public” (45). This public is addressed in an equally non-specialist manner.

Said, Lauwaert and Heynders discuss the professional character of public intellectuals. According to Said, the intellectual is threatened by professionalism (92) with which he suggests that being an intellectual cannot be seen as a profession. If it were a profession, intellectuality would become an activity only practiced in pursuance of money. Furthermore, intellectuals would become objective in order to act decent and professionally (Said 93). On the contrary, an intellectual has to remain an amateur who believes it to be a privilege to shed light on moral issues in society (102). This implies having to diverge from the norm and be subjective. Lauwaert agrees with Said on this matter. Intellectuals have a profession, however this profession is left behind when they are working as intellectuals (Lauwaert 1). The knowledge intellectuals might have gained within their profession may not be used in their judgment as intellectuals, since this could cause them to be prejudiced (2). This raises the question whether it is at all possible to turn off previously gained knowledge, as if it were a switch, and whether it would not strengthen public intellectuals’ judgment if they were to incorporate professional knowledge into their reasoning. Lauwaert comments on this, mentioning that “without knowledge one cannot take responsibility, however this knowledge does nothing to alleviate this responsibility” (4, my translation). In other words, Lauwaert recognises that knowledge is necessary in order to gain responsibility, however this knowledge does not make that responsibility any lighter to bear. Lauwaert fails to give an actual solution to the question whether knowledge is or is not used by intellectuals. Consequently, the contradiction remains intact and unsolved. Heynders, contradicting

Lauwaert, states that public intellectuals do use the knowledge gained in a different profession. According to her, public intellectuals are people who speak from “expertise in a particular field of knowledge” (45).

Gramsci, Benda and Lauwaert reflect on intellectuals’ inclination towards action. According to Benda, intellectuals started to gradually adopt political passions (48). This change moved their focus to action and they developed a thirst for immediate results (48). They desire to glorify the real and the practical, rather than the ideal (72). Thus, intellectuals are active participants in society, rather than passive philosophers. They are practical realists, rather than dreamers. Gramsci, similar to Benda, distinguishes between old, passive intellectuals and new, active intellectuals. Gramsci is referring to a “new stratum of intellectuals” which are intellectuals founded on “muscular-nervous effort” (9). These intellectuals are different from the “traditional and vulgarised” intellectuals, who are men of letters (9). This new type of intellectuals is active and has its basis in “the modern world, [and] technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level” (9). Thus, whereas intellectuals used to be a group of inactive, philosophising writers, the new intellectuals are active participants in an industrial society. This notion, once more, connects to Marxism which favours the labouring part of society. Lauwaert, similar to Benda, states that intellectuals are working in the present and are not focussed on a future ideal. According to Lauwaert, public intellectuals distrust novelties. They are fundamentally conservative people (17). However, this idea is in conflict with another remark by Lauwaert in which he states that intellectuals work in the present, towards future improvements (6-7). Lauwaert combines Gramsci’s old and new intellectuals in the way that he describes intellectuals to be writers whose language is impulsive, practical and an active aid (12). Thus, Lauwaert contradicts himself once more, failing to decide whether intellectuals

work solely in the present or work towards the future. In any case, they are active, using their writing as means of action.

1.2 What Do Public Intellectuals Do

For the most part, Benda, Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders agree that intellectuals discover issues in society and reflect on these issues. Benda explains intellectuals' action as intellectuals relating their own thoughts to the national mind. This national mind is then conflicted with other states of national mind (55). Intellectuals see themselves as the voice of the nation, opposing other national voices which these intellectuals perceive to be false.

Gramsci divides intellectuals into two groups, according to their contradicting actions. The first group exists out of traditional intellectuals, who are: "professional intellectuals, literary, scientific and so on, whose position in the interstices of society has a certain inter-class aura about it, but derives ultimately from past and present class formations" (Gramsci 3). In other words, traditional intellectuals are motionless. From generation upon generation, they perform the same profession or role. The second group consists of organic intellectuals, who are: "the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class. These organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession ... than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (3). Thus, organic intellectuals are connected to a certain class or enterprise and are actively involved in society. They are constantly working to change peoples' minds. Examples of organic intellectuals are urban and rural intellectuals. The urban intellectuals function as intermediates between the executive staff and the instrumental mass (14). The rural intellectuals "bring into contact the peasant masses with the local and state administration ... Because of this activity they have an important politico-social function, since professional mediation is difficult to separate from political" (14). Thus, both kinds of intellectuals are situated in between the higher and lower classes. However, urban intellectuals just pass on messages from the higher

order to the lower, whereas rural intellectuals actively try to connect the lower classes to the higher. Earlier on in his text, Gramsci defines the movement of intellectuals between the higher and lower ranks of society differently. The functions which intellectuals fulfil in society are connected to all social groups, but more specifically to the more important social groups (10). Within these dominant groups, intellectuals function as “‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government” (12). In other words, intellectuals manage the social group on a subordinate level.

According to Said, intellectuals are individuals who are gifted with the talent to convey a message, idea, notion, philosophy or opinion to and from a group of people. With this task comes the duty to pose difficult and publicly painful questions, to expose orthodoxy. The intellectuals’ “raison d’être” is to stand up for all those people and issues that are forgotten or concealed (28-29). Thus, intellectuals are people who speak to and from the weaker parts of society about worrying issues. It is their task to generalise the crisis of a nation (62). Said means that intellectuals connect national suffering to the suffering of others. In this way, intellectuals are a strange mix of the personal and the public: their personal opinion is given because they believe in it and want to persuade others of this opinion, however they are discussing public matters (44). Their opinion is often unpleasant to convey, since intellectuals’ main goal cannot be pleasing their public. They ought to be difficult, unruly and even unpleasant (30). Criticism should go before solidarity (44) and therefore the issues discussed by intellectuals are often not easy for the audience to hear. Intellectuals should point out the issues that people overlook in their aim for a collective identity or society (53). In doing this, intellectuals are fighting the ruling norms (55). Thus, they are always tested by loyalty, since everyone belongs to a certain community, including intellectuals (58). Still, this should not influence their judgment.

According to Lauwaert, the responsibility to answer a societal issue falls upon

intellectuals. The task of intellectuals is mainly to answer the question posed by society and show said question through the answer (Lauwaert 2). Lauwaert agrees with Said when he states that intellectuals' answers are personal, however they are situated within a social context and therefore they apply not solely to the intellectuals (3). Moreover, the matters discussed by intellectuals come to them through an impulse from society (3). Heynders states that "a public intellectual ... is someone who reflects on critical concepts, comments on what is happening in society, from a position of detachment and takes a countercultural and engaged stance" (44-45). This definition is largely in agreement with Lauwaert's explanation. Furthermore, public intellectuals need to anticipate on events and make their message understandable for the group they address (47). Heynders ascribes public intellectuals the talent to sense difficulties or issues in society before they escalate.

Said, Lauwaert and Heynders reflect on the way intellectuals perform the aforementioned tasks. Said states that intellectuals have to show authority who is boss (116). Showing the people in power who is boss means that intellectuals have to carefully consider all alternatives, choose whichever they deem right and show this wherever it might be useful and where a change might be achieved (122). Whereas authorities only see one perspective, intellectuals need to consider all perspectives before they persuade others to act. According to Lauwaert, intellectuals do not know but only judge. They speak in exaggerations which form an opinion. Intellectuals problematise an idea and always search the other side of the problem. Consequently, distrust is an essential trait of intellectuals' characters (9-10). In other words, intellectuals do not take general knowledge for granted, but look into issues in order to establish a judgement. This careful consideration of information is similar to Said's explanation of the way intellectuals think. Whereas Lauwaert states that intellectuals do not work with facts but only with their opinion, Heynders states the opposite. She problematises the statement that "intellectuals are criticised because of their neglect of arguments put

forward in the wider political arena” (43). They would be “shunning a true confrontation with the facts” (43). Heynders negates this in her article and states that public intellectuals do work with facts to establish a truth. According to her, public intellectuals “perform the role of mediator, taking care of sound argumentation and adding ‘truth value’ to the debate” (48). Thus, Heynders similarly portrays public intellectuals to carefully consider information before coming to a conclusion. However, according to her, public intellectuals do use facts to support their message, rather than just their opinion.

Benda, Gramsci and Lauwaert discuss whether intellectuals are active or passive in the solving of societal issues. According to Benda, the issues addressed by intellectuals are those of realism (77). They are not occupied with the future or with dreams. Intellectual functions are only truthful when they are directly connected to the pursuit of a concrete advantage (93). Thus, intellectuals work in the present, towards concrete goals. In order to achieve those goals, they use thought, not physical action (103). Gramsci contradicts Benda when he states that, whereas intellectuals used to be a group of inactive, philosophising men, the new intellectuals do take action, rather than just speak: “the mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence ... but [has to exist] in active participation in practical life” (10). Intellectuals, according to Gramsci, are active in practice themselves, rather than persuading others to act by using solely words. Lauwaert states that intellectuals are called to represent a certain opinion clearly and convey this message to their public (30). However, similar to Benda, Lauwaert believes that intellectuals are unable to act. They guide and reflect on the acting, but do not partake in it, since they are supposedly independent (8). Yet, intellectuals are part of a group in society and “feel certain movements, positions and manoeuvres” of that group (8, my translation). The matters discussed by intellectuals come to them through an impulse from society (3). Thus, intellectuals sense which issues in society need to be discussed and changed. Subsequently, intellectuals ask society for an answer to a

question concerning such an issue and at the same time action according to that answer. Again similar to Benda, Lauwaert states that intellectuals work only in the present. They reflect upon contemporary issues, naming what is to be aspired, not what is already corrupted (6-7).

Heynders largely agrees with Lauwaert. She states that public intellectuals have “a vital concern for the practical application of ideas in the context of welfare of society, and this ‘practice’ is the deliberative expression of opinion and analysis” (46). In other words, public intellectuals guide action, rather than partake in it.

