Securitizing COVID-19:  
A case study of negotiated securitization between securitizing actor & the public in Norway

Nadja Friborg

Thesis, 30 ECTS (hp)  
Political Science with a focus on Crisis Management and Security Master's Programme in Politics and War  
Autumn 2020  
Supervisor: Maria Hellman  
Word count: 20 109
Abstract

This thesis analyzed the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway as a negotiation of meaning between the public and Norway’s prime minister. By employing framing analysis and a sociological approach to securitization, this thesis breaks with the binary view of ‘audience acceptance’ in securitization theory’s original framework. Instead, it argues for the relevance of understanding securitization in the context of COVID-19 as an intersubjective process between securitizing actor and audience. While scholars have tended to overlook the audience’s role in securitization processes, this thesis analyzed both the securitizing actor’s and the audience’s perspective. This made it possible to reveal competing views regarding threat perception and emergency measures. The thesis contributed to the theoretical debate on the audience by highlighting the special ingrained role the public has been assigned in this particular securitization context. The nuanced analysis of audience acceptance showed that despite a general resonance regarding the threat perception, it revealed important tensions regarding the measures and the audience’s participatory role in the process. This questions whether COVID-19 in Norway can be considered to have been ‘successfully securitized’.

Keywords: Securitization Theory | Audience Acceptance | COVID-19 | Norway | Successful Securitization |
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for my supervisor, Prof. Maria Hellman, whose guidance, support, and encouragement have been invaluable throughout the study. Her advice and constructive feedback gave me confidence in my research and kept me motivated throughout the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank the 189 respondents who took the time to participate in the survey, without whom I would have no content for my thesis. I would also like to express my warm thanks to Prof. Håvard Rustad Markussen for his assistance with spreading the survey in Norway.
### List of figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Analytical framework</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distribution of threat perception in regards to personal health</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distribution of threat perception in regards to the healthcare system</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Support for Infection Quarantine</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support for “Cabin ban”</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>“I think the lockdown measures have restricted my personal freedom too much”</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>“I think that the recommendations on how I should live my daily life during the pandemic have required too much from me as a citizen”</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>“I think the lockdown measures have been necessary despite the economic consequences it has brought for society”</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of contents

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................................................ II

LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................................... III

1. INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 AIM & RESEARCH QUESTIONS ....................................................................................... 3
   1.2 Thesis Outline ................................................................................................................... 3

2. THEORY AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH: ‘THE AUDIENCE’ IN SECURITIZATION THEOR... 5
   2.1 Securitization Theory ....................................................................................................... 5
   2.2 Critique and Theoretical Developments .......................................................................... 6
   2.3 Understanding ‘Audience Acceptance’ ............................................................................ 9
   2.4 The Audience as the General Public .............................................................................. 10
   2.5 Summary ......................................................................................................................... 12

3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY .......................................................................... 13
   3.1 Designing the Study ......................................................................................................... 13
      3.1.1 Case Selection ........................................................................................................... 14
   3.2 Material ............................................................................................................................ 15
      3.2.1 Speeches .................................................................................................................... 15
      3.2.2 Survey ....................................................................................................................... 16
   3.3 Framing Analysis ............................................................................................................. 17
   3.4 Limitations and Delimitations ......................................................................................... 19
   3.5 Analytical Framework .................................................................................................... 20

4. ANALYSIS ............................................................................................................................... 25
   4.1 Framing Analysis: The Securitizing Actor ........................................................................ 25
      4.1.1 The diagnostic frame: Defining the situation ............................................................... 25
      4.1.2 The prognostic frame: Providing the solution .............................................................. 27
      4.1.3 The motivational frame: Calling for collective action ...................................................... 30
   4.2 Framing Analysis: The Audience ..................................................................................... 31
      4.2.1 The diagnostic frame: Defining the situation ............................................................... 32
      4.2.2. The prognostic frame: Providing the solution ............................................................. 34
      4.2.3 The motivational frame: Calling for collective action ....................................................... 39
   4.3 Frame Resonance ............................................................................................................. 42

5. CONCLUSIONS ....................................................................................................................... 45
   5.1 Suggestions for Future Research ...................................................................................... 47

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................ 48

APPENDIX ................................................................................................................................. 52

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE ........................................................................................................ 52
1. Introduction

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused nearly two million deaths as of January 2021 (Worldometer, 2021), national leaders were faced with the challenge to contain the spread of a highly infectious novel coronavirus. As the pandemic quickly spread around the globe, countries worldwide responded by declaring a state of emergency and implemented community based measures to mitigate the spread. Norway, one of the countries that early implemented strict measures such as lockdown and quarantine rules, has managed through the crisis with few death cases (Ibid). While the implementation of lockdown on March 12 was met with strong support by the Norwegian population according to polls (e.g. Statista, 2020), the country was also the first to release a comprehensive report that measured the adherence to COVID-19-related measures on its population. The report by Steens at al (2020), which showed only 42% adherence to quarantine and isolation rules in April-July, concluded that “further analyses are required to better understand the determinants of COVID-19 health-related behavior” (Steens et al, 2020, p. 5). This understanding of the public’s perspective regarding COVID-19 will be explored in this thesis.

According to Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde’s (1998) theory of securitization, the construction of an issue to have security status occurs by securitizing actors who convince an audience that the issue poses an existential threat and requires emergency measures. The assumption that to successfully securitize an issue depends on audience acceptance, without specifying who the audience is or how it accepts securitization, has been criticized by second-generation securitization scholars. Their sociological approach to securitization, which defines securitization as a negotiation of meaning between securitizing actor and audience, moves beyond the focus on the speech act in the theory, i.e. the act where the securitizing actor declares securitization. Instead, their audience centered approach emphasizes the audience’s role, but opposes the binary view of ‘audience acceptance’ in the original theory; that the audience either accepts or rejects a securitizing move. By nuancing this concept, these scholars have empirically illustrated how an audience may accept the threat as existential but reject the suggested emergency measures. These findings challenge the original framework’s underdeveloped assumptions regarding the audience and questions how successful securitization can be defined. The second generation argues that the role of the external context must be taken into account for understanding how the audience accepts or rejects securitizing moves, an aspect which the original theory neglects.

However, second-generation scholars have not examined how this negotiation of meaning takes
form when the audience has such an ingrained role in a securitization process as with COVID-19. The audience, which can be conceptualized as the general public or other actors, has been studied by the second generation for contributing to theory-building. However, the few studies that explicitly focus on the relationship between the securitizing actor and the general public as the audience has not examined a securitization process in which the public has such an ingrained role in the process. Further, many studies on how an audience accepts securitizing moves are based on the securitization of other issues, such as terrorism. This has led to an existing gap in the literature on how we can understand how the public accepts this case of securitization when it has an ingrained role in the process. Since securitizing actors are dependent on the public’s adherence to the suggested emergency measures, the role of the public is arguably quite different compared to the securitization of issues such as terrorism. Therefore, the conclusions by previous scholars regarding the public as the audience in securitization may not be applicable to this case. Since a security issue of the same kind and severity as COVID-19 has not been seen since the Spanish Flu in 1918, which was “…the most severe pandemic in recent history” (CDC, 2020), a case of securitization of infectious disease, which requires everyone’s changed way of living, has not been examined by previous scholars. The public’s role for achieving successful securitization is arguably more important in this case than in most other securitization processes. As the Norwegian report concluded, a greater understanding of the public’s perception is needed to better understand this security situation. This thesis challenges securitization theory with a nuanced conceptualization of audience acceptance to increase the understanding of the public’s ingrained role in this process.

Drawing on the premises of a sociological approach to securitization, thus treating securitization as an intersubjective process, this thesis problematizes how the traditional framework determines ‘successful securitization’ by asking to what extent the securitization of COVID-19 was ‘accepted’ by the public in Norway. The thesis thus contributes to the theoretical critique against the underdeveloped concept of the audience and how ‘successful securitization’ can be determined in the original framework. By employing framing analysis to analyze the securitization of COVID-19 from both the securitizing actor’s and the audience’s perspective, it will be shown how securitization should be understood as a negotiation of meaning. In line with the critique by the second-generation, it is thus argued that a sociological approach is preferred rather than the single focus on threat construction during the speech act. By shedding light on the special situation when the population has a key role for the achievement of its success, this thesis offers a fresh angle of securitization analysis given the special nature of COVID-19 as a security threat and the unusual and important role that the audience plays in this context.
1.1 Aim & Research Questions

This thesis seeks to theoretically contribute to securitization theory’s concept of ‘audience acceptance’ by analyzing the securitization of COVID-19. In doing so, it contributes to the theoretical critique of the concept since the public seldom plays such an integrative part in securitization. It is thus unknown how the negotiation of meaning between securitizing actor and audience, conceptualized as the general public, plays out in this context. This thesis aims to fill that gap by analyzing the framing of the threat from both the securitizing actor’s and the audience’s perspective. Using the empirical case of Norway to fulfill this aim, the research questions this thesis seeks to answer are:

1. How was COVID-19 framed by the securitizing actor, Prime Minister Erna Solberg, in Norway?
2. How was PM Solberg’s framing of COVID-19 perceived by the Norwegian public?
3. In what ways does the framing of COVID-19 by PM Solberg and the public’s perception resonate with each other (with respect to the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings)?

The first two questions of how COVID-19 was framed by the securitizing actor and the public help to answer the third question of frame resonance. Altogether, the research questions center attention on the inter-subjectively established securitization of COVID-19. Nuancing ‘audience acceptance’ into the diagnostic framing regarding how the problem with the threat is framed, the prognostic framing regarding how the solution is framed, and the motivational framing that regards the framing of the audience’s role in the process, help to understand this securitization process with a nuanced view.

1.2 Thesis outline

This study is divided into five chapters. Having presented the research questions of this study, Chapter 2 goes on to discuss the tenets of securitization theory and previous research with a focus on the theoretical advancements regarding the concept of ‘the audience’ and ‘audience acceptance’ by securitization scholars. In chapter 2, I also identify what is underdeveloped in existing scholarship on this topic, which lies at the base for this study. Thereafter, I present the theoretical premises from which I depart. Chapter 3 outlines the research design, methodological considerations, and
the analytical methods employed in the study. Chapter 4 presents the analyses, divided into three parts, that approach each research question respectively. Chapter 5, finally, concludes the thesis by discussing the implications of the results for existing scholarship on the ‘audience acceptance’ concept and suggests some ideas for future research.
2. Theory and Previous Research: ‘The Audience’ in Securitization Theory

This chapter outlines securitization theory’s theoretical assumptions and engages with the scholarly discussion regarding ‘the audience’ concept among critics of the theory. Thereafter, it identifies the remaining gap in the literature, namely how we can understand the audience conceptualized as the general public with an ingrained role in a securitization process. Lastly, it elaborates on how existing scholarship can be used to approach this underexplored topic.

2.1. Securitization theory

The Copenhagen School’s (CS) securitization theory by Buzan, de Wilde, and Waever (1998) assumes that security is a social construction. Security issues become constructed when securitizing actors, defined as the actor(s) who attempts to securitize an issue, declares an issue to have security status. This declaration of security by the securitizing actor follows a certain security rhetoric in its language, in the so called ‘speech act’. An issue transforms into a security issue in a process of securitization, defined as:

“the process through which an issue is presented as an existential threat requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”


Security issues can thus be identified by how they distinguish from political issues; they are declared by securitizing actors to require handling outside of normal politics given their existential nature. The issue that is presented as existential in the speech act is a so-called referent object which commonly, but not necessarily, refers to the state (Buzan et al, 1998).

