



# PhD dissertation

Aske Kammer

## News on the Web:

instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and  
hypertextuality on Danish news websites



# **News on the Web**

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Instantaneity, multimodality,  
interactivity, and hypertextuality on  
Danish news websites

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*This dissertation is dedicated to Laurids Søndergaard Christensen (1936-2012) and Sigrid Kammer (1934-2012), both of whom I lost while writing it, and to Regitze, whom I grew even closer to.*



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# Introduction

”The turning point for this new medium came after the bombs in the London tube. Many of our London based bloggers [...] send in their reactions in *real-time*, almost while it happened. I was having my morning coffee and read the *New York Times*, which had a front page photo of Londoners celebrating that they’d won the right to host the Olympics. And I thought it is such a different picture we’re seeing now. It gave me a sense of how anachronistic the daily newspaper has become, of how you’re really holding *yesterday’s news* in your hands.”

This reflection from Arianna Huffington (quoted from Krasnik, 2008: 235, emphasis in original, my translation), the founder of the Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/>), is about her morning on July 7, 2005, where four terrorist bombs exploded in London. It serves as an illustration of several of the ways news and journalism have changed with the introduction of the internet<sup>1</sup> and the web. First, it obviously emphasizes how digital media often deal with the news agenda in real-time, providing instantaneous (or near-instantaneous) coverage which the traditional printed newspaper cannot compete with; sometimes, as

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<sup>1</sup> A note on notation: in line with Baym and Markham (2009: vii), I write both internet and web with lower case letters as they are technologies, not names, and do not have individual agency. With the advent of Actor-Network Theory (see Latour, 1993), the question of agency has nevertheless been rephrased because subscribers to this theoretical position assign agency to technologies which they regard as formative of social contexts (i.e. agentic). The way I see it, however, technologies are results of human agency, made by engineers, developers, programmers, hackers, academics, entrepreneurs, and others. For this reason, what technology “does” and the way it influences social situations originate in the last instance from human agency, even though, admittedly, technologies often work or are used in ways not intended by their creators.

in this example, the agenda will have changed dramatically before the readers get their hands on the printed newspapers. Second, the remark highlights how journalists are no longer the only ones making the content of news media; in the digital environment, everyone with an internet connection can potentially provide content or raw information to news organizations and thereby participate in the production of news. The journalists' prerogative to news making has simply been challenged by the proliferation of digital, internet-connected media. Third, the observation is interesting because of its economic context. The developments have also turned their backs on printed newspapers in the sense that audiences are increasingly moving towards news websites, where the abilities of news organizations to monetize their content are not nearly as well-developed as with print (Grueskin, Seave, & Graves, 2011; R. K. Nielsen, 2012). Ironically, the Huffington Post is supposedly thriving financially (Pulley & Cho, 2011), a fact that only adds insult to injury from Huffington's observation.

Another equally telling observation comes from Pavlik, who observes that "Today, news is in a constant state of flux" (Pavlik, 2001: xiv). Only a good decade old, this remark is already a cliché in scholarly writing and conference presentations on news on the web and the journalism that produces it – but as the case is with most clichés, it resonances among most people. For news *is* indeed in a constant state of flux today, and so in more than one way. For one thing, the flux is apparent in the constantly updated content of news websites, where the agenda is constantly developing, following the latest occurrences. The agenda and concrete content of most news websites are rarely stable for a very long time. The technology of the internet and the web enables continuous updating, and because of the journalistic "thirst to be first" (Lewis & Cushion, 2009), the disposition to get the news sooner rather than later, journalists often follow this invitation to instantaneity. Digital news is a transient object, and some even argue that it is a process rather than a product (Hartley, 2009a; Karlsson, 2010). Furthermore, as the technology for presenting and disseminating news develops, so too do the form and formal features of much news; for example, many news organizations that used to write news for the printed newspaper have now also begun to produce web video (Michelsen & Rasmussen, 2011). This way, also, the journalistic work that produces the news is in

flux in the sense that journalists are adapting their work practices to the digital media technologies.

This dissertation is about what constitutes that flux, and about the changes Huffington also describes. It is about the current state of news and journalism, both of which are changing these years as their technological basis has developed into its current condition. It is still developing as I proofread this introduction. Specifically, the dissertation focuses on news on the web and the journalism that produces it, and on the way they use the new, digital technology. The web, the hypertext-based application that makes the internet immediately usable for ordinary people, holds a different set of affordances for journalists than do traditional news media such as printed newspapers, radio, and television (see the sections *Previous research* and *Affordances* below). With this dissertation, I research the use of these affordances on Danish news websites and, understanding journalism from an institutional perspective, propose mediatization theory as one way to contextualize it.

