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Live blog as genre in pursuit of credibility

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CHAPTER 6

Conclusions & Discussion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

I started this thesis with the main question: how is journalistic credibility established in live blogs? To answer this question, I introduced the concept of the pursuit of credibility, indicating that credibility is a public evaluation of a professional attempt to convince the public with content of their version of reality. This pursuit of credibility, therefore, includes the content of credibility, the realization of credibility, and the evaluation of credibility (see Figure 1). With these concepts, empirically underpinned in four chapters, I will answer the main research question of how credibility is established in live blogs (6.1). After answering this question, I will reflect on the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of my thesis (paragraph 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 respectively), and discuss the findings in this conclusion.

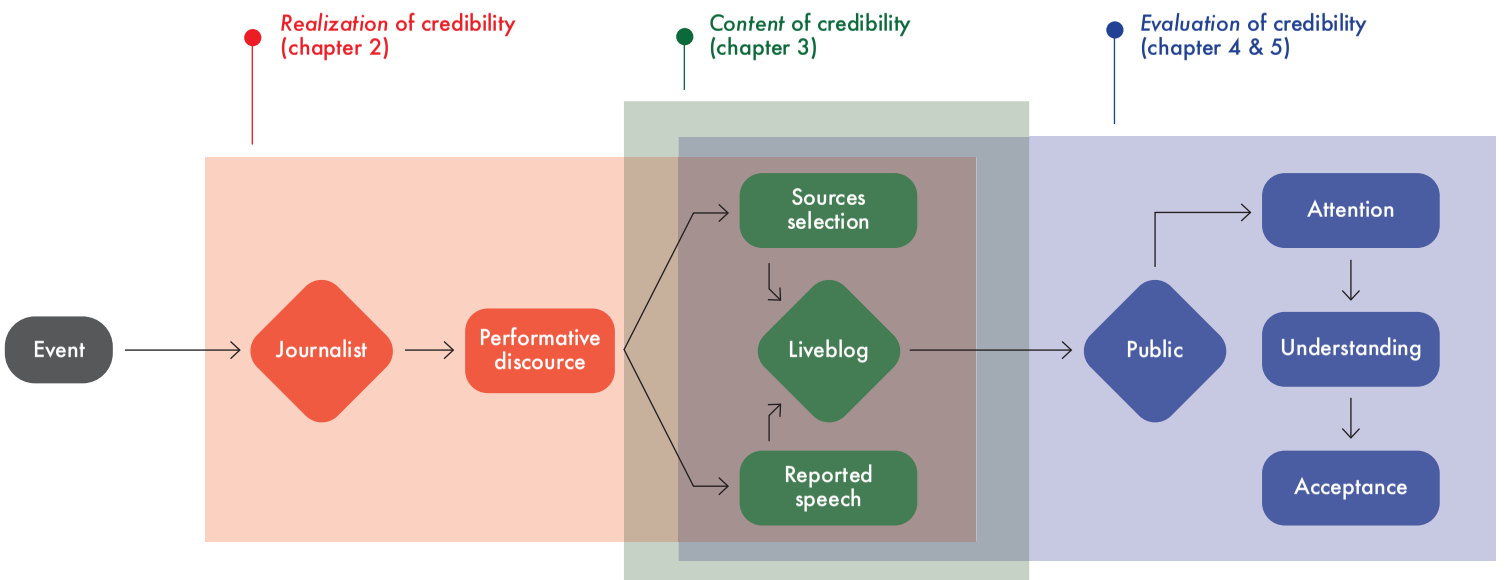

Figure 1 Stages in the pursuit of credibility in live blogs

6.2 REALIZATION OF CREDIBILITY

In Chapter 2, I empirically underpinned the realization of credibility by interviewing journalists performing discourse (the red dotted square, left in Figure 1). Conventions and routines help journalists cope with the epistemic challenges posed by uncertain information that must be transformed under immediate circumstances into credible content for live blogs. Journalists covering events in live blogs claimed, acquired, and justified knowledge on the go, leading to conventions for the realization of credibility. First, despite working with different platforms and covering different events at different moments, respondents shared in their answers the conceptualization of a communicative goal, channels for communication concerning routines and conventions, and assumptions about subject and episteme concerning the use of the genre, echoing Swales's (1990) conception of discourse community as described in the introduction of this thesis. In contrast to other genres of (online) journalism, live blogs have a strong social and organizational convention for production. I found in my study that live-blogging is a predominantly social event, and therefore, a different activity than individual contributions to news platforms. Liveblogging is realizing credibility with each other, incorporating debates concerning choices in their productions.