The speech act is placed central by the CS for explaining how issues discursively transform into security issues. The concept, based on Austin’s language theory, assumes that this speech act is a special discursive act. As Balzacq puts it, it is considered a “‘…social magic’ power of language…” (Balzacq, 2011, p. 1). The speech act can be identified by scholars of securitization since it is theorized that it follows a special rhetorical structure, a ‘grammar of security’: “a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return, and a possible way out” (Buzan et al 1998, p. 33). However,
the success of the speech act depends on certain ‘facilitating conditions’ which regard not only the rules of the speech act but also the securitizing actor’s authority in the social-external context (Buzan et al 1998, p. 32). The latter is of relevance since the speech act by the securitizing actor must be accepted by an audience for successful securitization. The audience, defined as “those the securitizing act attempts to convince to accept exceptional procedures because of the specific security nature of some issue” (Buzan et al 1998, p. 41) thus decides successful securitization since “…the issue is only securitized if and when the audience accepts it as such” (Buzan et al 1998). Thus, there must be a negotiated understanding of the issue to have security status by both the securitizing actor and the audience (Buzan et al 1998, p. 27).

Securitization theory offers a broad framework for security analysis. It applies equally well to military issues as to other security threats, since the referent object could be any kind of issue. In Security - A new framework for analysis, Buzan et al (1998) identified at least five sectors in which securitization could occur: in the military, political, societal, environmental and economic sector where “…each sector also has its own unique actors, referent objects, dynamics, and contradictions that need to be understood in their own terms” (Buzan et al 1998, p. 196). The strength of the model is this broad applicability to security analysis. The theory has made possible analyses on a wide range of non-military security threats, including public health. For instance, HIV/AIDS (e.g. Elbe 2006) and the Avian Flu (Curley and Herington, 2011) has been analyzed with the use of the framework. Accordingly, it could at first glance seem to be easily applicable to the COVID-19 case in its original form. However, the insufficient conceptualization of the audience makes the question regarding the audience’s role in securitizing COVID-19 difficult to analyze with the theory’s original shape. The framework is useful since no other theory, to my knowledge, offers such a flexible model for analyzing security issues. However, with the difficulty to account for the public’s participatory role as the audience, the theory needs refinement in order to account for this special dynamics between securitizing actor and audience in this context, which the next section will further discuss.

2.2. Critique and Theoretical Developments

The concept of ‘the audience’ in securitization theory has become a scholarly discussion as a result of the unclear specifications of the concept by the CS. Second-generation securitization scholars (e.g. Salter, 2008; Stritzel, 2012; Balzacq, 2005) have highlighted that the ‘the audience’ concept and the securitizing actor-audience relationship is undertheorized and have refined the theory to better account for the audience’s role in securitization. This goes sharply against Floyd’s (2016) argument that the audience is ‘irrelevant’ and that the concept should be removed.
This thesis, which aims to understand the public’s ingrained role in the securitization of COVID-19, argues against Floyd’s argument of removing the audience concept. According to Floyd, the securitizing actor decides successful securitization, not the audience. Her refined model of securitization excludes both the audience, emergency measures, and existential threats since the relevance lies in whether the securitizing actor chooses to act or not. Since this action/inaction decides successful or failed securitization, it is irrelevant whether the threat is existential, if the measures are extraordinary, or if the audience accepts or rejects. Since the securitizing actor can choose to securitize an issue regardless if the audience rejects, and vice versa, “there simply is no conclusive relationship between audience acceptance and the ‘success’ of securitization” (Floyd 2015, p. 691). This view seems ill-suited for understanding the securitization of COVID-19 where it is logical to assume that there is a conclusive relationship between securitizing actor and audience. It thus seems that Floyd overlooks the possibility of cases of securitization where the audience has a powerful role, such as the ingrained role it has been assigned in the COVID-19 case. Since the measures required to handle COVID-19, such as social distancing, highly regard everyone’s daily lives, it is logical to assume that a negotiated understanding of the issue to have security status and to require emergency measures is necessary, or at least, desired by the securitizing actor. How could we possibly understand the securitization of COVID-19 without taking the audience or the extraordinary measures into account? If the public did not consider the threat to require security status or extraordinary measures, could the issue even be securitized with such intrusive measures in a democratic country? I argue that Floyd’s model becomes too simplified for understanding this case.

The sociological approach to securitization seems to be a better departure point for understanding the COVID-19 case. As Balzacq (2011) explains, the second generation’s ‘sociological approach’ to securitization differs from the CS’s ‘philosophical approach’ in its theoretical assumptions. The second generation has highlighted a theoretical contradiction by the CS; securitization is considered as one act on the one hand – that securitization is a speech act -, and an intersubjective process between securitizing actor and audience on the other hand – since the audience’s acceptance of the speech act is required for successful securitization. The sociological approach argues for moving away from the speech act concept and consider securitization as a process, not one act. While the CS only takes into account the illocutionary part of speech act theory – the performative act of saying something, the second generation has included the perlocutionary part which the CS excludes – the effects of the speech act on the audience. This makes possible the analysis of securitization as an intersubjective process between securitizing actor and audience. Moving away from the speech act, the sociological approach neglects that attempts of securitization can only be identified with a
specific ‘grammar of security’ in the speech act. It thus opposes the view of the audience as “a byproduct of a speech act event” (Ibid, p. 2). Instead, it argues that the external context must be taken into account for understanding how the audience accepts securitization, an aspect which the CS excludes. Instead, it argues that securitization moves by securitizing actors “operates at the level of persuasion” (Balzacq, 2011, p. 2). The social and political context must therefore be taken into account for understanding this attempts to persuade an audience that an issue requires securitization, since contextual factors may have an impact on its success. The view of the audience and the securitizing actor as mutually constituted thus requires the study of the effects of the speech act, and the context matters for understanding how the audience understands and accepts securitizing moves (Balzacq, 2011).

Balzacq (2005, 2011), Stritzel, (2007, 2012) and Salter (2008, 2012) most prominently have advanced the sociological approach. While they offer different definitions of securitization, they share the idea to account for the social and political context for understanding securitization and the effects of securitizing moves on the audience. Balzacq (2005, p. 172) defines securitization as “…a strategic (pragmatic) practice that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction”. Similarly, Stritzel (2007, p. 368) defines securitization as “…a dynamic three-layered triangle of text, context and positional power”. Stritzel (2012) accounts for the external context by arguing that a securitizing move needs to fit into the social context, wherefore securitizing actors draws on “…emotional appeals, historical analogies and/or various forms of symbolic, often culturally highly specific language” for succeeding with the ‘speech act’ (Stritzel, 2012, pp. 553-554). Salter (2008, p. 321) argues that “the process of securitization is not a moment of binary decision but rather an iterative, political process between speaker and audience”. Drawing on sociologist Goffman’s concept of settings, Salter (2008) has divided the audience into four different ‘settings’ to demonstrate the existence of multiple audiences, in which each audience’s setting must be analyzed to understand how they accept securitization, given the unique norms and rules that constitutes each setting. Hence, it is not only a grammar of security that needs to be studied from these scholars’ view.

In line with these scholars, I argue that the sociological approach offers a more fruitful understanding of securitization rather than the explicit focus on the illocutionary speech act, and not the least in the COVID-19 context. This approach seems to be a useful point of departure for understanding the audience’s ingrained role in the securitization of COVID-19, since it analytically accounts for not only the securitizing actor but also the audience. Positioning the audience in a specific historic, cultural and socio-political context might thus bring explanatory value to the
responses by the audience in securitization. Further, empirical evidence suggests that this approach is useful for understanding securitization. As Côté (2016) concluded in his assessment of 32 empirical studies with an audience-centered approach to securitization, the audience plays an active role in securitization. The review also included studies that have shown that the audience has affected the success of securitization (Côté, 2016). The next section will present empirical contributions regarding audience acceptance within this line of scholarship.

2.3 Understanding ‘Audience Acceptance’

Scholars that account for the audience’s role in securitization have sought to advance how audience acceptance can be analyzed. One advancement of the theory is the nuancing of the binary view of the concept by the CS; that the audience simply ‘accepts or rejects’ a securitizing move. Salter (2011) has argued for the need to understand how securitization is rejected or resisted to understand successful securitization. Drawing on Goffman and disaggregating the audience into 4 ‘settings’; the popular, scientific, technocratic, and the elite, his study showed how securitization moves could be accepted in one setting and rejected in another. Further, by nuancing audience acceptance into 4 steps: threat perception, emergency measures, policy solutions, and the result with a change of a new policy, his study also showed how the degree of acceptance varies. Since the popular setting in the USA after 9/11 accepted the threat of terrorism as existential but rejected counter-terrorism policies due to the values of privacy and freedom of speech, Salter argues that “securitization theory needs a sociological approach to understanding how audiences understand security as one value in a set of other values and how settings structure the way that securitizing moves are made” (Salter 2011, p. 130). The point of nuancing audience acceptance has also been made in the securitization of public health issues. Rushton and Innes argue in their study of securitizing HIV/AIDS that securitization theory fails to grasp audience acceptance in this complex case. They assert that “securitization can best be understood as a continuum rather than a binary condition, and that different members of an audience may place an issue at varying points along this spectrum” (Rushton and Innes, 2012, p. 1). Since securitization theory holds that audience acceptance defines successful securitization, the nuanced view of the concept problematizes this definition. Roe’s (2008) study of the UK’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003 also found that an audience may accept the existential nature of the threat but not the emergency measures since the public accepted Saddam Hussein’s WMD as an existential threat but disagreed with the invasion. According to Salter (2011) and Roe (2008), the audience needs to accept both the threat and the emergency measures for securitization to be successful.

Bright (2012) also asserts that the definition of successful securitization by the CS is problematic
since “… accepting a definition of existential threat and the proposed ‘possible way out’ appear to be one and the same action” (Bright 2012, p. 866). His study, that also found that the audience may accept the threat as existential but not the emergency measures, questions how successful securitization should be defined. While Bright’s study focuses on the aspect of emergency measures (which he calls “the breaking of rules”) and how they are chosen and become implemented, his study includes an interesting insight on the different roles of the securitizing actor and audience in securitization: that the structure of the rule determines the role of securitizing actor and audience. Bright has identified that rules can be of two kinds: rules as restraints and rules as behaviors. In the former, it is the securitizing actor who performs security by legitimizing rules they will break themselves. In the latter case, by contrast, it is the audience who performs security. Hence, the securitizing actor seeks to break established rules of the audience’s behavior. By using security to exhort behavior by convincing the audience to act, the securitizing actor becomes dependent on both audience consent and that the audience behaves as desired by the securitizing actor, which requires individual and collective sacrifices by the audience (Bright, 2012). Unfortunately, Bright’s study does not include a case in which the audience is the performing actor of security. This situation thus seemed to be unexplored. However, this role of the audience in exhorting security is exactly what makes the COVID-19 securitization process interesting and different from other securitization processes. The argument that the structure of the rule determines the role of the audience further shows how Floyd’s model becomes insufficient for understanding securitization by excluding the audience and emergency measures.

