STEINMEIER ACCEPTED YOUR FRIEND REQUEST

German Social Democrats and their Online Communication through Facebook during the 2009 parliamentary elections

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The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the way Facebook is used during the parliamentary election campaign in 2009 in Germany by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the candidate for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). The purpose is to find out which topics are presented to his fans by his communication and in which way he tries to appeal to his readers emotions. The data has been collected from the candidate’s Facebook posts that he published between spring and autumn 2009. The main findings show that even though some topics are repeated none of them are used consistently throughout the election campaign. Moreover, Steinmeier tries to rebuild the image of the SPD and wants to build up an image for himself. Another important reason to use Facebook, as the analysis has shown, was to mobilize the citizens.
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1.0 Introduction

Online campaigning on Facebook has become so popular that politicians have been given their own category of Facebook page (“politician”).

The trend to employ online channels in political campaigns, mainly the social networks, has slowly evolved while more and more people have gained access to the internet. The election campaign of Barack Obama in 2008 can be seen as a benchmark in election campaigns. In the age of web 2.0 the trend is towards a socially networked and networking candidate. German candidates from the entire political spectrum are heavily active on facebook and other similar types of social media. They (or their assistants) use these sites to engage in discussions with ordinary people, thus adding on to the former, traditional way of street campaigning.

This study will examine a politicians Facebook effort. It seems the focus of the campaign team was on the number of followers during the German parliamentary election in 2009. It can be argued, that there are still areas within the political parties and campaign planning teams where this is seen as the best approach. Like many others, the SPD basically jumped into the social networks, because it was the thing to do. However, it was often forgotten that the communication in social networks is different from offline communication.

1.1 Aim of the Study
The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was established more than 140 years ago. It is the oldest political party in Germany and one of the two ‘big’ (or former big) parties, the other one being the Conservative Party (CDU). The SPD had as of
December 31st 2009 513,000 members (which is only half as much as it had in the 1960s) (ARD Mediathek, last accessed 4th February 2009).

In 1963 Willy Brandt became the first Social Democratic chancellor in the history of Germany. He came to power by creating a similar mindset as Barack Obama in his presidential election campaign in 2008, a feeling of change after 20 long years of conservative government. Brandt’s governmental declaration was titled “Daring for more democracy” [Mehr Demokratie wagen] (1969). This declaration hit the nerve of the German population. Never again has the SPD been as popular as during the 1960s and 1970s.

After the chancellorship of Willy Brandt, and later Helmut Schmidt, the SPD went into opposition for 16 years. It was not until Gerhard Schröder, who led the SPD to a victory in the parliamentary elections in 1998, that the SPD became the governing party again. They went into a coalition with the relatively young Green Party. During this time the social benefits and social security system underwent reforms. This was called ‘Agenda 2010’, which f.e. put the social money and unemployment money together and thus reduced the amount that somebody who is unemployed receives in the end. Furthermore the pension age was raised to 67. These structural reforms led to great disappointment with the SPD as the (former) workers party.

In 2005, the SPD (who had won the election in 2002) lost the regional elections in North- Rhine Westphalia. This is the core region of the SPD where they always had secured the majority. Furthermore the SPD was deeply divided over the so-called ‘Enduring Freedom Mission’ in Afghanistan. Consequently, Schröder posed a vote of no-confidence which resulted in new parliamentary elections The outcome of which put the SPD into a grand coalition (for the second time in German history) with the Conservative Party.
The time between 2005 and the next parliamentary elections were marked by strong inner party quarrels and several personal changes on the leadership board of the SPD. This is important for the following study. Since many of the inner party disputes are reflected in the comments that Frank Walter Steinmeier received on his Facebook profile.

The SPD that went into the election campaign in 2009 was deeply internally disrupted. This was public knowledge because the party members had never been successful at keeping disputes within the party. Another issue was that Frank Walter Steinmeier had been foreign minister during the Grand Coalition and was hardly known among the public. Steinmeier had, and arguably still has, more the profile of a diplomat than a politician. The election campaign as a whole was difficult for the SPD because they could not exploit and challenge the previous governing coalition since the SPD was part of it. The SPD came out of the parliamentary elections 2009 with a historic low of only 23% of the votes (in comparison to 34.2% in 2005).

1.2 Brief history of the SPD
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1.3 Characteristics of the parliamentary elections 2009
Matthias Machning and Joachim Raschke have a strongly voiced opinion in their analysis of the SPD’s election campaign (Machning & Raschke, 2009). It is however important to notice that Machning is the former party secretary of the SPD who had to leave after major changes in the organization of the party. The SPD has undergone several challenges and inner turmoil that need to be taken into account in order to understand the status quo. Furthermore the challenges and problems the SPD was facing play a role in the way Steinmeier uses Facebook.

Machning points out that the elections 2009 were held under special circumstances (Machning & Raschke, 2009, p. 11). First of all, the world is shaken by the deepest financial crisis since the war. He remarks that the result of the first economic crisis in the 60s in Germany was the formation of the grand coalition (between SPD and CDU). The crisis in the beginning of the 80s led to the long chancellorship of Helmut Kohl (16 years). The second distinctive feature of the elections in 2009 is the financial crisis with its dynamics and deepness itself, according to Machning and Raschke (Machning & Raschke, 2009, p.11). The real task of politics is less symbolical policies than real political actions. Machning points out an important difference to the American
election campaign. Obama stood for change, for something new, while the SPD had been engaged in the government throughout the grand coalition. This tightrope walk is one of the biggest challenges in the 2009 campaign because the two governing parties have to publicly divorce each other and fight for the custody of the country (Machning & Raschke, 2009, p.12). This brings us to the third characteristic of the election in 2009: it is the first time in German history that a grand coalition ends on regular terms with the option to be reappointed (which the majority of people thought would be the outcome of the election). The fourth striking element of the 2009 elections is the fact that since 1998, more small parties have entered the political spectrum.

The SPD has changed because of various factors. One important factor, especially when analyzing the online communication on Facebook, is that the SPD was in the governing coalition for 11 years, during which time it has changed under Schröder to a more center orientated party. The party has, according to Machning and Raschke (Machning & Raschke, 2009, p. 16), exchanged the spirit of something new for pragmatism.

The SPD started 2005 as the underdog winner of the elections [Umfrage Sieger Besieger- opinion poll conqueror] into the grand coalition (Raschke, 2009, p.1). The challenges of the SPD were firstly being the junior partner in a Grand Coalition and secondly, the so-called ‘Agenda 2010’ reforms (which were initiated by former chancellor Gerhard Schröder and have been regarded as betrayal by many former SPD supporters). One final challenge was the pension age of 67, also introduced by Schröder, which means a step back, from what the SPD (the party who initiated the earlier pension age in the 60s) traditionally stood for.

In order to grasp the following study, a basic understanding of the German Political system is important. Germany is a parliamentary system. This means
that on a federal level, the German Bundestag is the only institution that is directly voted on by the citizens. In turn the proportional representation (as opposed to majority vote) system in Germany shapes the outcome of elections in significant ways. Therefore a variety of parties are competing for the voters in Germany.

The parties in Germany are of crucial importance. This is defined by the constitution, which highlights the right of formation and action of political parties (GG. Art 21. Abs.1). The right to form and operate a political party in Germany is manifested in the constitution and therefore parties will never completely lose their importance as they are a so called institution under constitutional law [verfassungsrechtliche Institution] (Andersen & Woyke, 2000, p. 434.).

1.4 Research Questions

It is the goal of the study to examine how Steinmeier communicates on the social network Facebook with his friends and followers. The communication in social networks is different from former forms of political communication. The question is how this is embedded into the activities of Steinmeier on Facebook.

The key research question of this paper is: How does the candidate of the German Social Democrats - Frank Walter Steinmeier – tries to appeal through his communication on Facebook to his followers on the social network?

This research question encompasses three sub-questions: Which topics does Steinmeier highlight? In what way does Steinmeier use Facebook to build up his and the SPD’s image and how does Steinmeier encourage participation? The core challenge of the SPD in the parliamentary election campaign in 2009 was the mobilization of the party’s base; it will be taken into account in this
research how Frank Walter Steinmeier used those and other different emotional appeals (and if he succeeded).

2.0 Political communication in the digital era
The literature gathered for this study starts with a review of the changes in political communication. These changes are a move towards a more online centered communication where social networks play a key role. The literature concerning the way elections are more and more centered in the social media realm plays an important part in this study as well. Previous literature has looked at the way Barack Obama employed the internet and specifically Facebook for his campaigns and also what earlier forms of online political campaigns looked like. Moreover, the function of online campaigns has been discussed in literature. As political systems differ across the world, the reasons as to how social media campaigns are implemented vary. Lastly the literature review covers the way emotions and power structures play a role in online political campaigns because part of this study is it to analyze in which way Steinmeier tries to appeal through his Facebook communication to his (potential) voters.

2.1 Changes in political communication – moving online
The term political communication is strongly associated with being difficult to define. Both components of the term are open to a variety of definitions that are more or less broad (McNair, 1995, p.3). Political communication can be described as “purposeful communication about politics” (McNair, 1995, p.4). Political communication has two aspects. Firstly, political actors use it to achieve their goals. The second aspect, which is nowadays seen in social network online campaigns, as for example on Facebook, is that citizens also can enter political communication in form of replies. Citizens are traditionally addressed by the political communication that comes from political actors, however, they now use online social networks to voice criticism and comment on the subjects that they feel are not being treated correctly by politicians, such as certain policies.
Political communication is not a one-way communication, but a communication made up of dynamic interactions between politicians, political actors and their audience, i.e. the citizens. All parties are engaged in “the process of producing, receiving and interpreting political messages” (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995, p.7).

Political communication has developed over time. This process can be divided into three stages (Mazzolenie, 1987, p.80). The first stage was after the Second World War where the importance and power of parties was extremely strong. The importance of political parties shaped political communication at that time. People felt more affiliated with a certain party and another reason for this is of course that there were fewer parties available. It was a time when parties played a strong role in life of the citizens and the citizens kept up strong ties with political parties.

The second stage of political communication began in the 1960s with the development of television. Television shaped political communication because it offered another medium in addition to newspapers. Politicians had to be adapting to the logic of television and work on appearing in a positive manner on TV. Party tactics and strategies had to be modified as they had to adapt to the new media logic; the so-called mediatization of politics (Mazzolenie, 1987, p.83).

Currently political communication is in the third stage. This stage is described as a “hydra header beast, the many mouths of which are continually clamoring to be fed” (Blumer & Kavanagh, 1999, p.213). The new developments in the media, mainly the increasingly individualized communication, have changed how voters expect, receive and decode political messages. As Blumer and Kavangh argue “the avenues of political communication are a multiplying process that is becoming more diverse, fragmented and complex, but also at a deeper level, power relations among key message providers and receivers are
being rearranged” (Blumler& Kavanagh, 1999, p. 209). Therefore it is important that research looks at how these relations between politicians and citizens are shaped through power relations. A politician might use certain forms of power to shape an online discussion in a certain way. This can be done, for example, by deleting unfavorable comments.

The advent of social networks is seen as the major difference between modern election campaigns and previous campaigns (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.17). However it is argued that election campaigns should not be caught up relying only on social networks (Garofoli, 2008, p.18). The internet plays a strong role in the life of the citizens, but a campaign that tries to succeed without real life interactions fails. It is acknowledged that the internet indeed enables communications with voters, helps with the organization of offline campaigns and mobilizes the grassroots followers. However, this ability should be kept in the focus of online campaign planners instead of focusing on the sheer number of supporters a politician has acquired on Facebook. As Garofoli (2008) claims “(...) if our people on the internet were not also organizing in the ground we were not going to be effective” (p.18). Thus elections are not won online, and it is often forgotten when praising successful presidential election campaigns that used the internet that the key to success in these campaigns was the ability to facilitate a platform where potential voters could organize with each other in real life and act. (Bimber & Davis, 2003, p.127). Political communication has always been more or less a linear top-down communication process where political actors offered communication to potential voters. The new media has altered political communication considerably because it enables a fast response not only for the candidates, but also for the voters.

2.2 Evolution of social media elections
In order to understand recent online election Campaigns, it is vital to take previous campaigns into account. They demonstrate how political
communication has moved online more and more over the past decade. The presidential election campaign in 2000 by Howard Dean (former Democratic presidential candidate) was the first campaign where the internet played a vital role not only in the actual campaign and the reporting of the campaign but also in the way the voter was informed about political issues through non-party organizations (Bieber, 2010). During Dean’s campaign, direct mailings had a high importance (Bieber, 2010). The internet allowed a new form of voter targeting. In particular, e-mails were used to reach the voter. However, increased targeting possibilities called for new tools that enable the best use of this targeting. The tools that came to be used were originally marketing tools, such as specific customer-relations management technologies (i.e. newsletters that the customer/ voter can sign up for and which come addressed to him). This was accomplished by various possibilities to sign up for newsletters online or to register as a voluntary helper online. Barack Obama has taken this focus on delivering content to potential voters one step further. The virtual market where the citizen is seen as the one who pays rather than the one who counts was the center of Deans campaign (Bieber, 2010). The internet campaign in 2000 was focused on generating databases of personal data of citizens. These databases ultimately generated donations. Since the year 2000, election campaigns have adapted more and more to the possibilities of the new social networks that have emerged, such as Facebook.

It is claimed that Howard Dean was the pioneer of online campaigning when he initiated his Blog for America (Blog for America, last retrieved, December 7, 2012). Barack Obama can be seen as the most successful online campaigner (Wired, last retrieved December 7, 2012).

