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The Playful Police: The Role of Social Media in Public Institutions'

Legitimacy Work

Magnus Bergquist, Jan Ljungberg, Björn Wikhamn Remneland, Bertil Rolandsson
magnus.bergquist@ait.gu.se, jan.ljungberg@ait.gu.se, bjorn.wikhamn@handels.gu.se,
bertil.rolandsson@gu.se

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

Public authorities are rarely associated with creativity and playfulness. Rather, it can be threatening civic legitimacy. With the introduction of social media, a new channel opens possibilities for officers to meet the public and interact in more personal and creative ways than previously. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, have become important in people's everyday lives as well as for organizational use. These technologies encourage self-expression, and allow users to create and share content, to comment and show appreciation or dislike of content. It also makes social networks visible. For public authorities, social media is a double-edged sword. It is a promising technology for dialogue with the citizens, but it may also facilitate the mobilization and coordination of criticism from the public. This is due to the dynamics and disruption afforded by the social media platforms. With the Swedish police officers' Facebook interaction as empirical setting, the aim of this paper is to discuss how the increased use of social media affects the police's legitimacy work. The study contributes with a deeper understanding of the interplay between social media and competing value logics in the context of public authorities, as it highlights the institutional tensions between official authority and playfulness. The empirical example of the police is used to show how social media creates new possibilities for creativity and playfulness.

1. Introduction

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, have become important in people's everyday lives as well as for organizational use (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). These technologies allow users to create and share content and comment on other participants' postings. Social media technologies encourage self-expression, dialogue and network building in new creative ways. In organizational activities that build on systematic processes and legal regulations, creativity, however, can be seen as threat (Amabile, 1998). Public authorities are thus rarely associated with creativity and playfulness,

but the growing use of social media has opened up possibilities for public authority representatives to be more personal and creative in their communication and interaction with citizens.

While social media creativity is often linked to a positive generative power of digital technologies (Zittrain, 2005), it might be a double-edged sword for public authorities: besides creating a possibility for expression, communication and interaction, it may also facilitate the organization and escalation of negative effects, such as criticism from the public and the risk of public officers expressing values that are not well associated with their roles as public servants. Social media encompasses a dual direction that on the one hand potentially creates possibilities for increased democratic conversations, but on the other hand balances on the verge of what a public institution “should do”. Social media creates dynamism and disruption, and at the heart of this dynamism lies the informality ascribed to social media and the formality associated with the exercise of public authority.

Public authorities are legitimized by the value they create for citizens by successfully managing common challenges, not solely by their general popularity. Public authorities’ work is founded on a civic institutional logic that forms the higher common principle to which all activities are judged from. ”Duty” guides officials’ work. Police officers are delegated the power to uphold law and order because they represent the public and look after the public’s interests. The police as an authority organizes activities and legitimates work. Not only is the case that law and order must be sustained, the police must make sure that trust is maintained, which they do by e.g. communicating results to the public. Activities must be based on values that are considered both logical and fair (Thornton et.al., 2012; Friedland & Alford, 1991) to ensure that all citizens are treated equally. In contrast to this value foundation, social media offers a context that promotes play, fun and creativity (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), which obviously has the potential to elaborate contradictions and create tensions between the police and the public.

Few studies have addressed how the integration of social media into public institutions affects communication patterns and interactions with citizens, and how the reiteration of public discourse in social media changes public authority (Lanzara, 2009). The aim of this paper is therefore to describe and analyze the increased use of Facebook among Swedish police force representatives and how it reshapes the police force approach to authority and trust on which their legitimacy rests. We take an interest in how social media affords legitimization work through which the police establishes a trustworthy public authority. The study builds on affordance theory and institutional logic theory to explain how

the sociomaterial entanglement of technological properties and human activities structure how the police is rendered in social media and how the public communicate and interact with the police, or just make their voice heard. The research question is: *How does social media affect police officers' legitimacy work?*

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First we present an overview of social media research with special reference to affordance theory. We then present an institutional approach to the police's legitimization work, inspired by sociologists Boltanski and Thévenot's (2006) work on institutional logics, and especially their order of worth theory, which captures the role of institutional values in society. This framework is connected to the police as an institutional actor. Based on 30 interviews and data from the police Facebook-pages we show how social media affords transformation of the police force's legitimacy work. After the method we present and discuss how Facebook supports civic value legitimacy, but also how social media extends and calls into question both previous practices and the new ways of doing legitimacy work with social media.

2. Theory

2.1 The uptake of social media in public organizations

Social media is recurrently described as a mix of applications, infrastructure, services and specific products (Kane et al., 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Treem & Leonardi, 2012), often connected to "web 2.0" as an umbrella term for the development towards a more interactive internet. Social media has its roots in groupware and computer-supported collaborative work, and is designed to foster individual creativity and community building (Haeffliger et al., 2011). Central to such technologies are web-based services targeting social interaction and user-generated content that allow individual users to build a public (or semi-public) digital profile, construct lists of other users they are connected to, and view these users lists of connections (c.f. Bertot et. al, 2012; Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Examples of such technologies are blogs, microblogs (e.g. Twitter), social content (e.g. YouTube, Flickr) and communities for social networking (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn).

From an organizational point of view, social media is different from previous generations of information technology such as workflow systems, enterprise systems, knowledge management, or customer relationship systems. With these former systems, managerial control was more or less exercised through the IT department, or at least through the hierarchical structure of the organization. For example, making a decision to implement and use a workflow system was an in-house undertaking involving primarily IT-managers.