2.4 The audience as the general public

Since securitization theory does not specify who the audience is, the audience has been analyzed in different ways. For instance, Rychnovska (2014) has analyzed members of the Security Council as the audience, and Salter (2008) analyzed multiple audiences simultaneously in one study. However, an explicit focus on the general public as the audience does not seem to have been of much scholarly interest. As pointed out by both the CS, Floyd (2016), and second-generation securitization scholars (e.g. Roe 2008, Balzacq 2011), the public is not always the most important audience in securitization. Wæver argues that the audience’s role “varies according to the political system and the nature of the issue” (Wæver, 2003, p. 12, in Roe 2008, p. 620). It seems that the latter factor is the reason for this existing gap in the literature. The public’s role is usually not as powerful in securitization as in the COVID-19 case where it has a participatory role. This has not occurred in the last 100 years. The nature of this issue thus require the public’s participation in securitizing the issue. This means that while previous scholars have provided knowledge of how the audience(s) matters in other securitization processes, there is a lack of scholarly work of the audience’s role in a securitization
process comparable to the COVID-19 case. This case is thus special both in terms of the nature of the threat and the emergency measures.

Given this gap in existing scholarship of the public as having a powerful role in securitization, the theorizing of the public’s role has therefore led to conclusions that may not apply to the COVID 19 context. For instance, Roe’s (2008) study, which conceptualized the audience as the general public, argues that securitization can be seen as a two-stage process. He asserts that the securitizing actor seeks moral support by the public in the first “stage of identification” of the threat, and formal support in the second “stage of mobilization” to securitize the threat. His study showed that the general public did not matter as much as the Parliament when it came to ‘doing’ security and invade Iraq. Therefore, the general public’s support plays a role in achieving legitimacy in the first stage, but in the second of doing security, formal support is what ultimately matters. Hence, the success or failure rests on the second stage, since audience consent is not required for ‘doing’ security, although their legitimacy is desired (Roe, 2008). While his conclusion on the public’s role may apply to the securitization of terrorism, the argument that the audience only matters in terms of moral support does not seem to apply to a case like COVID-19 or other security issues in which the securitizing actor-general public relationship is integrated regarding the emergency measures required. I argue that if scholars are to draw any conclusions about the role and function of the audience in securitization, they should apply to all kinds of security issues. It seems to make a difference for the negotiation between audience and securitizing actor to what type of security threat we are dealing with and what kind of legitimacy is required. Since COVID-19 requires a different role of the audience than in the securitization of terrorism, its function in the process as restricted to moral support thus seems ill-suited for understanding the securitization of COVID 19.

In sum, the existing scholarship by securitization scholars is thin regarding how we can understand the public’s role in securitizing COVID-19. There also seems to be a lack of scholarly understanding of public perceptions of security in general. As Stevens and Vaughan-Williams (2016) point out, the fields of IR and Security Studies have tended to concentrate on threat constructions, wherefore there is little knowledge on public perceptions on security threats. Further, they have noted that countries such as the UK and the US recently have expressed the importance of the citizen’s role for national security as a response to the changing character of security threats (including pandemics). Their study of citizens’ perceptions of security threats in the UK measured whether elite framings resonated with public perceptions since “the extent to which members of the public share this framing is largely unknown” (Ibid, p. 16). The authors argue that the strategy of having the citizen ingrained into a national security strategy becomes problematic without knowing how security threats are understood by the public. The study’s result, that elite perceptions did not
resonate with the public’s security perceptions, is thus an important finding. The same question of resonance between securitizing actor and the public is of relevance in the COVID-19 context, not only for the sake of developing securitization theory, but also relevant for policymakers who seeks to securitize issues with the help from the public.

2.5 Summary

The second generation has generated theoretical advancements of securitization theory by treating securitization as an intersubjective process between securitizing actor and audience, and to account for the external context. Empirical evidence further suggests that there is relevance for nuancing audience acceptance to understand successful securitization. This study embraces this ‘sociological approach’ to securitization since it accounts for the effects of securitizing moves by the securitizing actor on the audience. This offers a suitable theoretical point of departure for studying the public’s ingrained role in the COVID-19 context.

Despite these theoretical advancements, there is a lack of deeper understanding of the audience’s special role as participants in securitizing COVID-19. This gap seems to be grounded in the nature of the security issues that so far have been analyzed by scholars in this field. Since a lethal virus against which there is no remedy spreading across the globe has not appeared in the last 100 years, the public has not taken on such an ingrained role in a securitization process before. With the purpose of contributing to the theory, I argue that the COVID-19 case challenges not only the CS, but also Floyd’s and Roe’s arguments on the role of the audience in securitization. The audience needs to be further explored, also in a situation like COVID-19, before general conclusions of its role can be drawn.

Departing from the sociological approach, in order to embrace Bright’s underexplored idea of the audience as performing security, i.e. that the emergency measures set by the securitizing actor are to be practiced by the audience, will be explored in this study. In doing so, this study conceptualizes securitization as an intersubjective process between securitizing actor and audience in line with the second generation. Further, it embraces the idea that audience acceptance should be nuanced for understanding this intersubjective process. Since previous studies has shown that the audience may accept the threat but not the emergency measures, analyzing audience acceptance seems to be of relevance for understanding securitization. In accounting for the audience’s ingrained role in the process, Salter’s insight on how value judgments matter for understanding how the audience values security in relation to other values seems useful. With the aim of contributing to this line of scholarship, I build on these insights in constructing this study. The next section will further explain
3. Research Design & Methodology

As explained by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, a researcher’s methodological choices should be consistent with one’s philosophical presuppositions about the social world. The ontological and epistemological presuppositions underpinning this thesis falls under the interpretivist research paradigm where “...meaning-making is key to the scientific endeavor: its very purpose is to understand how specific human beings in particular times and locales make sense of their worlds...” (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, p. 10). Interpretivist methodology thus strives for understanding meaning-making (Ibid, pp. 40-41) which corresponds to the purpose of this study; to understand meaning-making in the securitization of COVID-19. Epistemologically, I assume in line with interpretivism that these understandings are diverse and contextual. To understand meaning making in this context, this study was designed with a mixed methods approach. This chapter will further explain the research design and the methods chosen in order to approach the research questions.

3.1 Designing the study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway as a negotiation of meaning between the securitizing actor and audience. To fulfill this objective, three analyses were made to answer each of the three research questions respectively. Firstly, I conducted a framing analysis of speeches by the Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, who constituted the principal securitizing actor in this thesis. Thereafter, I analyzed the perception by the Norwegian public based on survey data. The survey was constructed to grasp their perceptions and making it comparable to PM Solberg’s framings. Lastly, the resonance and dissonance of these two frames were analyzed. Since the purpose was to challenge theory, the study was designed with the use of mixed methods to make a comparative analysis of the securitizing actor and the audience possible. Since scholars have increasingly found the usefulness of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods into one single study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2019, p. 312), such a mixed methods design was employed. The quantitative element in the survey thus made it possible to steer the survey questions. This made a comparative analysis possible, which the research questions required.

Since the theory assumes a securitizing actor-audience relationship in securitization processes, a securitizing actor had to be chosen. In this thesis, PM Solberg was considered the primary securitizing actor. While there have been competing views on COVID-19-related measures in
Norway, for instance between the government and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH), the government led by PM Solberg has been the primary decision-maker despite these disagreements. As the Director of Infectious Disease Prevention and Control at the NIPH, Frode Forland, explains; In Norway, crisis management is steered by the government. COVID-19-related measures have thus been political decisions (Aftenbladet, 2020). According to Forland, the decision to close schools, child care centers and universities was a governmental decision unsupported by the NIPH (Jones, 2020). The same goes for the quarantine and isolation rules. Established rules regarding the protection of public health in case of the outbreak of contagious diseases are outlined in Smitteverneloven, the prevention and control Act of communicable diseases. The Norwegian Government, authorized to make changes in Smitteverneloven, used this mandate to implement new regulations of quarantine rules and isolation in conjunction with the outbreak (Bahus, 2020). Given the authority as a prime minister, and the powerful role the Norwegian Government has had in deciding on Norway’s policy direction, PM Solberg was considered the primary securitizing actor. She has played a powerful role in securitizing COVID-19 and has communicated the Norwegian strategy to the public in speeches and press conferences.

3.1.1 Case selection

With the purpose to challenge theory, the study was designed as a single case descriptive study of the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway. Yin and Davis define case study research as an empirical method that constitutes the in-depth investigation of a contemporary real-world phenomenon (case) where contextual conditions are assumed to be important for understanding the case (Yin and Davis, 2007 in Yin 2018, p. 45-46). Accordingly, the design of a case study was chosen in relation to the purpose to contribute to the audience acceptance concept through an in-depth analysis of the COVID-19 case. As George and Bennett explain, the strength of case studies is the potential to “… achieve high levels of conceptual validity” in refining concepts and contribute to theory development though the in-depth analysis of one particular context (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 20). For this reason, the case study approach was deemed suitable for in depth analysis of audience acceptance, since I assume that contextual factors matter for understanding securitization, and that it analytically requires a nuanced conceptualization.

The case of Norway was chosen in relation to the purpose of theory-building. As Rolland and Herstad (2020, p 2) explain: “critical cases where contradictory and paradoxical issues can be illuminated could contribute to existing theory or illustrate the inadequacy of theories and methods”. Aiming to illustrate the inadequacy of the ‘audience acceptance’ concept, Norway was selected for two reasons. Firstly, since Norway was the first country to release a comprehensive report on adherence to rules during the pandemic, which in addition reported on low adherence,
this indicates that this case would be of benefit for illustrating the inadequacy of ‘audience acceptance’. Further, as Flyvbjerg suggests when selecting critical cases; “…it is a good idea to look for either ‘most likely’ or ‘least likely’ cases, that is, cases which are likely to either clearly confirm or irrefutably falsify propositions and hypotheses” (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 14). Since popular trust in government and other political authorities often is considered an important factor when exploring public opinion on COVID-19 and measures (e.g. Helsingen et al., 2020) it is even more telling that the Norwegian population, characterized by a high trust in government and political authorities, has reported low adherence to rules. Further, the lockdown was met with strong support by the population according to polls. This indicates that Norway constitutes a critical and ‘least likely’ case with the potential to illuminate interesting insights of relevance for the theoretical concept.

Five measures as a response to COVID-19 in Norway was used in the analysis. These were: the measures implemented on March 12 regarding the closing of educational institutions and the closing of parts of the private sector, such as cultural events and restaurants (Helsedirektoratet, 2020a), the cabin ban that prohibited citizens from visiting their cottages, implemented on March 19 (Regjeringen.no, 2020) and the two quarantine rules inreisekarantene and smittekarantene. The former regards quarantine requirements for 10 days when entering Norway and the latter regards quarantine for 10 days for those who have been in close contact with confirmed/ suspected COVID-19 cases (Helsedirektoratet, 2020b).

3.2 Material

The material for the analyses consisted of speeches and a survey. In collecting the material, the starting point of the securitization process in Norway was set to March 12, when the lockdown was announced. Even though extraordinary measures had been implemented earlier, such as the closing of the Norwegian border, the lockdown on March 12 included emergency measures that affected the population to a greater extent. March 12 was also the day when Norway had confirmed community spread and its first confirmed death due to COVID-19. Hence, even though this process could be claimed to have started earlier, I found it reasonable to select a point in time where Norway had confirmed community spread. Furthermore, the content of the speeches needed to be of relevance for analyzing audience acceptance.

3.2.1 Speeches

Three speeches from March, 2020 have been used to analyze PM Solberg’s framing of COVID 19. These were considered key speeches from the securitizing period. In order to grasp how the threat
of COVID-19 was first framed, they encompass the period when the securitization process evolved. All three speeches were given as the crisis broke. The March 12 and March 24 speeches were selected because the former contains the announcement of lockdown measures and the latter the continuation of these measures. The March 18 speech is a broadcasted speech about the coronavirus pandemic where PM Solberg addresses the nation. Further, the content of the three speeches regard COVID-19, emergency measures, and the collective effort required for dealing with the threat.