1.3 Relationship Between Public Intellectuals and the Media

Since mass media, such as television and social media, is a concept of more recent times, only Said, Lauwaert and Heynders comment on the relationship between public intellectuals and those forms of mass media. Concerning intellectuals and their connection to the media, Said states that the media form the politics that drive intellectuals. Intellectuals can only resist these politics by fighting their visions and the power structures created by the media, by way of extrication. Intellectuals have to show the truth (39-40). In other words, the untruthfulness of the media drives intellectuals by giving them the task to show said falseness. Around 1968, intellectuals fled to the mass media since these provided them with easy ways to reach their public. This enlarged their audience but also made intellectuals dependent on that audience (85). Intellectuals started to work in order to please their audience which connected them to institutions. When these institutions lose power, so do intellectuals (86). Consequently, intellectuals might be inclined to please their audience in order to remain powerful. However, when the pleasing of an audience or employer takes the place of debating with other intellectuals, the work of intellectuals is lost (86). The question if it is possible for intellectuals to be completely independent (87) resurfaces. According to Lauwaert, intellectuals cannot be separated from the societal system that is the media. Intellectuals think according to the flow of the media, which means that their thinking is sharp, economic, quick

and topical (5). With the media, Lauwaert is referring to contemporary media, in which news is up-to-date and quickly spread. The ways of thinking Lauwaert indicates here are consequently those of contemporary intellectuals. Concerning the connection between public intellectuals and the media, Heynders states that public intellectuals, nowadays, have to be able “to come across well on radio and TV or ... be visible on blogs, Twitter and in public events” (47). In that way, public intellectuals are undeniably connected to the media.

Lauwaert and Heynders comment on the way the connection between the media and public intellectuals influences public intellectuals’ work. According to Lauwaert, the fact that intellectuals speak to an anonymous public is reflected in their way of writing, namely in “style, content, way of thinking and representation” (4, my translation). Thus, the media influences the appearance of intellectuals’ work. According to Lauwaert, intellectuals are writers and the language they use is impulsive, practical and an active aid. In the media, language is a channel for facts. Therefore, the language of intellectuals is not fit for the media. It has to be language freed from specialism (12-13). In other words, Lauwaert states that language in the media has to be sterile and factual. However, not all forms of media require said specialised language. Heynders first of all mentions that, with the relevance of the media, public intellectuals have to possess a certain receptivity which she explains as “a capacity for creative, original thinking, something that is ahead of events and necessarily experimental, that has to do with a specific talent for putting events in an imaginative frame in order to confront and persuade the audience” (47). Furthermore, Heynders, too, mentions how modern public intellectuals’ use of the media influences their work: “today’s marketplace is the television show in which the public intellectual tries to get as much attention in as short a time as possible, knowing that an emotion one-liner can be more effective than an elaborate ethical appeal” (45). The language of public intellectuals is adapted to the form of modern media

they use. In conclusion, both the work of public intellectuals as well as public intellectuals themselves are unavoidably influenced by the media.

1.4 Comprehensive List of Features

Three extensive inventories conclude this chapter. They are connected to the three subjects into which the chapter is divided. The features present in the inventories are derived from the works of Benda, Gramsci, Said, Lauwaert and Heynders. Consequently, some of the features might be contradictory. Similar features are merged into a single item. This has resulted in a fluid or morphological characterisation of public intellectuals. This list of qualities is worked with throughout this thesis.

Who are public intellectuals?

Which place do public intellectuals take in society?

- Public intellectuals are an elevated group of kings of philosophy. They are situated above society.
- Public intellectuals are xenophobic people.
- Everyone in society is a public intellectual.
- Public intellectuals are part of society.
- Public intellectuals move between a position within society and a position detached from society.

To which part of society do public intellectuals belong?

- There is one continuous group of public intellectuals, who are not defined by society or profession.
- Public intellectuals are part of the group in society to which they feel connected.
- Public intellectuals are connected to the weak and voiceless in society.
- Public intellectuals are connected to educated people.

What position of authority do public intellectuals take?

- Public intellectuals are tempted by authority.
- Public intellectuals are authorities.
- Public intellectuals are not aristocratic or haughty.

What is the professional character of public intellectuals?

- Being a public intellectual is not a profession.
- Public intellectuals do not use previously gained knowledge when functioning as public intellectuals.
- Public intellectuals use previously gained knowledge when functioning as public intellectuals.

Are public intellectuals active or passive?

- Public intellectuals glorify the practical and have a thirst for immediate results.
- Public intellectuals are active within an industrial society.
- Public intellectuals are conservative and shun novelties.
- Public intellectuals use writing for practical purposes.
- Public intellectuals work towards future goals.

What does the public intellectual do?

Public intellectuals discover issues in society and reflect on them.

- Public intellectuals see their own mind as the national mind and conflict their own ideas with other national ideas.
- Public intellectuals do not develop and have performed the same profession for generations.
- Public intellectuals' goal is to change people's minds.
- Public intellectuals work as mediators between the higher and lower ranks of a societal group.

- Public intellectuals expose painful, societal issues and provide a solution for those issues.
- Public intellectuals convey their own opinion.
- Public intellectuals answer questions posed by society.

How do public intellectuals perform their task?

- Public intellectuals think before persuading others to act.
- Public intellectuals do not work with facts, only with their own opinion.
- Public intellectuals consider facts before persuading others to act.

Are public intellectuals passive or active in solving societal issues?

- Public intellectuals are interested in issues of realism and are in pursuit of concrete advantages.
- Public intellectuals use only the exercise of thought as means of action.
- Public intellectuals are active and practical participants in society.
- Public intellectuals guide action and do not partake in it.

What is the relationship between public intellectuals and the media?

What is the relationship between public intellectuals and the media?

- The media drives public intellectuals, because public intellectuals want to show the untruthfulness of the media.
- Public intellectuals are part of the mass media which provides them with a large audience. However, they are now dependent on that large audience and work in order to please them.
- Public intellectuals are inseparable from the media. They think on the flow of the media.

How does the media influence public intellectuals?

- The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectuals write:
 - The language of public intellectuals is not suitable for the media. The media requires sterile and factual, specialised language.
 - The language of public intellectuals is designed to appeal to their audience.
 - The language used by public intellectuals is sharp, economic, quick and topical.

- The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectuals think. They think on the movement of the media which is quick and up-to-date. Public intellectuals have a creative mind and anticipate on events.

2. Blogs

This chapter considers blogs and the possibilities that come with them. After discussing the history of blogs, an inventory of features belonging to blogs is presented, based on eight different texts by Kristin Roeschenthaler Wolfe, Greg Myers, Christoph Meinel et al., Brook Bolander, Pranam Kolari et al., Brian Ekdale et al., Barbara K. Kaye and Michael Chau et al. This inventory resembles the list of features ascribed to public intellectuals. The features are subdivided into traits concerning the form of blogs and aspects related to the possibilities accompanying blogs. The definitions of blogs are, contrasting to definitions of public intellectuals, largely in accordance with each other. In other words, there seems to be a quite unambiguous definition of blogs. An explanation for this might be that blogs are a relatively new form of media, since they only came into existence in 1998 (Myers 16) and are still in the earlier stages of development (Du et al. 4). Consequently, they have not had as much time to develop a diverse set of characteristics, as public intellectuals have. Furthermore, since blogs are still quite novel, not as much is written about them. Therefore, the inventory of blog features created in this chapter is shorter and more concise than the list of features characterising public intellectuals as presented in chapter one.

2.1 History of Blogs

According to Wolfe in her book *Blogging: How Our Private Thoughts Went Public*, blogs began as a way for technology enthusiasts to share links to other websites with each other (13). Myers, in *The Discourse of Blogs and Wikis*, agrees largely with Wolfe on this. He specifies the technology enthusiasts as “website designers” who shared links (16). Meinel et al. search the origins of the blog somewhere else. In *Blogosphere and Its Exploration*, the origins of blogs are said to be online diaries (13). Nonetheless, these different roots of blogs have something in common. They are all based on sharing, whether it is the sharing of links or the sharing of personal thoughts and experiences. Wolfe comments on reasons for the latter

form of sharing. According to her, “self-presentational writing provide[s] a way for a person to be remembered” (7). Being remembered is exactly what people want, in order to be immortal (idem.). In other words, personal writing provides people with a means to overcome death by being remembered. Furthermore, this kind of writing might teach future readers about mistakes as well as successes in the past, allowing those readers to grow and evolve (7). In this way, self-presentational writing is not just concerned with the self. According to Wolfe, this kind of writing went through a development. First, it was confined to diaries (8; cf. Meinel 13). However, the writer of a diary is often the complete readership of that diary at the same time, since diaries are mostly seen as private. In order to reach more people, self-presentational writing was published in journals where more people could read it. Despite this opening up, the author could still determine and control who would read the work (Wolfe 8). Bolander, in her book *Language and Power in Blogs*, states that blogs have “developed and evolved in accordance with medium and social factors” (Herring qtd. by Bolander 10). Wolfe specifies the medium which allowed blogs to evolve as the World Wide Web, or internet, which was invented not just for reading but for writing as well (12). This writing part of the internet gained importance with the development of blogs. Both Wolfe and Myers mention the factors that contributed to the evolution of blogs. Blogging was allowed to grow into a mass medium through new software (Wolfe 14). This new software made blogging easily accessible to people other than technology enthusiasts (Myers 16). After blogs became more available, blogging became a more common form of communication (Wolfe 15). The number of blogs increased remarkably and became a frequently used medium after 9/11 (14). Myers is more careful with the exact date of this blog-boom. However, he too specifies it to happen between 2001 and 2005 (16). Thus, after an event which had enormous, societal impact, the public need to share increased, allowing blogs to become mainstream.

There is not one, all-encompassing type of blog. Meinel et al., Kolari et al. and Chau

et al. try to classify the different kinds of blogs. According to Meinel et al. there is a struggle going on “to find a generally accepted typology of all weblogs in existence” (18). Kolari et al. agree on this in their article “SVM for the Blogosphere: Blog Identification and Splog Detection”. According to them, there is no general agreement on the genre content of blogs (1). There are so many types of blogs that it is difficult to find a comprehensive definition. However, blogs may be divided into certain classes (Meinel 18). This classification is made by Meinel et al. on the following subjects: genre and content; authorship; information flow; and medium used (20-23). Of these subjects, they divide authorship into personal and corporate. Personal blogs are mostly a reflection on the author’s life, whereas corporate blogs are tools for communication within a company (Meinel et al. 20-38). Chau et al. come with a third classification of authorship in their article “A Blog Mining Framework”. According to them issue blogs are blogs used for commentary and opinion and most of them focus on discussing and debating current events (37). Chau et al. classify blogs according to their purpose in five major categories: documenting the blogger’s life; providing commentary and opinions; expressing deeply felt emotions; articulating ideas through writing; and forming and maintain community forums (37). These categories can never be completely separated, since blogs concerning commentary and opinions also articulate ideas through writing.

In this thesis, the content, information flow and medium used in the four designated blogs are similar. The blogposts are concerned with religious extremism, the information flow is one of two ways in which a discussion between author and reader is possible and the medium is the internet. Concerning authorship, only the classification by Chau et al. will be inserted in the inventory, since it is the only one applicable to the kind of blogs discussed in this thesis.