Obamas presidential election campaign in 2008 had certain features that made it successful. One of the features was the campaign that was based online within the social networks. This feature enabled the participants to engage in
networks in their real life, to connect with people online and meet them at
events they had organized online. A strong characteristic of social campaigning
is the structure and organization of a party/candidate centered social network
through existing social networks such as Facebook (Bieber, 2010). This is
strongly tied to the recruitment of supporters on Facebook and consequently of
course also in real life, i.e. the offline world. Obama was highly active in the
social media. The four presidential debates during the election campaign were
accompanied with postings on blogs and social networks. This resulted in the
so-called viral effect, where the message travelled through the supporters and
their friends quickly and reached a wide audience.

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Political candidates have generally used the internet during and in addition to
election campaigns in the last decade, but the means of operation have
changed. In general, researchers have defined five main goals for which
politicians and parties use the internet. First, politicians provide information via
the internet (with a higher speed than in the print). Second, the internet provides
added value through different multimedia forms, interactivity and control over
the information that is posted and distributed. They have more control over what
information is published than with traditional mass media. Third, the web allows
for immediate distribution and recruitment of possible voters. Fourth, networking
online is easier through the hyperlink system and through social networks
(which after all have been designed to enable networking). Lastly, the
interactive features embed the citizens more in the political process. Parties use
this to suggest a certain participatory factor for the citizens (Gibson & Ward,
2000, p. 112).
Through new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the internet has gained more importance for campaigning politicians. These five goals and purposes have become even more important. However, the new ICTs play a different role for different parties. Research distinguished between those parties who are expected to emphasize the participatory aspect, those parties who focus on the possibilities of direct top-down information distribution and those parties that keep a close eye on public opinion (Römele, 2005, p. 8).

According to research, the new ICTs serve three key functions: opinion formation through direct contact with the citizens, bypassing mass media and lastly controlling the content and dose of information distributed. This has shown to be useful especially for smaller, less established parties. Furthermore, citizens can be embedded more in the campaign through active features, such as the comment section that allows politicians to open up in a new way and even enter a dialogue with citizens. (Römele, 2005, p. 23)

Online campaigns, on Facebook for example, have certain benefits. The campaign can increase the exposure of the candidate at a low cost and most importantly is less controlled by the mainstream media, thus surpassing the traditional gatekeepers. Furthermore an online campaign enables access to the younger generation who tend to be less interested in traditional ways of political campaigning such as rallies. Moreover, Facebook creates the essence of each successful campaign, a database of people who connect with the candidate and thus allows the campaigners to contact them directly in order to engage them and to raise contributions. Facebook, as well as other digital tools, allows for reaching potential donors and volunteers. In that sense, Obama raised more than 600 million USD. Most of the money came from small donations made online (Small, 2008, p. 86).
The crucial factor for a successful online campaign is that the party manages to engage the citizens through their campaign and its platform. Interactivity is important (Small, 2008, p. 89).

2.2.1 The impact of web 2.0 during election campaigns

The term web 2.0 describes the area where so-called user generated content can be spread and multiplied through other users (Stanoewska & Slabeva 2008, p. 2). The biggest innovation of web 2.0 is that every user is at the same time also a potential producer of content. In the euphoria concerning web 2.0, it is however commonly forgotten that the structures of the offline world, especially the power structures, are also present in those new realms. (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, last accessed April 19, 2011) claims that, the digitalization of the public sphere in web 2.0 changes the way the party and party members interact with each other. Parties will not be organized in regional communities, but rather in online communities. According to Bieber (Leggewie & Bieber, 2001, p. 39) the advent of social networks has and will have a strong impact on political communication, customer rights and personal rights.

2.2.2 Differences in research regarding the impact

In her comparative analysis of Facebook use during the 2008 Canadian national elections Tamara A. Small (2008) provides a working definition for Web 2.0 and social networks such as Facebook. She claims that the distinguishing factor between web 2.0 and earlier forms of the Internet is the moment of collaboration and interactivity. Social networking sites, which are the essential part of web 2.0, allow users to interact with other users and to collaborate in the
creation of site content. Small (2008, p. 85) points out that Facebook is the most popular social network with over 100 million users and a high number of regular visitors. Researchers have differing opinions with regards to the importance and impact of the internet on election campaigns. It has been previously claimed that the amount of views that a candidate’s website gets by citizens does not have an impact on the outcome of elections (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.3). This is contrary to the later findings of the PEW study (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.3), which indeed sees citizens turning towards the internet to gather information and material on politicians and parties. The PEW study argues that the internet has a strong impact on the political opinion building process of citizens. Other studies (D’Alessio, 1997, p.495; Wiliams & Gulati, 2007) argue that the internet, namely the social media networks, have an impact on the outcome of election campaigns. (D’Alessio, 1997, p.495; Wiliams and Gulati, 2007)

The internet and web 2.0 have developed at an immense speed. This pace also explains the gap between the skepticism regarding the social networks on one side and the optimism on the other side. Some of the differences in the arguments are because of the different time that the respective studies were carried out. (Bimber & Davis, 2003, p. 124)

In order to assess what role the internet plays in the life of an average citizen in the western world, the PEW study (Wiliams & Gulati 2008, p.3) offers vital insights. A similar study is not available in Germany. However, the American trend can be used as a benchmark for the role the internet plays in Germany. Internet use has increased the same way in the two countries. According to the study, 46% of Americans reported using the internet to acquire information and news about campaigns and to share their views and to mobilize others. As a result, three core online activities were drawn out.
First, 35% of Americans reported that they have watched online videos associated with political parties and or candidates. This figure ranks three times higher than it had been reported in previous surveys.

A second reason for internet usage was the gathering of information and the step to become involved with politics and politicians. This was reported at 10%.

A third core online activity is the possibility to make political contributions (this figure was also three times higher than in 2004). In particular, 11% of respondents have actually reposted comments and given ‘likes’ about an election and 5% have even posted their own comments.

Furthermore, 39% of the respondents of the PEW survey state that they use the internet because it provides unfiltered information and material (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.3).

It has been also argued that the online activities of candidates and parties can have a positive impact on the electoral outcome for the candidate (Gibson & Mc Allister, 2005, p. 17). The question of whether the actual number of followers matters or not has been the main focus of the research. It is argued though that the number of supporters increases the vote share of a candidate (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.7). It has been found that candidates who maintained a website for their campaign have won an average of 9,000 voters more than those who did not. (D’Alessio, 1997, p.492). However the study, which made this conclusion, left out important variables like the financial resources of the respondents and the candidates. This might have led to a certain degree of misrepresentation and thus affected the outcome. This argument is further supported by studies, which found that the number of online supporters a certain candidate has is positively correlated with their vote share (Williams & Gulati, 2007).
Previous research has also tried to generalize which kind of candidates will be more likely to use Facebook in their campaigns. It is argued (in an American context) that democrats, candidates challenging a previous winner, better financed candidates and those who run in competitive races were most likely to use Facebook in their campaigns. Furthermore, candidates in districts with higher education and more white people seem to be active on Facebook. Moreover, it is claimed that candidates for open seats were most likely to update their Facebook profile (Williams & Gulati, 2009, p. 14).

Other findings suggest that minor party candidates tend to employ the internet more than major candidates. However, in most studies it turns out that major party candidates outperform their rivals in terms of the sophistication of their online presence (Greer & LaPointe, 2004, p. 125). There has also been a difference between incumbents and the challenging parties. Incumbents seem to be able to rely more on traditional (media) channels whereas challengers are perceived to have more to gain from web campaigns (Mangolis & Resnick, 2003, p. 41). However, incumbents have more advantages than challengers. For example, they are already known and do not need to build a name first.

Moreover, the size of a candidate’s party is found to be important when looking at which candidate is active online or not (Howard, 2006). Older research found that candidates of minor parties are unlikely to allocate money for building websites (Lijphart, 1994 p. 22). However newer research is likely to find differing results because the creation of a website is not as expensive as it used to be and the Internet gives opportunities for different forms of online activities. Web 2.0 enables an easy and low-cost web presences for candidates and parties.

When the study was carried out, it might have been a relevant question to examine which kind of candidates use Facebook in their campaigns. However, only a few years later the questions have moved from whom and how much to
why and how. The mere existence of a Facebook account is not a novelty or a distinguishing factor anymore because most candidates have a regularly updated account.

The impact of Facebook was near zero for candidates who put little effort into their online campaigns. Furthermore, online campaigns are regarded as an important additional factor for raising a candidate’s standing in the election. In conclusion, the compromise between the different viewpoints in literature is that Facebook activity of candidates can have an impact on the election outcome if it is integrated thoroughly into the campaign, but it cannot compensate for strategic problems within the overall election campaign. (Williams & Gulati, 2008, p.26).

The last point is crucial for this study as well because it might hint at the reason why the SPD did not win the election. As laid out in the previous chapter, the SPD had a number of strategic and personnel weaknesses during the election campaign which could not be compensated for by their online campaign. This study will also look into other issues that are related to the weaknesses of the SPD (i.e. party unity). This leads to the weakness of the research concerning the importance of online campaigns as described above. A lot of previous research focused heavily in the importance of quantity. These studies were conducted using quantitative methods, but lack the qualitative backbone. I argue that not only the quantity of supporters a party has online is relevant but even more so, the quality of their communication with citizens on Facebook matters. The topics of the discussion, power relations and the emotions that shape the debate, are at the core of this study because they offer insights about the quality of the online communication.
2.3 Online campaigns and emotions

Emotional appeals are communication that is intended to trigger a certain response (Brader, 2005, p. 390). A lot of discussion focuses on the emotions of enthusiasm and fear, which seem to be dominant in the research on emotions in political campaigns. It has been argued that appeals to enthusiasm are used to reinforce commitment and motivation, whereas fear is thought to direct attention towards alternatives (Brader, 2005, p. 389).

It has been widely recognized that affective judgment of citizens plays a key role in the political decision making process. Citizens do not make their voting decisions only based on a rational analysis. Affections are seen to influence economic evaluations (Conover & Feldman, 1986, p. 62), tolerance judgments (Marcus 2005, p.958) and campaign involvement (Nadeau, Niemi, Amato, 1995, p. 564).

Researchers from various backgrounds (psychology and political science) found that emotions play a big role in the reasoning of the citizens and are as likely to enhance rationality, as they are to subvert it (Marcus, 2005, p.962). It is therefore no secret that campaign ads affect voting behavior and appeal to the emotions of the voters through images and music (Brader, 2005, p.388). Similarly, we can see Facebook as a political ad, a form of political advertisement at a much lower cost. The emotions appealed to in Facebook might be analogous to the emotions that political ads appeal to. The big difference with Facebook is that the politicians receive direct emotional feedback to their content through the comment field.

Political candidates might use emotions to provoke certain actions. Research has found out that arguments that appeal to a recipient’s fear or anger are a good way to mobilize a party base and attract new potential voters. (Johnston, 1992, p. 22). Emotional appeals show that the stakes are high and that there is
a lot to lose. They paint, so to speak, a dark picture of the alternative future (i.e. the other party). Furthermore it has been pointed out that emotional appeals are well suited for media ‘laws’, which call for drama, personalization and emotion (Bennett, 2003, p. 515).

Another body of research emphasizes that citizens process information very differently under positive or negative emotional circumstances. Positive emotions are said to deepen the reliance on existing beliefs and acceptance of top-down information distribution, whereas negative emotional surroundings deepen the reliance or need for bottom-up information distribution and procession (Schwarz, 2000 p. 438).

Researchers found that enthusiasm increases campaign involvement, and anxiety enhances the learning effect (Marcus & MacKuen, 1993). Therefore, candidate-induced enthusiasm is seen to deepen the involvement. However, this research has failed to take into account the interactive role of individual differences. Not every citizen reacts to an emotional appeal the same way. It has been found that the extent to which these negative emotional appeals induce learning and involvement in a citizen is influenced by the degree the citizen sees himself to successfully undertake political action (Brader, 2005, p. 393).

Research claims that voters who are exposed to appeals to enthusiasm show a greater interest and are more willing to vote and rely more on preexisting preferences to choose a candidate. More to the contrary, research sees enthusiastic appeals as being able to turn attention towards other issues. Later research disagrees with the previous research, which saw a positive link between enthusiasm and interest as well as the absence of a link between enthusiasm and information seeking (Marcus, 2000). The later research has found that indeed enthusiasm can initiate information seeking. Furthermore, it
has been found that enthusiasm can cause voters to rely more on prior beliefs (Brader, 2005 p. 392).

Fear appeals are another emotional appeal that research has extensively dealt with. Research has shown that campaign ads using fear, fear evoking images and music can have a strong persuasive power. For example, in campaigns regarding healthcare, fear is a commonly used emotional appeal. Research on public health campaigns has shown that fear appeals are more effective at changing behavior. This is especially true when appeals offer an alternative or a way to mitigate the danger. This is the same for political ads and is supposedly true in online communication on Facebook as well. In particular, it shows ways to avoid a disastrous scenario. (Brader, 2005, p. 390)

Researchers see the shift in decision-making caused by appeals to fear as the same thing as the link between anxiety (triggered by fear) and political judgment (Marcus, 2000). Therefore anxiety appeals do not only cause fear, but are seen by research as causing change. Furthermore, there is a suggested relationship between fear and motivation, wherein fear can provoke the withdrawal of engagement (Witte & Allen, 2000, p. 602). In that sense, research found that anxiety does not boost interest in the election per se, but rather interest in the underlying political issues (Marcus, 2000).