For politics, journalists covering debates with live blogs have expertise that resides within a network of colleagues. An important convention to acquire knowledge is social, by contacting expert colleagues on the spot. So, acquiring knowledge for planned events (sports and politics) is part expertise (knowing about the game and politics), and part technical dexterity (asking, scrutinizing, and embedding information delivered by third parties and colleagues) done by individuals with a high degree of editorial autonomy.

In contrast to blogs covering politics or sports, it is an important convention to covering breaking news with at least two journalists. To do their work, they have a gatekeeping role in the production of live blogs: they are in constant and continuous contact with other journalists in the organization. In contrast to debates and sports, breaking news is covered by a team with distinct roles that actively acquire knowledge, indicating not only lesser editorial autonomy of live blogging journalists, but also of their direct colleagues, who now must share their knowledge and give access to (exclusive) contacts and sources needed to acquire more and more reliable knowledge.

This discourse community of live bloggers is constantly weighing (ir)relevance with (un)certainty, due to the immediate character of live blogs. Not writing an article, as regular online journalists do, but writing posts (updates), live bloggers have an immediate challenge with this balancing act—journalists do not have a coherent narrative after the facts, as with online news, but report on news (or politics or sports) the moment it is taking place. This led to the evaluating information.

One convention was quite clear: if information was irrelevant and uncertain, journalists did not publish. When it was evaluated as certain and relevant, the convention was as clear – then information was published immediately. In between

was information that was relevant but uncertain, or certain but irrelevant. Both evaluations led to the convention to justify their choices to publish. Journalists explained they did so by either referring to the relevance for the public, or by attributing uncertainty in wording, using hedges, and therewith managing accountability concerning the information published.

Two more conventions concerning the use of sources were found in our data. First, when uncertain, respondents' claim to knowledge is based on the authority of the (formal) source. To balance the importance of the information with its questionable factuality, the ethos of the police's spokesperson legitimizes the claim. Dealing with eye witnesses, respondents indicate that they check the coherence of the eyewitness's stories, meaning they want more of them to tell the same story before they use the information in their live blog, or they want to know the development of the situation to make checking the eyewitness accounts possible, using them at the end of the event.

These routines and conventions are all used but are also still in development, as is the discourse community of live bloggers. New applications of live blogs ask for new routines and conventions, like the long-lasting live blogs covering COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine—both examples of new content answering to a new situation, and therefore, possibly demanding new routines and conventions. Within the genre of live blogs, we see differences in the communicative goals of live blogs (as will be further reflected on in the discussion), and hence in the discourse communities of live blogs covering breaking news, politics, or sports. These discourse communities seem to differ, as data shows, in the editorial autonomy (McEnnis, 2016) of the journalists. This autonomy seems to be highest in sports blogs. Journalists—often specialists—cover games, matches, and races on their own. Political events (debates, campaigns, hearings) are often covered in live blogs by one journalist who uses networks of knowledge, constantly asking colleagues (with knowledge about certain dossiers) to contribute. Covering politics is a very social activity. Third, when covering breaking news, journalists are part of the much broader network of colleagues; they're often not writing themselves, but gatekeeping contributions by others concerning the crisis that is covered. Covering breaking news in live blogs has the lowest amount of editorial autonomy, and is, for those matters, a highly social activity.

6.3 CONTENT OF CREDIBILITY

In Chapter 3, I empirically underpinned the content of credibility, focusing on the selection of sources and reported speech in live blogs (the green dotted square, left in Figure 1). Based on my data, I concluded that the coverage of breaking news, politics, and sports events was mostly done by narration, interpretative content written by journalists. When journalists use sources to cover events, they mainly choose formal sources, and therewith formal views. They mostly quote ad verbatim (direct speech) to perform discourse in their pursuit of credibility. So, despite the potential to be polyvocal (more and more different voices) in live blogs, and incorporate more and more different views on events evolving, journalists have a clear preference for formal

sources, and therefore, narrow down readings of events to some of the most trusted official accounts.

