This is [Version unknown!] version of a paper presented at Colis10 - Concepts of Library and Information Studies, Ljubljana, June 16-19, 2019.

Citation for the original published paper:

The Construction of Consensus: Analyzing “facts” in the Flashback.org Contemporary Crime sub-forum
In:

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-38494
The Construction of Consensus
- Analyzing “facts” in the Flashback.org Contemporary Crime sub-forum

Flashback Forums is a Swedish discussion forum that have existed on the internet in different versions since 1996. Since after the millennium it has got a reputation being very active discussing contemporary criminal cases. The discussions are often harsh and vibrant, not minding any of Sweden's laws regarding slandering or regulation of press, the servers being located in North America. Lawless or not - the forums have been involved in several criminal cases, supplying information that had not been found by the Police. Because of these cases Flashback Forums has gained a reputation among journalists, police and the public. It is now heavily used as a source of information by different agents in society. This makes it a powerful actor and information provider in Swedish society.

I am interested in how consensus regarding what is considered facts are treated in the Flashback Contemporary Crimes-sub forum. In order to have a flow of discussion, the participants need to have a common ground, some traits used to decide what is to be considered a proven fact and what is not. In this process a number of consensus-building moments will appear in the discussion. I will focus on when official documents, from the Police investigation and from the legal system are added to the discussion. How are they treated by the participants in the discussions? How is other external information treated by the users? With focus on:

* Negative critique and discussion regarding official documents, of work done by police and other government agencies, and of documentation done by the same agencies.
* Positive critique and discussion regarding the work of government agencies.
* Disagreement between users of the interpretation of the official document.
* Interaction and use of official documents.

* Flashback - A free speech forum since 1996

* Discussions regarding all major crimes committed in Sweden

* The research in this study is directed towards discussions regarding two murders in the municipality of Upplands-Väsby during 2015

* How is consensus constructed among users?

* How are government sources used?

**CONCLUSIONS**

* The users are in general positive to the Police and other agencies’ work.
* Official documents are seldom doubted.
* Lack of consensus regarding treatment of photographs of victims

Sharing and discussing official documents, the Flashback users actually start what we could say is a unique conversation between government and public. His is a raw, open conversation, without the distortion of journalism. You could be of the opinion that this conversation actually is beneficial for a transparent democracy. We have a lot of people that are engaged, as users (participants) and as lurkers (persons observing) in these threads, and they will see, and maybe understand, the administrative procedures of the court. This should be beneficial for a democracy that values transparency and engaged citizens.