As a contrast, social media use relates on individuals distributed in the society far beyond organizational boundaries, who can heavily affect the organization, regardless of their own strategic intent. Put differently, most traditional organizational information systems aim at increasing efficiency and inscribing control (Beniger, 1986), while social media instead brings informality, creativity and social networks beyond control. Hence, social media is impacting organizations whether they like it or not.

The exponential diffusion of social media usage in private and business domains, has become a transformative force affecting both commercial and public organizations, as well as people's everyday lives and society at large (Aral et al., 2013; Bergquist et al., 2013). The spread of social media represents a strong force that simultaneously provides opportunities and challenges for organizations. Innovative ideas can spread quickly in a bottom-up fashion, knowledge can be shared, and customers reached (Bygstad & Presthus, 2013; Gibbs, et al., 2013; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Social media – and the values and practices it promotes – offers capabilities for organizations to become more flexible and responsive. However, management also face challenges related to loss of control, both in terms of losing the internal control over which IT that is used in the organization, and risking potential viral spread of (mis)information about the organization by dissatisfied customers (Shirky, 2011; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Such duality of possibilities and risks is equally present in public authorities. On the one hand social media provides a platform and efficient channel for information, citizen *dialogue* and transparency. On the other hand social media also provides an easy to master platform for citizens to monitor the activities of public authorities, challenge their legitimacy, and mobilize and coordinate dissatisfaction (Bertot, et al., 2012).

2.2 Social media affordances

Social media may be seen as specific form of socially defined materiality (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), with a capacity to enable certain types of potential actions, “affordances”. Being originally a concept for describing how the natural world eventually supports human agency (Gibson, 1979), research today view the features of social media as infused with meaning in relation to the context of use, leading to an interest in the interplay between the capacity of the technology and social action. A human-technology system affords a set of potential actions (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Norman, 2011; Majchrzak et al., 2013; Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Affordance refers to the co-constitutive relation between technology and actor by which a technology becomes an action possibility for a particular actor (Zammuto et al., 2007). Affordances are sociomaterial assemblages that are made meaningful as parts of

organizational and individual contexts and are enacted in practice. Thus, social media affords citizens differently than it affords a formal authority such as the police. For example, in the hands of ordinary citizens the technology can alter public visibility and accountability differently than for the police. Treem and Leonardi (2012) identified four organizational social media affordances: *visibility*, *persistence*, *editability*, and *association*. Visibility concerns the technology-user system's ability to create visibility and reach large crowds of people. Persistence is the action possibility related to control and monitoring, since information is stored, accessible and possible to search in its original form. Editability is the possibility to edit own messages and to comment on others posts. Association refers to the capability of linking to posts, sites and other information resources.

The work of Majchrak et al. (2013) extends previous identified social media affordances by identifying *metavoicing*, *triggered attending*, *network-informed associating*, and *generative role-taking* (Majchrak et al., 2013). Metavoicing concerns the possibility to engage in online conversations by reacting to other people's profiles, content and activities, for example by retweeting, voting, commenting or "liking" a post. Triggered attending means that a user may remain uninvolved until an automated alert informs about a specific subject of interest. Networked-informed associating means the capability to see how people are connected to other people, and to content. Generative role-taking are the patterned roles that a system affords users to provide ongoing dialogue among participants.

Social media sites typically offer a repertoire of some or all of the possibilities for action described above. To name a few: visibility is enabled by features such as status updates, profiles, comments and opinions; persistence is created by local storage of information and by being indexed in search engines that display past activities and make them searchable; editability make available the possibility to edit, modify and revise or delete content, both before and after it has been published; meta-voicing is the possibility to comment, like/dislike and to share content, and provides action possibilities for spreading content as well as valuing it. However, these affordances are dependent on the value system within which they operate. The police is founded on a value logic where the idea of civic creates a foundation for social media activities.

2.3 Institutional value logics

To analyze how social media affect police officers' legitimacy work we departure from French sociologists and neo-institutionalists Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) and their work on economies of worth where they develop a theory of the role of values as justificatory

organizational devices. Societal institutions such as business, public sector, families and royalty are founded on values that legitimate that particular institution (Jagd, 2011; Cloutier & Langley, 2013). The value of the theory is that it makes clear how valuation is grounded on specific justificatory logics and practices that are intertwined and defined interactively on both micro and meso/macro levels of society (Brandl, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2008; Thornton et.al. 2012).

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) describe order of worth as a framework that aims to explain how different and sometimes conflicting value rationalities operate in organizations and how they over time form arrangements of complex and competing values (Jagd, 2011). Value logics are inscribed in institutions and are fundamental to the guidance of action and practice. Value logics work as overarching principles that guide institutional actors and through which these actors gain status and authority through processes of legitimation (Bertot et al., 2012).

A *civic logic* is founded on the value of being representative and on conducting actions in accordance with a collective will. It is what is united, representative, and official that is valued here. To be a representative gives authority, and the capacity to exercise power (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999). Within this logic individual's interest are subordinated to the general will and a strive for common good. In the case of the civic logic, the principle of public benefit vis à vis the citizens, thus becomes crucial to how authorities legitimize themselves (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Authorities' exercise of power is also founded on the perception of them as rational and equally fair to all citizens (Thornton et.al., 2012; Friedland & Alford, 1991).

To reach such civic goals, there has been a tradition within public sector authorities to apply practices related to a *managerial logic* (with much resemblance to what Boltanski and Thévenot call an industrial logic) in the realm of efficiency, and grounded on core values such as productivity, standardization, and control. Strongly associated to a business and industrial logic, managerial logic puts attention on efficient allocation and optimization and use of resources, and to measure the progress of goal implementation and job assignment (Moynihan, 2006). Managerial logic has recently been inspired by a more market driven approach, so called New Public Management (NPM) invoking principles of competition and the use of private-sector managerial instruments, such as measures of output and results (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006), in line with what Thornton et al. (2012) calls a corporate logic.