2.2 Form of Blogs

Concerning the appearance of blogs, there is little disagreement. The structure of a blog is similar to that of a journal, with several posts which are ordered by date (Meinel 7). These posts contain a title, a publication date and content (9). According to Kolari et al., blogposts are usually displayed in reversed chronological order, however this is not always the case (2). Myers mentions this order of posts as well (20). He adds that a blog has to contain a possibility for readers to leave a comment (20). This is a feature of blogs Meinel et al. mention as well and they consider it an important part of a blog (17). According to Wolfe, these comments are not just a means of communication between the reader and the author, but between readers as well (17). Readers find this interaction the most important feature of blogs (Ekdale et al. 219). Since blogs provide their readers with one-way as well as two-way forms of communication, readers are able to be as actively engaged as they wish (Kaye 75). Myers specifies the lay-out of blogs as existing out of three columns of which the middle one is the widest and filled with mostly text (18). The description of Meyers is similar to Kolari et al.'s description of the homepage of a blog, in which the most recent blogposts are listed. However, according to Meyers blogs exist out of more than just a homepage. Blogs also contain "pages for category, author specific and individual blog posts" (2).

Concerning the content of blogs, Meinel et al. state that they are "a mixed environment of real-life social interactions, other social networks, news portals and traditional webpages" (10). These social interactions are an important part of blogs and they come into existence through the possibility for readers to comment on blogposts. According to Wolfe, this input of readers, who are known and unknown to the author, is valued by the author (8). However, a lot of feedback and many readers is not the norm for a great number of blogs. The internet is just too vast for many to achieve this (18). The fact that bloggers value the opinions of their readers shows an interest in society, something which Wolfe also notices: bloggers

become “so invested in the community around them that [they want] to give something back” (68). Myers comments on the importance of a blogger’s readership as well. According to him, bloggers adjust their ways of expressing their opinions in order to interact with their audience” (95). In other words, the language used in blogposts is adjusted to an audience. Wolfe comments on this too, stating that blogs might portray a change in the tone used by the authors in posts. She specifies this as the tone becoming less formal and resembling everyday speech. Consequently, the posts are not written grammatically correct (17). Finally, Wolfe and Myers also mention the portrayal of the author within blogposts. Posts tend to contain a strong sense of the author’s passion (Wolfe 19). Wolfe fails to specify what these passions are, however they are described by her as an important part of the author’s identity (19). Consequently, we might assume that by passion Wolfe means whatever the author deems important and is passionate about. At the same time, a blogger reflects on public issues and starts a discussion with the public connected to those issues. In this way, the public becomes the personal and the private becomes public in blogs (20). However, even though bloggers put a lot of themselves in their posts, they do not share all details about them (18). According to Myers, an example of a detail that should be left out by bloggers is place, since blogs are placeless (48). Myers assumes that readers do not care where bloggers are situated, since they are supposed to have a global vision and should not be influenced by their environment (49). Later on, Myers contradicts himself by stating that places give identity to bloggers and provide a perspective on a topic (57). I agree with the latter statement, since surroundings determine an important part of one’s identity and cannot simply be left out. Rather, readers are more likely to be interested in the author’s environment since this insight might make it easier for them to connect to the author. Concerning the subjects of blogposts, the most significant one is the portrayal of news. Blogs are perceived to be more trustworthy (Ekdale et al. 219) and more up-to-date than traditional forms of media (Kaye 77). The news is not

brought in an objective way (Kaye 76) but in an in-depth manner that is easy to understand for the general public (Ekdale et al. 219). Thus, even though the news is brought in an informal and subjective manner, readers still perceive it as credible. This might have to do with the fact that readers are able to point out the wrongs of the blogger via the comment section (Kaye 76). In this way, readers feel a sense of supervision over the discussed news, which might make the news appear more trustworthy.

2.3 Options of Blogs

Many of the authors discussed in this chapter agree that blogs allow authors to distribute their opinions freely. Meinel et al. describe blogs as a completely new channel that supports freedom of expression (v). Chau et al. agree with this statement. According to them, “bloggers use this venue to freely express their opinions and emotions” (36). Wolfe states something largely similar, when she says that “blogging has made it possible for people to share their opinions and thoughts freely” (13). However, blogging is not as unrestricted as it might seem at first sight and there are multiple factors which influence the extent to which authors feel free to express themselves. Meinel et al. briefly touch upon this subject: “individuals are not entirely free in their actions, in reality they take account of the rational considerations of others, observe rules and structures and are constrained in their actions by the framework of the societal system” (27). In other words, although the internet provides bloggers with a large amount of freedom to express their opinions and thoughts and to a broad audience, bloggers are nevertheless restricted by their readership and the society of which they are part.

The second opportunity connected to blogs, is the possibility of a two-way conversation. Meinel et al. state that the internet is a place of communication, interaction and collaboration (6). People are not just consuming information but are also participating in creating and discussing it (7). Blogs provide a kind of communication between reader and writer that is direct and unlimited (7). Thus, whereas for example books allow only the author

to speak, blogs allow readers to respond to the opinion of authors and engage in a discussion. Wolfe agrees to this when she mentions that blogging is about sharing and discussing information in a dialogue between reader and writer (15). Furthermore, Wolfe touches on the scope of this two-way communication, stating that the internet allows people to write, read and respond to each other no matter where they are located in the world (13). However true, this statement is a little carelessly put, since certainly not everyone has access to the internet, due to location, income or other factors.

Bolander is the only one to discuss the access to power which is connected to blogging. She focusses on “the linguistic exercise of power when bloggers and readers interact with one another in personal/diary blogs” (35). According to Bolander, even though bloggers have structural power, which means that they can decide the lay-out and subjects of blogposts, the readers may also exercise power through commenting on posts and thus produce text (35). With the exercise of power, Bolander is referring to the possibility of controlling the conversation (36). This power is then further explained as speakership and turn-taking (44). Turn-taking is the process of speaking and taking the lead in a conversation. Thus, bloggers exercise control when it comes to the subjects and the lay-out of blogposts. However, readers control the conversation following the blogposts, which demonstrates itself through their comments on these posts. This subject of power in blogs is certainly interesting concerning public intellectuals, since they actively try to persuade others of their opinion. In a sense, they try to exercise power over their readership.

2.4 Inventory of Blog Features

Similar to the inventory of features ascribed to public intellectuals, a list of traits ascribed to blogs is established. The features present in the inventory are derived from the previously discussed works and are therefore contradictory on certain points. Since the authors agreed on

many points, these are merged into a single item. This chain of features resembles a morphological characterisation of blogs.

History of Blogs

Purpose of Blogs

- Documenting bloggers' life.
- Providing commentary and opinions.
- Expressing deeply felt emotions.
- Articulating ideas through writing.
- Forming and maintaining community forums.

Shape of Blogs

Appearance

- The structure of blogs is similar to that of a journal, with several posts which are ordered by date.
- Posts contain a title, a publication date and content.
- Blogposts are usually posted in reversed chronological order.
- Blogs have to contain the possibility for readers to leave a comment.
- The homepage of blogs exists out of three columns of which the middle one is the widest and filled with mostly text.
- Blogs contain pages for category, author specific and individual blog posts.

Content

- Blogs are a mixed environment of real-life social interactions, other social networks, news portals and traditional webpages.
- Blogs convey news in an in-depth manner that is still understandable to the general audience.

- Language used in blogs is adjusted to an audience.
- The tone in blogs is less formal and resembles everyday speech.
- Blogposts are not written grammatically correct.
- Blogposts contain a strong sense of the author's passion.
- Blogs reflect on public issues.
- Blogs start a discussion with their readers.
- Bloggers do not share all details about themselves.
- Blogs are placeless.

Options of Blogs

Freedom of expression

- Blogs are a completely new channel that supports freedom of expression.
- Bloggers are not entirely free in their actions. In reality, they are restricted in their work by certain influences. For example, they take account of the rational considerations of others, observe rules and structures and are constrained in their actions by the framework of the societal system.

Conversation and discussion

- Blogs are a place of communication, interaction and collaboration.
- Blogs provide a kind of communication between readers and writers that is direct and unlimited.
- Blogs provide a means of communication between readers.
- Readers are able to determine their rate of participation in the discussion.
- Readers are able to point out the wrongs of the blogger.
- Bloggers have structural power.
- Readers may exercise power through commenting on posts.

3. Public Intellectual Bloggers

In this chapter, a new chain of features ascribed to public intellectuals is established, with the traits belonging to blogs incorporated in it. A comparison between the inventory of blogs as established in chapter two of this thesis and the inventory of features ascribed to public intellectuals as established in chapter one of this thesis, shows the relevance of such an interweaving of features. A visual as well as a textual comparison of both inventories show a high level of correspondence between features of blogs and public intellectuals. The characterisation obtained through the merging of both inventories is better described as a role adopted by public intellectuals. The role is connected to the medium that is used by public intellectuals since that medium is incorporated into the role. For this thesis, the role is defined as that of a public intellectual blogger. The role created in this chapter is still too broad and will be specified in the course of chapter four and five.

Exceptionally little has been written about the relationship between public intellectuals and the specific medium they use. It remains a matter of guessing why researchers avoid or perhaps forget this subject. One reason might be that technology is developing extremely fast and the different forms of media accessible to public intellectuals change and multiply on an equal pace. This could suggest that research and statements concerning a certain form of media are quickly deemed outdated when a more novel version of that medium develops. Thus, by discarding the medium used by public intellectuals, research results might be expected to remain relevant for a longer period of time. Another reason for the overlooking of the medium used by public intellectuals might be the almost stereotypical character of public intellectuals. When mentioning a public intellectual, the image of a meditating philosopher quickly surfaces. Books and journals are forms of media deemed suitable for that stereotype, rather than more novel forms of media such as blogs or Twitter. This view of public intellectuals is fairly outdated and limited, as this thesis proves. Nevertheless, it is of great

importance to reflect on the relationship between public intellectuals and the medium they use, since that medium is of great influence on the work of public intellectuals. It should be noted that public intellectuals are not restricted to written media only. Their pursuits and tasks might also be performed through speech or forms of visual art. Examples of such forms of media are talk shows, where public intellectuals might appear and orally convince their audience of their ideas, or even graffiti, in which public intellectuals might visually portray those same ideas to their audience. The medium public intellectuals choose to work with determines to a large extent the reach of their work. A printed book is likely to reach a smaller amount of people than a blogpost, which is distributed via the Internet. Such a blogpost is easier to access as readers, most likely, do not have to pay to access content and do not have to purchase the text in a bookstore or obtain it from a library. Many newspapers and books are currently available online too. However, a blog, by virtue of the kind of text that it is, caters to different needs and interests. Its style and content attracts a broad and more general audience. Furthermore, the speed of production and distribution of a work is significantly higher on the internet, since it is not printed. Connected to the reach of public intellectuals, is the audience that is reached. The medium used by public intellectuals is of influence here as well. The internet is more and more pervasive in the lives of adolescents (Gross 634). Consequently, an online medium, such as a blog, reaches those people sooner than a printed text. Finally, the medium used by public intellectuals affects the style of their message. For example, a message on Twitter cannot exceed 140 characters. The way in which public intellectuals present their message on such a medium is remarkably different from the way they present their message in a book or an extensive article. This presentation of their message then, in turn, influences the readership of that message. A Twitter post is more likely to be read by younger people who are active on social media, whereas a printed article is more likely to be read by specialists. In summary, public intellectuals cannot be seen as one single, unchanging

entity or profession. Rather, public intellectuals might be perceived to take on roles. The character of these roles is partly determined by the medium that public intellectuals use. For example, public intellectual bloggers are different from public intellectual columnists. Their roles differ on certain points which are influenced by the medium used, such as their style of writing. Public intellectuals are able to alternate between those different roles. In this thesis, only the role of public intellectual bloggers is established and discussed.