Due to the emergence of social media, the promise of online journalism was a more polyvocal selection of sources, thus, there were also more and more different stances in journalists' reports. Rosen (2012) summarized the emancipation of the "accidental journalists" (Allen, 2013) as "The people formerly known as the audience," indicating their active participation in the production of news. However, this potential is not met. The public potential to react to what happens (regarding natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or other breaking news), or to participate in what happens (political debates or sports), and thereby be open to more alternative views on the developing story, is minimal. To be credible, it seems, journalists reduce uncertainty regarding the event covered by following official accounts, and as much as possible, represent them in the words of formal sources (direct speech) or the words of journalists themselves (indirect speech, narration). Therefore, they do in live blogs what they say about live blogging (see above): constantly weighing (ir)relevance with (un)certainty, and justifying choices made by attribution and using hedges or by (in)direct speech, and therewith managing accountability about what is said.

However, one strategy to reduce uncertainty—using expert sources—is hardly used by journalists covering events in live blogs. I found that expert sources were very rarely used, despite the possibility for journalists to organize expertise in advance for live blogs covering planned events, such as political events or sports. For crises—both complex and dynamic events—expertise was hardly organized in advance or during an event. One explanation could be the sheer speed and immediacy of production, which makes the organization of expertise difficult, but as mentioned, this only counts for the unplanned events, not for the planned ones. Another explanation is the discourse community mentioned above. For live bloggers with a high degree of editorial autonomy, the organization of expertise is not a primary (or secondary) concern: they ask for specific knowledge within the social network of colleagues, not in external networks of experts.

6.4 EVALUATING CREDIBILITY

I empirically underpin the use of live blogs in Chapter 4, and the evaluation of credibility in Chapter 5 (the black dotted square, left in Figure 1). To understand if live blogs are accepted by the user, we must first analyze who uses live blogs to become informed about specific events. The survey study (Chapter 4)—conducted during the first months of COVID-19 in the Netherlands—shows that 24 percent of the respondents read a live blog daily in the first month. However, this number of users decreases in the following months. Users of live blogs consume a variety of different media—including live blogs—to become informed about an unfolding issue. For them, consuming news through live blogs is a way to diminish their uncertainty about what is going on. They do not want to miss out on the news. And this feeling of not wanting to miss out is even reinforced when consuming live blogs. This provides us with explanations on the use of live blogs.

To understand if users of live blogs accept them as a credible format, I then conducted focus groups with avid users of live blogs, asking them how they evaluate the credibility of a live blog. Data showed that avid users of live blogs are highly critical. Respondents scrutinized source credibility, message credibility, and medium credibility, as well as the technological affordances of live blogs as an online format. In doing so, respondents constantly mobilized an extensive body of knowledge concerning their favorite subject to reflect on the content of live blogs. Using direct speech elevated the source's credibility, but not automatically the source's message credibility. Respondents further signaled imbalances in reported views due to the selection of specific sources, and they missed the criteria for choices made. Consequently, they questioned the expertise of journalists, fed by their own knowledge concerning alternative sources they heard and read about in other media they followed.

So, how can we explain this critical stance towards live blogs, and at the same time, their popularity among respondents? The avid users in my focus groups are dedicated news followers with an impressive body of knowledge regarding their events of interest. They are constantly aware of the news, paying a lot of attention to developments concerning their subject of interest. By doing so, they understand the news and are very critical in accepting or rejecting what is told. Still, respondents seem to enjoy scrutinizing the news; live blogs feed them with the content they need to do so. Using a live blog is more than consuming news; it is an active way to relate to an unfolding world, where uncertainties and fragmentation are not obstructions, but motivations to look, read, and listen further, like in a detective or adventure game.