The research has mainly focused on emotions and especially on emotional appeals in political communication. But since Facebook is a different form of political advertisement, the findings can (arguably) be applied there as well.

Emotion is not a one-way street. It is created between two parties especially through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook. The post of a candidate might spark an emotion that has not been anticipated or might not even have been intended. As it is noted before, not only political parties and candidate shape the values of citizens through appealing to certain emotions
but also “…individual’s emotions have been shown to influence political and economic evaluations” (Conover & Feldman, 1986, p. 60). Politicians are faced almost immediately with the emotions of the citizens on Facebook and other social media forms because the instant reply means that everyone can instantly share emotions and feelings about certain actions, i.e. posts (on Facebook).

Throughout the research, it has been widely argued that through appealing to specific emotions (such as hate), certain actions are provoked in the person who is submitted to these emotional appeals. It has been argued that a feeling of anxiety interrupts an ongoing behavior. In this case for example, the belief in the governing party (the CDU) and that enthusiasm increases the motivation of the citizens to act is interrupted. The feeling that Barack Obama created during his presidential election campaign in 2008 supports this idea.

2.4 Fostering emotions among citizens
Since the presidential election campaign of Barack Obama in 2008 literature has tried to analyze the elements that made the campaign successful. Obama’s election campaign does reveal a historic change from earlier campaigns (Roleff, 2011). Most notably no candidate has ever before gained that much donations from his supporters. It is claimed that the secret to this lay in the direct mailing that was aimed at the working and middle class (Roleff, 2011). Obama allowed voters to donate any amount of money, even if it was only one USD. The election team introduced digital payment methods like PayPal. Citizens were already used to paying this way through Amazon and the likes. This made it easy for possible donators to pay. The ultimate goal was to generate small donations that could be done through a few mouse clicks. However apart from those technological and practical aspects, the factor of emotion played a great role. Obama not only created enthusiasm, he gave this emotion a ‘home’ so to
speak. He did this with the website ‘mybarackobama.com’, where volunteers could register themselves as supporters and build online and ultimately offline (in real life) networks that allowed them to transport the feeling created online to the offline world. This also had an effect on street campaigning. This is often forgotten with the focus on online campaigns. Street campaigning was also made more effective and efficient by the transfer of online enthusiasm to the offline world (Roleff, 2011).

Throughout his campaign Obama created emotional enthusiasm and solidarity among the citizens. This led them to donate and organize, not only on social networks (online), but also in real life events such as public viewings (offline) where he mobilized the grassroots (of society) and thus integrated large parts of them into the election campaign.

The campaign slogan is still widely known and the majority of active people in his campaign believed that they could actually create change. He created a strong sense of ‘We’ (Novy & Fliegauf, 2009, p. 50). He created an area where the people believed that they were part of a common project.

2.5 Power and hierarchy in online campaigns
It has been widely claimed that social networks break down traditional power and hierarchy relations. For example, power has been defined as the structural capacity of a social actor to “impose its will over other social actors(s) (Castells, 2007, p. 239). Counter power is regarded as the capacity of social actors to resist and challenge, “power relations that are institutionalized” (Castells, 2007, p. 239). The research is divided when it comes to the analysis of whether the social networks enable this form of counter power or not.
Power relations are seen to be based on socialized communication. This is the communication that makes up the everyday life in politics, i.e. politics is based on socialized communication and aims to win the battle over “the people’s minds” (Castells, 2007, p. 238). The most powerful message in this realm is an image with added text. Media rules have made the political communication focus on leaders and images of leaders. Therefore, an effective campaign must communicate the moral values of a candidate in order to influence the people’s mind and thus exert power (Castells, 2007, p. 240).

Some researchers claim, that web 2.0 enables a new distribution of power by rendering the communication to a horizontal format where everyone has the ability to talk about or comment on everyone. It is a “multimodal exchange of interactive messages from many to many” (Castells, 2007, p. 240). The new media structures, web 2.0 and the social networks undermine the old way that politicians influenced the citizen’s mind. According to research, this has created new ways for the public to exert power over the citizens, to monitor their activities and to enter and interpret the political world and ultimately take part in the battle to shape people’s minds (Castells, 2007, p.254). However research has remained skeptical in which ways citizens will be able to employ this gained power.

Optimistically we believe that the erosion of gatekeeping and the emergence of multiple axes of information provide new opportunities for citizens to challenge elite control of political issues. Pessimistically we are skeptical of the ability of ordinary citizens to make use of these opportunities and suspicious of the degree to which even multiple axes of power are still shaped by more fundamental structures of economic and political power (Williams & Delli Carpini, 2008, p. 1209)
In that sense, there have also been claims in research that the new media with the social networks does not give the power back to the public because institutionalized communication by, for example, politicians is stronger and will also survive in the realm of new media and may even enlarge the distribution channels for this kind of communication (Murdock, 2004).

2.6 Conclusion: Focus shift in political communication
In summary the theory reviews the main changes that have taken place in political communication, which has shifted focus between street-campaigning to online-campaigning. The theory shows that political communication has two aspects. The first aspect is the way political actors to achieve their goals use it. The second aspect deals with the way citizens can engage through political communication to give direct (public) feedback on what political actors communicate. Moreover, the literature offers examples as to how political communication gradually moved more online. From Howard Dean, who was a pioneer in using the internet for his political election to Barack Obama who took online communication one step further in his presidential campaign 2008. The way Obama used the internet for his communication is explained by the literature as new and it is highlighted that his ability to mobilize the grassroots made his online campaign successful. In conclusion, the move online has dynamized political communication to an interactive communication between politicians, political actors and their audience, such as citizens. This communication is influenced by emotions, which can be voiced by the audience and to which politicians can appeal to through their communicative acts.
3.0 Rhetorical criticism as methodological tool

Rhetoric Criticism is a qualitative research method that is especially designed to gain a systematic understanding of symbolic acts, symbolic communication and artifacts. Since this study will analyze Steinmeier’s posts on Facebook, which are essential parts of his political communication during the election campaign in 2009, it can be assumed that his posts show symbolic acts because they are symbolizing traits of him.

This study uses a combination of two different methods from rhetoric criticism, in particular, cluster criticism and pentadic criticism. To start with, a cluster analysis will further the understanding and offer insights as to which topics Steinmeier brings up. From there, pentadic analysis will offer deeper understanding as to why these topics are brought up and which motives Steinmeier is pursuing with his communication on Facebook.

3.1 Rhetorical criticism
Rhetoric criticism is a general concept based on the assumption that every human chooses to communicate in particular ways based on what he or she aims to bring across to their audience (Foss, 2008). The concept of rhetoric itself is old and dates back to Aristotle. Throughout its use it has had a rather negative connotation and is strongly tied to persuasive communication. Politicians are often criticized that they offer more rhetoric than actions, i.e. that they just use nice sounding words and symbols but do not provide any action against a problem.

However, rhetoric criticism uses a different approach from traditional rhetoric analysis. In this context, rhetoric is defined as the human use of symbols to
communicate. This use of symbols has different dimensions. The first dimension basically states that humans are the creators of messages and thus the ones who will employ rhetoric. The second dimension offers a basic understanding of why rhetoric criticism offers a useful way of analyzing texts, as it is the purpose of this study. Symbols are seen as the carrier of rhetoric. A symbol is something that represents something else by its virtue of relationships and conventions, i.e. a common normative understanding or association. (Burks, 1949, p. 676). Juxtaposed to signs, symbols are directly connected to the object. In contrast, a sign represents something else standing for an object (i.e. traffic signs which stand for a certain rule). It is also important to note, that only the conscious use of symbols for communication can be understood as rhetoric. When analyzing a text with rhetoric criticism, the researcher might also analyze components that are not consciously created as symbols. This type of rhetoric criticism is then again rather unlikely, since the text corpus is derived from a political campaign where the posts of Steinmeier were highly copy-written by his staff. Nonetheless, it is good to keep a distance as a researcher to try to not analyze everything as a rhetoric symbol. The last dimension that treats communication as the purpose of rhetoric suggests a rather interchangeable relationship between the two concepts. Often it is the angle from which the issue is looked at that determines whether the term communication or rhetoric is appropriate. In the context of this study, since it deals with strategic political communication, it is well understood that the term rhetoric is more appropriate because it entails a much more strategic predisposition that the term communication (Burks, 1949, p. 681).

Rhetoric criticism looks at three different parts in a communication: (1) systematic analysis as the act of criticism; (2) acts and artifacts as the objects of analysis in criticism; and (3) understanding rhetorical processes as the purpose of criticism. (Foss, 2004, p. 6)
Acts and artifacts are the object of criticism. This takes what was explained above one step further. The authors or speakers initiate acts towards the anticipated audience. However these acts are difficult to trace and researchers base their findings on the artifacts that are the tangible evidence of the act. Acts, which are written down or posted in some form, have become artifacts, which are available to a large audience. An artifact is basically a copy of the original. However, in this study the actual acts will be analyzed (although at first glance they might appear as artifacts). But since they are originally written down and intended for this written format it is the actual acts that will be analyzed. This brings more depth to the study because there is no possibility of something from the original message being lost in the process of transcription. The unique aspect in this study is that artifacts and acts have become interchangeable, the act is at the same time an artifact and only its existence as artifact makes it an act. In other words, the act only becomes important (in this context) because it is written down. The nature of the artifact (it is on Facebook) determines the way the act is composed.

The process of rhetorical criticism is a four-step process. In the first step, the research questions are formulated. A rhetoric act has to be selected in the second step. This has already been accomplished by the theme of the study because all the posts of Steinmeier have been taken out of Facebook and put into a word document. In the third step, the acts need to be analyzed. Finally, the findings are systemized and put into words in the final step (Burks, 1949, p. 683).

The research questions seek to look at a rhetorical phenomenon and how it is constructed. Rhetorical criticism provides the identification of some of the basic concepts that are involved in the creation of this rhetorical phenomenon and explains how those concepts work. Rhetoric criticism allows the research to draw conclusions about ways to improve on the way rhetoric is employed in
different forms of communication. Therefore, this will be the main method of the following study because it serves the research questions and is supposed to lead to the desired findings and outcomes.

### 3.3 Data Collection
The data that is analyzed for this study has been collected from the Facebook page of Frank Walter Steinmeier. The analysis only looks at Steinmeier’s own posts. All of his posts have various comments, but since Steinmeier never replied to those comments, they are not to be analyzed.

The posts provide the qualitative body of data through which the analysis is grounded. All posts from February 2\(^{nd}\) (when Steinmeier started using Facebook more frequently) to October 5\(^{th}\) have been collected and analyzed according to cluster and pentadic criticism, two methods, which will be laid out below. In this time frame, Steinmeier posted 200 times on Facebook. The majority of posts took place in September (almost 100) and August.

### 3.4 Two main methods: Cluster and pentadic criticism
There are several methods in Rhetoric Criticism that could have been used to analyse the data. However, a review of different methods showed that cluster and pentadic criticism would be more helpful in answering to the research questions. Below, I will explain why I opted against certain techniques and in favor of others. Applying cluster criticism to this study will offer insights into how Steinmeier communicates and tries to build connections with his followers. Pentadic criticism is strongly related to drama and thereby gives a good account of this form of political communication. It has to be kept in mind that political communication during election campaigns is highly dramatized and organized by directors (election planners and agencies).
3.4.1 Introduction to cluster criticism
The study will start with a cluster analysis to provide answers for the research question dealing with the topics Steinmeier presents in his communication on Facebook. The cluster analysis will give some preliminary answers as to how Steinmeier communicates on Facebook, which topics he addresses and how often he posts. The concept dates back to Kenneth Burke. Burke is regarded as the theorist with the greatest influence on the discipline of rhetoric criticism. He set the benchmark for all rhetoric criticism methods to follow by building a working definition for rhetoric that moves away from its traditional definition. Burke sees rhetoric as “the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents (Burke, 1996).” Burke argues that people define themselves by forming clusters of friends, argumentations and beliefs and thereby distinguish themselves from others. Division is an important aspect of rhetoric. Rhetoric can be used in two ways: either to create distinction or to overcome it. People form identifications with another person or another group of people through shared clusters. Persuasion can be seen as a result of identification (Burks, 1949). In this case, Steinmeier wants his followers to identify with him and thereby persuade them to vote for him. He also wants to offer reasons for his followers to distinguish himself from other candidates. However, a person is only persuaded “insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (Foss, 1984, p. 8). This quote demonstrates how important it is to master the communication on Facebook in the right way, i.e. in a way that leads the (mass) audience to identify with the rhetor. Rhetors offer ways to identify a certain situation. In this study for example, Steinmeier offers ways to interpret the impact of the global financial crisis (which will be laid out in the analysis) in order to help his audience understand it, but moreover to create a shared worldview and thus identification with him.
Furthermore, rhetors create so called ‘terministic screens’ (Foss, 2004, p.71). The screens are made up through the repeated mentioning of certain topics. Those screens, or highlights, bring attention to a specific aspect of society. Terministic screens are valuable to this study because they offer insight as to how Steinmeier creates attention for specific topics, rather than for others and thus uses a form of power in shaping his followers minds. The screens offer clues to the rhetors worldview. It has to be analyzed if Steinmeier’s Facebook posts allow for the establishment of certain terministic screens or if a rhetor fails to do so and the terministic screens build up by Steinmeier are not fully developed.

