This thesis is an investigation of specific methods and overarching methodological issues regarding the collection and analysis of Twitter data, making use of examples from the context of Swedish political communication. The thesis consists of five studies of which one is a literature review of web related research and four concern political Twitter usage. Shortcomings and problems in the Twitter research to date are identified and discussed. These problems are results of the way Twitter makes data available through its application programming interface (API). Due to this, Twitter research has largely made use of fragmented data sets, collected through hashtag searches or by tracking users. To solve this problem, a new data collection method is developed and discussed. This method enables both the collection of more complete data sets as well as analysis of the conversations that take place on the platform.

The four Twitter studies show the methodological complexity of studying relationships, content and activity on the platform. A contribution is made through the development of new methods as well as knowledge of how Twitter is used in the studied context. The Swedish political Twittersphere is characterised by a domination of around 1,000 users. These seem to prefer to relate to likeminded, although opposing viewpoints do meet in the discussions. On a methodological note, results show that there are many replies that do not include hashtags, and hence the analyst risks missing out on many relevant tweets with traditional methods. Further tests of the API indicated that complete data sets cannot be obtained with the non-paid common access to the interface, which is granted to all Twitter accounts. Therefore, it is important to reflect on both the data collected and the data excluded, not only as a result of the sampling criteria defined by the researcher but also what is not given access to through the API.