6.5 LIVE BLOG AS GENRE IN PURSUIT OF CREDIBILITY

To answer the main research question, how journalistic credibility is established in live blogs, we must accept that credibility is not a characteristic, quality, or attribution of journalism, but the outcome of the evaluation of journalism. Credibility is a process that starts even before journalists start covering reality. Before a word is noted, and the cursor is blinking in the left-upper corner of the screen, journalists choose a genre to report on reality. That choice determines what is written – like a secret power over the journalists' autonomy and creativity. It is genre that forces journalists to take the social-cultural setting of discourse into account, transcending particularities of makers, content, and the public through a social view of writing. Doing genre studies can "reveal certain philosophical and moral underpinnings that guides acts of journalistic production and representation that news workers may not even be conscious of" (Buozis & Creech, 2017: online). So, genre studies reveal routines and conventions for journalists, making explicit what is still implicit. At the same time, genre prescribes discourse in such a way that effects of credibility can occur, and the public gets what it expects to get. Based on these expectations, trust can be built between makers and the public through discourse.

We defined genre as a social action, based on the recurrence of situations or events. Political debates, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, matches, races, and games recur,

and in covering these recurrent situations, conventions and routines evolve and are established. Every time such an event must be covered—exigence in rhetorical terms—journalists fall back to these conventions. Yes, there are alternative ways to cover such an event, but these are not chosen (yet). And every time the public follows these events in the news, they evaluate the journalistic attempt according to their expectations.

In short, genre organizes professional discourse to fulfill public expectations, even before an event or situation is transferred to the news. When genre is in action, public expectations are met, and effects of credibility can be established. The same holds true for live blogs. They are a specific genre in journalism that differs from other journalistic genres. Live blogs are characterized by a developing narrative, a diversity of modalities (text, photo, data, social media), and variable timelines between two hours and two years are used to produce immediate news by journalists, which is tolerated by the public. Live blogs covering politics and breaking news are the result of a very social production process with a specific communicative purpose: immediacy over relevance, over uncertainty.

How credibility is established in live blogs is determined by an implicit and silent contract of expectations between producers and the public over the content of the live blog, with effects of credibility as a result. Credibility is the raison d'être of journalism; it is a constant mission of journalists to persuade the public to accept their version of reality. Journalism is, in essence, a profession of second-hand (even third hand) knowledge transferring from the journalist (realizing credibility) through content (content of credibility) towards the public (evaluation of credibility). Luckily, journalists can fall back on genre to establish credibility in their content. And, luckily, the public has knowledge about these genres and evaluates journalistic attempts of persuasion. Consequently, to understand this implicit contract of expectations organized by genre, the journalists' thriving for, and the public's evaluation of credibility must be analyzed together. That is exactly what I tried to analyze in pursuit of credibility in this thesis. This pursuit of credibility is not without theoretical, methodological, and practical consequences for the study of live blogs specifically and journalism studies in general. I will, hereafter, discuss these consequences.

6.6 THEORETICAL CONSEQUENCES

One theoretical consequence of the pursuit of credibility concerns the unit of analysis: the pursuit of credibility is studied by interviewing journalists, analyzing the content of live blogs, sending out a survey to news consumers, and organizing focus groups with avid users. Consequently, the pursuit of credibility is established within and between all three phases of the communication process: sender > content > receiver. The pursuit of credibility, so to speak, requires a holistic approach to the simplest communication process. I argued that credibility is an aim of journalists to persuade the public to accept their version of reality, and the evaluation is in the eyes of the beholder. This process of persuasion through an evaluation of journalistic discourse, as mentioned above, is not a game of chance. The journalists' aim to persuade the public is based on well-established routines and conventions. In short: genre.

Genre encompasses makers of discourse, discourse itself, and the public that the discourse is directed toward. Genre theory helps explain existing genre, but also explains how genre comes to existence. Recurring communicative events, writes Swales (1990: 45-46), are put into genre if they share a set of communicative purposes. Journalism shares one essential communicative purpose: credibility, embedded in the realization of content when covering recurrent events. The rationale of genre, explains Swales (1990: 52) further, is to establish constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their content, positioning, and form. Genre gets work done, to cite Frow (2015) and paraphrase Tuchman (1973). So, as Broersma (2010) remarks, journalism is not about creativity and autonomy; journalism is about routines and conventions. These routines and conventions are the basis of the journalistic transferring of reality in discourse in a comparable, stable, predictable, but sometimes also biased, troubled, and non-convincing way. I argue that genre theory offers a coherent theoretical and empirical apparatus for the assessment, critique, practices, and effects of credibility, especially in a timeframe of high technological affordances, which are rich breeding grounds for news formats and genres.