The speeches were found on the Norwegian government’s website www.regjeringen.no. In their online archive I selected the filters; speeches by the governmental department, the theme “coronavirus situation”, and the time period 2020, where I selected from speeches from March. Other speeches found but excluded from the analysis were speeches that only focused on aspects such as economic measures. Instead, a few speeches that outlined new measures and that addressed the whole population were selected and considered key speeches during the securitization period in March.

3.2.2 Survey

A Survey was constructed to analyze the Norwegian public’s perceptions of the securitization of COVID-19. The framing of threat, measures, and the audience’s role in the securitization process was then set against the frames deducted from the survey data. This was done to be able to investigate whether these perceptions matched the framing of COVID-19 by PM Solberg. To make a comparison possible and answer the third research question of frame resonance, I sought to ask the same questions in the survey as to the securitizing actor.

The survey was constructed with the online tool Typeform which makes it possible to send a questionnaire online. The survey included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Including open-ended questions where the respondents could express themselves in their own words was necessary for making a framing analysis of the responses possible. Only two open questions were included to avoid the risk that the survey would have been too demanding and decreased participation. The remaining 18 questions were closed-ended questions to make a comparative framing analysis possible, so that the questions could be steered and comparable to PM Solberg’s framings. This resulted in a survey with a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions where I sought to use the open-ended questions where it would be of most benefit for my analysis. Questions such as attitudes towards certain measures used quantitative rating options.

The survey consisted of 20 questions. 4 demographic questions regarding age, gender, nationality
and geographical location were included to control demographic variation during the data collection process. The remaining 16 questions consisted of questions about the threat perception, emergency measures, and of the expectations on the populace’s role. Regarding threat perception, I asked the respondents to rate their worry about their personal health and for the risks for state capacity, and how their threat perception balanced with the one by the government. Regarding emergency measures, I asked them to rate their support for the decision of lockdown, and about their respective support towards each of the 5 different lockdown measures that were introduced on March 12 and prolonged on March 24. Regarding the role of the public in this process, they were also asked to rate their value judgment between security and other values; the balance between the threat and measures, measures and personal freedom, measures and economic consequences, and the requirements on them as citizens during the pandemic. Two open questions regarding what they would have changed about the handling and why they think others do not follow the rules and recommendations were asked in order to be able to analyze their perceptions more closely.

Following ethical research practice, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and were only asked personal questions of relevance for the study. The respondents were assured anonymity and were informed that the survey program does not make it possible to trace the answers back to the respondent. Participation was voluntary and withdraw was possible at any time.

The sample consists of 189 respondents. A request for participation in the survey was sent to 4 universities in Norway that are located in different parts of the country. The Arctic University of Norway, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and Nord University declined participation. Only the Norwegian School of Economics in Bergen accepted the request. To maintain variation in location among the respondents, the survey was shared on Facebook and was distributed to all parts of Norway. However, the sample is not perfectly population-representative. The Northern part of the country and men are under-representative to the whole population. A few respondents are foreigners living in Norway (6 Swedes, 1 Canadian, 2 Danish, and 1 of Italian nationality). The survey was sent out on November 19, 2020 and the last response came in on December 7, 2020.

3.3 Framing Analysis

The speeches and the survey material were analyzed by employing framing analysis. Framing analysis has become a popular method for analyzing how the media presents information and allows for both qualitative and quantitative methodology (Linström and Marais, 2012). Framing is defined by Entman (1993, p. 52) as “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them
more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation”. Framing analysis as a method thus regards the analysis of “the power of a communicating text” (Ibid, p. 51) which can be in the form of a speech or other means of communication. Frames within texts can analytically be found by looking for selection and salience. Selection refers to the aspects from reality that have been subjectively selected by the communicator in the text. Salience, defined as “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences” (Ibid, p. 53), can be increased through the repetition of information or associations to cultural symbols familiar to the receiver (Ibid).

Framing analysis as a method was selected because it is suitable for analyzing a securitization process from the sociological approach. Watson (2013) argues that securitization scholars who approach the under-theorized concept of the audience would benefit from drawing on framing research which often engages with the effects of a speech on the audience. Further, Watson specifically mentions the concept of audience acceptance as an aspect that would benefit from better integration since framing analysts, unlike scholars of securitization, have developed methodological tools for studying the general public (Ibid, 2013). In line with Watson, I share the argument about the potential of integrating the frameworks for studying securitization. Given the lack of a suitable method among securitization scholars for analyzing the public’s perspective, framing analysis was considered useful for approaching the research questions in this thesis.

I employed qualitative methodology for the framing analyses of PM Solberg’s speeches, which aims to “…understand the character of experience, particularly how people perceive and make sense of their communication experience. This involves interpreting meanings…” (Wood 2004: 69, cited in Linström and Marais, 2012, p. 26). Qualitative framing analysis constitutes a holistic engagement with a text to discover themes, keywords, and metaphors to identify what is included and excluded in a frame. Compared to quantitative framing analysis that deals with numbers, the qualitative approach deeply engages with the text to understand sense-making (Linström and Marais, 2012). The survey, based on both qualitative and quantitative data, was analyzed with a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative framing analysis.

As Linström and Marais (2012) explain, the subjective character of qualitative framing analysis poses methodological challenges for the researcher regarding both data collection, analysis, and presentation of results. This generates problems for validity and reliability. Framing analysis thus requires knowing how to identify a frame and what to look for. To decrease such bias, I borrowed technique Alozie’s technique (2005: 66, in Linström and Marais 2012, p. 31) regarding how to
identify frames. This technique includes: 1) reading material and taking descriptive notes, 2) re-read the material and identify themes, frames, values and topic categories, and 3) in-depth interpretation of the material (Ibid). Regarding what to look for, I will look at thematic and rhetorical structures, keywords, and metaphors that contribute to a frame (Linström and Marais, 2012, p. 32). Since my study includes a comparative analysis, I take seriously Kuypers (2009) insight of not mixing a theme with a frame. While a theme is the subject of discussion, the frame is the interpretation of that theme. In a comparative analysis, it is thus important to be aware that finding the same theme to occur in both analyses does not mean that the frame is the same or contains the same meaning. It might have been framed differently by the receiver.

3.4. Limitations and Delimitations

Some delimitations had to be made regarding the research design in this thesis, which might have affected the results and conclusions. First of all, the study delimited the analysis to the prime minister and the public in this process and thus excluded other actors. For example, the NIPH has been involved in the handling of the pandemic in Norway. Despite the finding by second generation securitization scholars that securitization often occurs through multiple securitizing moves and by multiple securitizing actors, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the securitizing moves by all possible actors; such as the Parliament, public health authorities, the media, or even within the government. Therefore, this thesis has not accounted for the entire securitization process in Norway, given the exclusion of the role of other actors who might have been influential in this securitization process.

Secondly, I chose to analyze the public’s view based on survey data. Given that the survey mostly included quantitative questions, which was considered necessary to avoid the risk of withdrawal from participation and to make a comparative analysis possible, the ability to acquire a deep understanding of meaning-making from the audience’s perspective was limited. It is therefore likely that greater inclusion of qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, would have revealed more detailed accounts of the public’s perception. However, after considering the trade off between a larger survey sample and a smaller sample of interviews/focus group material, I considered survey research as the most suitable option, given that it would generate a broader sample size and provide stronger empirical evidence to make a theoretical contribution. However, the analysis of the responses may include bias since the answers were shortly expressed by the respondents.

The third limitation regards the generalizability of the study. I was unable to conduct a large-scale
survey, which would have provided a better representation of the Norwegian population. Given the small sample size in this study, the results cannot be considered generalizable. However, this was not the intention of this thesis, designed as a case study with the purpose to challenge a theoretical concept.

The fourth delimitation regarding the time aspect is important to mention. The intention to study the initial phase of the securitization process in March has some implications. Most importantly, the respondents were asked about the perceptions they held in March regarding the disease and its related policies. Since their perceptions may have changed over time, their retrospective responses might not fully match their actual perceptions in March. This might have affected the results. For instance, this might be the reason why the support for the lockdown was higher in polls from March than in my study. While it was un-intended to include such changes in perception, it is also an aspect I consider inevitable, given that the crisis is still ongoing. However, I do not consider this risk to affect my argument regarding my theoretical contribution, that audience acceptance should be nuanced in a securitization process.

This study also has potential limitations that should be mentioned. Within the confines of the case study, I intended to include as great a variation as possible of Norwegian respondents. For this reason, the demographic questions of location, age, nationality, and sex were included in the survey to control demographic variation. However, when the survey was shared on Facebook, which was an effective way of increasing the number of respondents, it was beyond my control to obtain a sample that perfectly corresponds to the Norwegian population. While the respondents are moderately representative with regards to location and age, women (57.1%) are slightly over representative to men (42.9%), which might have influenced the results.

Another limitation is the risk of researcher’s bias. As the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges, the pursuit of analyzing others’ social realities, with the assumption that everyone’s perception is subjective, also problematizes the researcher’s ability to provide valid analyses without biased results (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). While the quantitative element in the survey was considered helpful in decreasing bias, for instance in terms of not overestimating unusual perceptions, the risk for researcher’s bias cannot be dismissed.

### 3.5 Analytical Framework

Rychnovska’s (2014) analytical framework, which builds on Watson’s (2013) insight of the benefit of integrating framing analysis into securitization analysis, was used in this thesis. The framework
was considered appropriate for approaching the research questions since it builds on the second generation’s sociological approach to securitization, nuances ‘audience acceptance’, and makes it possible to account for the audience’s ingrained role in securitization. However, the framework has been adjusted in this thesis to make it more suitable for analyzing the COVID-19 case. The framework was constructed for studying securitization characterized by a ‘very powerful audience’ in a ‘highly discursive setting’, and might therefore require re-operationalization for analyzing “more complex social environments” (Rychnovska, 2014, p. 19). While its adoption for analyzing a powerful audience is suitable, the highly discursive setting does not suit the COVID-19 context. The second step of frame resonance has therefore been adjusted.

Rychnovska’s (2014) framework consists of two levels of analysis. The first step, as illustrated in the model above, regards the analysis of how a threat framing is negotiated between the securitizing actor and audience in a securitization process; from the securitizing move to successful securitization. This step “highlights struggles over the interpretation” (Ibid, p. 16) by nuancing the threat interpretation into three aspects; the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. In this way, it nuances audience acceptance. As Rychnovska asserts, since “diagnostic, prognostic and motivational threat frames stimulate different social actions and thus have different roles in the process of securitization, it is suggested to distinguish between these framings and trace the construction and contextualization of each frame separately” (Rychnovska, 2014, p. 18). The framework thus makes it possible to analyze potential tensions between the securitizing actor and the audience’s perspective in regards to these different aspects of the threat framing. The second step of the framework is a frame resonance analysis which “approaches the broader social context” (Ibid, p. 18) by analyzing the compatibility between the threat frames and already established master frames and prior security frames (Ibid, p. 18). The frame resonance part thus analyzes how the threat framing relates to prior discourse and securitization processes.
The model above was used to approach research questions 1 & 2 regarding how the securitization of COVID-19 was framed by the securitizing actor and audience. In doing so, it analyzed the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames from both perspectives separately. The second step of frame resonance has been adjusted. Rather than deeply exploring resonance with the help of historical documents, which was suitable for a highly discursive setting, the frame resonance part will instead be constituted by a comparison of the securitizing actor and the audience’s frames to approach the third research question of what potential tensions hindered resonance. In this way, I will account for the external context in the first step of framing analysis and then compare the two in a frame resonance analysis. In this way, a contextualist approach to the analysis will still be maintained.