The comparison between both inventories is depicted in a textual and visual representation in order to make matters more clear. The visual representation of the comparison can be found in the appendix under the number one. On the left side of the visual representation, the complete list of blog features is depicted. On the right side of that image, the corresponding features from the inventory concerning public intellectuals are rendered. When an arrow has a cross through it, there is no correspondence between both inventories. Those features are still incorporated in the role of public intellectual bloggers in order to keep the inventory as broad as possible. The role is limited in chapter four and five of this thesis.

The textual comparison between both inventories is sorted according to the inventory of blog features as depicted in chapter two. The inventory is divided into five sections, respectively: purpose of blogs, appearance, content, freedom of expression, and conversation and discussion.

3.1 Purpose of Blogs

Through articulating ideas, public intellectuals try to change people's minds. They provide commentary on and expose painful, societal issues and make an attempt at providing a solution to those issues. When performing those tasks, public intellectuals allow their own opinion to prevail. Consequently, they often express deeply felt emotions in their work.

The forming and maintaining of community forums is not exactly part of the features ascribed to public intellectuals. However, since public intellectuals do bother themselves with

societal issues and start a discussion with their public they, in a way, form a community with their readers within their works.

The only feature ascribed to blogs which is in no way relatable to public intellectuals is the fact that blogs are used to document the blogger's life. Public intellectuals do not focus on their personal life. They do, however, show their personalities in their work since they express their opinions, ideas and emotions. Since this is just one of the many purposes of blogs, the discrepancy is trivial when deciding whether blogs are appropriate for public intellectuals.

3.2 Appearance

The assumption that the structure of blogs resembles that of a journal - with posts organised by date and in reversed chronological order - connects to the way in which the media shapes the thinking of public intellectuals. Public intellectuals think on the movement of the media. The subjects of their work are provided by the news brought to them through the media. This means that public intellectuals are up-to-date and quick to respond. This is reflected in the blogposts portraying a date, being organised according to that date and updated according to relevance. Furthermore, this shows how the work of public intellectuals depends on the media and, consequently, how public intellectuals are inseparable from that media. The possibility for readers to leave a comment connects to public intellectuals being part of society, since they are open to interaction with their readers. However, public intellectuals are able to retain a distanced position from that same society because they still have the freedom to refrain from responding to the comments left by readers. The presumption that blogposts contain a title and content is irrelevant for their suitability for public intellectuals. Naturally, a blogpost contains content, otherwise it would simply not exist.

3.3 Content

The belief that the language used in blogs is adjusted to an audience is identical to the feature which states that public intellectuals design their language to appeal to the audience.

Furthermore, the language in blogs is often less formal and resembles everyday speech. This is in agreement with the statement that the language used by public intellectuals is not sterile, factual and specialised language. This sort of language is what distinguishes the way in which blogs offer news from the way in which more traditional forms of media achieve a similar goal.

Blogposts transmitting the author's passion connects to the presumption that public intellectuals convey their own opinion in their work. It is needless to say they are passionate about their own beliefs.

The feature of bloggers refraining from providing their readers with all details about themselves is in agreement with public intellectuals moving between a position within society and a position detached from that society. By providing certain details about themselves, bloggers are connecting to their readers but by withholding some information they remain detached from that society as well. This relates to public intellectuals not focussing on their personal lives, but still portraying their personality through their works. They show their public what is necessary to connect to them, yet they refrain from displaying their entire personal life in order to retain a more distanced position.

3.4 Freedom of Expression

The belief that blogs are a channel which supports freedom of expression connects to public intellectuals exposing painful, societal issues. Blogs enable public intellectuals to portray such issues more freely and easily.

Bloggers are restrained in their freedom by certain factors such as audience, society and rules. The freedom public intellectuals do have allows them to move in a way that is

detached from society. However, they are formed to a certain extent by the society they are part of and this partially limits their freedom of expression. Furthermore, public intellectuals are said to work in order to please their audience because of the media. This is another limiting feature for the freedom of expression of bloggers, who are unquestionably part of the media.

3.5 Conversation and Discussion

Bloggers start discussions with their public. This is in agreement with the belief that public intellectuals are part of a society and start a conversation with the society to which they belong. Furthermore, blogs provide a certain communication between readers and writers. Public intellectuals use this communication in order to convey their own opinion and persuade their readers to act. The comment section that is part of blogposts allows readers to start a discussion with other readers. This enables a more extensive discussion concerning the subjects of blogposts, aiding public intellectuals in their attempt to make their readers reflect on certain issues and possibly change their minds. The possibility for a discussion between writers and readers is a distinguishing feature of blogs. Readers are able to comment as soon as a text is made public. This is not the case with articles in a newspaper or journal, which offer mostly one-way forms of communication (Kaye 75). The possibility of a two-way form of communication entails certain consequences for the relationship between reader and writer. Authors are more likely to take their readership into account when it is easy for the audience to comment on a text. They might write in a way which keeps the possibility of a discussion in mind, for example by avoiding or actually focussing on subjects which spark a discussion. Furthermore, when entering a discussion with the readers, the relationship between those readers and the author becomes closer. Those writers are likely to value their readership more than authors of works in the form of a one-way conversation.

Public intellectuals are tempted to authority, but will never assume a haughty position.

Bloggers only have structural power and thus only have authority up to a certain level. This position does not allow them to be haughty. Readers of blogs are in a position of power as well. They are able to determine their rate of participation and they have the possibility to point out wrongs of the blogger. Furthermore, they exercise power through the comments they make and the discussion they start. This connects to the assumption that public intellectuals are not the ones to act, but others are.

The role of public intellectual bloggers, derived from the previous comparison between both inventories, can be found in the appendix under the number two.

4. Four Blogposts

The role of public intellectual bloggers as established in chapter three of this thesis is kept as broad as possible. In order to be able to make a legitimate statement concerning which features are lacking in that role and which features are irrelevant, the role will be compared to four actual blogposts from the blogs *Arnon Grunberg*, *Ann Coulter*, *Think Progress* and *De Dagelijkse Standaard*. Two of these blogs are written by American authors, the other two by Dutch authors. Of these two blogs, one has a conservative attitude and the other takes a progressive stance. The progressive Dutch blog *Arnon Grunberg* is written by Arnon Grunberg. Grunberg is a Dutch writer of novels, columns, articles in mostly progressive newspapers and magazines, and a personal blog (*Auteur, Biografie: Arnon Grunberg*). The conservative American blog *Ann Coulter* is the personal blog of Ann Coulter. Coulter is a conservative activist and writer (Limbaugh xiii-xviii). *Think Progress* is an American blog with multiple authors, which has won the award for Best Liberal Blog in 2006 (*The 2008 Weblog Awards*). Finally, the conservative Dutch blog is *De Dagelijkse Standaard*, a political blog with, again, multiple authors, founded by Joshua Livestro. Livestro was a columnist for *De Telegraaf* and *Het Buitenhof*. *De Telegraaf* is a conservative newspaper with a reputation of being sensational and amusing. *Het Buitenhof* is a television show in which guests discuss and debate certain items with each other. Livestro was fired from *Het Buitenhof* due to his extremely conservative stance (*Gasten: Joshua Livestro*). The fact that *De Dagelijkse Standaard* en *Think Progress* are blogs with multiple authors is not an issue for this thesis. Only one blogpost by a single author will be discussed, which makes these blogposts comparable to the blogposts from *Arnon Grunberg* and *Ann Coulter*. The posts discussed in this thesis are respectively “Emergency, War” by Arnon Grunberg, “Refugees – Another One For the ‘Not Our Problem’ File” by Ann Coulter, “Less Than 2 Percent of Terrorist Attacks in the E.U. Are Religiously Motivated” by Beenish Ahmed, and “ISIS heeft de EgyptAir-crash

nog niet opgeëist. De mogelijke reden daarvoor is behoorlijk angstaanjagend” by Paul van der Bas. Each one of these blogposts focusses on a similar subject, namely the religious extremist war in the Middle East and the accompanying issues of terrorism and refugees. As mentioned in the introduction, this war is currently ongoing in both the United States and the Netherlands. Since time and environment are of influence on the work of public intellectual bloggers, this subject of the discussed blogposts is relevant for this thesis. Each blogpost is separately discussed according to the broadly defined role of public intellectual bloggers as established in chapter three. These comparisons show which traits of the role of public intellectual bloggers are relevant for the blogpost concerned. Furthermore, a profile will be created of each blogpost and its author, in an attempt to characterise them. The blogposts are discussed in random order.

4.1 Arnon Grunberg ²

From the blog *Arnon Grunberg*, the blogpost “Emergency, War”, written by Arnon Grunberg, is discussed. In this blogpost Grunberg discusses an article by Steven Erlanger in the *International New York Times*. Grunberg reflects on the war of European inhabitants and politicians on Muslim inhabitants of Europe. He asks everyone to “forgive [the Muslim terrorists], because they don’t know what they are doing” (Grunberg).