3.4.2 Cluster analysis
The different topics presented by Steinmeier on his Facebook wall will be clustered so that they offer a bigger picture into what kind of direction Steinmeier tries to shape the public agenda, i.e. which topics he wants the public to talk about. Initially key terms need to be identified. It is crucial to limit the number of key terms in order to not lose focus (Burke, 1996). The key terms in Steinmeier’s Facebook posts are the concert against new-Nazis [Nazis aus dem Tackt bringen], the crisis, tax-reform and job-creation (Deutschlandplan). The significance of key terms can be determined either by frequency (how often the terms appear) or by intensity (how strong the emphasis on the terms is) (Burke, 1996). Often terms function as good/evil pairs. The good term describes what the rhetor sees as ideal and the evil is what he criticizes on the opposing side (Burke, 1996). The second step examines the terms surrounding the key terms. They are charted around them. I am going to make traditional clusters with the key term in the middle and the surrounding terms around it. Terms may cluster in different ways. For example, they might be in close proximity and or in conjunction with each other. Furthermore, there might be a
cause and effect relationship between the key term and another term. It is important to take in the way these clusters work. Ultimately, through these clusters, an explanation for the artifact will be discovered. This will be complimented by patterns in association that will be found during the research. The worldview as constructed by the author will be made visible in this step. A good way to reach this is by Agon analysis (Burke, 1996). This is the examination of opposing terms. The researcher looks for terms that contradict each other. Furthermore, those conflicting terms might point to a conflict within the rhetor. In terms of Steinmeier, this could lead to interesting insights because he was in a difficult position during the election campaign. He went into the campaign as the foreign minister of a grand coalition. Therefore, he was unable to do what is normally done in election campaigns: criticizing and pointing out the wrongdoings of the previous government. The contrasting terms furthermore make the allies and enemies visible by linking them to either site, by juxtaposing them.

Ultimately, the cluster analysis will provide a dictionary for Steinmeiers key terms and show a relationship between the terms. This will provide answers to the first research question about how Steinmeier communicates on Facebook. It will also offer insight into the second research questions, which seek to understand the ways in which Steinmeier wants to shape the public discussion.

3.4.3 Introduction to pentadic criticism
Similar to cluster criticism, pentadic criticism is also rooted in the work of Kenneth Burke and is derived from the way Burke uses the word pentad. Pentadic criticism will offer answers to the research question how Steinmeier tries to re-build his image and the image of the SPD. Traditionally, a pentad is a group of five things. Burke analyses human motivation through terms that come
from drama studies. In theater, an act is the action happening, the scene is the stage’s set up, the agency or in drama studies, the tactic which for example establishes an act, the agent is the person carrying out an action, the actor but it should not be confused with the rhetor (Burke, 1996). Lastly the agent carries out the act in a certain scene via certain agencies for a specific purpose (Burke, 1996). Burke combines them with the notion of pentad because he uses five terms. Later, Burke added the terms attitude and ratio as sub-terms (attitude is a sub-term of the agent, and ratio is the way two terms are paired) (1996). The terms will be described in detail in the practical part of this section. The historic background in drama studies can be explained because as rhetoric drama tries to convince the audience of a certain story; it tells a story from a certain angle (Burks, 1949).

According to Burke (1996), language use constitutes action. This happens within two conditions. First, the action must involve the freedom of choice; otherwise it would be a movement (i.e. something is moved juxtaposed to taking the action to move itself) (Burke, 1996). Motion is something that happens after action. Secondly, humans present messages in a similar way a play is presented (Burke, 1996). As also seen in cluster criticism, rhetoric is used to present a situation in a specific way that constitutes a certain action. Through discovering how rhetors present arguments, their motives for action in the particular situations become evident (Burke, 1996). Often rhetors aim to justify, explain or account for something. For example a rhetor, like Steinmeier, who sees a person, like Angela Merkel, as the core of a problem, will use rhetoric that explains why she is the core of the problem. With this rhetoric, Steinmeier hopes that a specific action will happen within his audience. In this case, the specific action would be to not vote for Angela Merkel in the parliamentary elections but instead to vote for him (Burks, 1949).
Political communication is a valid field where pentadic criticism can be applied because the understanding of ‘play like’ communication fits well with the way political communication becomes highly dramatized during election campaigns in order to highlight the differences between parties (even though in reality and in times of catch-all parties these differences might be rather marginal) (Burke, 1996).

Furthermore the terms used in pentadic criticism are act (what took place), scene (background), agent (who is acting), agency (by what instruments) and purpose (what for). These terms are highly related to the journalistic questions (what, when, how, why, where) and are therefore also applicable to political communication during elections because political rhetors like Steinmeier also direct their communication towards the media in order to earn coverage.

### 3.4.4 Pentadic criticism analysis

After I have analyzed the artifact through cluster criticism, as described above, I will run a pentadic criticism analysis based on the five terms (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose).

The agent can be Steinmeier, i.e. when he talks about something he did or will do; or another person like the political opponent (Merkel or Westerwelle the party leader of the Liberal Democrats). The act is a major action, which takes place. One dominant example of this could be the possible bankruptcy of Opel in 2009. This was a big topic in the election campaign because opinions were split as to whether or not the government should help keep Opel or let it go to bankruptcy. The agency refers to the means this act is established by. In Steinmeier’s case, the agency is the way he posts on Facebook. It can be a link to his blog post, an event or pictures with comments. The scene considers the situation in which Steinmeier says something. Naturally since the study is
analyzing Facebook, the scene is Facebook. When Burke was alive Facebook did not exist and therefore it is not taken into account as a possible scene. Therefore the distinction between scene as Facebook or as an actual event cannot be taken into full account. However, for the purpose of the study, the scene will remain Facebook because this also reflects on the way things are said. The purpose refers to the effect the rhetor wants to have with his communication. In Steinmeier’s case, the ultimate purpose is of course vote maximization, but also the immediate purpose of his Facebook communication is for example, discrediting the political opponent. Those terms will be applied to every posting of Steinmeier between May and the 29th of September 2009. This will give an overview of Steinmeier’s view of a situation and the way he frames situations in order to win over his follower’s minds.

In a second step, the relationship between the different terms needs to be explored. This will lead to further insight with regards to what dimensions of a certain situation the rhetor privileges over other dimensions (i.e. focus on scene or agent). This practically results in the systematic pairing of the different terms and testing which one is dominant over the other. The questions that will guide the research here are: if the first term (i.e. the scene) requires the second term (i.e. the act) to happen in a certain way? And is there something in the first term that determines the nature of the second term? For example, if the agent in one of Steinmeier’s posts is the political opponent and then Steinmeier’s presentation of the act will be corresponding to this and thus the agent dominates the act in this example.

This will be done for all 20 pairings until for every pairing the domination of one over the other has become clear to the researcher. However, in some cases this might not be answered clearly. These tests will be entered in a two-column chart: One column for the pairing and one column for the question of whether or
not the first term dominates the second term. This question is a yes/no question but it is possible to indicate that the relationship is unclear.

This process will produce a pattern that points to a dominant term (the one with the most yes answers). The analytical part of this study will then identify the featured and dominant terms to support the argument. Through knowledge of the dominant term, the research can show how Steinmeier communicates on Facebook and what are the means through which he influences the public opinion. By determining the ratios between these five aspects it can be shown how Steinmeier creates audience identification through the use of these aspects.

3.5 Evaluation
Both methods that will be used in this study are qualitative methods. Therefore, they are guided by different principles than quantitative research. The standards used to evaluate the findings of rhetorical criticism are based on two assumptions that qualitative research has to always take into account and even apply to quantitative research but have been neglected in the latter all too often.

The first assumption is that there is no reality that is completely objective because any form of reality is always subject to the perception of an individual or a group. The second assumption that has to be taken into account when evaluating the research is closely tied to the aforementioned. A researcher will always analyze rhetoric acts (or anything for that matter) based on his own understanding of the world and based on his own knowledge about the world. This is especially true for this study, as I have been involved in Steinmeier’s campaign team and have to keep myself from analyzing the posts too much under the knowledge I have gained from working within the campaign. However, this factor is lessened now since it has been more than two years since the
campaign and I hope to have achieved a critical distance. Furthermore, this will even lead to an increase in credibility, as I am aware of the fact that I might have a professional bias on the matter and will strive more to proof all my findings within the text. I will demonstrate exactly (and provide the documents in the Appendix) how I moved from the initial rhetoric acts to the claims that I will make in the analysis section of this study. Furthermore, this study is not based on a single method; it employs two methods, cluster criticism and pentadic criticism. Both methods approach the artifact from different angles. This will avoid a bias because I have to adjust the way I look at the artifact. Plus, the supplementary study is used to analyze the relations and will further back the findings of the cluster critics. The question as to how I justify my assessment of a certain analysis from a post will guide my research and the analytical chapter. Another possibility to increase this credibility is to translate all the posts; they are included in the study because an automated translation device has done them in order to avoid translating the posts in a certain way and creating a bias.

3.6 Ethical considerations
Steinmeier is a public person; this study focuses only on his communication. The replies of his followers will not be analyzed. The Facebook page is open and accessible for everyone; therefore this study does not pose any ethical questions.

3.7 Summary of method choice
In conclusion, rhetoric criticism will be used because this method fosters the needs of the study. The main goal of rhetoric criticism is to analyze and understand rhetorical processes that are influencing communication. The communication of Steinmeier on Facebook will be analyzed according to cluster
and pentadic criticism to gain a deeper understanding of the symbolic acts that are significant in his communication on the social network Facebook. Pentadic criticism originates from drama studies and this approach fits well, as during election campaigns political communication becomes highly dramatized. Pentadic criticism will offer answers as to how Steinmeier tries to rebuild his and the SPD’s image on Facebook and in which ways he tries to mobilize the citizens. Moreover, it will lead to a deeper understanding how he tries to appeal to his (potential) voters.
4.0 Analysis of Steinmeiers posts on Facebook

As laid out above, the data was examined using cluster criticism and pendatic criticism. Cluster criticism looks at which topics are presented, while pendatic criticism answers the question of how a form of communication has taken place. The cluster criticism has shed light on what kind of topics Steinmeier offers his Fans on Facebook to discuss. It shows which topics Steinmeier has dominated, i.e. in which topics he tried to establish himself as a thought leader.

The pendadic analysis gave further insights into the reason as to why Steinmeier posted in a certain way about specific topics. Usually, the pendadic analysis searches for the dominant part of the communicative act, i.e. agent, agency, scene or purpose. However, the data presented here has shown that in all cases the purpose dominated the other parts. This is logical because during election campaigning and in political communication a communicative act is regarded as purposeful communication. Moreover, the communication analyzed here happens on Facebook and most of the variables remain static or at least interchangeable. This means that the agent has mostly been a third person speaker (which will be taken up in the discussion). Even the few cases that showed Steinmeier’s communication in first person do not show a dominance of the agent over the purpose. This is a fact that has to be noted and will be discussed in the later part of the study. For the analysis, the dominance between the different variables will not be laid out separately because the analysis has shown that the purpose is the driving force behind Steinmeier’s Facebook communication.

One major thing that is striking in all of Steinmeier’s posts is that he constantly posts in the third person singular. This robs his posts of a personal touch. This is especially interesting because, as the pendatic analysis has shown, image
building is very important for Steinmeier. However, he loses an opportunity here in his posts to interact on a more personal level with his fans.

The analysis has been divided according to the posts of Steinmeier into three main chapters: Findings of the Cluster Analysis, Framing/Agenda Setting and Participation/Mobilization.

4.1 The topics of Steinmeiers posts on Facebook
In order to systemize the findings of the cluster analysis an online word cloud generator (http://wordle.com) has been used to show which words were emphasized during the months of the election campaign and which other topics and words have been used to which extent. All word-clouds show that the main used words are Frank-Walter and Steinmeier. The words around them differ throughout the months.

*February – April*  
*May*

*June*  
*July*
The word cloud from the early months of the election campaign is interesting as it shows Steinmeier but as we see in the later clouds, not as strong in a focus as it will be in the later months. Moreover, “SPD-Kanzlerkandidat” – SPD candidate for chancellor is present together but will not appear in such a form later anymore. It shows clusters that will be shaped out later, such as government program and also emphasizes topics that play a role in the election campaign, such as social and equality.

May is the first month in which the Facebook posts have put a strong emphasis on Steinmeier. He is clearly in the center. Another very important topic is the European election and associated terms such as TV-Spot.

The word cloud from June shows that the main focus was on Steinmeier, which the following analysis also showed, the election campaign focused on building and re-shaping his personality. Also Europe is emphasized in the word cloud.
The word on the far right ‘Kanzlerformat’ is usually used to describe Steinmeier as the future chancellor.

July shows that also Steinmeier is in the focus but more topics that are closely related to the SPD or that the SPD wants to be closely related to are present. These topics are such as employment, education and women. Moreover the SPD is present in the words that are presented in this word cloud. The SPD and Steinmeier are the most common cluster in this month and the other words belong to the clusters.

The cloud in August shows also a strong focus on Steinmeier and the SPD but does not show as much topics as in July. However, the Plan for Germany (Deutschland Plan) appears now for the first time in the cloud.

The September cluster is very dense and again has Steinmeier in its center. Another very emphasized word is election rally ‘Wahlkampfkundgebung’. September was the last month of the campaign and Steinmeier has focused his posts in this month on participation and engagement.