6.7 METHODOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

This study concerning the pursuit of credibility embedded in genre theory shows that understanding genre—particularly new upcoming journalistic genres—cannot be done by solely analyzing the content (Matheson & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Thurman & Walters, 2013). By using both qualitative and quantitative methods, I showed that the pursuit of credibility is a process that demands analysis of sender makes content for receiver, as is structured in my conceptual model of the pursuit of credibility (see Figure 1). My thesis is a triangulated study, combining quantitative and qualitative studies concerning the process of the pursuit of credibility. Other than what the conceptual model implies, the actual sequence of my studies was different. I started with a content analysis of live blogs concerning the selection of sources and the use of reported speech (Chapter 3). This study informed my study concerning the makers of live blogs (Chapter 2), which informed my quantitative content analysis of live blogs again. Logically, makers precede content; therefore, makers are the first stage in our conceptual model. Consequently, an important methodological consequence of my triangulated method is a necessary back and forth between content and interviews. It's necessary because content and makers inform each other. Thereafter, both this content analysis and interviews led to a third study, concerning the use of live blogs in comparison with other media in a survey among news users in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. All these previous studies eventually led to my fourth study: six focus groups concerning the evaluation of credibility by users, completing all stages in the pursuit of credibility.

A second methodological consequence of this approach is that I studied a process, not stasis, and combined not just content and the production of news, but both in relation to the public evaluation of both. I conceptualized the evaluation of credibility as an integral part of its pursuit, leading to an operationalization of credibility in its

content, realization, and evaluation. A direct consequence of this approach is that the questions of if and how credible journalism can be is in the eyes of the beholders: the public. That does not mean we cannot determine the credibility of content or analyze routines and conventions used to realize credible discourse (as I showed in this thesis); however, it does mean that for a complete evaluation of credible journalism, we must take the public evaluation into account. Without this, we simply do not know if and how credible journalism is, and if and how successful journalists' attempts to persuade the public of their versions of reality are. In short: without the public, we cannot evaluate journalism itself.

Third, and finally, I used common methods, well known in journalism studies, but altered them to answer the main question. The first challenge concerned the makers. I chose to interview them, and not observe them doing live blogs, due to the restrictions of the pandemic (COVID-19). It was not possible to visit or observe for a longer period in the working environment of journalists covering reality in live blogs. Therefore, I had to interview journalists online (by Teams). To compensate for the loss of information I could gather when present, I asked journalists beforehand to bring their last live blog to the interview and started by asking what they did, almost line by line, as if we both did a content analysis, or maybe better, as if we were both "doing" a live blog. This assignment's focus was on the journalist's motivations to perform discourse. This "reconstructive" interviewing—asking what and why journalists did what they did—informed the content analysis of live blogs.

A challenge of the content analysis was the unit of analysis of live blogs (Chapter 3) in such a dynamic format. I had to establish boundaries of this multimodal discourse in motion to quantitatively analyze the content of live blogs. Live blogs are characterized by individual posts. these short status updates of reality are often multimodal; sometimes, an update is posted by reposting and embedding (parts of) social media. To cope with these challenges of a new format, I chose to minimize the unit of analysis to individual sentences, and following Bennett (2016), interpret embedded social media as sources and direct quotes to answer our research questions concerning sourcing and reported speech (Chapter 3).

The COVID-19 crisis not only interfered with this thesis, but it also presented an opportunity. Live blogs are a format chosen by journalists to cover a highly dynamic reality, but why did people follow these live blogs? So, we conducted a survey for users of live blogs, asking who they were and why they followed live blogs. Therewith, we placed our final study—focus groups with avid users of live blogs—in a broader context of media use and motivations for media use.