**Step 1: Threat framing analysis**

The diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames in Rychnovska’s framework builds on Benford and Snow’s (2000) idea of how collective action frames are constructed, that is when:

> Movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change”

(Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615).

With this definition, the authors have identified three different frames: 1) diagnostic, which defines the problem and who is responsible for that problematic situation, 2) prognostic, which depicts a solution to the problem, and 3) motivational frame, which calls for an action to change the problematic situation. The disaggregation of successful securitization into these three frames thus makes it possible to nuance audience acceptance. These frames will be translated as follows for analyzing the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway:

**Diagnostic frame:**

The diagnostic frame regards the problematic condition in need for change where attributions regarding who/what is to blame is articulated (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 615). The diagnostic frame in my analysis will look at how the problematic situation with COVID-19 is portrayed and exactly what the problematic situation means for both the securitizing actor and the audience. What is said about the disease will thus matter for the framing of the issue. What precisely, and for whom, is COVID-19 an existential threat? How is the problematic condition framed by the securitizing actor how does the audience perceive this view?
Prognostic frame:

The prognostic frame involves “the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem…the strategies for carrying out the plan/… what is to be done…” as “…the identification of specific problems and causes tends to constrain the range of possible “reasonable” solutions and strategies advocated” (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 616). The analysis of the prognostic frame will then regard the articulation of the Norwegian strategy for handling COVID-19 and how the plan and emergency measures is framed by the securitizing actor and perceived by the audience. It will then pay attention to all the five different measures implemented in March from the audience’s perspective and ask about their view of the appropriate plan to detect similarities and differences between securitizing actor and audience.

Motivational frame:

The motivational frame provides “a call for arms/…/a rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive…” (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 617). How the adherent “urge others to act in concert to affect change” will in my analysis regard the action the securitizing actor seeks to exhort on the public and how the public makes sense of this urge. This is in line with Bright’s idea of “rules as behavior”, where securitization is performed by the audience. How does the securitizing actor frame how the audience is supposed to act? How is this collective action motivated? This will be analyzed and compared with the perception by the public regarding their role in securitizing the threat. In this frame, I also draw on Salter’s insight on the importance of understanding how the audience perceives security as a value set against other values. In this case, I will treat the values of personal freedom and economic values set against the value of security as especially important in this context, given that the emergency measures intrude on these aspects. How does the audience value security against the other values? How does the audience perceive their own role in this process as framed by PM Solberg?

Step 2: Frame resonance

As mentioned above, I have adjusted this second part of the analysis. Rather than deeply explore how it relates to established discourses and prior security framings, I will approach my third research question of frame resonance based on its original definition in a way that better suits my topic. Frame resonance as a concept “… seeks to explain why some frames are more effective than
others by looking at how a frame appeals to the existing beliefs and values of the audience (Snow–Benford, 1988 in Rychnovska 2014, p. 16). The frame resonance part of my analysis will compare the frame analysis by PM Solberg with the perceptions of the audience. The findings from the first step will therefore be contrasted with each other in order to answer how the securitization of COVID-19 was negotiated between securitizing actor and audience. Since the method of framing analysis includes the analysis of how cultural symbols are used in frames, I will include the aspect of how socio-political and cultural factors contribute to frame resonance without deeply exploring prior discourses with the help of secondary data as in Rychnovska’s framework.
4. Analysis

This chapter, which analyses the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings of COVID-19, is firstly made from PM’s Solberg’s perspective and thereafter from the Norwegian public’s perspective. These two analyses are compared in the third analysis of frame resonance, which presents how the securitization of COVID-19 was negotiated between securitizing actor and audience in Norway.

4.1 Framing Analysis: The Securitizing Actor

4.1.1 The diagnostic frame: Defining the situation

The diagnostic framing depicts the COVID-19 situation as a collective problem for everyone in Norway. The repetition of how infectious this virus is and how fast it spreads thus frames the problem as of equal concern for all citizens by emphasizing how many, rather than who, it infects. The situation is also framed as fear in collective terms: “the coronavirus is spreading fast. This causes fear and worry for both children and adults. I understand that fear” (Solberg, 12 March) and “I know that many of us are worried. Some are tired. Some are already sick. And the only thing we know is that it will get worse before it gets better” (Solberg, March 18). The situation is thus framed as creating fear and worry for the whole population although it was known that the elderly and those with underlying diseases are more vulnerable to the disease. The higher risk the virus poses for these groups is only mentioned once: “it is not dangerous for most of the children, young and healthy. But it is dangerous if too many become sick at the same time. Then the healthcare system will no longer manage to help everybody” (Solberg, March 18). The risk that COVID-19 poses for the healthcare system is framed as the main concern. It is also framed as a collective concern by highlighting how the consequences of this risk affect everyone:

“The scenarios show that more people will die from corona in Norway. Many will experience that planned surgery will be cancelled due to capacity challenges in the healthcare services” (Solberg, March 12)

“If the virus spreads so fast that the capacity of the healthcare system collapses, it will have many serious consequences. Then we will not be able to save even many young people who are infected and who we can save today” (Solberg, 24 March).

Depicting the consequences associated with a collapsed healthcare system to also risk the lives of the young and healthy thus frames the situation as a collective problem; that not only the elderly
are put at risk. Framing these consequences as facts; that it will get worse, that more people will die, that planned surgery will be canceled, and that the healthcare services will face capacity challenges, highlights the situation as serious. Although only one death due to COVID-19 had been confirmed as of March 12, the future scenario framed as a situation with a suffering healthcare system and deaths thus depicts the situation as urgent and dangerous. The urgent COVID-19 situation, referred to as a ‘crisis’ and a ‘challenge’ in the speeches, is framed as novel and abnormal by placing the situation in a historical perspective:

“No one in my generation has experienced that the country is facing as severe challenges as we are now facing. But Norway has managed through difficult times before” (Solberg, March 18).

“It is so that on March 12 the government implemented the most drastic measures we have ever experienced in Norway in peacetime. We did so in order to stop the virus” (Solberg, 24 March).

The situation is thus clearly framed as a security issue by depicting the situation as a challenge like never before. Highlighting how the measures required as being comparable only to situations of non-peace times frames the situation as deviating from the normal. By pointing to the context and that people are dying further frames the situation as an urgent crisis:

“As known, 12 people in Norway have died from the coronavirus. My thoughts are with the families and to the bereaved. We have many who are fighting for their lives at the hospitals. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the health professionals who are working day and night for it to end well” (Solberg, March 24).

The situation is thus framed as a security situation where people are fighting for their lives and where health personnel are working day and night. This is even more telling in the March 18 speech where the situation is framed as requiring the intrusion on Norwegian democratic principles:

“The Government has today asked the parliament for extended government powers to handle the situation. This is very unusual in our democratic country. But it says everything about the seriousness” (Solberg, March 18).

This quote regards the Government’s request for having extended powers without Parliament’s approval for six months due to the COVID-19 situation. This was considered as “making for an historic departure from Norway’s principles at balancing power” (Berglund, 2020) by the media and caused critique in the newspapers. Such a request is thus rare in Norway but yet framed as
necessary by PM Solberg in this COVID-19 crisis. The crisis is thus framed as a security situation that can only be managed by way of exceptional measures.

The diagnostic framing interconnects with the framing of the solution (prognostic framing) and the need for a collective effort (motivational framing) in the following way:

“We are in the middle of a difficult time for Norway and the world. Norway is facing a great challenge. Both as a society, but also as individuals. In this period we will all experience changes in our daily lives. The drastic measures we are now implementing, we do with the hope to stop the virus” (Solberg, March 12)

Depicting the crisis as an urgent security situation that requires extraordinary measures that will mean a changed way of living for everyone thus constitutes PM Solberg’s complete framing of the securitization of COVID-19.

4.1.2 The prognostic frame: Providing the solution

The solution is framed as a need for a strategy with ‘drastic’ and ‘strict’ measures to ‘knock down’, ‘fight’ and ‘suppress’ the virus. In this strategy, the citizen’s role in this is stressed:

“The government’s goal is still that the virus shall be suppressed over time. That is, that each person does not infect more than one person on average” (Solberg, 24 March)

“The goal is to take back everyday life” (Solberg, 24 March)

Framing the goal as ‘everyone must not infect more than one person’ thus depict each citizen as part of reaching the goal of stopping the virus, where all citizens play an equal part in getting ‘everyday life back’. Depicting the solution to require everyone’s equal contribution thus connects the prognostic and the motivational framings with each other; the solution is one collective effort. The prognostic framing is also framed as a Dugnad. Drawing on cultural and historical references thus works to integrate the prognostic and motivational framings of each citizen’s role in the Norwegian strategy:

“The virus is infectious when people gather and are in close contact. Therefore it is now completely vital that all the country’s citizens participate in a dugnad in order to slow the spread. This we shall do in solidarity with the elderly, chronic sick, and others who are especially vulnerable to develop severe disease. We must all protect ourselves so that we protect others” (Solberg, March 12)
“When terrorism and accidents have threatened us we have gotten through it together. When freedom has been threatened, Norwegians have given everything for each other. This has given our country an advantage more powerful than any weapon, and more valuable than any oil fund. Namely that we trust each other. It is this trust that will carry us through the crisis that we are now in. Without this trust between the people and the authorities, we could never have gotten all of Norway on the dugnad to fight the virus. In times of crises, we understand how dependent we are of each other. What unites us, is more important than what divides us” (Solberg, March 18)

The prognostic framing thus depicts the handling of the crisis as Dugnad. Dugnad is a Norwegian term meaning “to help, to support” which does not exist in the other Scandinavian languages and has a special meaning in the Norwegian culture. The word has been used since the 17th century and refers to voluntary, unpaid work done in a community (Nordbo, 2020). Until the 19th century, it was used for situations that required a collective effort, such as carrying heavy material in construction work (Nordbo, 2020). More recently, the word has also been used in crisis contexts. For example, former Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg, framed the global financial crisis as a time of Dugnad in Norway in 2009: “the good word dugnad is quite amazing in the Norwegian language. This ability to cooperate is valuable /…/ Between citizens and authorities. Between individuals and the collectivity /…/ This is the cornerstones in the Norwegian model…” (Stoltenberg, 2009). The Norwegian culture was thus framed as important for dealing with the financial crisis. In the same vein, the strategy for handling the COVID-19 crisis is framed as Dugnad in PM Solberg’s speeches. The prognostic framing stresses how everyone’s individual effort in the Dugnad ‘is completely vital’ which shows a close integration between the prognostic and motivational framings. The framing of the special relationship between the Norwegian people and the authorities in times of crisis further reminds the audience of how Norwegians behave in crisis situations. The inclusion of these historical and cultural references in the framing thus shows how PM Solberg expects the Norwegian people’s contribution in securitizing COVID-19.