With the advent of social media, public authorities have become inspired by new ways of gaining legitimacy in society that previously have not been associated with civic values. New values and practices are founded on a creative logic (similar to inspirational logic in Boltanski and Thévenot terminology) and a popular logic. A *creative logic* relates to on passion, artistry, spontaneity, emotions, entrepreneurship and risk taking as core values. Artists, entrepreneurs and souls of fire are the role models and admired persons in a world of creation. Creativity is typically attributed to individuals, but could also refer to the creative process itself, or the product/idea (Amabile, 1988). Creativity considers the capacity to produce new and original ideas, inventions or artistic products (Boden, 1994). Thus, creativity could be associated both with problem-solving activities, and inspired artistic activities. A creative logic refers both to the activity of the artistic genius, and to the human feature displayed whenever an actor solves a problem in a specific situation (Joas, 1996; Weik, 2012). Defined in this way, creativity relates to institutional entrepreneurship (Garud et al., 2007).

The introduction of social media in public sector is also associated with a *popular logic*, founded on the core value of public recognition (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), and expressed through reputation, fame, visibility, influence or public opinion. The role model is the star with many fans and followers. Justification is reached by being renowned and granted credits in the opinion of others. Popular value are expressed when, for instance, media tell positive stories about public sector representatives and present them as citizen heroes. Authorities' strive for popularity may also be an integral part of a civic value base. Being popular or recognized, for instance in social media (Grimmelikhuisen & Meijer, 2015), is a way for authorities to influence citizens' recognition of public institutions as representative of public values, and thereby being supportive of a civic logic (Mawby, 1999; Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Goldsmith, 2010). Public recognition for e.g. maintaining law and order, may render public figures sympathy from citizens (Weitzer, 2005; Chermak & Weiss, 2005). Popularity can thus be of great value also for an authority such as the police when managing public accusations of misconduct, or to dampen consequences of negative media (Chermak & McGarmell, 2006).

2.4 The police use of IT and social media

The police force use of information technology (IT) is an emergent research area. Two different strands of research can be identified, of which one mainly refers to the broader field of research on eGovernment and e-services (Schein, 2003; Contini & Lanzara, 2009). The

increased use of IT often emerges as a resource enabling police to proceed with economic cut-backs while improving efficiency, accessibility and transparency (Koper et al., 2014). In return the police can offer more accessibility in the form of e-services to all citizens by exploiting an expanding number of digital innovations to offer “self-service” to citizens (Kortelands & Bekkers, 2008; Ma, 2012). Initiatives like these often create tensions where representatives for the police force express concerns that digitalization might render difficulties to implement reliable and secure public services, reach different marginalized social groups, and maintain trust in digital public services (Helbig et al., 2009; Seifert & Relyea, 2004; Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006; Welch et al., 2005).

The second strand of research is more concerned with how increased use of IT affects the link between police legitimacy and external communication. Information technology in general, and social media in particular, emerge as part of a broad media landscape that enable the police to communicate with citizens (Chermak, S. & Weiss, 2005; Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Goldsmith, 2010). Such communication can affect police reputation, e.g. if officers show misconduct or behave publicly in a way that can be questioned (Goldsmith, 2013; Williams et al., 2013). Exposing misconduct in social media often generate dramatically increased attention from the public and media. A conclusion in this research is that the new digital resources, such as the social media landscape, is an uncertain terrain for members of the police. This can result in the police expose themselves to the risk of being questioned for violating their own regulations or just becoming public entertainment (Cooke & Sturges, 2009). Social media therefore seem to nurture tensions between officials and the public sphere.

Information technology is increasingly introduced to the police to increase efficiency. A risk is identified that police legitimacy might be undermined due to the dissemination of unfavourable information about police work and the organization’s internal affairs to the public (Goldsmith, 2013).

3. Method

Aiming to generate new and empirically valid insights about a particular issue or topic (Stake, 2000), the paper applies an exploratory qualitative approach mainly based on interviews and documents to explore the role of social media use within a public authority. 30 individuals working in different geographical areas and with different roles in the Swedish police force were interviewed about the current view on and interaction with social media as part of their work.

The interviews were selected by purposive sampling intended to satisfy a variation in terms of gender, type of police district and tasks. In addition we applied snowball sampling using interviewees to identify further respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The geographical areas for sampling covered both cities and more rural districts to include variations between different kinds of police organizations. Another sampling strategy for variation was to select respondents engaged in preventative policing, officers engaged in intervening police activities, and officers doing of investigative police work. All of were active on social media platforms, mainly Facebook, and in some cases also Instagram and Twitter. Platform access was provided by each officer's police district. Several officers also had private accounts on social media platforms, but were generally careful to keep them apart and acted on the police Facebook pages in their role as officers and representatives of the police force.

The interviews lasted from between one to three hours, and were fully transcribed. They were structured on the basis of an interview guide, highlighting a number of thematic questions, still allowing for new questions to emerge in the specific interview situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2006). To improve our understanding of officers daily activities on social media, we have also conducted observations on Facebook and to some extent Twitter. These observations comprise 12 different sites managed autonomously by the local police districts where our interviewees worked. The content could therefore be connected to the interviews, both geographically and historically. Facebook observations (Savage & Burrow, 2007) enabled us to triangulate the interviews with other data sources as a way to interrogate our interpretations of the interviewees' descriptions of their practices on social media as well as the public's interaction on the Facebook-pages in the form of number of shares, number of likes, amount and content of comments.

Additionally, we have collected policy documents, instructions for the police force's social media use and an evaluation describing the organizational expectations on the individual police officer's use of social media.