Finally, I conducted focus groups with avid users. I choose avid users on purpose: live blogs are a relatively new format that is quite demanding for consumers. Because I wanted respondents to evaluate the format, I selected respondents who used live blogs as a daily routine, and who knew their way around, so to speak, to evaluate credibility without being distracted by the forms and appearances of live blogs. This approach has a disadvantage: avid users (or news junkies) might be more critical of live blog content than less frequent users, leading to a distorted evaluation. However,

their evaluation—biased perhaps by their avid use of live blogs—is not intended to evaluate live blogs as such but is intended to find arguments with which they evaluate the credibility of live blogs. In other words: if avid users are more prone to use more criteria for the evaluation of live blog credibility, these arguments are possibly also used by a more "general" public evaluating the same live blogs. The other way around might not be the case: a more "general" public is perhaps less critical of the content of live blogs, which can possibly lead to missing arguments for the evaluation of credibility. To do so, I gave them an assignment to read a live blog as they always did, and to first, note what they found remarkable for all reasons they could think of, and second, tell me what they thought was credible (or not). My discussion guide was informed by the interviews with makers and the content analysis concerning sourcing and reported speech (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) These three approaches—quantitative content analysis (or the content of credibility), "reconstructive" interviews (or the realization of credibility), and the "assignment" focus groups (or the evaluation of credibility)—were based on a coherent conceptualization of the pursuit of credibility, operationalized in these three methods that reciprocally informed each other.

6.8 PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

The main practical consequence of this thesis is that it brought makers of live blogs together to reflect on their work, leading to further discussions in some media organizations concerning live blogging as a journalistic activity. During individual conversations with journalists, while we reconstructed live blogs for my second study, we (I and the journalists) sometimes found surprising routines and conventions.
This method led some respondents to a switch from unconscious competence to conscious competence, not only concerning what journalists do when they live blog, but also the position of live blogs in their organizations. One respondent, for instance, wondered why almost every article online was evaluated, except the live blog that was generating the most public clicks by far. Consequently, the conversations concerning the production of live blogs gave journalists arguments to critique and improve their live blogging.

Second, this thesis has some advice to offer journalists to improve the credibility of live blogs: be transparent in authorship (who wrote this); use numbers and statistics in posts; use video and photo; organize expertise before planned events (political debates, sports) or as fast as possible during crises; use these experts; link to backgrounding stories or analyses; and give meta-information about the selection of sources (why this source now). These are factors that can be distilled from my survey and focus groups among live blog users.

Third, and finally, genre theory unravels the rhetorical effects of text structures in relation to public expectations and offers insights into routines and conventions to get work done by realizing discourse. Understanding genre is understanding discourse and discourse production. But genre theory not only offers a rich palette of tools and concepts to analyze discourse, but it also analyzes discourse for innovation. The need for speed, the technical possibilities to deliver, and the urge for media

organizations to cover reality resulted in the exigence—the pressing urge for relevant and immediate discourse—of live blogs. Their routines and conventions, sourcing practices, and reported speech are evaluated as highly critical by avid users, so there is not only room for improvement, but under our eyes, we see room for innovation as well. Consequently, understanding the genre of live blogs makes it possible for journalists and the public alike to understand the innovation of live blogs too.

6.9 DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction, genre gets work done. It forces producers of discourse to choose and follow routines and conventions to answer to public expectations. Seen as such, genre normalizes, and therewith, stabilizes discourse. At the same time, studying live blogs in the past four years showed the dynamics of live blogs. COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine showed that genre changed under our eyes, and reality found new ways of expressing itself. So, how useful is the concept of genre to understand the pursuit of credibility? If journalism is discourse in motion, why are we focusing on similarities rather than differences? The answer to this question depends on the way I define stability and change: what exactly is stable, and what changes? Yes, the content of live blogs changes every day, or to be more specific, every minute or so. Yes, news concerning COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine differs from a terrorist attack or a football match. In short, reality constantly changes. What stays stable is what Tuchman (1973) already coined as routinizing the unexpected.

Live blogs offer a structure for an ever-changing and developing reality. Journalists do not have to invent new ways of covering this ever-changing reality; they can use the format of live blogs, reporting all the observed (or inferred) changes in a prescribed format of time-stamped posts. In this thesis, the question was not what differences I could find between live blogs covering breaking news, politics, or sports; the question was not what differences I could find between makers and users of live blogs, and if I found differences, how I could explain them. The question was what similarities I could find between different live blogs, different makers, and different users, and if I found similarities, how I could explain them. Genre theory answered the question of why different live blogs covering terrorist attacks, political debates, or sports were similar, why different makers working for radio and television, online platforms, or newspapers did similar things, and why different users—each with their own preferred subjects—evaluated credibility in the same ways: because producing and using live blogs is regulated by genre conventions.

