Internet political discussion forums as an argumentative activity type: A pragma-dialectical analysis of online forms of strategic manoeuvring in reacting critically

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Citation for published version (APA):

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Preface

My first thanks go to my supervisors. Frans van Eemeren, apart from his great insight in the problems of argumentation theory, never ceased to amaze me with a rare skill of providing feedback to my ideas that was sometimes justifiably critical but, by some miracle, always remained encouraging. Bart Garssen, thanks to his precise knowledge of pragma-dialectics and familiarity with online discussions, helped me in refining many points of the developing dissertation. Besides, I cannot but appreciate the amount of hard work they both put in meticulous reading of successive drafts of all the chapters of the manuscript (some of them were not entirely of great quality, mind you). It is largely thanks to their detailed comments, criticisms and encouragements that the dissertation could be finished in the present form (and in the present time, so to speak).

Three other members of the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam belong to the context of discovery of the ideas discussed in this book. My interest into the problem of contextual embeddedness of everyday argumentation was initiated in the excellent class on verbal communication taught by Agnès van Rees back in 2005. This interest was further deepened and extended during my work with Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, who supervised my master’s thesis that partly addressed the issues studied in the PhD thesis. Apart from being a careful supervisor, Francisca has kept correcting my English pronunciation; the resulting improvements, unfortunately, do not really show in the book (but it is better). Finally, Peter Houtlosser, though never directly involved in my work, until his untimely death in 2008 gave me a very precious chance to get involved in discussions on a whole range of topics: from procedural starting points in a critical discussion to underground music.

Further, the shape of this study would be quite different if not the regular opportunity to present parts of my work during the Friday’s research colloquium organised in the department. For me, it has been an important venue for forging, improving, and, luckily, also abandoning some of the ideas related to my research. Therefore, I would like to thank all the faculty members and graduate students that listened to and commented on my presentations in the colloquium between 2006 and 2010. Among them are other PhD
students conducting research in argumentation theory: Bilal Amjarso, Corina Andone, Roosmaryn Pilgram, Lotte van Poppel, Yvon Tonnard, and Assimakis Tseronis. (Lotte and Roos also translated the summary into samenvatting.)

Three fellow PhD students at the University of Amsterdam—Dima Mohammed, Constanza Ihnen and Walid el Houri—have also become my closest friends, which means that they had to put up with me in both academic and private environment on an (almost) daily basis. They have done it very well, and I would like to express my gratitude for that.

A large group of people influenced my work on the dissertation from the backstage, so to speak. This includes, here in Holland: Agnieszka and Sebastian, Andrej, Antonis, Carla and Piotrek, Caterina, Elena and Cristobal, Eleni, Elif, Ewa, Konstantina and Taylan, Loreto, and Nicolien. Back in Poland, Damian Michałowski, Paweł Jabłoński, and Michał Otrocki are still inspiring the way I think, both inside and outside of academia. Moreover, I cannot but mention: Ania siostra, Dominika, Dziabol and Dysia, Ewa, Guci, Hania and Zając, Kasia, Kamila, Misiek, Nina, Pustak, Smycza, Solar, Szymon and Sylwia, Ziółek. Each of them has had a unique place in my social milieu that cannot be described here. However, together as a group they have mastered various techniques of turning less than ideal contexts of my life and work into ones that are nearly ideal.

In a more direct way, it was the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA)—a research institute within the University of Amsterdam—that created appropriate conditions for writing a dissertation. During my work, I was employed by ASCA as a full-time PhD researcher (AIO) and could make use of ASCA’s convenient conference funds.

Crucially, I have to thank my parents, Maria and Jan. Over the years I have had a privilege of being influenced and supported by them in all the ways mentioned above, notably in a way similar to ASCA’s.

Finally, if mentioning all these names means that the book would never appear without them, then I have to stress that without Dima’s help it would really never appear.