The method for analysis of the different sets of data is based on abductive reasoning (Kolko, 2010), allowing the researcher to go back and forth in the data along a process of hypothesis-driven exploration analysis in order to create new insights. Theoretically the 'orders of worth' framework (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) worked as a sensitizing device in the analysis of the empirical material.

4. Empirical findings: Police Officers use of Social Media

The police engagement in Facebook creates new opportunities to communicate police work and interact with citizens. In doing so, we argue, the police ground Facebook activities on a civic value logic; Facebook does not only help the police in their daily work, it also creates new opportunities to legitimize the police as a public institution.

We first analyze how the police engages in justification work to legitimize their Facebook activities as expressions of civic values. Analytically we trace how social media affordances visibility, persistence, editability and association (Treem & Leonardi, 2012) supports the police civically. These affordance create new action possibilities for the police to be creative and reach the public in new ways using social media affordances. The following two sections elaborates this theme by describing how Facebook creates opportunities for the officers to play and be creative in their Facebook communication and thus reach popularity among citizens. In doing so they legitimize both creativity and popularity using a civic value scale.

However, social media is also a controversial phenomenon in the police force. The organization rests on a managerial value logic from which social media appears threatening the very foundation of civic legitimacy. While individual officers developed skills in using Facebook creatively to communicate and interact in new ways with citizens, and thus become popular, other representatives for the police force embraced a managerial value logic that promoted a more rational and formal approach to social media. The different approaches created tensions between individual officers and the force with regards to the legitimacy of social media in the police force.

4.1 Legitimizing civic values with social media

Social media enables new ways to inform, communicate with, and engage in discussions with the public. In this section we analyze how social media affordances are recognized from a civic point of view as ways to legitimize the police engagement in Facebook. value logic.

Treem and Leonardi (2012) have identified four central and consistent social media affordances: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. Visibility is the mean by which users can make themselves and information they possess known to others by posting, commenting, updating status and friending (Treem & Leonardi 2012, p. 150). Social media has persistence because information and conversations are available in their original form and can be reviewed long after they were originally presented. Editability refers to the users' possibility to spend time and effort to craft a message before it is made public. Association is

the possibility for users to associate themselves with a site, to particular information, and with other people that also relate to the site or the information.

According to Treem and Leonardi (2012) Facebook is an example of a social networking application with high affordance in all four aspects. However, to become actualized as action possibilities for the police, affordances must be recognized as possibilities in the context of a police civic value logic. In this section, the police engagement in Facebook is analyzed from the perspective of how social media affords the civic value logic that creates the foundation for the police as an authority.

Visibility

The police force is legitimized through its capacity to uphold law and order in a transparent way that can be scrutinized and criticized. The police represent civic society and delegated formal authority is guided by participation and citizen focus. The public should be involved in police matters as long as it does not hinder investigations or jeopardize the police's neutrality. Social media is generally viewed as an important way to increase visibility and transparency and thus to promote participation, increase information dissemination to the public, inform decision making and elevate the accuracy in handling of cases (Bertot et al., 2012). The argument for social media is that visibility makes police work and the police as an organization more transparent and thus increases legitimacy for the police's mandate to represent and guard citizens, and to uphold law and order by allowing transparency. Facebook lets the police be transparent in their actions, sensitive to the public opinion and adds a channel where they can show how they deliver the problem solving capacity that the public has the right to demand.

Police activities in social media are from a civic point of view not legitimized as expressions of particular individuals' views. Instead, as the empirical data demonstrates, the interviewees conform to a discourse of representation. They present their activities in social media as part of a united police force voice, which is an expression of the public authority and the larger structural and more overarching entity that constitutes civic society. This has consequences both for how the police officers organize themselves around social media activities and how they express themselves in their role as officials in a public organization. It is generally agreed that an officer does not publish on Facebook as an individual but as a representative for the whole organization. However, what social media adds is a change of perspective. Traditionally authorities inform citizens about current state of affairs. Facebook offers a more user centered and service oriented approach to information and communication.

My belief is that we should not base it [social media communication] on how our organization look like, but rather from the citizens and their needs.

Visibility creates a sense of openness to the public. The police publish organizational information but also personal accounts of experiences from day-to-day work, such as pictures and narratives. Often stories are told about difficult situations and how the police officer handled it. The reader gets a glimpse of a police officer's struggle and their reflections on crime and difficult social conditions.

Goldsmith (2010) notes that the police visibility is a critical component for how they appear to the public. Visibility used to be primary source for public information through direct observation. With the increased importance of mass media the policy direct visibility has decreased. Newspapers decide to a larger extent how the police is visible to the public. Social media gives the police possibility to regain control over visibility. Even if it is based on narratives and photos, they control the selection and presentation of the force, i.e. how they are visible.

Persistence

Persistence in social media is a function of the availability of information and conversations in their original form long after it is originally presented. It can be shared and reviewed by anyone with access to the information (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Social media creates demands on the police officers to be careful about how they present themselves and their work to the public. Every post can be scrutinized by citizens who eventually use the comments field to discuss what they feel is appropriate or inappropriate behavior for a police officer or the organization as such. The interviewees were aware that Facebook posts could become the starting point for agitated discussions. When approaching comments the police had to make sure that they acted polite and according to police standards for informing and communicating with the public.

The difference between their traditional civic centered approach and the social media approach to communication and information dissemination was that each communicating member who spoke for the police in social media must be conscious of the fact that they were part of a public authority and thus had to take responsibility to represent a societal interest:

In a way I'm speaking for this whole [name of the town district]. It's not me speaking, I'm not posting, it is [the police district] that does the post. But when I answer on a specific question, then I'm responsible for what I say.