**4.2 A systematic look into Steinmeiers posts**

The September cluster is very dense and again has Steinmeier in its center. Another very emphasized word is election rally (Wahlkampfkundgebung). September was the last month of the campaign and Steinmeier has focused his posts in this month on participation and engagement.

**4.2.1 Topics in the early phase of the election campaign**

The beginning of Steinmeier’s posts shows a strong focus on the government program that the SPD introduced early in 2009. The government program is proposed during an election campaign by each party and forms the core of the
campaign. It lays out which policies the respective parties want to carry out. In the election campaign this became a buzzword in the campaign of the SPD since they accused their political opponent, the Conservatives, of lacking a program for the coming legislation period. Steinmeier uses his posts to create a strong awareness among his followers of the topics the SPD stands for, i.e. social equality and the importance of education

*With a strong commitment to greater investment in education, social opportunities and an enhanced understanding of education, Frank-Walter Steinmeier on the GEW-union congress in Nuremberg made the focus of the SPD government program clear. (April 29th)*

In this post, also the agency, the means by which something is done, is important. The post introduces the government program as presented at a GEW conference by Steinmeier. The GEW is the union for education and science. This is strongly related to the topics Steinmeier introduces and it puts further emphasis on the importance of education. Steinmeier wants to stress this in his post in order for his followers to understand that education is a key element in the policies outlined in the government program.

The cluster analysis has brought up two dominant issues that Steinmeier is set to bring onto the public agenda in the early phase of the election campaign. One is the European election and the other one is the government program. The Facebook activity of Steinmeier really begins with posts concerning the government program. The government program is commonly associated with statements that it has been passed unanimously and all party members have followed Steinmeier. This can for example be seen in Steinmeiers post from April 18th.

*Unanimously the SPD leadership has decided to draft the government program for the parliamentary elections - and thus follows the proposal*
by Frank-Walter Steinmeier for a solidary, fair and prosperous Germany. (April 18th)

The post states that the SPD party committee has concordantly approved Steinmeier’s suggestions to create a more unified, fair and successful Germany. It is important to highlight that this at first seems like a straightforward agenda setting from Steinmeier, but it can be argued that the main reason for pushing this message throughout the early phase is that he needs to build up the image of a candidate who has a united party behind him. This will be laid out in more detail in below under the sub-topic candidate/party image building.

In the early phase, according to the pendatic analysis, the focus in Steinmeier’s posts is on topics, in other words, agenda setting and of course other purposes such as framing play a role as well. The European election has been, all through the early phase of the campaign, a dominating factor in Steinmeier’s posts. It is framed as a decision that will impact the direction towards which, not only Europe but also Germany is heading (May 7th). Furthermore, posts about the European election are always connected to topics that are important to the SPD like social equality. In May, Steinmeier also started sharing content that could be re-shared by his followers like a video about the new decade (May 16th) or the SPD TV-Spot for the European election (May 7th). This shows a new style in the way Steinmeier uses Facebook. He has moved from merely posting things, towards trying to engage with his audience by giving them tools they need to share with their friends and to thus make the SPD content go viral. This is an integral part of viral marketing and it will be debated if this was successful or not. This will also be examined for later stages of the campaign.
4.2.2 Topics in the summer phase of the campaign
The summer phase (June-August), is the first phase in which Steinmeier starts to employ of Facebook’s biggest potential when used for marketing communications: the agenda setting. He posts repeatedly about topics, that the SPD traditionally stands for and tries to direct the public, or at least his Fans, attention to these issues. In election campaigns agenda setting is an important factor and the beauty of new communication is that they enable posting these topics to the public agenda, if used correctly. The following discussion section will take a closer look as to why Steinmeier tried to impact the public agenda with his Facebook posts. A big part of Steinmeier’s posts in June try to bring topics to the public agenda. He focuses on things the SPD stands for in a quite direct manner.

In June, the focus was not yet much on placing topics on the public agenda. Agenda setting for its own purpose has been pushed to later in the election campaign. However, some of Steinmeier’s posts intended to do just this. One post where this has been done is about Arcandor. Arcandor had become a hot topic during the election campaign. It is the owner, among other chains of the German Karstadt Group, which are retail shops spread across the country. As Opel previously, also Arcandor was hit by the crisis and went bankrupt. This also became an issue in the election campaign because both Conservatives and SPD tried to fight the bankruptcy and come up with strategies to save Karstadt and its employees. Ultimately, all attempts failed and currently Arcandor is in a bankruptcy process. Steinmeier accompanies this with a post on June 9th, where he states that Arcandors bankruptcy could have been prevented.

"Arcandor insolvency could have been prevented. As "bad news - especially for the employees," describes Frank-Walter Steinmeier the insolvency of Arcandor. Responsible is the lack of willingness among
others, the owners, to materially participate to help rescue Arcandor.
(June 9th)

This post states that the owners of Arcandor could have prevented the bankruptcy by getting more involved to help rescue Arcandor.

The media had widely covered the crash of the Karstadt group, one of Germany’s most traditional retail stores. Both the SPD and CDU had measures they wanted to take and debated publicly which way would be the better. Ultimately, Arcandor’s bankruptcy was sealed in June. This is noted and commented on by Steinmeier (June 9th). This shows that the possibility to use social media and specifically Facebook to set topics on the public agenda had not yet been explored by Steinmeier and his online team. He merely states that it is bad for the employees of Arcandor and that it could have been prevented. This falls under agenda setting even though it can hardly be regarded as (successful) agenda setting since the topic was already high on the public agenda.

The second post on June 11th about nuclear disarmament can be regarded as proper agenda setting.

For a world without nuclear weapons, Frank-Walter Steinmeier is determined in his fight for global disarmament. In Moscow, he once again praised the abolition of nuclear weapons as encouraging signs coming from the Russian Government. (June 11th)

This cluster is also associated with words like global and nuclear weapons. The question is why Steinmeier chooses to bring this topic on the agenda. The second German SPD chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, who was widely known for being one of the first to point out the unbalanced armament situation in 1977 that was caused by new intermediate range missiles. He worked to establish
the so-called NATO double track decision that allowed the positioning of missiles in Western Europe. This was however tied to an offer by the Soviet Union to refrain from putting those missiles up. This decision was, not only in the German public but also within Schmidt’s own party (the SPD), discussed extensively. In that sense, Steinmeier steps into Schmidt’s path by ultimately pushing disarmament forward, but of course since the world has changed, he is speaking about this on global terms since Western Europe is not anymore such a boiling point for conflicts. Steinmeier brings this topic into the public agenda because the SPD sees itself as a strong advocate for disarmament.

In summer 2009, this was not an issue that was on the public agenda which was mainly dominated by issues relating to the crisis and results from the crisis. The crisis is a recurring topic in the parliament election campaign in 2009. It hit countries worldwide and many, such as Greece and Spain, are still struggling with it. A big part of the election campaign was fought over who has the better solution to, and who learned more from, the crisis. Which was a difficult question to answer, since during the high time of the crisis SPD and Conservatives where in a Grand Coalition and both parties claim that Germany’s successful way out of the crisis was due to them. This might be one reason why in some of Steinmeier’s posts the crisis is mentioned but not as much as it could have been.

On June 11th Steinmeier posts that he is fighting for a world without nuclear weapons and that he promoted global disarmament in Moscow. This posts shows what Steinmeier stands for and in addition, how he works for what he wants to achieve. The party conference is another important event in German politics. It is held annually and all members of a party have the right to participate. Here, the content of the program for the following year, personal issues and also financial issues are discussed and decided upon. This is
mentioned on June 14th in a post about the SPD party conference where Steinmeier added images to an album titled “Germany: Social and democratic”.

We will win "When we're marching side by side". Unity was also at the end of the party conference the defining character, the delegates passed unanimously the proposed SPD government program for the elections on September 27th. (June 14th)

He is equalized or rather stands pars pro toto for the SPD, which is striving for a stronger and more solidary country. In the end of June, (June 30th) a project against New Nazis is introduced (“Nazis aus dem Takt bringen”). This is used to show that Steinmeier is active against nationalistic tendencies

Statement by Frank-Walter Steinmeier regarding the project against neo-nazis. Read more here: http://spdlink.de/sTc3 (June 30th)

Finally the posts slowly move to prepare the followers for Steinmeiers Plan for Germany.

The post on June 26th is a good example of how Steinmeier presents the topics that will be in the Plan for Germany without specifically mentioning the plan.

Building bridges for the work of tomorrow with a clear commitment to politic's responsibility to secure employment during the crisis, Frank-Walter Steinmeier has re-affirmed his ground line: go now to "build bridges for the jobs of tomorrow. (June 26th)

He speaks about the work of tomorrow. Through this, he creates awareness among his followers for what is to come. In July, Steinmeier's posts are heavily trying to influence the public agenda by posting about typical SPD topics like employment, education and social equality. This can be seen on July 13th.
Frank Walter Steinmeier describes the main points of the SPD government program: employment, education and equal changes for all, more fairness and social equality. July 13th

When Steinmeier posts about the main pillars of the SPD government program: Employment, Education and a fair chance in life. Furthermore, he also refers to the topics of the CDU when, on July 15th, he states that the SPD has warned that the conservatives will prolong the nuclear energy plans in Germany.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier has warned the conservatives for society problems caused by longer nuclear energy running plans. CDU and CSU should be committed to the nuclear energy consensus to protect inner peace. (July 15th)

This is also evident in the postings surrounding the summer interview because the status mentions, once again, topics that are close to Steinmeier and the SPD, for example, the creation of new work places and increased investment to education as on July 21st.

The spirit of optimism and admiration for the courage of the Space Pioneers are the formative memories that Frank-Walter Steinmeier connects with the moon landing 40 years ago. Emergence and courage: Frank-Walter Steinmeier - the SPD chancellor candidate departure www.frankwaltersteinmeier.de. Emergence and courage. (July 21st)

The summer interview is conducted every summer by the German public service broadcasters with politicians. In years of parliamentary elections, the main focus in those interviews lies in the candidates running for chancellor. Both Steinmeier and Merkel took part in the summer interview. Furthermore, this agenda setting is also a sort of preparation for the Plan for Germany that will be introduced in August. Even though Steinmeier moves to a more direct
agenda setting in the summer phase of the election campaign, he still uses framing to build up identity. However he does not do it in a usual way of something else, but rather of himself or the party and therefore these posts will be analyzed in the Identity Building section.

In July, the only topic that seems clearly pushed on Facebook by Steinmeier is again the government program of the SPD. It emphasizes similar topics as before, but the big difference now is that it is only mentioned for what it is, a government program and no longer a way of showing a strong and united SPD. Now the focus is on the content of the program. The main content is social equality (post from July 13th), education, Employment and nuclear power. These topics are all addressed in the post from July 20th.

Frank Walter Steinmeier lays out the goals of the SPD government program in his summer interview with ZDF. The goals are, sustainable employment and creation of new work places, more investment in education and a future orientated energy-poltic without nuclear energy. (July 20th)

Steinmeier points directly to the key terms of the government program of the SPD that have also appeared before in connection to the government program.

The cluster analysis of the Facebook communication from Steinmeier for the summer phase shows a range of key terms. The European elections and the government program are also present in this phase. Some of the key terms show Steinmeier’s attempt to bring certain issues on the public agenda and others show his attempts to frame issues in a certain way. In this and the previous phase, a higher number of posts framing issues can be seen.

As in the pre-phase of the election campaign, the European elections played a vital role in Steinmeier’s Facebook posts. They are here associated with similar
terms and framed as decisions about the direction the country will take in the future (June 6th). However, in June this cluster is broadened by pointing towards the global financial crisis, which had hit Europe in the end of 2008. On June 4th, Steinmeier highlights the importance of people voting during the European Elections to make sure that market radical forces will not play a key role after the crisis. He sees this has been caused by these tendencies

 Only four days left until European elections. Every vote counts! Dear Supporters, this is a special year, a year marked by the crisis but also a year of decisions. The market radical ideology went bankrupt. A lot has started to move. (June 4th)

Steinmeier connects with this post the political opponents to something he refers to market radical forces. Furthermore he states that these market radical forces are bankrupt. This shows also the reason Steinmeier sees the elections as giving a direction for the future. He wants to distinguish the different ways out of the crisis, i.e. the SPD approach as opposed to the CDU approach. It is an important subject because in Germany, SPD and CDU had been in a coalition together working for the same goal of getting the country out of the crisis. However for the public it has been hard to distinguish which efforts have come from whom. Furthermore, Steinmeier calls out for decisions that need to be made, hinting at the election date in early June. He builds a D-day scenario with this, which might lead the public to believe that they are in a similar important situation as the Americans in WWII. It has to be noted that D-day was the day where the course of the Second World War changed and connecting this to the election date in the European elections seems to be what Steinmeier wants to do. Although this time the enemy is not Nazi-Germany but global market radical forces which caused a financial crisis that left Europe and the World still trembling. Comparing the dates, D-day was on June 6th 1944 while the European elections 2009 were on June 7th, makes the connection between
the terms even more present. This connection between decision day and D-day frames the European election date as important.