The length of Grunberg’s blogpost is its first remarkable characteristic. The largest part of the blog exists of a quote from an article by Steven Erlanger, to which Grunberg responds in no more than two sentences. However, in these two sentences Grunberg manages to achieve a lot. He provides commentary on and his opinion concerning the current attitude of European inhabitants and politicians against Muslim inhabitants of Europe (2.1.3.1;

² “Emergency, War” matches the following traits of the role of public intellectual bloggers as seen in figure 2: 1.1.4; 1.1.4.1; 1.1.5; 1.1.5.1; 1.1.5.2; 1.1.5.3; 1.2.2; 1.2.4; 1.3.1; 1.3.1.1; 1.3.2; 1.3.3; 1.3.1.1; 1.4.3; 1.5.1; 1.5.4; 1.5.5; 2.1.3; 2.1.3.1; 2.1.3.2; 2.1.3.3; 2.1.5; 2.1.5.1; 2.1.5.3; 2.1.5.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.6.1; 2.1.6.2; 2.1.6.3; 2.1.7; 2.2.1; 2.2.1.1; 2.2.1.2; 2.3.2; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.4; 3.1.2; 3.1.2.1; 3.1.3; 3.1.3.1; 3.2.1.2; 3.2.1.2.1; 3.2.1.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.2.1; 3.2.2.2; 3.2.2.3

2.1.6.2³). He implicitly tells his readers that their current opinion is wrong, by requesting them to change their attitudes: “forgive [the Muslim terrorists]” (Grunberg). In doing so, he guides his readers to action and takes a position of authority (1.3.2; 2.3.2; 2.3.4; 1.5.4). The request focusses on achieving short term results, since Grunberg expects the action to take place the next day (Grunberg) (1.5.5; 1.5.1).

A second noteworthy characteristic of Grunberg is his style of writing. Since he uses only two lines to achieve all the above, Grunberg writes economically and topical (3.2.1.3). His language is clear and quite neutral, which forces readers to fill in certain blanks in the text themselves. Grunberg, due to his limited amount of text, cannot be explicit about everything. This kind of reading most likely requires a more educated audience (1.2.4). Even though Grunberg takes a position of authority, he is never haughty in his writing. The only emotion Grunberg portrays is disappointment, through the word “unfortunately” (Grunberg) (2.1.6.1).

Thirdly, Grunberg does and does not respond to society at the same time (1.1.5). He acknowledges a fear that is present in society, namely the fear of Muslim terrorists (2.1.7). However, even though his readers are able to comment on his blogposts, Grunberg does not respond to these comments (2.2.1.1). This can still be perceived as a form of communication between the public intellectual and reader, since Grunberg addresses society and his readers respond. However, this discussion does not take the form of a conversation. It should also be noted that “Emergency, War” received only two responses, which is quite a small amount. This lack of response might be attributed to Grunberg’s emotionless and concise way of writing, which does not seem to generate a reaction from his public (2.1.3.3).

³ The numbers between brackets correspond to numbers in the role of public intellectual bloggers as seen in figure 2 in the appendix.

4.2 Ann Coulter⁴

From the *Ann Coulter* blog, the post “Refugees – Another One For the ‘Not Our Problem’ File”, written by Ann Coulter, is discussed. In this post, Coulter criticises the Islamic immigrants of the U.S. She points out that the U.S. citizens keep welcoming those immigrants, whilst they are solely there to bring the jihad into the U.S. and commit terrorist attacks.

Coulter’s style of writing is highly remarkable and a stark contrast to Grunberg’s tone of voice. The language Coulter uses in her blogpost is quite emotional and subjective (3.2.1.1.1; 2.1.6.1; 2.1.6.3). She translates her emotions mostly into sarcasm. For example, she discusses “a few other heart-warming humanitarian stories” and subsequently mentions a number of terrorists which entered the U.S. as immigrants and committed attacks on U.S. citizens (Coulter). This sarcasm is an expression of Coulter’s authority. By using such a tone, Coulter places herself above the people who still perceive the current U.S. immigration policy as a good thing. She does this by making those people seem unintelligent, installing herself in an almost haughty position (1.3.3). This kind of writing attracts a certain audience, which is most likely different from the audience drawn by Grunberg’s style of writing (1.2.2). No solid statements can be made about whether this is an educated audience or not. The readers attracted to Coulter’s way of writing are drawn to a style that, in a way, ridicules other people. Furthermore, they are drawn to Coulter’s emotional style of writing which might indicate that they express themselves in a similar fashion. The enormous amount of comments and the heated discussion following this blogpost confirms this suspicion (2.1.3.2).

⁴ “Refugees – Another One For the ‘Not Our Problem’ File” matches the following traits of the role of public intellectual bloggers as seen in figure 2: 1.1.2; 1.1.4; 1.1.4.1; 1.1.5; 1.1.5.1; 1.1.5.2; 1.1.5.3; 1.2.2; 1.3.1; 1.3.1.1; 1.3.2; 1.4.3; 1.5.3; 1.5.4; 1.5.5; 2.1.3; 2.1.3.1; 2.1.3.2; 2.1.3.3; 2.1.3.4; 2.1.5; 2.1.5.1; 2.1.5.3; 2.1.5.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.6.1; 2.1.6.2; 2.1.6.3; 2.1.7; 2.2.1; 2.2.1.1; 2.2.1.2; 2.2.3; 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.4; 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.2.1; 3.1.3; 3.1.3.1; 3.2.1; 3.2.1.1.1; 3.2.1.2; 3.2.1.2.1; 3.2.2; 3.2.2.1; 3.2.2.2; 3.2.2.3; 4.2.

Connected to Coulter's style of writing is the severity of her utterances. She makes relatively large statements concerning the current immigration policy (2.1.3.1; 2.1.5.3):

For the cherry on top, the whole welfare-dependent, Islamic terrorist-nurturing family won refugee status in America by claiming they were persecuted in Uzbekistan for *being Christians*. I am 100 percent sure there will be no thought given to deporting the rest of this useless family. (Coulter)

Coulter's future goals are of an equally severe character (2.1.3; 1.5.5): "Maybe it's time the world gets used to life without the United States. If our current immigration policies aren't stopped, this country will soon be nothing more than another failed Latin American state." Statements such as the previous ones make Coulter seem quite racist (1.1.2; 1.5.3). On the other hand, they do show the freedom of speech Coulter apparently feels (2.1.5.4). Since they are almost hyperbolic, Coulter's remarks appear as unfounded. She does mention facts in her post (2.2.3), such as: "Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, or 'the Blind Sheik,' imprisoned for life in the U.S. for his participation in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing: Asylee" (Coulter). However, she uses these facts in an oversimplified way, not weighing them against other, contradicting facts. Similar to Grunberg, Coulter responds to a public fear that is present, the fear of terrorist attacks (2.1.7). She communicates her thoughts on the matter to her readers and her readers are given the possibility to react through comments (1.1.5.1). However, Coulter refrains from reacting to these comments as well (1.1.5). She distances herself from her audience by not taking part in the discussion of this audience.

What is different from Grunberg's post, is the aforementioned large size of the discussion following Coulter's post (2.1.3.2). Coulter's post does seem to generate a reaction from her readership (2.1.3.3). This might be attributed to the emotional readers Coulter's style attracts. What's more, the fear of terrorist attacks already present amongst Coulter's readers is fuelled by the severity of her claims and her religious prejudice. This sparks a more intense

discussion than Grunberg's more formal and almost comforting message. It is up for discussion whether such a large discussion should be seen as a positive feature. Since the discussion is based on fear, racial prejudice and hyperbolic assumptions, it is most likely not a thoughtful, considerate conversation. Rather, it probably enlarges the already existing fear and racial prejudice of society.

4.3 Beenish Ahmed⁵

In "Less Than 2 Percent of Terrorist Attacks in the E.U. Are Religiously Motivated", Beenish Ahmed reflects on the portrayal of terrorist attacks as religiously motivated. She shows how most attacks are not part of that category and how and why media and politicians choose to portray them as being religiously motivated.

Ahmed's style of writing is quite extraordinary. She writes factual and almost emotionless, as if she writes an objective news article. However, even though she does not reflect on her own emotions, she refers to the readers' emotions and fears and addresses them. In this way, Ahmed's writing is not solely factual and she places herself, not in a haughty position, but on an equal level with her readership (1.3.3; 3.2.1.1.1; 1.2.2; 3.2.1.3). An example of this is when she addresses fears concerning Islamic terrorist attacks:

The murdering spree by two gunmen on the offices of a French satirical magazine have incited horror across the world. That's completely justified. But what's been lost in the mass outpourings of solidarity and condemnations of barbarity is the fact that so few of the terrorist attacks carried out in European Union countries are related to Islamist militancy. (Ahmed)

⁵ "Less Than 2 Percent of Terrorist Attacks in the E.U. Are Religiously Motivated" matches the following traits of the role of public intellectual bloggers: 1.1.4; 1.1.4.1; 1.1.5; 1.1.5.1; 1.1.5.2; 1.1.5.3; 1.2.2; 1.2.4; 1.3.1; 1.3.1.1; 1.3.2; 1.3.3; 1.3.3.1; 1.4.3; 1.5.4; 1.5.5; 2.1.3; 2.1.3.1; 2.1.3.2; 2.1.3.3; 2.1.3.4; 2.1.5; 2.1.5.1; 2.1.5.3; 2.1.5.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.6.2; 2.1.7; 2.1.8; 2.2.1; 2.2.1.1; 2.2.1.2; 2.2.3; 2.3.2; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.4; 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.2.1; 3.1.3; 3.1.3.1; 3.2.1; 3.2.1.1.1; 3.2.1.2; 3.2.1.2.1; 3.2.1.3; 3.2.2; 3.2.2.1; 3.2.2.2; 3.2.2.3; 4.3.

She acknowledges that it is understandable how people are afraid after an Islamic terrorist attack. Ahmed agrees with her readership first, before contradicting their viewpoint. In other words, she first becomes a part of her readership, before showing them what is wrong according to her. In this way, Ahmed makes sure she addresses the societal fear, not from a haughty position, but from a level of equality. In trying to convince her readership (2.1.3), Ahmed uses many facts, similar to Coulter (2.2.3). She, too, portrays mainly facts which support her personal opinion. She refrains from considering the matter from a variety of stances. This is another way in which her writing is not as objective as it might seem at first. Thus, Ahmed's blogpost offers news in an in-depth and understandable manner (2.1.8). However, the profoundness in her article concerns only one side of the discussion.

Ahmed implicitly conveys to her readers what she desires from them. Through showing them why their current attitude with regards to terrorist attacks is wrong, she implicitly asks them to change that position (1.5.5; 2.1.3; 2.1.5.1; 2.1.5.3). However, this future goal is not explicitly mentioned by Ahmed. Her readers are supposed to fill this in as they read Ahmed's text. Thus, similar to Grunberg's readership, Ahmed requires readers who are able to reflect on her text by themselves, without Ahmed's guidance. This kind of reading requires, most likely, a more educated audience (1.2.4).