Social media could thus be used for increasing citizen representation by referencing to particular police assignments relating to specific interest-groups in society, such as inhabitants of particular city areas, groups with special needs, and certain types of crime victims.

Citizens have access to many different social media channels for publication. The increased use of different devices for communication, such as mobile phones for filming and linking to YouTube videos were all consequences of information persistence. The interviewed police officers were hesitant to delete comments on their Facebook pages as this could immediately lead to a discussion about police oppression and generate protests among Facebook followers and additionally create other streams of information outside their pages that they could not comment on.

We never delete critique against us as part of the police force, because that would easily... Of course people can be critical towards us.

The police sometimes needed to do repair work to regain the public's trust, such as answering comments and provide additional information. The interviewees expressed that, even if complicated situations could arise, the persistence of information had positive implications for their accountability and legitimacy.

Editability

One of the biggest advantages with social media was the possibility to communicate directly with citizens and target content specifically to them. Previously the police had to contact the newspapers with a press release. Several of the interviewees were critical to this as they experienced that the newspapers reformulated press releases into something different that was more in line with the paper's own news agenda. Reporters often turned neutral - according to the interviewees - pieces of information into eye-catching headlines that communicated very different messages than the intended. Social media gave the police officers a direct channel to citizens and less dependent on news media. Information was instantly updated if necessary.

Facebook offered a multitude of media formats, such as texts, photographs, and links to other pages to create rich information. Facebook offered a more intimate relationship with citizens than newspaper articles. The officers felt that they developed more personal relationships with their followers, and thus increased reach, transparency and citizen engagement:

[Facebook] is good, both for me personally and for the public authority as such. It's interesting that people discuss and that they have different opinions. [...] People are very generous and share their experiences, and sometimes if a person asks us something and we don't answer, someone else will answer and help that person.

Such discussions created a sense of a common problem definition, a common agenda and thus that the police work is important to all citizens.

The police were aware that their Facebook behavior was a sensitive matter. Increased visibility and information persistence created new possibilities to inform, communicate and thus build trust. However, using the wrong wording could easily create endless series of agitated posts that eventually were observed by news media, which was not uncommon. Another important affordance of editability is the possibility to privately develop a message before posting it and thus make it public.

The officers spent considerable time crafting posts. Often they let colleagues read and give feedback to avoid the possibility for unintended negative interpretations. Some precincts had dedicated personnel that read posts before they were published. Another common policy was not to publish immediately before leaving for the day or when approaching a holiday when there was less staff that could respond to citizens' eventual reactions.

Nevertheless, posts recurrently created debate. Besides carefully working out answers, the officers also developed a wait-and-see strategy using the self-regulating nature of social media. After an initial critical comment other users often posted arguments in favor of the critical post. In cases where this did not happen a common strategy was to formulate a new post that was designed to generate many comments. This made the previous comment move down the list and thus become "hidden" to immediate attention.

Association

The police acted from a position legitimized by civic values, i.e. their capacity as an institutional actor to maintain law and order. As officers the interviewees represented the aspirations of the public, and their acts were demanded by and sanctioned by individuals in

society who also hold them responsible for their acts (Cloutier et al., 2013). This created a strong need to make visible the legitimacy of their authority in relation to activities in everyday police work. Civic values therefore structured the way the police acted in their role as serving a democratic political system to promote democracy and represent the public (c.f. Lichterman & Eliasoph, 2014).

The affordance of association captures social media's ability to establish "connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation." (Treem & Leonardi, 2012, p. 162) Facebook provided the police with a surplus of opportunities to associate themselves with a site, to particular information, and with other people that also related to the site or the information. Facebook pages were organized geographically based on different precincts or other geographical delimitations. The Facebook page expressed a virtual representation of that particular area and could thus become a part of what has been referred to as "networked policing" alongside other information and communication technologies such as CCTVs and district policing partnerships (Loader, 2000).

As individual police officers had up to several thousand followers, Facebook pages formed hubs in the police network. Citizens could associate themselves freely with a particular police district's Facebook page ("likes") without having to formally apply, which opened for easy association by citizens to different Facebook pages. Sharing of posts had a similar effect. The interviewed officers recognized this as their dynamic information infrastructure that effectively could be mobilized when necessary. The more followers they had, the easier it was to reach out to many people in case of emergency or when investigating a crime. As will be discussed later, creativity and playfulness were essential to this enactment of civic value logic: the more followers, likes and comments, the more legitimate was the police.

4.2 The creative police

On one hand the police as an authority with monopoly to use force, is rarely associated with creativity and playfulness. However, on the other hand creativity has always played a vital role in crime investigations. It has been claimed that imagination and creativity are inevitably essential components of detectives work to solve serious crimes, no matter how much they insist on only dealing with facts (Waddington, 2004). Creativity is typically attributed to individuals, but could also refer to the creative process itself, or the product/idea (Amabile, 1988). Creativity considers the capacity to produce new and original ideas, inventions or

artistic products (Boden, 1994). Thus, creativity is associated both with problem solving activities, and inspired artistic activities.

The latter meaning of creativity has rarely been visible in ordinary police work, and may even be considered as strongly improper for a formal authority. With the spread of social media, the artful or inspirational side is afforded to those who have the gift, who dare and want to let creativity spur. It also supports the creative side of persons that want to engage in more inspirational and playful activities. The police engagement in Facebook opened possibilities to be creative and engage in new ways:

You actually dare to believe in the souls of fire that dare to do this [...] I think there must be room for creative persons and that they can have their art commune in some way [...] it's engagement, fun and you can see there is results from it.