The second reoccuring cluster that points to the framing done by Steinmeier’s Facebook posts is the government program. In the summer phase however the government program is strongly connected to a new cluster around the SPD as a central term. The posts move from a focus on the government program to a focus on the party as a whole, including it’s history. The government program is still connected to terms such as concordantly and a strongly tied together party (both June 14th), but in June, Steinmeier refers to, while talking about the government program, “Brüder zur Sonne zur Freiheit” (14th June). It’s the title of the German version of the Russian Labor song ‘Leonid Petrowitsch Radin’. This is the connector to the SPD cluster and leads Steinmeier from focusing on the government program itself, and establishing the SPD as a united front, to later going deeper into what the SPD stands for. The old, socialistic, labor song is one of the oldest traditions within the SPD and is always sung during the closing of party conferences. The lyrics talk about going side by side towards the sun and freedom. This reflects the strong united front that the government program is connected to in Steinmeier’s posts and this leads to the SPD. In June, the cluster around the SPD appears for the first time in Steinmeier’s posts. It is subtly introduced and connected to terms like ‘powerful’ and ‘pugnacious’ in Steinmeier’s postings on June 6th

*New majorities for Europe! The SPD is powerful and ready to fight at the final campaign for the European elections on Friday in the Tempodrom. Because there is a lot at stake in Europe in the election on June 7th – this is a direction decision! (June 6th)*

These posts show that the SPD should be framed as the party that is ready and willing to enter the election campaign and fight for the win with the best people
and the best program; to fight the battle over the peoples mind so to speak. It has been a difficult situation for both parties to enter the election campaign since they were in a grand coalition together. This means that they could not do what normally is done in an election campaign: criticizing the work of the current government. This is why it was important for Steinmeier’s posts to frame the SPD as ready. Furthermore, this readiness is an important thing that needed to be communicated also to the parties own members as the basis of the SPD was well aware of the inner party struggles. Steinmeier sends, with these posts, the message that the SPD has moved beyond their inner party dispute, has lifted itself back up, and is now ready to fight for government and most importantly will also be able to form a stable government.

In July, the cluster analysis shows a change. Instead of framing Steinmeier or the SPD to build up a certain identity, now agenda setting and Framing are used to bring topics to the public agenda and to frame the political opponent in a certain way. In this process, agenda setting and framing start to mix. Steinmeier posts about the SPD, the CDU and the government program of the SPD in a way that it portrays them in different ways through connecting topics to them. Furthermore, the SPD and CDU are contrasted in two posts directly. The CDU is presented as supporting only wealthier parts of society and giving those groups of people tax benefits, while the SPD is supporting the low earners. This contrast is directly established in Steinmeier’s post on July 25th.

*The SPD wants better representation for those on the low-income end and invest in the future - and also says where the money has to come from. CDU / CSU conceal consciously how they intend to finance their tax cut presents to the wealthy. People need to be told the truth. (July 25th)*
The topics that Steinmeier wants to put on the public agenda in these posts are **nuclear energy** and its impact on society and **taxation**. During the election campaign, especially the CDU’s junior partner, the Liberal Democrats, has called for a taxation reform to make it simpler. The SPD and other parties have criticized this suggested reform because it would only benefit the top earners. Basically the suggestion was to have the same taxation percentage for everyone. Furthermore the CDU and FDP spoke about lowering taxation altogether. The SPD called this a lie. This is why Steinmeier points to these issues and wants to see them on the public agenda. Also, the posts dealing with Steinmeier as person move to a combination of portraying the SPD and the political opponent in a certain way. By setting certain topics for himself, Steinmeier frames what the audience thinks of him. The topics that is dominating the cluster around Steinmeier in July is education but the clusters are connected to words such as fight and rising (July 23rd). The last part is especially interesting because these come from a post about the landing on the moon (July 23rd). Steinmeier compares indirectly himself with the first pioneers who arrived at the moon by first stating that he admires their courage and then finishes the posts with Steinmeier: courage and rise (July 23rd) This shows Steinmeier in the light of a pioneer landing on the moon, in other words Steinmeier wants to achieve the seemingly impossible and always strives for more in his politics. This is the way Steinmeier frames himself in July.

However, this move to a more straight-forward approach of using Facebook to influence what the public is talking about comes to an end. In August, agenda setting goals in Steinmeier’s posts have not been widely taken forward. The only cluster that tries to offer topics for the public agenda is the cluster “our country can do better” in which the content of the election posters is explained. It indirectly relates to the SPD and Steinmeier so it frames them in a positive light while setting the topics for the public agenda. The main defined topics are
an economy driven by measurement and regulations (July 28\textsuperscript{th}), social security (July 28\textsuperscript{th}), clean energy (July 28\textsuperscript{th}) and work (July 28\textsuperscript{th}). These topics appear in later clusters, and in clusters previously laid out as well and are here only clearly identified as the issues at the heart of the SPD one more time.

4.2.3 Topics in the late phase of the election campaign
In September, the posts of Steinmeier have moved almost completely to framing and rarely focus on agenda setting. Throughout the whole month there are only two exceptions where there is an actual agenda setting approach in Steinmeier’s posts. In the CDU cluster Juergen Ruettgers has a sub-cluster around the 5\textsuperscript{th} of September. He is portrayed as a repeat offender, a racist, cheap and irresponsible (September 5\textsuperscript{th}). Ruettgers was the minister president in North Rhine, Westphalia. During an election event in Duisburg he spoke in a rather racist manner about Romanian workers and Chinese investors. Ruettgers referred to a Nokia plant, which was moved to Romania and stated that unlike people in the Ruhrgebiet, Romanians would not arrive to work at 7 in the morning, but rather come and go as they pleased. A few members of the SPD’s youth organization recorded these statements and spread them over the Internet. Steinmeier posted about this once, trying to place this incident highly on the public agenda. This is also connected to a post ten days later that is analyzed under framing. There, Steinmeier connects the CDU with Konrad Adenauer. Adenauer was, before the fall of the Third Reich, a member of the SS and the SPD in the 60s. He had criticized the CDU for being not much better than the Nazi party. The key phrase back then was “Unter den Talaren Muff aus tausend Jahren”, which means that the old dust from years ago is still present in the ‘new’ leaders of society. It is possible that Steinmeier consciously used this exact framing for the CDU to demonstrate, in connection with the Ruettgers affair, that it is still like in the 1960s.
The second attempt at agenda setting is seen in the cluster around the CDU/FDP coalition ("Schwarz- Gelb"). Steinmeier points out that the promised tax decrease will only benefit the rich people (September 21st). This is an issue that has been picked up a few times throughout the campaign. This is partly because the FDP did not have many other topics they discussed as much as the tax reduction and partly because the SPD strongly believed and pointed out that either the tax reduction was only a promise that would never become reality or because they wanted and felt the need to demonstrate that this would only benefit the rich. The promise of tax reduction is a rather opportunist promise that was designed to take voters from the SPD that thought it would benefit them as well, such as the workers. The FDP claimed to reform the tax system to a simpler, more secure and fair system. This was even appealing for people from the SPD voter base. Steinmeier tries throughout the campaign to put this issue on the public agenda. However, it seems he failed since the FDP ultimately reached their best result in the parliamentary elections 2009 and since analyses showed that they gained also among voters from a less financially well off background.

In September, the cluster analysis shows a combination of framing and agenda setting of topics that Steinmeier’s plan for Germany intends to bring to the public agenda. The plan for Germany (Deutschlandplan) is historically a strategy paper from the SPD that dealt with plans for a German reunification in 1959. Steinmeier picked up the term and introduced his plan for Germany in which he envisioned the creation of new jobs that would lead to an unemployment rate close to 0. The plan was highly criticized and claimed to be utopic. With his posts around the plan for Germany, Steinmeier tries to bring the issue of unemployment on the public agenda and frame his solutions in a positive way. He basically tries to spin the public sentiment regarding Steinmeiers plan for Germany. The numerous posts that share the plan on
Facebook show this. However the topics discussed in the plan are not mentioned as repeatedly as before. This could be explained by the fact that Steinmeier received a lot of negative feedback on the plan. The feedback focused mainly on the content concerning the creation of millions of new jobs. Public opinion remained skeptical about this, hence Steinmeier chooses, with his posts, not to bring this topic back to the public agenda, but rather to frame the plan as courageous, determined and new (September 3rd). He also mentions words like direction, perspective and compass to show that the plan is supposed to signal a direction rather than provide answers. The cluster analysis shows that the plan for Germany is repeatedly picked up throughout the election campaign. Steinmeier tries with his posts to bring it in a positive way on the public agenda, i.e. to spin the public opinion. In the hot phase in September, Steinmeier tries to adapt to the response that he receives from his plan for Germany. Whereas before, his posts didn’t take the negative feedback into account. He portrays himself as courageous and tries to emphasize that it is a plan that will lead Germany to a successful future. Arguably, the election campaign was heavily built on this plan for Germany and when it didn’t receive the intended reaction, the SPD and Steinmeier stuck to it in order to after all receive a positive response.

This cluster around the Plan for Germany is strongly related to the cluster “Unser Land kann mehr” (eng: our land can do better). This offers the contextual backbone for the mere framing of the Plan for Germany. Hence the focus on actual agenda setting. This will be laid out under agenda setting. Strongly connected with the ‘our land can do better’ cluster is the SPD cluster. This cluster has played a key role in earlier phases of the campaign but has remained on the sidelines all through August. The cluster comes up only once. Regional elections were taking place in several states throughout 2009 in Germany and in some states; the regional elections were on the same date as
the parliamentary elections. Obviously, the regional elections of 2009 stood not just for themselves, but were seen in the bigger context of the parliamentary elections and thus were regarded as indicators for the outcome of the national elections. The SPD is mentioned in context with regional elections. This frames the SPD in Steinmeier’s posts as the party with content and candidates. In contrast to the marginal appearance of the SPD cluster, the CDU cluster is more and more apparent in the hot phase of the campaign. What is interesting here however is that it changes from being first only addressed as CDU to being framed with negative attributes such as lacking in content and the mentioning of the industrial political paper that was somehow found in the ministry of economy and published. This paper was most probably sold to the SPD and it contained ideas and proposals of Karl Theodor zu Guttenberg (who was the former minister of economy and finance that wanted to reform the economy). According to the SPD, the paper framed the CDU as highly on the side of the industry and as a result, neglecting the labor force. However, the posts from Steinmeier change in August when they start to address “Schwarz Gelb” (CDU/FDP coalition) as an entity and frame the term with connected keywords such as market radical, fatal for society (21) and not wanted by the public. His post on August 30th states clearly that this country does not want the black-yellow coalition as the regional elections have shown

Frank-Walter Steinmeier notes that black-yellow is not wanted in this country. The CDU has had massive losses in the regional elections in Saarland and Thuringia and lost the absolute majority there, moreover they do not have enough votes for a coalition with the FDP. (August 30th)

Steinmeier, or his team, has discovered that the CDU is not an easy target, they did not open themselves up to attack and the SPD was running into problems finding things to frame or put on the public agenda, therefore it was found to be more fruitful to address the possibly outcome of a win of the CDU and FDP.
Steinmeier’s posts and also other posts by the SPD in the social media tried to not only coin the term “Schwarz Gelb” but also to frame it in a highly negative way.

Of note is that the term election campaign was never mentioned in the cluster surrounding the CDU. They are thoroughly negatively framed. September 15th shows a clear framing by connecting the 2009 elections back to Konrad Adenauer (the first chancellor of Germany). Steinmeier shares blog posts where he explains that no nostalgia trips on the so-called ‘Adenauerexpress’ provide a way out of the crisis. The term ‘Adenauerexpress’ needs to be seen in context of Angela Merkel because she went on a tour through Germany in the so-called ‘Rheingoldexpress’. The Rheingold train is an old train route that runs along the Rhine River in Germany and the neighboring countries. It was in operation before World War II and also during it and therefore the term nostalgia, in combination with Adenauer, hints at Adenauer’s past as a member of the German National Socialistic party (NSDAP). In 2009, Germany was in a difficult economic situation and it is possible that Steinmeier hints with this post that Germany before has been in tight situations and has sometimes gone the extreme way (a devastated economy was one of the reasons the Nazis where able to gain such popularity).

No nostalgia excursions in the ‘Adenauerexpress’ will help us. We must confront the questions of the here and now. Courageously with clear goals. (September 15th)

It is framed as pure nostalgia and aims to set the readers minds to understand that the CDU has not evolved beyond these times. Through reporting on the regional elections in Thuringia, Steinmeier frames the CDU ‘as a whole’ in a negative way. The regional elections are portrayed in posts on September 3rd
as a debacle and Steinmeier postulates a dramatic decrease in the voters for the CDU.

*News of the day: Dieter Althaus resigns. He is taking consequences from the debacle the CDU faced in the elections in Thuringia last weekend. This does not surprise anyone after the enorme losses of 12% for the CDU. (September 3rd)*

He uses a German idiom to portray the CDU as arrogant. His post on September 5th states that arrogance comes before the fall ["Hochmut kommt vor dem Fall"]. Regional elections are often seen as an indicator for parliamentary elections, hence Steinmeier focuses on decreasing the public opinion of the CDU’s chance to win the wall by letting the regional elections in Thuringia stand for the CDU as a whole. Steinmeier communicates the elections in Thuringia as defeat (September 1st) by framing it like this. In reality, the CDU indeed lost, but not as extreme as Steinmeier’s posts suggests (and on a side note, the SPD did not have the best results either).

Angela Merkel is only mentioned once because Steinmeier did not want to bring her on the agenda by mentioning her name. Here we see framing through ignorance in a way. During the final month of the election campaign, Angela Merkel was often abroad due to her role as chancellor. This was used by the SPD against her, claiming she did not want to fight an election campaign.