Ahmed is, other than Grunberg and Coulter, explicit in showing the untruthfulness of the media (3.1.1):

Despite the low frequency of Islamist militant attacks, fears around them are continually stoked by politicians, law enforcement officials, and even the media which tends to highlight religiously-motivated attacks over political or environmental ones.

Thus, she reflects not only on society but also on the governing structures in that society. This might contribute to the air of authority she assumes in her article (1.3.2). A person who

criticises authorities in a seemingly constructed manner is often held in high esteem.

Even though Ahmed does not write emotionally, as Coulter does, but portrays a style of writing more similar to Grunberg, her blogpost is accompanied by a large discussion. Ahmed chooses not to respond to these comments as well (1.1.5; 1.1.5.1; 2.1.3.2). She does, other than Grunberg, write quite extensively about this topic. It could be that, since Ahmed simply provides her readers with more to respond to, a larger response is generated. Furthermore, it could also suggest a difference between American society and Dutch society. Perhaps American citizens are keener to respond to a blogpost and start or enter a discussion than Dutch people are (2.1.3.3).

4.4 Paul van der Bas ⁶

Paul van der Bas writes in “ISIS heeft de EgyptAir-crash nog niet opgeëist. De mogelijke reden daarvoor is behoorlijk angstaanjagend” about his belief that the crash of the EgyptAir airplane could be a terrorist attack. However, the crash has not yet been claimed by a terrorist organisation. Van der Bas shows how this might be a sign that a much bigger attack is coming.

Van der Bas’ style of writing resembles Coulter’s style in that it is quite emotional and thus less formal (2.1.6.1; 3.2.1.1.1). The emotion that largely dominates the blogpost is fear: “volgens regeringswoordvoerders en experts is de oorzaak van de crash waarschijnlijk een aanslag. Toch zwijgen alle terreurgroepen als het graf over de toedracht van het neergestorte vliegtuig. De reden voor die stilte is behoorlijk zorgwekkend” (Van der Bas). The fact that Van der Bas labels the situation with regards to the plane crash as alarming, responds and

⁶ “ISIS heeft de EypAir-crash nog niet opgeëist. De mogelijke reden daarvoor is behoorlijk angstaanjagend” matches the followig traits of the role of public intellectual bloggers: 1.1.4; 1.1.4.1; 1.1.5; 1.1.5.1; 1.1.5.2; 1.1.5.3; 1.2.2; 1.2.4; 1.3.1; 1.3.1.1; 1.3.2; 1.3.3; 1.3.3.1; 1.4.3; 1.5.1; 1.5.4; 1.5.5; 2.1.3; 2.1.3.1; 2.1.3.2; 2.1.3.3; 2.1.3.4; 2.1.5; 2.1.5.1; 2.1.5.3; 2.1.5.4; 2.1.6; 2.1.6.1; 2.1.6.2; 2.1.6.3; 2.1.7; 2.1.8; 2.2.1; 2.2.1.1; 2.2.1.2; 2.2.2; 2.2.3; 2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.2.1; 2.3.4; 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.2.1; 3.1.3; 3.1.3.1; 3.2.1; 3.2.1.1.1; 3.2.1.2; 3.2.1.2.1; 3.2.2; 3.2.2.1; 3.2.2.2; 3.2.2.3; 4.3.

even increases the already existing public fear (2.1.5; 2.1.5.3). This is similar to the effect that Coulter's style of writing has.

Another characteristic Van der Bas has in common with Coulter, are the hyperbolic claims he makes in his blogpost. They are based on supposed evidence (2.2.3), however these facts are too weak to support the weight of the assumptions Van der Bas bases on them (2.2.2). An example of one of Van der Bas' sources is Stratfor, an American discussion platform, who thinks that: "het [is] mogelijk dat ISIS (of welke terreurgroep hier ook achter zit) zwijgt, omdat ze hun infiltranten op vliegvelden en in luchtvaartmaatschappijen willen beschermen, en deze aanslag als test zien voor een nog veel grotere aanslag" (Van der Bas). Van der Bas uses this one assumption as a foundation for his prediction that a new terrorist attack is swiftly approaching:

De kans is groot dat terroristische groeperingen infiltranten hebben rondlopen onder het personeel van vliegvelden en vliegmaatschappijen, die van binnenuit kunnen helpen bij een aanslag. Als ISIS de aanslag zou opeisen, zou er een grootschalig onderzoek komen naar het personeel om zulke infiltranten op te sporen. Door te zwijgen over de toedracht van de vliegcrash, kunnen de ISIS-infiltranten onopgemerkt verder hun gang gaan met het voorbereiden van meer aanslagen.

By making such statements, the already existing fear of society concerning terrorist attacks is only enlarged. Furthermore, Van der Bas' suspicions are based on insufficient evidence, which makes his warning almost superfluous. It serves no real purpose besides unnecessarily frightening his readership.

Van der Bas places himself firmly within his readership (1.2.2). He uses words like "we", which make him equal to his readers. Furthermore, in his blogpost he urges intelligence services to act (1.5.5), on behalf of society, rather than addressing that society: "laten we

hopen dat de inlichtingendiensten deze mogelijkheid zeer serieus nemen, zodat deze terroristen snel worden uitgeschakeld.” This approach is similar to Coulter implying that the U.S. Immigration Policy should be changed. She, too, seeks a solution with the governing structures, rather than with society.

Similar to Grunberg’s post, Van der Bas’ post received only five responses despite the fact that his post is quite emotional and induces fear, as Coulter’s post does (2.1.3.2; 2.2.1.1). Furthermore, the responses given are critical about Van der Bas’ assumptions and they are all reflecting on the lack of evidence the post portrays (1.2.4; 2.1.3.4). This strengthens the previously made assumption that there is a difference between American society and Dutch society when it comes to responding to blogposts. The Dutch readership seems to respond more carefully and constructively, evaluating the text before creating a response (2.1.3.3). However, such a claim cannot be based on as little evidence as portrayed in this thesis. Similar to all the previously discussed authors, Van der Bas refrains from reacting to the comments (1.1.5).

4.5 Conclusion

All of the four discussed blogposts have a lot in common, such as the fact that they are concerned with public issues and that, by reflecting on those issues, the author expresses future targets. However, the blogposts still retain their own characteristics and personal profile.

Whereas Grunberg portrays a quite formal and concise style, Coulter and Van der Bas are hyperbolic writers who fill their words with emotions. Ahmed appears to be situated between both of those styles of writing. All these different styles of writing are appealing to a different kind of audience. Some of the posts require a more educated readership which is able to fill in the many blanks in the text. Other posts are attractive to a more emotional audience.

All of the authors, apart from Grunberg, mention facts in their posts. However, they use them in order to support their own viewpoint and they refrain from assessing the situation from different perspectives. This kind of foundation supports a biased outcome. Such an outcome might be expected from writers who try to convince their readership of an opinion. However, it might lead to unfounded and even unnecessary claims. It could also suggest that the medium of blogs obstructs the objectiveness of public intellectuals. Perhaps this form of media provokes a more biased style of writing, whereas more traditional forms of media do not. This might be ascribed to the two-way form of communication that is connected to blogs.

All of the authors portray the contradictory position in society as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis. They situate themselves with a certain part of society, by addressing societal issues in a manner as if they are speaking to equals. Furthermore, they allow their readers to respond to their posts via the comment section. This feigns the idea of a discussion between the author and readers. However, all of the authors refrain from responding to the comments of their readers. By doing this, they take a step back as it were and assume a more distanced position. It would seem that, not the style of writing, but the audience to which the message is directed is deciding whether or not a discussion unfolds. They determine the rate of their participation irrespective of the style of writing or subject of the post. In this way, the readers of blogs have power as well.

5. Accustomed Role of Public Intellectual Bloggers

In this chapter, the broad role of public intellectual bloggers as established in chapter three is limited, defined and complemented where necessary. This happens according to the discussed blogposts in chapter four of this thesis. It is necessary to note here that only four blogposts could be discussed, of four different blogs, due to the limited size of this thesis. Thus, the eventual role of public intellectual bloggers is by no means comprehensive or complete. In order to construct a comprehensive role, more research is required. In such a research attention should be paid to different kinds of blogs, a larger number of blogs, blogs situated in a larger number of different countries, a larger number of different authors and multiple subjects of blogposts. According to the four discussed blogposts in chapter four, many features of the role of public intellectual bloggers appear irrelevant and should be questioned, some features should be defined more carefully and some features should be added to the role as it is depicted in figure two in the appendix. A feature is deemed questionable when it corresponds to none of the discussed blogposts.

5.1 Questionable Features

The following features from the role of public intellectual bloggers appeared as irrelevant in chapter four and it can be questioned whether they are applicable to public intellectual bloggers.

Features 1.1.1 and 1.1.3 do not apply to the discussed blogposts. In these blogposts, the author is situated either within society or partly within society and partly in a position detached from society. Thus, public intellectual bloggers are not an elevated group of philosophers. However, they do possess certain distinguishing qualities, which make them suitable for their role as public intellectual bloggers. Not every person in society is able to take on that role.

Features 1.2.1 and 1.2.3. Since public intellectual bloggers are connected to society,

they are not a separate, continuous group of people who are insensitive to influences from that society. Furthermore, public intellectual bloggers are not solely connected to the weak and voiceless in society. Rather, they are connected to the people who identify themselves with their posts.

Features 1.4.1 and 1.4.2. The role of public intellectual bloggers is definitely one that can be taken on as a profession. It may or may not be simultaneously performed with a different profession. Knowledge gained within another profession cannot be turned off as if it were a switch. This knowledge is part of public intellectual bloggers and will be used when performing their role.

Features 1.5.2, 1.5.3 and 2.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers are not physically active in pursuing their goals for society. Rather, they use reflection and writing to change the minds of their readers in order for them to bring about the desired change.

Features 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4 and 2.1.5.2. In none of the discussed blogs is the mind of the author portrayed as the national mind. Furthermore, being a public intellectual blogger is not a profession that is inherited, which is a rather old fashioned idea. The idea of public intellectual bloggers being a mediator between higher and lower ranks of society is also not present in the discussed blogposts. Society is still divided into certain social levels, however those ranks are not as explicit anymore. Nevertheless, in none of the blogposts does the public intellectual blogger take up the role of mediator. Rather, they situate themselves in a certain position and articulate a standpoint belonging to that position. This is not necessarily a position between two ranks in society. Finally, even though a blogpost and the discussion surrounding it might be seen as a forum, there is no clear community to which this forum belongs.

Feature 2.2.2. All of the discussed public intellectual bloggers discuss knowledge outside of their own judgment before portraying their opinion.

Features 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.1.2. The language used by public intellectual bloggers is adapted to the medium they use and that is precisely why this language is suitable for the media. However, even though the language might be slightly less formal, there are no grammatical mistakes in the discussed blogposts.