Compared to face-to-face situations, social media gave time to reflect and chose the valor of formulations in a way a co-present encounters would not make possible. Facebook afforded the time be more creative:

It is easier on Facebook since you have the time to reflect before you answer. If you are outside the grocery store you have come up with an answer directly.

The creative use of social media, these officers argued, supported the overarching civic goal. The spread of information contributed to the fulfilment of the police mission, both in terms of solving crimes and in terms of being proactive. One example was the publishing of pictures of stolen goods to make information about different crimes accessible to the public:

Facebook can have unanticipated effects. When we publish local news they spread easily. People share their information flows. We publish about a theft in one city and someone in another city recognizes the stolen goods. A whole case of organized crime moving around the country was solved. So, even those who were critical can see the benefit of social media.

Social media supported the proactive work of crime prevention. Facebook reached many people with facts and information about dangers and ways to stop crime from happening, like the danger of driving with bad tires in the winter.

Social media was also seen as an important tool for positive branding of the police and to show a human face. Through creative use of social media the police communicated their mission to be public servants. By publishing pictures of a lost teddy bear, a little girl taking a police woman's hand, or a policeman offering an old lady some coffee, Facebook visualized the civic value of being servants to the citizens:

We were walking around in a suburb, and were surrounded by kids, suddenly a young girl stretched out her hand to me, I took it, and she started to run. My colleague took a picture, and we wrote a text that if something like that happen, what can you do but run along.

The post generated huge amounts of likes and shares. Another creative use of social media was the continuous reporting of everyday routine tasks, creating visibility to the more mundane police work of patrolling the streets. Instead of being dependent on journalists to write about the important but maybe more mundane, ordinary and non spectacular police work – which they seldom wrote about – Facebook offered a way to not only reach out to the public, but also to do it in a way that created a positive image of the police as a supporter of people in their everyday life. Posting pictures from work, using a mobile phone, and upload it to Facebook while being mobile, also afforded the ability to visualize local presence. Pictures showed visits to different neighborhoods to create an impression of regular presence. A problem, the interviewed officers argued, was that if they patrolled a neighborhood for three hours and few people were in proximity, it would appear as if they had little presence in the area. A posted picture communicated that the police not only made visits under dramatic circumstances, but also took care of the residents on an everyday basis to prevent crime.

A practice where some police officers excelled was the posting of witty and funny stories and remarks based on everyday experiences from fieldwork. Such postings typically favored a humorous and sometimes ironic language to convey experiences and admonitions. There were a handful of officers in the police force who were early adopters, gaining reputation and credit from colleagues and public for their ability to craft posts that generated extensive traffic to their Facebook pages, but sometimes also criticism. One of officers went under the name of “the Facebook police officer”, and had built a reputation with several millions followers. His first humorous posting was well received, and soon followed by others. The following example captures the humorous and somewhat sarcastic style of narrating an event:

We were out in the woods and found quite many cannabis plants. We didn't have a

suspect so we made a post that if you miss your cannabis plants you're welcome to us and make a claim.

Another story of the young person drinking illegal alcohol and provoking the police, was read by over two million people:

If you are 16 years old, drinking illegal booze from a pet bottle and are going to shout “fuck the police”, be sure that you run fast, otherwise even a middle aged police may catch up with you, and bring you home to mom.

The post generated 70,000 likes and 2,600 comments in two days, resulting in a temporary close down of the web page. This kind of creative use of Facebook rendered much positive response both from colleagues in the force and from the public, but was also criticized for undermining the core values of the police as a public institution; irony and humor risked questioning civic values, the critics argued. From an institutional perspective, creativity host an inherent potential disruptive capacity (Weik, 2012) which was afforded by social media, and was hard to control. The officers who creatively took advantage of this narrative strategy argued that entertaining postings in fact strengthened civic values in the public because it anchored police work in citizens' everyday experiences and adhered to the “Facebook-generation's” way of communicating in social media and made them understand the societal role of the police, thus increasing legitimacy.

4.3 Building popularity with social media

Facebook affords features for sharing information with other Facebook friends and to “like” posts by using the thumbs-up button. As a social media Facebook affords shareability and visualizes the number of shares and likes to other Facebook users.

Previous police research describes how the force generally has been employing different types of media strategies to be recognized as a carrier of a civic value logic (Goldsmith, 2010; Grimmelijkhuisen & Meijer, 2015). Acquiring sympathy from large categories of citizens often emerge as a priority for how to maintain law and order while being recognized as a just societal actor (Chermak & Weiss, 2005). Popularity is viewed as a way to support civic worth (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). Studies show that this type of popularity often is associated with individual officers. Popularity is an important value when the police is evaluated as an authority, but also for how local district citizens relate to the police during police interventions as a representative for a reliable system of law and order

(Rolandsson, 2015; Goldsmith, 2013). The officers are key-actors in giving the police a “human face” that opposes stereotypes about an authoritarian and distanced officer in uniform (Goldsmith, 2013). Social media brings specific affordances to the forefront that offers new ways to reach out and be popular. Providing the police visibility and widespread associations in social media, popular value logic supported a civic value logic that was shaped by the specific context of social media affordances.

Social media visibility promotes popularity by numerical visualizations of message dissemination. Personal descriptions of incidents or daily police work reach millions of readers who can instantly express likes and opinions and distribute the content to their networks. As mentioned social media allows the officers to bypass conventional media channels and reach an extensive numbers of citizens without being filtered through mass-media’s “news making” discourse.