The lockdown measures are framed as legitimate by drawing on the diagnostic framing. The need for lockdown is depicted as the right solution by referring to the crisis situation and make manifest the actions required: “we have already implemented several measures to prevent the spread of infection in line with professional advice. But these measures are no longer enough” (Solberg, March 12). Depicting Norway as being in a situation in which the lockdown is the only solution thus frames the decision as legitimate. It is also framed as correct by repeatedly referring to the support of other professionals whom the Government has taken advice from in the speeches. The measures are further framed as legitimate although it affects everyday life, the economy, and intrudes on personal freedom by referring to the security situation and the responsibility to protect the population:

“Today the government comes with the most severe and intrusive measures Norway has experienced in
peacetime. The measures will have a great impact on our personal freedom. These measures will directly affect our everyday lives and how our society functions. This is absolutely necessary” (Solberg, March 12)

“It makes an impression to read about the elderly who write that the consequences of the measures are excessive/…/ That the economic consequences of the measures have become too large. But if the virus spreads so fast that the capacity of the health services collapses, it will have many serious consequences. Then we will not be able to save even young lives, which we can save today. Neither will we be able to save those who have other diseases, or those affected by accidents. To me, this is a situation we must not end up in. Therefore, we cannot give up. The fight against the virus must go on” (Solberg, March 18)

“The political community in Norway endorses the approach of using drastic measures. The most important thing now is to safeguard life and health of the population” (Solberg, March 12)

“It has been important to act quickly. New rules will not always be perfect. Errors and inaccuracies may appear. That we must correct along the way” (Solberg, March 18)

The priority to safeguard life and health of the population thus legitimizes the intrusion on personal freedom and the economic consequences. Framing a quick response to the crisis as more important than making the rules ‘perfect’ and making manifest the risks against the healthcare system, the consequences are thus framed as necessary and inevitable. Drawing on the support by ‘the political community’, PM Solberg or the government are thus not depicted as solely responsible for the management of the crisis. Rather, it is framed as legitimate; a collective decision based on expertise. This is also especially clear in the March 24 speech where the extension of the lockdown measures as framed as right and legitimate:

“First of all, the calculations show that it was accurate to implement the measures. Before the strict measures were implemented, each corona-infected person probably infected one other person. If the spread had kept going in that direction, then very many would have become sick in a short time. Then the health services would have been overwhelmed, and everyone would not have gotten the treatment they need. Neither those who are sick with corona or those who are sick with other illnesses. Secondly, the calculations show that the measures, and our collective effort by following the advice to avoid infection, will be important also in the following weeks. It is namely completely vital how fast the infection spreads…” (Solberg, March 24).

The measures implemented on March 12 are thus depicted to have prevented a collapsed healthcare system. This frames the management of the crisis as correct and right and legitimizes the extension of them. This also frames the strategy as a choice between action or inaction with the lockdown as the correct choice. This clearly connects the diagnostic framing and the prognostic framings with each other; that this crisis situation inevitably required such measures – there was no other option.
4.1.3 The motivational frame: Calling for collective action

The motivational framing, centered around the need for the collective effort, is highly characterized as what “we” have to do in this situation, “we” referring to the Norwegian people: “everyone must think through what they can do to limit the spread” (Solberg, March 12) and “we must put life and health first. For each other” (Solberg, March 12). The need for everyone’s participation in one collective effort also centers around the notion that this is a temporary period which requires everyone’s sacrifices: “we must all for a period of time change the way we live our lives, so that those of us who tolerate the virus poorly will not lose theirs” (Solberg, March 18). Here, the audience is reminded that the elderly and the risk groups are exposed to a greater risk, and that everyone must show care for them. Framing the period as temporary works to motivate the audience: “we will get back to the normal, pleasant daily life. But until then, we all have a job to do. And we are going to do it together” (Solberg, March 18). The motivational framing thus places the collective effort in protecting others central, and as a task assigned to everyone:

“In this crisis the answer is very concrete. Listen to the advice about hygiene and follow the quarantine-rules. We must protect ourselves, to protect others… remember that the choices you make will have a great impact on many others. And remember that this is not the time for «me». This is the time for «us» (Solberg, 18 March)

“This is an unreal time. I know that it creates fear, it creates worry. But it also brings out the best of us: our ability to take care of each other. Our creativity. Our ability to make others happy. Let us hold onto that, also in the following days and weeks ahead of us” (Solberg, March 24)

PM Solberg draws on motivations both related to the goal and to the Norwegian history and culture to urge the people to contribute to this collective effort. Motivating the audience to be part of this securitization process’s goal, the frame is making manifest the need for everyone’s effort: “the better we are at washing our hands, holding distance, not infect others, the quicker we will get our everyday lives back” (Solberg, March 24) and “If we act strict now, we can let go later on” (Solberg, March 12). The motivational framing thus places central how the people must put everyday life on hold until the crisis is over, since such an effort will take everyday life back quicker. The audience is also motivated to behave as a united collectivity during the crisis by drawing on historic and cultural references. This is framed as a natural thing for Norwegians to do. The audience is reminded of how the Norwegian nationality matters in times of crisis by referring to their country’s history: “we have managed through difficult times before” (March 18) and “In Norway we stand united when push comes to shove” (March 12). Just as Dugnad was used to describe the crisis, the
also culturally-specific word *Folksjål* is taking on the motivational function: “regardless if the world changes, the Norwegian folksjål is the same” (Solberg, March 18). *Folksjål* can be translated into “national soul” and refers to the idea that a nation’s people share certain characteristics (NE, 2020). The Norwegian people are thus framed as a population with certain characteristics that are of benefit during times of crises. The framing of the *Dugnad* and the urge on the population with cultural references thus interconnects the motivational and the prognostic framing.

The motivational framing of the collective effort as *Dugnad* also places central groups and individuals who are doing ‘the right thing’ during the COVID-19 crisis; showing responsibility and care for others. For instance, PM Solberg mentions one child who asked: what can I do to help out? In a press conference to make manifest that also children wanted to help out in the spirit of the Dugnad. It “says much about Norway”, she commented. In framing the crisis as a time where Norwegians are expected to act as a collectivity, many examples of how people care for one another in this crisis are present in the speeches:

“*In the last days organizations, companies and communes have taken many initiatives to limit the spread. They have taken advice seriously, and made responsible choices. That is very good, and we must do more of that. Everyone must think through what they can do to limit the spread*” (Solberg, March 12)

“I think nurse Jannike Arnessen placed the right words on the amazing will of effort we are now witnessing. To VG, she wrote: «tell me where to meet up, and I will be there». It is difficult to come closer to a truer hero than this” (Solberg, March 18)

“Many have been good at making the most of the situation. Especially the teachers have set a good example. In the future we must do even more. The more we manage to keep the wheels going, the easier it will be for our society to bear this burden” (Solberg, 24 March)

Depicting the collective effort as *Dugnad*, where individuals are risking their lives to keep the country running, and the willingness to help others framed as heroic, thus frames the period as a time for caring for others and highlights how everyone’s help is necessary. The use of cultural and historical references was most prominent in the prognostic and motivational framings, and seems to construct a strong connection between the prognostic and the motivational framings in motivating the people to act in concert.

### 4.2 Framing Analysis: The Audience

This analysis is based on the survey data that sought to understand the diagnostic, prognostic, and
motivational framings from the public’s view. The open questions regarding; 1) what could have been changed about the measures and 2) why they think others do not follow the rules and recommendations added contextual understanding of the quantitative questions. This part is presented in the same way as the analysis of PM Solberg’s speeches; the audience’s perception of the securitization of COVID-19 with regards to the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framings. In doing so, the analysis presents popular perceptions of the problem and solutions, as well as peoples’ self-perceptions in regards to value judgements between security and other values.

4.2.1 The diagnostic frame: Defining the situation

The respondents were asked about their worry about the disease regarding their own personal health and regarding the functioning of society and in particular the health services. Regarding the worry about COVID-19 for their personal health and safety, most chose the lowest or second-lowest option on the worry scale and only 9 were ‘very worried’. The worry regarding the functioning of society and the health services was significantly higher. The majority chose the second-highest score of worry and 17% chose the highest option ‘very worried’. Only 4% responded that they were not worried at all. Hence, the majority were mainly concerned with the risk the virus poses against society as a whole rather than for themselves.

The respondents were also asked to compare their concern with the disease with the perception by the Government. 69% rated the Government’s view as equivalent, 19% as exaggerated, and 7% as too relaxed compared to their own view. Three respondents chose to answer the question with their own words and wrote that they considered the Government’s exaggerated perception to have been positive. These numbers indicate a similar threat perception between most of the respondents and the Government.
The 9 respondents who expressed the highest worry for their own health were between 35-65 years old. 6 of them also chose the highest score of worry for the functioning of society and the health services. These 6 respondents, the ‘most worried group’, showed the clearest consistency regarding support for the different lockdown measures. Many, but not everyone, rated the highest option on most of the measures. While this indicates strong resonance between the diagnostic (problem) and
prognostic framing (solution), it showed tensions with the motivational framing within the ‘most worried group’. Half of them thought that the handling had been in balance with regards to personal freedom and the requirement on them as citizens. However, the other half thought that the intrusion on their personal freedom had been excessive and/or that too much had been required from them as citizens. This suggests that there is a small tension between the diagnostic framing and the prognostic framing among those who rated high levels of worry for COVID-19, but to a greater extent a tension with the motivational framing, even for those who were the most worried.

The oldest age group (65+) did not stand out against the other age groups regarding either the problem, solution or the value judgments between security and other values, although they are more vulnerable towards the disease than other age groups. Their worry towards their own health and the state’s functioning ranged between 2 and 4 on the rating scale. Only one chose the highest rating on the worry scale regarding society’s functioning and the health services, and none towards their own personal health. The same pattern of value conflict that was seen in the ‘most worried group’ could also be seen within the oldest age group. The majority thought that the measures had been excessively intrusive against their personal freedom, that the economic consequences for society were non-proportional to the threat, or that the handling of the disease had required too much of them as citizens. Only a minority did not consider the handling to have conflicted with any of these other values.

The closer look at these two groups, i.e. those who “should be” most worried - the elderly, and those who were the most worried thus revealed a tension with the motivational framing within both of the groups since a value conflict between security and other values was present.

The majority of the respondents have in general been satisfied with Norway’s management of COVID-19. 34% rated the highest score ‘very satisfied’ and 57% ‘satisfied’ regarding the overall response to COVID-19. Only 7% were ‘dissatisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’. This indicates that most of them perceived the situation to require extraordinary measures to avoid the risks associated with the disease.

4.2.2. The prognostic frame: Providing the solution

There was strong support among the respondents regarding the lockdown decision. 80% considered the decision as necessary, 14% as partly necessary/partly an overreaction, and 3% as an overreaction. Only 2% thought that the lockdown was insufficient and that stricter measures were
needed. This strong support indicates that the majority perceived the issue to require extraordinary handling. However, more than 1 out of 10 people did not fully agree with this decision.

The survey disaggregated the question of support regarding each of the different measures. The respondents were asked to rate their support for the closing of educational institutions, travel quarantine (10 days of quarantine for residents and visitors entering Norway) infection quarantine (10 days of quarantine for close contacts of confirmed/suspected cases of COVID-19), the closing of arrangements, gyms, and events (henceforth ‘the private sector’), and the cabin ban. This showed significant variations in support.

In general, there was high support for these measures, and in particular for both of the quarantine rules. 75% fully supported the travel quarantine and 85% the infection quarantine for confirmed or probable COVID-19 cases. By contrast, there was lower support for the latter three measures. The highest score of support was only selected by 41% regarding the closing of schools, 44% about closing the private sector, and 28% regarding the cabin ban. The greatest difference in support was between the infection quarantine and the cabin ban. Spending time in cabins, which is deeply rooted in the Norwegian culture (around half of the population had access to a cabin in 2012 (Haraldsen, 2012), might be a reason for why this measure was the least supported, or that this measure made less sense for the people.
The tables above, that show the significant difference in highest and lowest support for the lockdown measures, illustrates how audience acceptance varied. Furthermore, those who rated the lowest score for the cabin ban did not show consistency of a low worry of the situation. Rather, they gave both high and low ratings regarding their worry towards their own health and the state’s functioning, and viewed the lockdown decision as both an overreaction, insufficient, and necessary. While some of them rated the lowest score also on all the other measures, some actually rated the highest score on all measures but the cabin ban. This indicates that there seems to be a tension between the diagnostic and prognostic framing to these respondents; that they agreed with the problem but not with the solution. However, it should be said that quite many also choose the option ‘neutral’ on this measure, unlike in the question of infection quarantine.