Features of block 4. The blogs discussed in this chapter are not of the kind that discuss the blogger's life. Furthermore, the lay-out of blogs is not relevant for the content of the posts. Finally, as discussed before, blogs are not placeless. The surroundings in which public intellectual bloggers reside are of influence on their point of view.

5.2 Features to Be Added

Section 1.2. *Public intellectual bloggers are connected to the group of people which feels connected to their writing.* This element approaches feature 1.2.2 from a different angle. Instead of perceiving public intellectual bloggers as being part of a group they feel like they belong to, public intellectual bloggers are connected to the group of people which feels connected to their writing. This does not have to be a defined and existing societal group. The group might be comprised out of people from all different layers of society. However, what they do have in common is reflected in the blogpost of that public intellectual blogger. In this way, the connection between public intellectuals and their audience is approached from the perspective of the readers instead of that of the blogger.

Section 1.4. *The role of public intellectual blogger might be taken on as a profession and performed simultaneously with different professions.* The knowledge from other professions might be used when performing the role of public intellectual blogger. For example, a public intellectual blogger might be a professor of history at the same time. Knowledge on history he or she gained within that profession might be used when writing a blogpost.

Section 2.1.1. *The discussion which follows a blogpost does not depend on public*

intellectual bloggers and their style of writing. Rather, the responses and eventual discussion are determined by the readership. One kind of audience is keener to start a discussion than a different kind of readership. The intensity of such a discussion depends on the kind of people which comprise the audience of a blogpost as well.

Section 2.1.3. The way in which public intellectual bloggers choose to express themselves may differ per author and is not dependent on a certain political preference. Public intellectual bloggers use a style that fits their personality and with which they feel like they might bring across their message as best as possible.

Section 2.2. Public intellectual bloggers select and use facts and other forms of proof in order to strengthen their point and take a position of authority within their blogposts. Whether these facts are used in a rightful manner differs per public intellectual blogger.

Section 3.2.1. The language which public intellectual bloggers use is adapted to their personal style, their envisioned intentions and the medium they use. Consequently, this style may range from a formal way of writing to a more personal and emotional style. In other words, each public intellectual blogger has a different style of writing.

A role of public intellectual bloggers, based on the four discussed blogposts in chapter four and the discussed features in chapter five, can be found in the appendix under the number three. Once more, it should be stressed that this role is limited by the number of discussed blogs in this thesis.

Conclusion

As shown in this thesis, the definition of public intellectuals is a fluid one, constructed out of multiple and sometimes contradicting components. One could see it as an inventory of traits ascribed to public intellectuals throughout time. This flexible character shows the adaptability of public intellectuals to different times and environments which entails the changing of the media used by public intellectuals. Currently, there is not one, concrete definition for public intellectuals suitable for contemporary times. Furthermore, there is little mention of the medium used by public intellectuals. This thesis proposes precisely such a definition with the medium used by public intellectuals incorporated in it. Since there are many different forms of media public intellectuals might use, the created definition is better described as a role public intellectuals take on. This role differs with the medium used. The current text has made a first attempt to articulate the role of public intellectual bloggers.

The first part of this thesis showed the changing and fluid definition of public intellectuals throughout time. By comparing the traits ascribed to public intellectuals by five different writers in a period of time ranging from the early 1900s to the early 2000s, an inventory could be made out of all the different traits. In this inventory, similar traits were merged and contradictory traits were incorporated. This morphological characterisation of public intellectuals was gradually limited throughout this thesis and made suitable for contemporary public intellectual bloggers. First, a similar characterisation of blogs was made. Subsequently, the characterisations of blogs and public intellectuals were compared, showing the many points on which they connect, thus theoretically proving the suitability of blogs as a medium for public intellectuals. The inventory of traits ascribed to blogs was then incorporated into the inventory of features ascribed to public intellectuals, creating the role of public intellectual bloggers. This even longer morphological characterisation was subsequently compared four different, contemporary blogs. This comparison showed which

features appeared to be relevant for public intellectual bloggers, which features were not and which features were still lacking from the role. The features that appeared to be irrelevant for the contemporary blogs were then removed from the extensive characterisation. Features that were still missing in the role were added, thus creating a shorter and more concise definition. In this way, the role of public intellectual bloggers was created: a role which public intellectuals might adopt with the medium of blogs incorporated into it. This role might be taken on as a profession and performed simultaneously with other professions.

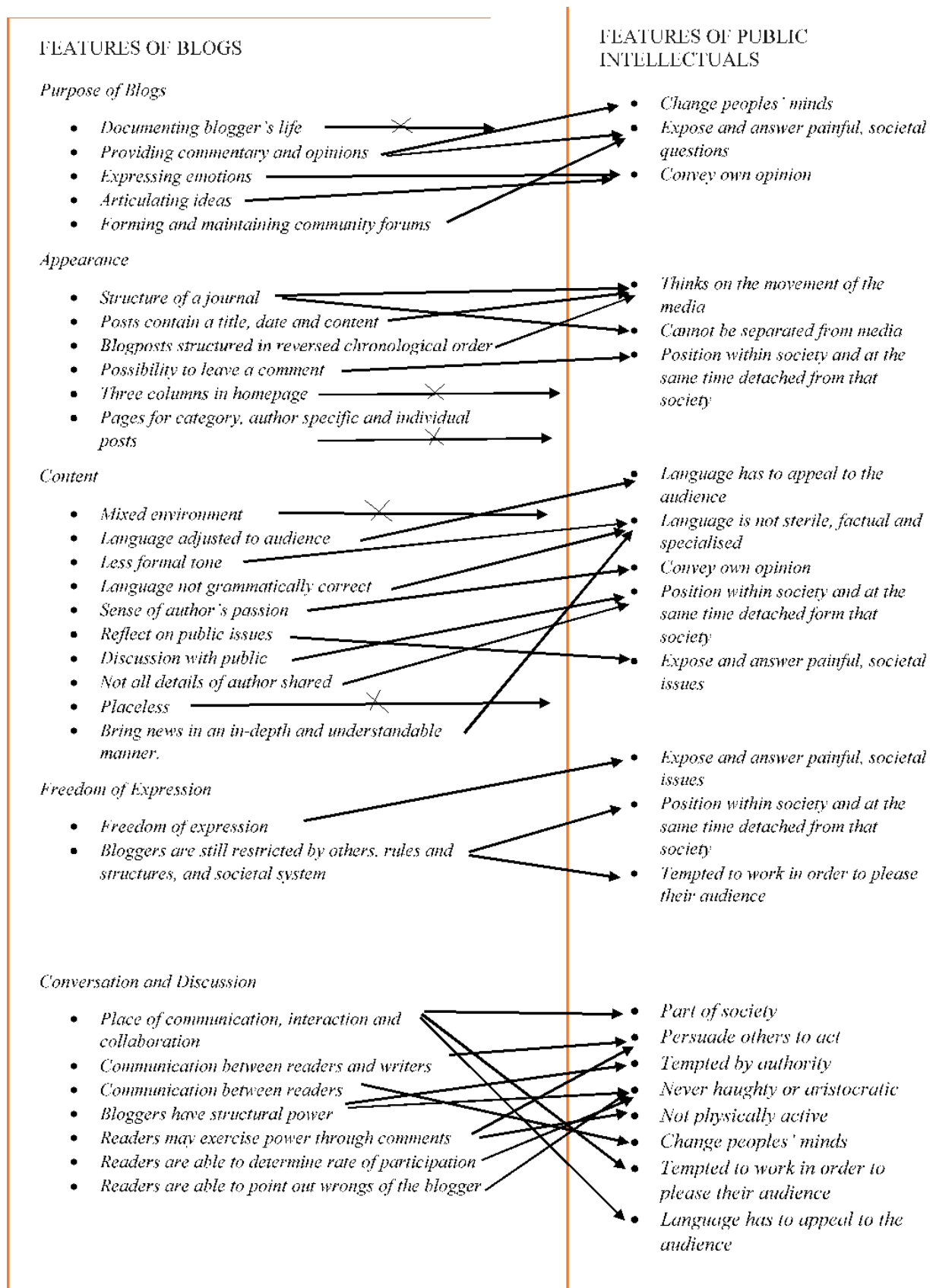
The approach adopted in this thesis kept all definitions as broad as possible, not impeding the research by any limiting characterisations. In this way, it allowed the contemporary, practical examples to determine the eventual role of public intellectual bloggers. Consequently, that role is up-to-date and relevant. By depicting the role in the form of an index, it might be adapted more easily in the future, by simply adding, removing or adjusting features. However, it should be noted that this accustomed role is limited by the size and depth of this research. Future research should look into different roles of public intellectuals. Furthermore, such a research should take into account multiple different countries, different kinds of blogs, a larger number of blogs, a larger number of different authors and multiple subjects of blogposts. In that way, a more complete role of public intellectual bloggers might be established. It should be mentioned as well that some of the features in the role of public intellectual bloggers might be seen as depending on the way in which they are defined. For example, not everyone defines profession equally. This might cause the adjusted role of public intellectual bloggers to be slightly less objective.

In summary, this thesis has aimed to continue the characterisation of public intellectuals throughout time, by creating a role of public intellectuals, suitable for contemporary times. This role is an inventory of relevant traits for public intellectuals and the first to incorporate contemporary media into it. However, this role will eventually prove to be

outdated as well, since public intellectuals will keep changing and adapting to different times and environments.

Appendix

1.



2.

Role of Public Intellectual Bloggers

1. Who are public intellectual bloggers?

1.1. *Which place do public intellectual bloggers take in society?*

1.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers are an elevated group of kings of philosophy. They are situated above society.

1.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers are xenophobic people.

1.1.3. Everyone in society is a public intellectual blogger.

1.1.4. Public intellectual bloggers are part of society.

1.1.4.1. Blogs are a place of communication, interaction and collaboration.

1.1.5. Public intellectual bloggers move between a position within society and a position detached from society.

1.1.5.1. Public intellectual bloggers are in discussion with their readers.

1.1.5.2. Not all details of public intellectual bloggers are shared with the audience.

1.1.5.3. Public intellectual bloggers are restricted by others, rules and structures, and the societal system.

1.2. *To which part of society do public intellectual bloggers belong?*

1.2.1. There is one continuous group of public intellectual bloggers, who are not defined by society or profession.

1.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers are part of the group in society to which they feel connected.

1.2.3. Public intellectual bloggers are connected to the weak and voiceless in society.

1.2.4. Public intellectual bloggers are connected to educated people.

1.3. *What position of authority do public intellectual bloggers take?*

1.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers are tempted by authority.