However, this approach leads to another question concerning genre: if I focus on similarities as an important quality of genre, how many differences between discourses are allowed to be included in (or excluded from) a genre? I theorized that a common communicative purpose is an important argument to in- and exclude discourse from genre. However, I cannot qualify or quantify the amount of commonality of communicative goal, so to speak, to in- or exclude discourse from a specific genre. This question is brought up by my analysis of sports blogs. Results in the content study showed differences between breaking news and politics on one side, and sports

on the other. Breaking news and politics share the same communicative purpose—namely, to inform the public; sports also entertain the public, as was explained by makers and users of sports blogs. So, different communicative purpose, different genre?

Yes, because all respondents following live blogs covering sports missed entertainment and ambiance in the coverage. Sport is emotion, as they answered questions concerning the pursuit of credibility in sports blogs. For these respondents, it was not credible to cover a football match as objective, as a matter of fact, as they saw happen in the live blogs they analyzed. Keeping the emotions out of the coverage meant being distanced from what happened. This distance was an argument to evaluate the live blog as less credible: without these emotions, how can a journalist understand this match? Journalists could not, respondents evaluated. So, covering emotions and entertaining the public are important communicative purposes for sports blogs, which makes these blogs differ from breaking news and politics. This difference in communicative purpose legitimizes a difference in the assessment of genre. However, at the same time, sports fans want high-density information (every relevant minute of a game, race, or match). They even demanded more information than was given in the live blogs they discussed during our focus groups. Respondents explained they use specialized apps to follow game details, and suggested icons or emojis to report on fouls, goals, times, or other sports variables to better inform them about the sport they preferred to follow with live blogs.

Not only does the communicative purpose differ, but sports blogs are also produced in a different way than live blogs covering breaking news and politics: as mentioned above, the editorial autonomy in sports blogs is much higher. Because the communicative purpose of sports blogs and their production process differs from live blogs covering breaking news and politics (not only inform, but also entertain), I argue that live blogs covering sports are a sub-genre of live blogs covering breaking news and politics.

This evaluation brings us to our final point of discussion: who has the authority to claim genre? According to Swales (1990: 9), the authority of genre is the discourse community. I explained the defining features of a discourse community in Chapter 2 and found that live bloggers are not a perfect match with the literature (Swales, 1990). For instance, there are no dedicated channels for live bloggers where they meet to share experiences, solve problems, or present discursive strategies to cover reality immediately. Consequently, they lack formal mechanisms of intercommunication. Despite these shortcomings, I concluded in Chapter 2 that a discourse community of live bloggers in the Netherlands does exist. The question remains: is there "enough" discourse community to claim the genre of live blogs?

An answer to this question can be found in a different discipline than that of genre and credibility—namely, in the sociology of knowledge (Gieryn, 1999; Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Central to this approach is the question of who has the authority to claim knowledge when credibility is on the line (to cite Gieryn's subtitle of *Cultural Boundaries of Science*). That question cannot be answered by listing functions of

knowledge or trait-based explanations. Instead, Gieryn (1999) proposes a more democratic and rhetorical approach—various groups of knowledge workers (for example, scientists and journalists) engage in a continuing debate concerning epistemic authority, defined as "the legitimate power to define, describe, and explain bounded domains of reality" (Gieryn, 1999: 1). One such bounded domain of reality is the live blog. Consequently, the live blog and live bloggers are constantly struggling for epistemic authority, defining their authority for the constant pursuit of credibility on the go. Answering the question of whether live bloggers are "enough" community to claim live blogs as their genre is up to the live bloggers themselves. As with journalism, their epistemic authority is not given, but subject to a continuing debate concerning the power to define, describe, and explain live blogs as their domains of reality.

Prof. Jaap de Jong asked me five years ago what I was doing when I live blogged every Tuesday and Thursday, covering the council meetings in Leiden, the Netherlands for the regional newspaper Leidsch Dagblad. Now, after five years, I can finally answer his question: I tried to persuade him to accept my immediate version of a local council meeting, using a live blog I chose as a professional journalist, following conventions and routines to report on what was debated below me, at the council floor. It is for him to decide if and how I succeed in persuading him to accept my version of reality.