The same pattern, that a low support for a measure did not equal low worry for the virus, could also be seen by looking at the group who rated the highest level of worry for society’s functioning. While the support for the measures were generally high, the support for each measure yet varied. For example, someone could strongly support all the measures but not the cabin ban, or strongly support everything except for closing the private sector.

Among those who resisted the lockdown, value conflicts were clear. All of them partly agreed with at least one value conflict; regarding either the economic consequences, personal freedom, or the requirement of them as citizens. The most common response was ‘partially agree’ on all of them, and many agreed with all but one. This indicates tensions between the prognostic and motivational framings. Interestingly, while this group included people from all parts of the country and all age groups, a majority of the 6 respondents who were of Swedish nationality were included in this group. Perhaps this connects to the fact that Sweden chose the strategy of not implementing lockdown measures, and that the respondents have been influenced by the prognostic framing in
Sweden.

When the respondents were asked to express in their own words what they would have changed about the handling, the responses varied from stricter measures to less strict measures. 19 of the respondents responded “nothing” or that they trust the authorities’ judgments. Among those who advocated stricter measures, common responses were better enforcement of the rules by law or punishment or an earlier response from the beginning with a quicker implementation of measures. The most common response, by around 40 respondents, regarded the Norwegian border, where they linked the decision to open the border in the summer to the spread of infection. A closed border was thus considered an important measure in order to stop the spread by many – a connection between the diagnostic and prognostic framing.

Among those who wanted less strict measures, these perceptions also connected to the diagnostic framing to some extent, but even more so to the motivational framing where their weighting of other values was expressed. Comments connecting to the diagnostic framing, such as: “let people go to the cabins, spread the people so that they do not spread infection” showed how the opposition towards certain rules connected to a different framing of the problem; in this case, that the cabin ban caused spread. It also connected to the motivational framing. The value weighting between security and the economy, such as “remove the travel quarantine because it affects the border trade” could be seen to some extent, which indicates the framing of the problem to not require priority over the economy. More apparently, the tensions between the measures and the values of social/human needs and personal freedom were expressed:

“Having more exceptions about the travel quarantine rules. I am Swedish living in Meråker and I cannot go home which is very burdensome for me”

“Not closing the schools. It is important to stimulate kids”

“The elderly and those in the dying phase should have been taken care of in a better way. Women who are giving birth should have been allowed to have their partner’s company when giving birth, also before the active phase, and at the childbirth hotel. The health stations should have had better plans for taking care of the health of mothers and children. There should have been a greater focus on measures to help children in vulnerable situations and with difficult living conditions at their homes”

“Families and friends who are near death should be allowed to meet”

“The closing of training facilities and schools. Because there are stricter directions on training facilities and I don’t think that is the place where most people get infected. Schools are absolutely a place with risk of infection, but I think that this strongly impacts the mental health of many”
These responses are clear examples of how the public weights security against other values. The mentioning of the negative effects that the rules have had, not only for themselves but also for others, indicates that the measures have not been seen as legitimate in proportion to the problem to these respondents. This indicates a tension between the prognostic and motivational framing where the value of social needs outweighs the value of securitizing COVID-19, or at least in what way it is being securitized. Another theme within the group that advocated less strict rules were those who argued against a national approach with the same rules for everyone which clearly showed a diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing that deviates from the one by PM Solberg:

“More detailed closing instead of having a broad brush approach for everyone. For example, there are several sports activities that can be maintained without breaking the social distancing rules. It seems that they are working from the principle of justice rather than having as much as possible «normal». That means a lot for all age groups when the world has been turned upside down”.

“In regions where the infection rate is not that high, the measures should not be that strict. For example, it should be possible to go to work and drop the use of face masks in public transport (which is by the way unhygienic and was un-recommended in the beginning of the pandemic). It could become difficult for the authorities to tighten the measures at a later time point, if they have been too strict when the infection rate has been low”.

These two quotes criticize the whole strategy and present another version of the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings. The former does not find a ‘broad brush approach’ of treating everyone equally as justified but argues for a strategy that strives for having everything as normal as possible. This deviates from PM Solberg’s connection between the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing; that all citizens have the same duties and responsibilities for stopping the virus in this crisis. The latter quote also presents a different framing by also highlighting the problems with the framings as advocated by PM Solberg: that too strict measures when the infection rate has been low may be counter-productive from the audience’s view. It thus frames the connection between the diagnostic and motivational framing differently; if the problem is not local, the rules may negatively affect the public’s motivation for the collective effort. By claiming that that the same should not be applicable for everyone, it thus highlights a tension between the prognostic and motivational frame.

Another tension between the prognostic and motivational framings was seen. Some highlighted a practical problem with the measures; that the rules have been difficult to understand and, in turn, adhere to. Comments such as: “Being more clear on directions. A lot of misunderstandings” and “Having more steady directions. There have been new rules several times a week and it makes it
hard to keep up with”. This indicates that this tension does not regard the willingness to adhere, but rather the ability to do so.

4.2.3 The motivational frame: Calling for collective action

The respondents were asked to balance the value of securitizing COVID-19 against other values. Regarding the balance between the lockdown measures and the threat, slightly above half of the respondents fully agreed and 36% partly agreed. The responses were more split regarding the balance between the measures and the value of personal freedom. While the majority leaned towards the opinion that the measures had not excessively restricted one’s personal freedom, almost a third partly agreed. 19% agreed or partly agreed that the rules and recommendations have required too much of them as citizens. 88% partly or fully agreed that the economic consequences of the lockdown measures had been necessary. Hence, the value of security was in least conflict with the economic aspect and most in conflict with the value of personal freedom.

Figure 6: “I think the lockdown measures have restricted my personal freedom too much”

Figure 7: “I think that the recommendations on how I should live my daily life during the pandemic have required too much from me as a citizen”
The respondents’ framing of why others do not follow the rules and recommendations revealed tensions between both the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings. Most of them strongly related non-adherence to the diagnostic frame; that those who do not follow rules lack an understanding of the situation or the consequences of not adhering to rules. This indicates that there is a norm regarding adhering to rules since nobody replied that each individual should be able to decide for themselves. Another tension with the diagnostic framing regarded people’s individual risk perception. Many replied that some people consider the rules to not apply to them, that they are not concerned, or think the risk with the virus is low. Such responses, expressed in a more neural sense, indicates that people who are not worried will not adhere.

Non-adherence was also framed in relation to Norwegians and the Norwegian culture, which indicated that not following rules was against the spirit of the Dugnad:

“Norwegians know ‘better’”

“Culture that freedom is more important than everything else. Slackness”

“They have grown up in a selfish society where people are too privileged. They do not think it happens to them. They think they know better.”

“Norwegians are used to the right to self-determination and do not like to be told how to live their lives”

“We are a nation of egoists who only think about themselves”

“Ola Nordmann and his selfishness trumps most things”

“Low dugnadssånd. I am just going too.”
Many people probably lack enough insight and understanding of the situation in order to understand what is meant by a national dugnad.

This frames a culture associated with the value of freedom as negative in this context. Framing non-adherence as selfish and how it does not fit to Dugnad thus indicates that not following rules should not be part of the Norwegian culture. Other negative qualities about the individual were common to describe non-adherence:

“Individual self-interest is more important than the community’s”

“People think more about themselves than the greater good. It has to be done whole-hearted. Many people do not understand the seriousness”

“Egocentric view of the world and society. Their own desire to have fun trumps other arguments against”

“A lack of responsibility”

“Combination of self-obsession and thoughtlessness”

“Not thinking about the long-term consequences, egocentric, poorly educated, easily affected by others, no insight into how serious this is, naive”

“They have no soliciude or compassion for others, I associate them with low level of education or intelligence. They are interested in ruining for others for their own gain”

Non-adherence framed as not thinking about ‘the greater good’, ‘self-obsession’ and ‘no soliciude or compassion for others’ thus sheds light on the need for the collective effort. The most common reply to the question of non-adherence was simply “selfishness”.

Non-adherence was also related to the prognostic framing. Some responded that some people disagree with the rules because they are perceived as exaggerated. Others responded that the rules are changing too often: “because the rules changes so quickly. Difficult to keep up with” and: “the rules are changing too much, not enough consistent rules”. This problem was also mentioned regarding what could have been changed about the measures. This indicates a tension between the prognostic and motivational framing.

Not following rules was also framed as in tension with the value of personal freedom and other social needs. Many responded that not everyone adheres because they are “fed up”. Other responses were more detailed:
“Loneliness is not as great when you are together with other people”

“Too much for too long”

“People are fed up, mentally difficult to keep distance over time. Some don’t give a damn”.

“Difficult to restrict one’s freedom”

“Fed up by limited living”

“Because they do not see the necessity and the consequences of following rules. Maybe they rather see the necessity of keeping their mental health. Keeping society running, living normally”.

“It is too tiring for them to follow strict lockdown measures over a longer period of time. The infection has not been that high in Norway, and then the measures can be perceived as exaggerated (at least outside the bigger cities)”

“Ignorance and tighter restrictions makes the motivation worse”

These responses show an understanding of why the rules are not followed by everyone. In the last quote, the tension between the motivational framing and the diagnostic and prognostic framing was apparent; that a low infection rate with too strict measures hinders motivation. These quotes also indicate that the time aspect is a problem—the rules have been in effect for long, which hinders motivation since it is mentally hard to restrict personal freedom.

4.3 Frame Resonance

This section, which compares the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framings by PM Solberg and the public, presents how the securitization of COVID-19 was negotiated in Norway.

PM Solberg depicted COVID-19 as a security situation where everyone should be worried about the referent object; the healthcare system. This was framed as a collective concern by highlighting that a collapsed healthcare system would also risk the lives of the young and healthy, not only the elderly and risk groups. Making manifest the urgent security situation, the consequences of many deaths and capacity challenges were framed as facts. The audience resonated that the healthcare system was the primary concern, including the elderly, who were not more worried about their health and safety than others. The threat perception has been on a similar level since the majority (69%) of the respondents viewed Solberg’s overall perception of the situation to be in resonance with their own. Further, many considered those who do not follow the rules to lack an understanding of the situation, which further indicates that the situation was perceived to have
security status. However, 19% perceived the Government’s view as exaggerated. Those who were the most worried about their personal health and for the healthcare system supported the emergency measures more than others. However, a conflict between the value of security and other values was present among them. Thus, the most worried resonated with Solberg’s threat perception and to a great extent with the solution. However, the dissonance with the motivational framing shows that not even the most worried resonated with the whole securitization framing detected in PM Solberg’s speeches.