1.3.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers have structural power.

1.3.2. Public intellectual bloggers are authorities.

1.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers are not aristocratic or haughty.

1.3.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers have structural power.

1.4. *What is the professional character of public intellectual bloggers?*

1.4.1. Being a public intellectual blogger is not a profession.

1.4.2. Public intellectual bloggers do not use previously gained knowledge when functioning as public intellectual bloggers.

1.4.3. Public intellectual bloggers use previously gained knowledge when functioning as public intellectual bloggers.

1.5. *Are public intellectual bloggers active or passive?*

1.5.1. Public intellectual bloggers glorify the practical and have a thirst for immediate results.

1.5.2. Public intellectual bloggers are active within an industrial society.

1.5.3. Public intellectual bloggers are conservative and shun novelties.

1.5.4. Public intellectual bloggers use writing for practical purposes.

1.5.5. Public intellectual bloggers work towards future goals.

2. What do public intellectual bloggers do?

2.1. *Public intellectual bloggers discover issues in society and reflect on them.*

2.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers see their own mind as the national mind and conflict their own ideas with other national ideas.

2.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers do not develop and have performed the same profession for generations.

2.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers' goal is to change peoples' minds.

- 2.1.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers provide commentary and opinions.
- 2.1.3.2. Blogs allow communication between readers.
- 2.1.3.3. Readers are able to determine their rate of participation in the discussion.
- 2.1.3.4. Readers are able to point out the wrongs of bloggers via the comment section.
- 2.1.4. Public intellectual bloggers work as mediators between the higher and lower ranks of a societal group.
- 2.1.5. Public intellectual bloggers expose painful, societal issues and provide a solution for those issues.
 - 2.1.5.1. Public intellectual bloggers provide commentary and opinions.
 - 2.1.5.2. Public intellectual bloggers form and maintain community forums.
 - 2.1.5.3. Public intellectual bloggers reflect on public issues.
 - 2.1.5.4. Public intellectual bloggers have freedom of expression.
- 2.1.6. Public intellectual bloggers convey their own opinion.
 - 2.1.6.1. Public intellectual bloggers express emotions.
 - 2.1.6.2. Public intellectual bloggers articulate ideas.
 - 2.1.6.3. Blogs convey a sense of the author's passion.
- 2.1.7. Public intellectual bloggers answer questions posed by society.
- 2.1.8. Public intellectual bloggers convey news in an in-depth manner that is still understandable to the general audience.

2.2. How do public intellectual bloggers perform their task?

- 2.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers think before persuading others to act.
 - 2.2.1.1. Blogs form a communication between readers and public intellectual bloggers.

2.2.1.2. Readers exercise power through comments on blogs.

2.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers do not work with facts, only with their opinion.

2.2.3. Public intellectual bloggers consider facts before persuading others to act.

2.3. *Are public intellectual bloggers passive or active in solving societal issues?*

2.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers are interested in issues of realism and are in pursuit of concrete advantages.

2.3.2. Public intellectual bloggers use only the exercise of thought as a means of action.

2.3.2.1. Readers exercise power through comments on blogs.

2.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers are active and practical participants in society.

2.3.4. Public intellectual bloggers guide action and do not partake in it.

3. What is the relationship between public intellectual bloggers and the media?

3.1. *What is the relationship between public intellectual bloggers and the media?*

3.1.1. The media drives public intellectual bloggers because public intellectual bloggers want to show the untruthfulness of the media.

3.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers are part of the mass media, which provides them with a large audience. However, they are now dependent on that large audience and work in order to please them.

3.1.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers are not entirely free in their actions. In reality, they are restricted in their work by certain influences. For example, they take account of the rational considerations of others, observe rules and structures and are constrained in their actions by the framework of the societal system.

3.1.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers are more inclined to take their readership into account because of the possibility for readers to comment easily and immediately on blogposts and start a discussion.

3.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers are inseparable from the media. They think on the flow of the media.

3.1.3.1. Blogs have the structure of a journal.

3.2. *How does the media influence public intellectual bloggers?*

3.2.1. The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectual bloggers write:

3.2.1.1. The language of public intellectual bloggers is not suitable for the media. The media requires sterile and factual, specialised language.

3.2.1.1.1. Blogs are of a less formal tone.

3.2.1.1.2. The language used in blogs is not grammatically correct.

3.2.1.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers write with the possibility of a discussion in mind.

3.2.1.2. The language of public intellectual bloggers is designed to appeal to their audience.

3.2.1.2.1. Language in blogs is adjusted to the audience.

3.2.1.3. The language used by public intellectual bloggers is sharp, economic, quick and topical.

3.2.2. The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectual bloggers think. They think on the movement of the media which is quick and up-to-date. Public intellectual bloggers have a creative mind and anticipate on events.

3.2.2.1. Blogs have the structure of a journal.

3.2.2.2. Blogposts are structured in reversed chronological order.

3.2.2.3. Blogposts contain a title, date and content.

4. Remaining blog features

4.1. Blogs document the blogger's life.

4.2. The homepage of each blog contains three columns.

4.3. Blogs contain pages for category, author specific and individual posts.

4.4. Blogs display a mixed environment of real-life social interactions, other social networks, news portals and traditional webpages.

4.5. Blogs are placeless.

3.

Accustomed Role of Public Intellectual Bloggers

1. Who are public intellectual bloggers?

1.1. *Which place do public intellectual bloggers take in society?*

1.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers might be xenophobic people.

1.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers are part of society.

1.1.2.1. Blogs are a place of communication, interaction and collaboration.

1.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers move between a position within society and a position detached from society.

1.1.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers are in discussion with their readers.

1.1.3.2. Not all details of public intellectual bloggers are shared with the audience.

1.1.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers are restricted by others, rules and structures, and the societal system.

1.2. *To which part of society do public intellectual bloggers belong?*

1.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers are part of the group in society to which they feel connected.

1.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers are connected to the group of people which feels connected to their writing.

1.2.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers might be connected to educated people.

1.3. *What position of authority do public intellectual bloggers take?*

1.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers are tempted by authority.

1.3.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers have structural power.

1.3.2. Public intellectual bloggers are authorities.

1.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers are not aristocratic or haughty.

1.3.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers have structural power.

1.4. *What is the professional character of public intellectual bloggers?*

1.4.1. Public intellectual bloggers might take on that role as a profession and perform it simultaneously with other professions.

1.4.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers use previously gained knowledge when functioning as public intellectual bloggers.

1.5. *Are public intellectual bloggers active or passive?*

1.5.1. Public intellectual bloggers glorify the practical and have a thirst for immediate results.

1.5.2. Public intellectual bloggers use writing for practical purposes.

1.5.3. Public intellectual bloggers work towards future goals.

2. What do public intellectual bloggers do?

2.1. *Public intellectual bloggers discover issues in society and reflect on them*

2.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers' goal is to change peoples' minds.

2.1.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers provide commentary and opinions.

2.1.1.2. Blogs allow communication between readers.

2.1.1.3. Readers are able to determine their rate of participation in the discussion.

2.1.1.3.1. The discussion following a blogpost does not depend on public intellectual bloggers and their style of writing. Rather, the responses and eventual discussion are determined by the readership.

2.1.1.4. Readers are able to point out the wrongs of the blogger.

2.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers expose painful, societal issues and provide a solution for those issues.

2.1.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers provide commentary and opinions.

2.1.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers reflect on public issues.

2.1.2.3. Public intellectual bloggers have freedom of expression.

2.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers convey their own opinion.

2.1.3.1. The way in which public intellectual bloggers choose to express themselves may differ per author and is not dependent on a certain political preference. Public intellectual bloggers use a style that fits their personality and with which they feel like they might bring across their message as best as possible.

2.1.3.1.1. Public intellectual bloggers express emotions.

2.1.3.1.2. Blogs convey a sense of the author's passion.

2.1.3.2. Public intellectual bloggers articulate ideas.

2.1.4. Public intellectual bloggers answer questions posed by society.

2.1.5. Public intellectual bloggers convey news in an in-depth manner that is still understandable to the general audience.

2.2. *How do public intellectual bloggers perform their task?*

2.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers think before persuading others to act.

2.2.1.1. Blogs form a communication between readers and public intellectual bloggers.

2.2.1.2. Readers exercise power through comments on blogs.

2.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers consider facts before persuading others to act.

2.2.3. Public intellectual bloggers select and use facts and other forms of proof in order to strengthen their point and take a position of authority within their blogposts.

2.3. *Are public intellectual bloggers passive or active in solving societal issues?*

2.3.1. Public intellectual bloggers are interested in issues of realism and are in pursuit of concrete advantages.

2.3.2. Public intellectual bloggers use only the exercise of thought as a means of action.

2.3.2.1. Readers exercise power through comments on blogs.

2.3.3. Public intellectual bloggers guide action and do not partake in it.

3. What is the relationship between public intellectual bloggers and the media?

3.1. *What is the relationship between public intellectual bloggers and the media?*

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3.1.2. Public intellectual bloggers are part of the mass media, which provides them with a large audience. However, they are now dependent on that large audience and work in order to please them.

3.1.2.1. Public intellectual bloggers are not entirely free in their actions. In reality, they are restricted in their work by certain influences. For example, they take account of the rational considerations of others, observe rules and structures and are constrained in their actions by the framework of the societal system.

3.1.2.2. Public intellectual bloggers are more inclined to take their readership into account because of the possibility for readers to comment easily and immediately on blogposts and start a discussion.

3.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers inseparable from the media. They think on the flow of the media.

3.1.3.1. Blogs have the structure of a journal.

3.2. *How does the media influence public intellectual bloggers?*

3.2.1. The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectual bloggers write:

3.2.1.1. The language which public intellectual bloggers use is adapted to their personal style, their envisioned intentions and the medium they use.

3.2.1.1.1. Blogs might be of a less formal tone.

3.2.1.1.2. The language used by public intellectual bloggers might be sharp, economic, quick and topical.

3.2.1.1.3. Public intellectual bloggers write with the possibility of a discussion in mind.

3.2.1.2. The language of public intellectual bloggers is designed to appeal to their audience.

3.2.1.2.1. Language in blogs is adjusted to the audience.

3.2.2. The influence of the media is reflected in the way public intellectual bloggers think. They think on the movement of the media which is quick and up-to-date. Public intellectual bloggers have a creative mind and anticipate on events.

3.2.2.1. Blogs have the structure of a journal.

3.2.2.2. Blogposts are structured in reversed chronological order.

3.2.2.3. Blogposts contain a title, date and content.

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