Furthermore black-yellow ("Schwarz-gelb") is associated with the CDU cluster. Calling the political opponent by their colors is a reference to the German political system that always calls for a coalition of at least two parties. The SPD tends to be in a coalition with the Green Party red-green (rot-gruen). Traditionally, the Conservatives and Liberals join in a coalition. Their ‘political colors’ are black and yellow. Often this coalition possibility is referred to as "Schwarz-Gelb" in media coverage surrounding election campaigns. It is highly
negatively framed as benefitting the rich in Steinmeier’s post on September 21\textsuperscript{st}
where he shares his blog post about how truly personally angry he is about the
tax reform plans proposed by “Schwarz-gelb”

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier blogs: “I am angry about the tax cut promise of black and yellow for the relief of the rich they want cutbacks exactly in areas where it is needed the most. Give to the top and take from the bottom...” (September 21\textsuperscript{st})*

In his post on September 1\textsuperscript{st}, Steinmeier refers to the boss of one of the biggest
labor unions who titled “Schwarz-Gelb” as the worst possible option for Germany

*This morning I read with great interest an interview with IG Metal boss Berhold Huber: “Black-Yellow is the worst option for this country and the employees”, he says. Couldn’t say it better! (September 1\textsuperscript{st})*

### 4.3 Image building – pentadic analysis

Steinmeier becomes a content creator by using Facebook to communicate with his fans. Facebook allows him to present exactly what he wants to write. In a way, the emerging social media channels offer politicians a way to become journalists, or rather to surpass journalists. Their message does not need to be spread through the media because they can spread it themselves. Therefore they also employ tactics, which are more commonly known in journalistic works. Framing in communication science refers to assigning certain values with news (Druckmann 2011). In this case, status updates related to current news. Framing means that by adding a normative value to a certain thing, a frame to look at something is created. Agenda setting is analyzed here at the same time as framing. It is analyzed as the differences between these two in Steinmeier’s
posts. In some cases, certain topics were brought up in order to frame the candidate in a certain way. This will be further laid out under party and image building. Whereas the posts show a framing by definition, the question as to Steinmeier’s posts that address certain topics can be seen as a try at agenda setting, not necessarily a successful try though.

Steinmeier’s posts aim in different ways at building the candidates and the parties image up. This needs to be taken up in the DISCUSSION as to why such a big effort has been laid upon image building and if this focus has taken the focus away from introducing topics that the SPD stands for consistently in the public agenda.

In this study, the two purposes have been separated to draw a clear distinction as to when agenda setting is used to bring issues on the public agenda and when it is used to build up personality and party profile in a certain way.

4.3.1 Party profile polishing
As stated previously, the cluster analysis found that in the early phase of the election campaign, Steinmeier pushed the government program in his postings on Facebook. At a first glance, this is done by bringing the topic to the public agenda. However, the history of the SPD makes it more likely to be a way of building up the image of Steinmeier as him who unites the party. It is repeatedly mentioned that the government program has passed unanimously and that all party members stand strongly behind Steinmeier. This is seen in the posts from April 18th and April 29th where Steinmeier states that the SPD party committee has passed the draft for the government program and that they follow in unison his ideas for a more united, fair and successful Germany.

_Unanimously the SPD leadership has decided to pass the government program for the parliamentary elections - and thus follows the proposal_
by Frank-Walter Steinmeier for a solidary, equitable and prosperous Germany. (April 18th)

This is important because the SPD was not at all united when they geared up for the elections in 2009. Therefore, it is important in the early posts to show that Steinmeier is the candidate of the SPD. The SPD is a party divided into different wings, there are right wingers, the so called Seeheimer, left wingers, the so called Parlamentarische Linke and young pragmatic wing (Netzwerker). These are the main wings within the SPD. On top of that, there are of course regional groups that have influence as well. All these different substructures could very well have different choices as to whom to elect as chancellor candidate. Therefore, the main effort of the SPD and Steinmeier is to convince their own party members that Steinmeier in fact is the entire party’s candidate.

The importance of this cluster can only be understood by taking a look at the SPD’s recent history. After Schröder resigned, the SPD seemed to be in an endless destruction process. Traditionally, the parties’ left and right wing have always been opposing each other.

Between 2005 and 2009, the SPD went through a number of leaders that left the party deeply disrupted. This is best illustrated by looking at Kurt Beck who was the party leader from 2006-2008. Unlike other party leaders Beck tried to get involved with the government’s decision. He opposed Franz Muentefering, who would later overthrow Beck. Beck tried during his time as party leader to integrate the different parts and wings of the SPD but was ultimately disposed as leader during a party conclave, which is referred to as “Conference at Schwielowsee”. Beck learnt there that Steinmeier would be running for chancellor and that Muentefering would regain the chair as party leader. This and the mere fact that in only 4 years the SPD ran through 5 party leaders is a good example of the inner-party quarrels.
The SPD that went into the elections in the beginning of 2009 was a deeply disrupted party that needed to find itself first before it could enter the election campaign. Steinmeier wants to make clear with his posts that this process had been undertaken in the past and that the SPD indeed has found itself and is now ready to go into election campaigning and ultimately lead the country. Before, Steinmeier focused on the topics that he could use to rebuild the image of the SPD with his posts. This was mainly during the pre-phase of the campaign and in the early summer phase, but then he needed to move forwards to portray the SPD in a certain way that the public could perceive it as strong and united. This was done by describing underlying values and by showing that the SPD is ready to enter the election campaign: structurally, internally and practically.

Furthermore, Steinmeier’s posts portray the election campaign as a race on September 26th

_The SPD candidate for chancellor Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke on Friday with Franz Müntefering and Klaus Wowereit in front og the Brandenburg gate in Berlin for the final sprint event. (September 26th)_

The German word “Schlussspurt” means final sprint in a long run, or stretch. It implies a tight fight because if a final sprint is needed, then the win is not clear because the competition is close. According to calculations this was the case. It is used to demonstrate that the election is not lost and that the SPD will fight all the way to the end. The SPD and CDU were close together during the election campaign. However, in the beginning the SPD was far behind the CDU and managed to ‘sprint’ closer and closer to them through their strong election campaigning. Moreover, the theme of the catch up race is present here, for example in Steinmeiers post on September 23rd where he shares his blog which
reflects on the catch-up race during the last four days before the election day. This also implies a certain kind of urgency.

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier blogs: “Only four days left until parliamentary elections. An exciting catch-up race!” (September 23rd)*

This is used to demonstrate that the SPD is actually catching up to the CDU in the polls. Which was true, but in reality only by a marginal percentage. However small the percentage was, Steinmeier needed to use this in his posts to give a positive feeling around the SPD and give hope to the supporters because theories show some voters might not be motivated to vote when they feel their party is going to lose. Mostly the focus is on framing the election campaigning of the SPD as full of atmosphere as Steinmeier describes it in his post on September 7th. Furthermore he describes it as intriguing as stated on September 24th and finally as grandiose on September 26th.

*The splendid culmination of a grand campaign in front of approximately 10,000 people, where Steinmeier reiterated his message to the voters: “This country can do more” - and: “The race is open!” (September 26th)*

Steinmeier’s posts show the election campaign and the election rallies as enormously successful. The aim of the framing on Facebook is to show that the SPD is giving everything it has.

4.3.2 Steinmeier’s image

In the summer phase, the postings from Steinmeier moved from building up and pushing the SPD as a strong and united party, to building up the image of Steinmeier himself. It needs to be understood that Steinmeier was completely lacking a political profile at the beginning of his candidacy. It was important to frame the person Steinmeier in a certain light to the public. Steinmeier has been more or less unknown. He was not an approachable politician as Gerhard Schröder. In particular, not among the common folks. In fact the media and
public have described Steinmeier as somewhat elite. Steinmeier has been foreign minister and people knew him, if at all, as diplomat but not for his persona, his identity or his political edge. Therefore, the posts focus on building up the persona after the party unity has been established. Steinmeier is running as West German in an electoral district in East Germany, which poses a problem which will be explained in more detail below.

In July, Steinmeier posts about space pioneers and the 40 year jubilee of the moon landing. He connects the words courage and departure with himself by posting about the space pioneers and his admiration for them. He wants to set himself in the same line, as courageous and ready to fight.

_The spirit of optimism and admiration for the courage of the Space Pioneers are the formative memories that Frank-Walter Steinmeier connects with the moon landing 40 years ago. Emergence and courage._

(July 21st)

The post creates a more personal appeal by giving an almost direct account of Steinmeier’s memories and thoughts. This post also has an impact on Steinmeier by showing him as a pioneer (with the plan for Germany) and also the SPD as well. Like the pioneers, the SPD and Steinmeier are ready for a new beginning. Steinmeier portrays the situation in such a way that it is time for new ways and for new thinking after the crisis and to leave the familiar. He is in a way priming the public for his plan for Germany. The cluster around Steinmeier as a person has been present in the clusters for the first time in June, but he will be re-occurring throughout the campaign. In June however, the politician Steinmeier is introduced in the posts on his Facebook wall. He is described as building bridges (June 26th), and to have “Kanzlerformat” (June 14th) which is a word typical of the often well-formed jargon that the SPD uses in their campaigns. “Kanzlerformat” roughly means someone who has the means
to be a chancellor. He is also described as a leader and democrat. Further words appearing around Steinmeier are security (June 26th), employment (June 26th) and strong content (June 14th). This shows Steinmeier as a politician, rather than just as a beyond foreign minister. He is associated with political values and content with regards to his standing within the SPD. This is the point where the difference between framing, agenda setting, building up an image for the party and Steinmeier as candidate blur into each other.

The final month of the election campaign (September) shows, in the cluster analysis, a strong focus on influencing the public opinion so that the SPD is seen as a strong united party. It is associated with words like impressive, race, self-confident (September 1st) and hot (September 2nd). Within the SPD cluster, the DGB (German labor union) is mentioned. The German labor unions used to be the voter base of the SPD since the 1950s. Unions used to send out election recommendations for their members, but throughout the years and with many decisions, the SPD has lost a lot of support from the unions and keeps trying to get it back. In the 1950s, all members of the labor unions would vote for the SPD. This could not be further from reality in 2009. The mentioning of the DGB shows efforts to link the SPD back to its origin in the labor unions. Since the SPD has lost touch with their labor roots throughout the years. This was especially true during the last chancellorship under Schröder in which the SPD was responsible for a number of reforms that cut down massively on benefits for workers (for example the pension age was lifted to 65). Here Steinmeier wants to define the SPD as somewhat of a labor unions friend or rather political party for the labor unions because the SPD is dependent on the votes of the union members.

The posts of the final months of the election campaign have moved on from framing the politician or person behind Steinmeier. The goal is no longer to introduce Steinmeier to the public (his Facebook followers) but to portray him as
fighting for the election. He is still associated with previously used terms like social, fair and successful. This is seen on September 13\(^{th}\), when he posts about the upcoming TV Duel with Angela Merkel and emphasizes that he will lay out his ideas for a social, fair and successful future there.

*Frank-Walter Steineier meets Angela Merkel tomorrow at 20:30 at the TV-duel. This is where Steineier will explain his proposal for a more social and fair future. (September 13\(^{th}\))*

Furthermore, Steineier contrasts himself to Merkel by saying that he has something that she doesn’t and talking about the things that he claims she is lacking. On September 14\(^{th}\), Steineier points out that Merkel only once agreed to meet for a public discussion on TV. He claims that this is because of Merkel’s lack of arguments and political agenda.

*Only once did Angela Merkel agree to a direct repartee with Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The televised debate revealed why. The SPD chancellor candidate has convinced that his content is credible and that he has ambitious plans for the country. (September 14\(^{th}\))*

In his posts, Steineier is also referred to as chancellor and future orientated. This is particularly evident in the post on September 17\(^{th}\) which only states that Steineier will become chancellor and links to a specially set up landing page. These posts frame Merkel as lacking substance and Steineier as the better (future) chancellor who will conduct fair and solidary political decisions aimed at taking Germany forward. Interestingly during the same time frame, two posts link Steineier to Helmut Schmidt (former SPD chancellor). Schmidt was known as pragmatic and Steineier is linked to him to show that he has similar characteristics and will find the best way out of the global financial crisis (a time were pragmatism is needed). The first post on September 25\(^{th}\) highlights a meeting between Steineier and Schmidt and links to an article in Bild (biggest
newspaper in Germany) about Steinmeier meeting Schmidt and getting advice from him for his future position from Schmidt

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier is with Helmut Schmidt in Hamburg: The former chancellor gives tips to the chancellor candidate. [www.bild.de](http://www.bild.de) Steinmeier visiting Schmidt four days before the elections. (September 23*th*)*

The second post, also on September 25*th* is an accompanying status update to a picture upload which states that he [Steinmeier] will govern like they [Schmidt, Schröder and Brandt] did [*Frank-Walter Steinmeier shared his own album: “He will govern like they did”*].

The last post in September introduces Steinmeier as opposition leader.

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier is heading the SPD. As opposition leader he does not want a competition for populist paroles. Because they need to be prepare to take over government at any time. (September 29*th*)*

This is important because the frame needs to move away from Steinmeier as a failed candidate. He needs to be framed with a new role. Furthermore, it was important for the SPD to claim the opposition leadership because the other parties like the Greens and the Left party might have otherwise claimed this role.

The repeated mentioning of *East* and *West* Germany in Steinmeier’s posts is of high importance. In the summer phase, Steinmeier posts about East Germany twice. German Unity is an important term used in the election campaign. It is a powerful topic. The main thing is that Steinmeier is from Western Germany but runs in an electoral district in Eastern Germany. This might not seem like a problem, but even though Germany has been reunified more than twenty years ago, the wall still exists in people’s heads. The wall in Berlin might have fallen but the wall in people’s minds stands as strong as ever. A person from Western Germany running in Eastern Germany has low chances of winning the electoral
district. On July 16th, Steinmeier reminisces about the German reunification and states that it is the courageous people of Eastern Germany who enabled reunification by protesting against their current system.