PM Solberg placed central the need for stopping the virus with ‘drastic’ measures. Since 80% supported the lockdown, the majority resonated with the need for extraordinary handling. Despite this high level of support, the support for each of the different measures varied greatly. Since a low response was not connected to a lower worry than others of the situation, it showed that some agreed with the problem but not completely with the solution. The respondents expressed other framings of the solution, such as even stricter measures or an earlier response, and others for less strict measures. Thus, arguments towards both more intense securitization and de securitization existed. Completely different connections between the frames were also present. For example, the argument for a local approach was seen as better since a national approach did not make sense where the infection rate was low. To Solberg, the lockdown was depicted as the only and correct solution given the urgency of the situation. The consequences for personal freedom, the economy, and the sacrifices required by the citizen was thus framed as necessary and legitimate. The solution clearly integrated each citizen’s equal part in stopping the virus. This connection between the solution and the citizen’s role was also made by framing the situation as Dugnad where the solution is that everyone must participate and protect others for getting everyday life back. This was framed with reference to the Norwegian history and culture; that Norwegians usually contribute in crisis situations. This framing of the lockdown as legitimate and of the citizen’s equal part in the goal was not in resonance with all of the respondents. Particularly, a value conflict between security and other values was especially apparent among those who resisted the lockdown. This indicates that this group did not consider the lockdown as legitimate. Among those who argued for less strict measures also indicated how they did not perceive the measures as legitimate by referring to personal freedom and social needs. Some of these respondents expressed examples of how the measures had affected them personally, for example how not being allowed to cross the border to get home was ‘burdensome’, and how it ‘should be allowed’ to say goodbye to someone who is dying. This indicates that certain rules were seen as illegitimate and that the connection between the solution and the citizen’s sacrifices was in dissonance to some. Someone argued against ‘a broad brush approach’ for everyone, and that having as much as normal possible would be better than having the same rules for everyone. This was in clear dissonance with Solberg’s view of each
citizen’s equal part in stopping the virus and the need for everyone to put everyday life on hold.

PM Solberg called on the public as a whole to make equal sacrifices to stop the spread of the virus. The need for this collective effort was framed as a temporary but necessary sacrifice everyone had to make in solidarity with the most vulnerable; to limit their personal freedom to stop the spread. The public was urged to put everyday life on hold since it would reach the goal of taking everyday life back quicker. As with Dugnad, it made manifest the Norwegian spirit of behaving as a collectivity in crises. A norm regarding the necessity to follow the measures could be detected from the respondents since many perceived it selfish to value personal freedom over the collectivity in this security situation, and expressed that it did not fit into the Dugnad situation. This was in resonance with PM Solberg’s view of everyone’s equal role in the Dugnad. However, around a third of the respondents agreed or partly agreed that the measures for dealing with the situation had excessively restricted their personal freedom. The value of security was more in conflict with personal freedom than with the economy and the requirements on them as citizens. Some highlighted that the measures had been difficult to follow because they are unclear and constantly changing. In this way, it seems that to some people, this tension between the goal and everyone’s contribution was a practical problem and not about the willingness to follow them. This was also present in the framing of what could have been changed with the strategy, and seems to have been an important factor regarding the tension between the prognostic and motivational framings. While the norm of following rules could be seen, some also expressed an understanding for why some do not follow the rules. By pointing to the difficulty of limiting personal freedom and that the rules have been in effect for long.
5. Conclusions

This thesis sought to challenge securitization theory’s insufficient concept of ‘audience acceptance’ by analyzing the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway. In doing so, it shed light on the special ingrained role the public has been assigned in securitizing this disease. Such a situation, in which the emergency measures required for securitization regards a changed behavior by the entire general public, has not occurred in the last 100 years. Therefore, existing scholarship has not explored how ‘audience acceptance’ plays out in this context. This case study of Norway adopted the sociological approach by second generation scholars to explore how the securitization of COVID-19 was negotiated between Prime Minister Solberg and the Norwegian public.

By analyzing the perceptions of both the threat, the solution, and the citizen’s role as participants in the securitization process from PM Solberg’s and the public’s perspective, this thesis analyzed to what extent the audience ‘accepted’ the securitization of COVID-19. The study showed resonance between PM Solberg and the public regarding the threat perception and the referent object - that COVID-19 had security status and required extraordinary measures to protect the healthcare system. However, the analysis revealed dissonance regarding the solution and the requirements of the citizen. Regarding the solution, support for the different emergency measures varied greatly. This shows that the kind of emergency measure matters for audience acceptance and that the public may agree with the problem but not the solution. While there was generally a high level of satisfaction with the handling of COVID-19 in Norway, alternative solutions were expressed: towards both more intense securitization or toward desecuritization. The greatest tension was between the solution and the audience’s role in it. PM Solberg’s idea that all citizen’s play an equal role in securitizing COVID-19 was portrayed as Dugnad, a Norwegian term meaning collective effort. While many seemed to resonate with PM Solberg idea of the solution as Dugnad, where everyone must help out and follow the measures, others expressed how the value of security conflicted with personal freedom and other social needs, and viewed certain measures as illegitimate. More than a third considered the measures as, at least partly, excessively intrusive on their personal freedom. The tension between the solution and the citizen’s role was expressed with reference to how the measures were seen as illegitimate because of how they affect social needs, the difficulty to follow the rules because they were perceived as unclear, and the duration of this Dugnad. While the support of the handling was generally high, these dissonances gave insight into the breaking point for how long other values can be put aside, and in what way they do so. For instance, the negotiated view of the situation as Dugnad may thus have a limit with regards to the time aspect, or that everyone’s equal sacrifices in the Dugnad may make less sense if there are no infections where one live, as a few expressed, or if the value of freedom or social needs outweighs the value
of security. While there was strong general support for the lockdown in March, many perceived the measures as excessively intrusive in the survey. Perhaps, this has something to do with the time aspect - that this long process of securitization matters in the negotiation of meaning. The COVID-19 case raises further questions from a theoretical perspective. What happens if nobody had accepted the threat perception, or the measures? This was not the case in the Norwegian context, but the time aspect of this long securitization process makes this breaking point for the negotiation of meaning between securitizing actor and audience interesting in this context.

This thesis embraced the sociological approach to securitization by second-generation securitization scholars. This line of scholarship has sought to advance the concept of the audience’s role and how it accepts securitizing moves in the theory. Since the general public’s role in securitizing an infectious disease by changing their everyday of living has not been explored before, this thesis had added this knowledge. This thesis also contributed with empirical evidence that supports several arguments by the second generation; first of all, that audience acceptance should be analytically nuanced to better understand the success of securitization. Secondly, the finding by Salter (2011) and Roe (2008) that an audience may agree with the problem, but not the solution, was found in this study, since the vary in support for the different measures was significant. This challenges securitization theory, since it does not distinguish between audience acceptance of the threat as existential or the acceptance of the emergency measures. Stritzel’s (2012) argument that actors often draw on cultural-specific language to create resonance with the audience was seen in Solberg’s speeches, which implies the need for moving away from analyzing only ‘the grammar of security’. However, it cannot be said to what extent this created resonance with the public. Salter’s (2008) assertion that “understanding how audiences understand security as one value in a set of other values” (Salter 2011, p. 130) was embraced in this thesis and was useful in order to understand the special role the audience has been assigned in this context. Taking such value conflicts between security and other values into account made it possible to analyze how the audience weighted the value of security against other values, which gained a deeper understanding of audience acceptance than in securitization theory’s original framework.

This thesis supports the relevance of the sociological approach to securitization. Pandemics have for long been an acknowledged feared security threat, and it is unlikely that COVID-19 will be the last. For this reason, this thesis argued for the relevance of understanding the audience’s perspective on security and how they value security in relation to other values in the context of securitizing COVID-19. While the study primarily aimed for contributing to the second generation securitization scholarship, the findings may also be of relevance for the fields of crisis management and political communication. As Stevens and Vaughan-Williams (2016) have noted, states have
recently expressed the need for the citizen’s role in their national security agendas, given the changing nature of security threats. Despite this, the scholarship on how the public perceives security is thin. As the report by Steens et al (2020) that showed low adherence to COVID-19-related quarantine rules in Norway concluded, a better understanding of the public’s view was needed. This thesis has added such knowledge of the public’s perspective and suggests that a sociological approach to securitization theory offers potential for such studies.

5.1 Suggestions for future research

This study did not fully account for the securitization of COVID-19 in Norway. First of all, it was delimited the analysis to the Prime Minister and the public. Since the results revealed traces of dissonance regarding how COVID-19 should be securitized, analyses that includes more actors in the process would be of interest, for instance the media or public health authorities. Secondly, this study focused on the initial phase of the securitization process in March. Studies of securitization of COVID-19 over time would also be of interest, since this pandemic will be ongoing for a longer time than what many expected. This raises questions such as: how do securitizing actors maintain the security status of COVID-19 in a population over time? Such analyses become possible with the sociological approach.
References


**Empirical Material:**


Survey questionnaire

Survey regarding the handling of the Coronavirus in Norway

This survey is part of an ongoing research project by a master's student at the Swedish National Defense College. The purpose of the study is to investigate how the Norwegian population has experienced Norway's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is being carried out for research purposes only within the framework of the education. By participating in the survey, you contribute to research in crisis management that increases knowledge about how the public perceives a state's handling of pandemics such as COVID-19. The survey consists of 20 questions and will take approximately 8 minutes. Your answers are anonymous and will not be traceable to you as a person. Thank you for your participation!

1. What is your age?
   a) Under 18
   b) 18-24
   c) 24-34
   d) 35-44
   e) 45-54
   f) 54-65
   g) Over 65

2. What is your nationality?
   a) Norwegian
   b) Other

3. What is your gender?
   a) Female
   b) Male
   c) Other

4. Where do you live? (City and Fylke)
5. When COVID-19 came to Norway, how worried were you about the disease for your own personal health?
Rating scale from 1-5. (1 = not worried at all. 5 = very worried)

6. When COVID-19 came to Norway, how worried were you about the disease as a threat to the functioning of society and the healthcare system?
Rating scale from 1-5. (1 = not worried at all. 5 = very worried)

7. The government's general perception of COVID-19 compared to my own worry of the disease has been:
a) Similar to my own worry about the disease
b) Exaggerated compared to my own worry about the disease
c) Relaxed compared to my own worry about the disease
d) Other

8. How did you react when you heard that Norway would introduce a lockdown?
a) I considered it to be necessary to reduce deaths
b) I considered it partially necessary, partially an overreaction
c) I considered it an overreaction
d) I considered it insufficient and that even stricter measures were needed
e) Other

In March, Norway implemented several lockdown measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. The following 5 questions will ask to what extent you support these measures.

9. The closure of educational institutions (schools, universities, and child care centers)
1) Strongly disagree
2) Disagree
3) Neutral
4) Agree
5) Strongly agree

10. Innreisekarantene (10 days of quarantine for residents and visitors entering Norway)
1. Smittekarantene (10 days of quarantine for close contacts of confirmed/suspected cases of COVID-19)
   1) Strongly disagree
   2) Disagree
   3) Neutral
   4) Agree
   5) Strongly agree

12. The closure of cultural events, restaurants, training facilities etc.
   1) Strongly disagree
   2) Disagree
   3) Neutral
   4) Agree
   5) Strongly agree

13. Cabin ban
   1) Strongly disagree
   2) Disagree
   3) Neutral
   4) Agree
   5) Strongly agree

14. Why do you think some people do not follow COVID-19-related rules and recommendations?

15. If you could have changed one thing about Norway's handling of the virus, what would it be, and why?
16. In general, how satisfied are you with Norway's handling of the pandemic?

a) Very satisfied
b) Satisfied
c) Not very satisfied
d) Dissatisfied

17. I think the lockdown measures have been in good balance with COVID-19 as a threat to lives and health

a) Strongly agree
b) Partly agree
c) Partly disagree
d) Strongly disagree

18. I think the lockdown measures have restricted my personal freedom too much

a) Strongly agree
b) Partly agree
c) Partly disagree
d) Strongly disagree

19. I think that the recommendations on how I should live my daily life during the pandemic have required too much from me as a citizen

a) Strongly agree
b) Partly agree
c) Partly disagree
d) Strongly disagree

20. I think the lockdown measures have been necessary despite the economic consequences it has brought for society

a) Strongly agree
b) Partly agree
c) Partly disagree
d) Strongly disagree