One of the respondents, engaged in developing the police’s social media strategy, described the impact updates on Facebook could have by referring to the massive attention the police in a small peripheral Swedish village got as a result of a popular post:

[On Facebook] it is possible to see directly the spread of a posting, how many it reached, how many took active part in the message, shared it, commented on it. Some districts have 600-700 followers even if they are not that large. One post generated three million views, got 10,000 likes, was shared around the world and got comments in all kinds of languages.

The officer who posted the highly acclaimed message did not only get high visibility, but also instant gratification of how the message was received by the audience. The number of citizens that read, liked and commented police postings generated a type of popularity that had not been recognized before. These individual officers, who where gifted with the ability to craft posts that rendered massive response, where both regarded as the heroes and the villains of the organization. The fact that a great number of followers acted as supporters and defended officers who made controversial postings made the organization hesitant to act forcefully and control who could post what. Popular recognition by citizen followers was seen as a source of motivation, encouraging the officers to retain attention they got. Visibility emerged as a sought after status among officers and the interviewees adhered to a discourse of “writer excellence” as a value in itself attributed to some officers who gathered large numbers of followers. They perceive themselves as writers or news mediators who in some

ways acted autonomously in relation to police management. As representative for the police force they could also promote themselves and gather a personal popularity score. Particularly one police officer known for his witty comments gained attention when he published a book under his own name; *The Facebook police*, where some of his most popular postings were retold. The interviews argued that even though popularity was a way to legitimize the police it was not a goal in itself:

We are no “likes junkies”. We rather try to find a good mix that people like. But, it is also a carrot, it really motivates when I see that many people read what I have written, and that is also something that has to be ok. After all, we all have this need to be confirmed, and it is great when I see that what I wrote has reached hundreds of thousands of people. It’s an amazing power in being able to do that. I mean, we had this post that reached 1,2 million readers, and that is just “wow”.

Officers’ ability to reach this type of popularity is linked to the affordance of *association* (Treem & Leonardi, 2012, p. 162). Facebook provides them with a surplus of opportunities to associate themselves with a site, particular information, or with other people. In terms of popularity, association as affordance stand out as particularly distinct when the interviewees describe how they adapt to the “catchy” language promoted by social media and learn to tell a good story by using humor and irony to improve their rating capacity on Facebook.

Social media also enable them to communicate more efficiently by taking advantage of followers that pass on police information to their connections. Popularity thus boost the viral potential, which may serve their purpose for instance in cases of emergency communication.

While striving for popularity as a way to support the civic value logic underpinning the police as an institutional actor, officers realized that they had to avoid conveying a picture that render them public recognition as unserious or as merely entertainers (cf. Goldsmith, 2013). To avoid undermining confidence in the police, the interviewees stated that they always kept their assignment as officers in mind and was aware of the negative implications that public recognition of their social media activities could have. Popularity was only justified as long as individual popularity converged with civic values Too much popularity may result in a threat to themselves as representatives of a democratic and transparent police authority.

I think it's right to sign a posting with my name. But still, how much space should you claim yourself? Is it ok to be in the spotlight all the time? I mean, officer C, who is famous in the neighborhood because he is very active on Facebook, fined this girl, and when he signed the bill the girl was so happy because she got his autograph! Do we really want it to be like that? I'm not saying that it is wrong, but we need to be aware of where this is taking us.

The fact that social media draw on mainstream recognition that was not always synchronized with the public assignment as a police, was referred to as a problem in relation to the potential impact of both the affordance of association and of visibility. The officers were aware that they left digital traces in the public sphere that could be edited and re-posted in new contexts that would alter the meaning of the content. To retain public trust, they had to avoid being perceived as vain. While being popular they must make visible that they as police are capable of prioritizing the public interest they represent before their own interest in popularity. The interviewees emphasized that they were not obsessed by the numbers of comments and likes, and that they were concerned about how popularity in some cases stole time and effort from other duties. Popularity in the case of social media prevailed to be a double edged sword.

4.4 The managerial logic and critique against creative and popular social media use

In contrast to the value logics of creativity and popularity, many officers were critical to the consequences of social media use in the force and saw it as a threat against traditional police work and, more grave, the foundation of institutional legitimization work.

The managerial logic has become influential for the Swedish police throughout the years as a means to maintain law and order – within the police organization as well as between the police and society as a whole. This enthusiastic embracement of market managerialism ideas has been promoted in most public sectors (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), following the adoption of “new public management”, “public management reforms” and e-government doctrines.

The strong connection between a managerial logic and a civic logic finds support in the weberian rational-legal bureaucratic ideals for state governments (Weber, 1946; du Gay, 2000). According to Weber, centralized, formalized, transparent and hierarchically structured bureaucracies work well to accomplish social functions in line with rational, purposive laws.

Individual officers are recruited based on formal competence, and is expected to carry out duties of their positions, while putting aside their own personal moral commitments.

The management ideal for the police organization is a mixture of a Tayloristic machine bureaucracy and a professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1983). The domination of a strong hierarchical organization with a clear line of command has been seen as a good structure to maintain discipline and order, yet solving complex challenges and problems, often under time pressure. However, the police organization has also been criticized for being too bureaucratic, with much red tape and administrative tasks, that risk weeding out creativity and engagement on both middle and lower levels of the organization (Björk, 2014). At the same time, however, much authority is decentralized to the individual police officers' professional judgment in a particular situation, and is mainly coordinated by skill training and tacit experiences, as well as overall governed by instructions from policy documents and laws.

This fine and intricate balance between control/planning and creativity/action makes management a challenge in everyday police work. In the era of new public management, a critique has been raised against an exaggerated focus control/planning, i.e. on performance management and efficiency measures (what in the Swedish police is labeled "counting sticks"), where the amount of beforehand decided and planned activities or outcomes become goals in themselves. As a consequence, easily obtained measures are more attractive to "chase" for policemen on the field, and qualitative measures are missing. This way of measuring and managing is also problematic in the sense that a large amount of normal police work becomes invisible, as these activities are not given attention in the organization, on management level and in society at large (Björk, 2014). For instance, Gorringer, Stott, and Rosie (2012) point to the importance of dialogue and communication for successful preventive policing in practice, which are activities not easily planned and quantified.