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier sees the German Reunification as success but not completed yet. In autumn it will have been 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is due to the engaged and courageous citizens of the former German Democratic Republic. (July 16th)*

In a second post on the same day he states that he likes the people in Brandenburg, which is in Eastern Germany, because they are down to earth and have a similar mentality as him.

*Frank-Walter Steinmeier appreciates how down to earth the people of his electoral district in Brandenburg are. He wants to fight for the region. (July 16th)*

With this post, Steinmeier not only brings up reunification, but also aims at two things. First he says that people from east and west have more in common and can be alike. Secondly, he depicts himself as one of them. Not only are East and West Germans the same, but also Steinmeier, the politician puts himself on the same level as a basic citizen. The idea of being one of them plays a role in Steinmeier’s image building. As stated earlier, Steinmeier has been seen as somewhat elitist, detached and in the posts building up his image, he tries to combat this view.

4.3.3 Mobilization and community building

Throughout his posts in June Steinmeier tries to increase participation by his followers. The EU elections are of only marginal interest in Germany and have generally a very low participation rate. Steinmeier however needed a good
result in the European elections in order to start the parliamentary election campaign under positive circumstances. In his post for example on June 4th, he addresses his supporters in a note he posted on Facebook, which states that every vote counts. Also he constantly points out that the EU elections are setting the direction and are important. He brings up the importance and raises awareness about the EU elections and hopes this will increase the participation. On the Election Day, June 7th, he posts that the vote is now open and that more SPD for Europe is needed. Although in European elections the SPD itself is not running. But rather it is a party, which is constituted by different SPD-like parties throughout Europe that is actually running. This is another way he connects the European elections to the parliamentary elections. In order to understand this strategy, it is crucial to note that in the last European elections, the SPD had a very bad result and it was believed that they would not fall under this percentage in 2009. So therefore Steinmeier shows a heavy focus on equalizing the EU elections with the SPD and the parliamentary elections, even though factually those two elections are not related. The SPD managed to decrease their result in comparison to 2004 so this strategy did not work out as planned.

In July, the posts trying to gain more participation by his audience are dominated by the summer interview he gave to the ZDF (German Public Service Broadcaster). The summer interview series is held every summer, but naturally during election years it revolves around the candidates who run for election. Steinmeier wants, in two posts on July 19th, to reach participation in his audience, first by pointing towards the summer interview; he wants his audience to watch it. Later on the same day he shares a link where those who missed the interview can read the summer interview.

Summarizing it can be said that Steinmeier tries to appeal at the emotions of his Facebook fans by highlighting successful election campaign events, i.e. by
uploading images but the actual posts inviting the readers does not change. It is a generic statement that tells people to join the team on an event and only the place is changed. Steinmeier fails to appeal to his followers and does not make unique posts for each event.

4.4 Major findings of the analysis
The cluster analysis shows that the crisis played a great role in Steinmeiers Facebook communication. He explains by different examples, such as the Arcandor bankruptcy why the SPD offers better alternatives to regain economic strength after the crisis. In addition to this the topics he presents on Facebook are related to core values within the SPD, such as education and solidarity. However, the analysis has also shown that Steinmeier does not fully succeed in consistently bringing topics up in his Facebook communication. The variety of topics that is laid out in the cluster analysis only underlines this impression.

The pendatic analysis has shed light to underlying aspects in Steinmeiers Facebook communication. Image (re-)building of Steinmeier himself and of the party SPD have been shown to be important factors within Steinmeiers Facebook communication. Moreover, he tries to appeal to his fans on Facebook emotions by shaping his image as one of them, one might say by shaping out an image for himself in the first place. His consistent posts about the east-west conflict in Germany strengthen this. The east-west conflict is an emotional topic itself, as laid out before because the wall in people’s heads is still existent. Lastly his communication on Facebook is driven by mobilizing the fans to come to events.
5.0 Discussion and conclusion

The analysis shows that the terministic screens, which are characteristic for rhetoric communication, are not present in Steinmeier's way of communicating. In Steinmeier's posts, no full terministic screens can be seen. It seems at times that he is moving in a direction to build up such a screen, but he does not follow up thoroughly. The only thing that can be seen is the repeated mobilization against new-Nazis, which is accompanied for example with the posts about the concert against them. It is surprising that this is the only topic Steinmeier brings up in his Facebook posts thoroughly enough to be referred to as terministic screen. This shows that it is something close to his heart. However the SPD and Steinmeier would have had other topics such as the financial crisis and social equality that they could have developed further. Activism against neo-Nazis is a common dominator throughout all democratic parties in Germany.

In the early phase, Steinmeier directed much of his posts towards framing the election agenda. However, he used framing and agenda setting in an even stronger way to serve the ultimate purpose, which was to build up the party image. Not yet so much to build up the image of himself. In the early phases of the campaign, Steinmeier's posts portray him as part of the party. It seems that Steinmeier has not gone all the way with the possibilities of setting topics on the public agenda via Facebook. The analysis shows that it has been a half-hearted approach where in some points the initial idea is good but it constantly lacks consistency. One example is the industry paper that was 'found'. It only appears a few times in the postings on Facebook and has not been consistently pushed. For example, sharing excerpts from it would have provided share-worthy content. Somehow, the paper had briefly been in the focus and it seems then sunk into oblivion. The question is if the SPD was that strongly internally disrupted in 2009 that they had to focus much of their energy on candidate and
party image building and had to also use agenda setting and framing for these purposes instead of focusing their energy on shaping out the topics in which they are strong and bringing them to the public agenda. One could question if the main opponent of the SPD is the SPD itself because this is the only way to explain why it was so important to build up the party image through framing and agenda Setting.

The only way Steinmeier tries to mobilize his Fans to participate is by prewritten posts suggesting that they come to a certain event. While it is important to connect online and offline campaigning, these posts fail to convey the message and are not successful. It needs to be positively noted that Steinmeier connects his postings about upcoming campaign rallies with the respective event, but that is it. He does not offer the Fans a reason why they should come and the mere statement “Come and bring your friends” is a very weak call to action. In marketing, the call to action is important because a persuasive message (political communication is also persuasive communication) needs to have this call to action which makes it clear what should be done and why. This provides ground for further research, i.e. a comparison between the election campaign 2009 on Facebook and the upcoming 2013 election. Mainly it can be said that Steinmeier only posted facts, i.e. event place and time but failed to appeal to his followers by making it sound like a unique event in their respective cities. Steinmeier cannot build up such a ‘We’ feeling as Obama because his posts remain too distant from his followers (ironically this goes hand in hand with Steinmeier himself being perceived as too distant and colt by voters throughout the election campaign). Therefore Steinmeiers posts lack the emotional incentive for people to attend events.

Although at first glance it seems that in the early phase of the election campaign Steinmeier does not use Facebook to build up his image as candidate or the image of the party, the analyses have clearly shown that what
supposedly seems like agenda setting serves the identity building of the SPD as a strong united party, as an entity. This is logical given the state the SPD was in when it went into the campaign. It remains questionable if the mere repetitions of key words like united have been successful and will be discussed in the discussion part of this study.

The main thing in Steinmeier’s Facebook communication is that he does not use Facebook as a mere channel to spread official statements and press releases. However, a lot of his status updates do not make use of Facebook’s features. The analysis shows that he often merely uses Facebook to spread slogans and he does not use the length that is possible in a status update. He merely throws slogans out. He could have used Facebook in a way where he explains why he opposes something. This would have been a true combination of agenda setting and framing, where Steinmeier actually uses Facebook to bring attention to a certain topic and on top of that, spin it by giving his own evaluation in a way that his Fans understand so that they will possibly adopt his opinion.

Another striking finding that the analysis has shown is the way Steinmeier communicates on Facebook is that his posts are usually accompanied with pictures, videos or at least links. All participation posts link to the specific event. This is very important because Facebook is highly visual. For example, follower has to pick or filter out a status update from the myriad of updates he sees in his newsfeed and interesting images or videos catch the eye more often.

One question after the analysis is, if Steinmeier’s team looked at the insights Facebook provides. There is a wide range of data that allows deriving future action objectives from previous posts. Insights show for example, the demographic makeup of those who like a page. This means that the posts can be targeted at the age group that is active on the page. Also, the insights offer
suggestions on when the best time to post on Facebook is. Lastly, the insights make up an overview of the engagement level of each post. This allows the Social Media Team to take educated guesses about what kind of content works well with the audience and which doesn’t.

Another thing that is striking in Steinmeier’s posts is the lack of interaction. Although this has not been discussed in this study it is strongly suggested to look into this closer because it just cannot be ignored. All the posts of Steinmeier have brought out some kind of interaction, i.e. comments but Steinmeier does not take part in any of the discussions at any time! This is one huge mistake in Facebook. As initially stated, Facebook (and other social networks) have changed communication from a one-way street to a two-way street and as such, interaction is crucial to success when using Facebook. This basically is the first thing every social media marketer knows and does when taking over the community management. It is highly questionable why Steinmeier and his team chose to ignore all Facebook comments. The question, when using Facebook for election campaigns, is how to use Facebook in such a way that the fans and possible voters are engaged. One can think of Facebook as a virtual street campaigning. If Steinmeier had talked directly with one of the commentators during an election rally, it would be highly unlikely that he would not answer to comments. In other words, why is that not done on Facebook? It basically defeats the point in using Facebook. A possible answer to this question is that the team had simply not expected the amount of comments and had no resources to reply.

Another negative thing in Steinmeier’s posts that was found during the analysis is that, except for a few times, Steinmeier posted in the third person singular. Obviously it is not expected that the politician himself is creating and posting updates on his page. However, it is common practice in social media to post in
one’s own voice. Facebook users are expecting a genuine experience when engaging with the friends and pages they value. Posting in the third person singular does not create this experience; rather it puts an artificial and frankly unnecessary distance between the page (ultimately the candidate Steinmeier) and his followers. Facebook pages are a great tool for political campaigners to engage with the audience on a human level. The human voice that is given to a somewhat abstract element is important and one way to foster this is posting in the first person singular. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that Steinmeier creates this barrier between himself and his fans because one of his main objectives, as discussed in the analysis, is to build an image up for himself, to present the person and man behind the candidate. As said, this was especially crucial because Steinmeier was not well known and has been regarded as distant from the beginning with by the public. The way he uses Facebook in the third person only nurtures this feeling. Politicians use in direct communication personal approaches to appeal to emotions in their audience (as described in the beginning of the study), however Steinmeier neglects this in his communication on Facebook and instead creates even more distance.

Moreover, even though Steinmeier usually uses images and video content, he does not provide content that people want to share much. Obviously to find content that people want to share is one of the most difficult tasks in social media marketing. However, posting open questions is a simple measure that makes content at least more engageable and invites people to discuss. The overall goal in social media marketing is to engage with people. None of Steinmeier’s posts use an open question. Granted, this might also be explained by the fact that it seems that the page administrators are not seeking discussion as explained further below.
Generally it seems that Steinmeier’s posts were not fully planned out. The lack of consistency for example points to this. A suggestion for the future is to plan the Social Media activities for one week ahead for the different channels. Moreover, the team can design different categories for content and the plan makes it easy to monitor as to how often what kind of content has been shared. This ensures the consistency that is often called for in this study. Categories could be agenda setting (with predefined topics that the candidate aims to place on the public agenda) and framing. Furthermore, mobilization and participation are also important. It is possible in political campaigns to define important events beforehand. These events then can be easily integrated into the social media schedule. It is also desirable to accompany events with multiple postings, at least before, during and afterward.

A challenge in the research process was to use rhetoric criticism to analyze Facebook posts. Rhetoric was developed in times when nobody would ever think of the internet and rhetoric criticism has been developed long before Facebook had gained such a strong influence that it would be used for political communication. In order to fully analyze Steinmeier’s postings the terms of rhetoric criticism have been fitted to Facebook. However it has been a constant issue if i.e. the scene of a rhetoric act can be seen as Facebook or as the actual scene (i.e. place of an event). This exemplifies the challenges that adapting older terms to newer platforms have posed throughout this research. Another relevant issue was a Facebook re-design (introduction of the timeline), which lead to posts appearing in a different order than before. Moreover it is also possible that at any given time Steinmeier’s Facebook posts could have been edited for unknown reasons, since Facebook is fully in the hands of admins this cannot be completely ruled out.
Throughout the research process it became evident that the inner party dispute of the SPD is one of the main obstacles for the party. A quick glance in the comment fields of Steinmeiers postings has shown that this inner disruption is eminent in every party member all the way to the bottom of the SPD. Further research could look into the comments posted to Steinmeiers wall and analyze in which way the comments show a desired outcome of Steinmeiers posts or which topics are repeatedly mentioned there.

This study has shown the ways in which Steinmeier communicates with his fans on Facebook and how he uses communication in his posts in order to build his and the party's image. The study has used rhetoric criticism to analyze postings on Facebook in a way it has not been done before. The aim was to get a deeper insight into political communication in the digital era and to derive practical instructions for future campaigns. The study shows the extreme inner party conflicts that constantly disrupt the SPD and have an impacted on the entire election campaign. This is an issue the SPD needs to sort out before the next election because only a strong united party is able to win the battle over the people’s minds.
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