Despite social media's different affordances, the interviews showed that its implementation in the police organization at least to some extent was enacting traditional managerial means in order to instill control and managerial governance. One of the responsible managers on the central organization explained how they internally approached the managing of social media usage within the Swedish police force:

We have not been able to manage this development more than that we have done it through tutoring, with seminars, and made sure that there are good material from RPS [The national police steering committee] to send out related to crime prevention. We have had Q&A:s related to several different topics on Facebook, and

we have tailored the material in terms of film and text. This is how we have supported the different local organizations.

The quote indicates that the Swedish police, when allowing for social media practices, acknowledged the difficulty of managing the process as a problem. To avoid this threat, training sessions, policy documents, seminars and workshops, the underlining of good and bad examples, were all direct and indirect means for top-down controlling the policemen's use of the media and to enforce certain behaviors in favor of other behaviors. On a managerial level, there was also a concern for consistency in social media usage across all local police districts. For example, the same manager stated;

What I point out [in the instructions] is: tell facts, not opinions. Remember that you represent a public authority. You can willingly use a human tone but you should avoid irony. We also say that one should be careful with humor.

The managerial value logic was in sharp contrast to creativity and popularity value logics where humor and shrewdness were seen as inherent in the social media community culture which also explained why some officers had gained a reputation that they meant also favored the police as such.

The national managerial tutoring documentation acted as policy instructions for social media usage in the police. Respondents who worked with social media to a large extent confirmed that these policies acted as guiding principles, but they also revealed that they overruled the policies in their daily work: "We need to be pioneers, we need to dare," as one of the interviewees exclaimed. Within the rather blurry boundaries of formal accountability, the policemen who worked with social media tended to organize themselves less hierarchical than in general police work. One of the local social media responsible managers made a parable with the governance of an editor:

I am more of a facilitator and want to push them; "you can dare to experiment with this." I try to utilize their engagement, but without putting a lot of demands and burdens, and that is important to maintain creativity.

Hence, another form of management appeared, more based on self-management and peer-management where the policemen involved in social media activities actively brainstormed and discussed publishable ideas or published content with each other. This was considered a good way of enhancing creativity and playfulness, providing support and help, while

reflecting upon the effectiveness of social media usage in relation to the police force's civic duty.

5. Discussion: Social Media and Public Institutions Legitimacy

Today a guy came in to the station and wanted to report something. He was obviously intoxicated and when a patrol arrived the person was gone. It turned out that he was dissatisfied with the quality of some drugs he had bought and wanted to report that to the police, but apparently changed his mind in the last minute. Have you ever been in the same situation? Have you paid for "Crazy Casablanca" but ended up with "Morgan's Manure". No worries! Call your local police's drug department and tell us. We can take your drugs and even test your urine to check the strength and quality of the drug. Don't let your dealer count your money and laugh at you. You are smarter than that. Call the police, we can help you /Scott.

The posting above is a typical popular Facebook story written by police officers who are active social media contributors. At the writing of this paper (May 2015) it had 32,192 likes and 5,180 shares on Facebook.

Most of the traditional IT-systems implemented in public organizations are associated with features that afford managerial control and efficiency. By inscribing a managerial logic in for example a workflow system or an enterprise resource planning system, legitimacy is created by efficiency and transparency in legitimizing civic values associated by public institutions. Social media offers features and practices that undermine managerial control and afford new ways to create public legitimacy. In the case of the police Facebook use social media strengthens practices founded on a creative and a popular logic that obviously have the potential to both support and undermine the civic logic.

However, this new practice also resulted in tensions in relation to the official authority's managerial practices. While managers saw a risk that this new form of communication was a violence against formal language and behavior, and could threaten legitimization of the police authority, officers argued that it in fact was a more efficient way to increase participation, transparency and citizen focus than rational management value logic with its focus on formal procedures instead of the quality of content and engagement with the public.

Facebook's more informal way of communication and expression of opinions versus

managerial formality (based on the idea of efficient communication and the official as a person who does not involve personal statements or opinions.

The problem with popularity is that it is founded on individual officer's attraction to mainstream recognition. These officers may become too occupied by their own interest in being popular, and as such popularity end up almost by definition in a tensed relationship to the collective interests constituting the foundation for the public assignment as a police. In accordance, most officers emphasize that they are not obsessed by the numbers of comments and likes.

In many ways social media opens up possibilities for individuals' creativity in strengthening the civic logic. This resulted in increased transparency, visibility and other trust building attributes. It also contributed to both proactive police work, and solving of crimes.

The increased creativity is not without risks. Inviting discussions for a good cause may have unwanted side effects. For example, going into a discussion about the dangers of drugs can open up for a discussion among drug liberals. Being too creative can lead to distrust, and there has been a few formal complaints filed.

Social media provides an opportunity to reach many people, and has to this effect become an important instrument. The power of the popular logic also has risks.

“If you write a posting that is read by two million people, even if only 1 % is dissatisfied, that is pretty many.” (Scott)

The balance between means and ends can be tricky here, and different opinions exists to what extent popularity is a goal in itself.

“Many people, even internally, is very critical because I write in a witty manner, but the reason for that is to attract as many as possible to like our pages, because if we don't have followers, when we need to give important information about pick pockets or a missing person it wouldn't reach anybody.” (Scott)

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