### **Context of the dissertation**

In a larger media historic perspective, news on the web is naturally a relatively new phenomenon, as the web protocol was not released until 1991. Electronic publishing that resembles the idea of today's news on the web, however, already started in the 1970s, where news organizations across the Western world began probing the potentials of Videotex, the "two-way electronic information, transaction, and messaging services" (Carey, 1982: 80), which worked through telephone cables. Ultimately, however, that system turned out to be a failure because of its slow response and delivery times, poor resolution on the screen, and lack of interactive features (see Gunter, 2003: 21), and by 1992, American news organizations had begun to distribute news through the internet instead (Li, 2006a: 1). In the autumn of 1993, Time Magazine and The San Jose Mercury News were among the first media organizations to launch websites, and in June 1994, the New York Times, as one of the first major news organizations, presented an "interactive news service on America Online called simply *@times*" (Gunter, 2003: 22, emphasis in original). The same year, the Washington Post also launched their news website as did The

Daily Telegraph in England. Around 1995, the web had established itself as the preferred technology for online news dissemination (Boczkowski, 2004: 48). It is a position it still maintains, even though mobile, app-based news is becoming increasingly pervasive these years (The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2012b; Westlund, 2013). That type of news is, however, not one which this dissertation will subject to scrutiny – not because it is not an important area within news circulation and consumption, but because it falls outside of this dissertation's focal point, namely news on the web (see also the *Terminology* chapter below).

A development similar to the international one has taken place in Denmark. Here, pre-web experiments with electronic news publishing include Politiken's Poltxt/Polinfo in 1975, Børsen's Telebørsen in 1987, and the bulletin board system Politiken On Line in 1994 (Falkenberg, 2009: 87). Concurrently, in December 1994, the trade journal of engineers, Ingeniøren, launched the first website of a Danish media organization, and proper news organizations in this country soon followed: in September 1995, Jyllands-Posten became the first newspaper to have a news website, and by November 1996, Børsen, Fyens Stiftstidende, Information, Næstved Tidende, and Aalborg Stiftstidende all had "some sort of news website[s]" (Falkenberg, 2009: 141). Dr.dk (<http://www.dr.dk/>), the website of the central public service broadcaster in Denmark, Danmarks Radio, also started in 1996 and had news as a content category from the beginning.

Even though news on the web is, this way, only just about celebrating its 20th anniversary now, it has become a most important source for the news consumption of ordinary people. Comparable studies of Danes' news consumption in 2008 (Schrøder, 2010) and 2011 (Schrøder & Kobbernagel, 2012), for example, show that "news on Danish internet sites" and "computer news" are consistently among the most used news sources as respectively 78 and 70 percent of Danes had used them "within the last week". Only television news is more popular (88 and 85 percent), while radio news broadcasts is in the third place (70 and 65 percent). In the 2011 study, however, "blogs" could also be answered as a possible source for news and were reportedly used by 9 percent of Danes; this addition of one more internet-based news source could probably account for some of the decrease on 8 percent-

age points from 2008 to 2011. To put those numbers into perspective, it is worth taking a look back: according to a report on Danes' general use of the internet from the Danish Ministry of IT and Research in 2001, 41 percent of the survey respondents reported that they used the internet for getting news (IT og Forskningsministeriet, 2001: 14). Even though the two studies by Schrøder and the ministerial report are not offhand comparable because of methodological differences, it seems only fair to say that the development from 41 percent (in 2001) to 78 (in 2008) and 70 (in 2011) does reflect an increasing centrality of news websites in the news consumption of the Danish population.

The same pattern exists internationally, even though the numbers are based on different research designs yet again. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the number of people who consulted news websites for news grew from 51 percent in 2005 to 67 percent in 2011 (Ofcom, 2012: 63). In the USA, surveys from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press show that the share of the population, who gets "most of [its] news about national and international issues" through the internet, was 6 percent in January, 1996, 14 percent in January, 2002, 24 percent in August, 2006, and 43 percent in July, 2011 (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2011: 7). In the 2009 "The State of the News Media" report from the Project for Excellence in Journalism branch of the Pew Research Center, the authors point out 2008 as the year where:

"the number of people who began to rely on the Web as a regular or even their main news source appeared to jump. For national and international news, according to survey data, the Web surpassed all other media except for television as a destination" (The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2009).

Profit has, however, not followed from this rise of news websites as a central news medium for both producers and audiences. On the contrary, throughout the last decade, the news industry has moved into a state of economic crisis. Even though more and more news consumption takes place online, news organizations are not able to monetize news on the web and on mobile platforms to a degree which makes up for the losses from declining circulation and increasing competition on the market for advertising: since the turn of the millennium, newspaper circulation

has dropped with two-digit numbers across most European countries (Bakker, 2008), and the prices for advertisement are, in the first place, remarkably lower on websites than in print publications. Combined with the global recession and financial crisis from 2008 onwards, these developments have shook the very foundation of the news industry, minimized profit margins, and caused several newspapers to close worldwide (see, e.g., R. K. Nielsen, 2012). In an assessment of the economics of the first decade and a half of online news dissemination, Grueskin, Seave and Graves (2011) paint a grim picture as they conclude that “the chase for traffic has put news organizations on a sugar high of fat audiences and thin revenue” (Grueskin, et al., 2011: 34). And according to Nielsen (2012), the worst is yet to come in many countries when advertising prices and spending adjust to the actual levels of use and audiences across different media. Popular countermeasures from the news industry against the dire economic situation have been to raise paywalls around their content on the web and experiment with extending the portfolios of revenue-generating activities such as digital market places and subscription based associations centered around weight loss (Barland, 2012; Grueskin, et al., 2011). While the extra-journalistic activities seem economically promising for the news industry (Barland, 2012), the economic effects of paywalls are still disputed (Anderson, 2012; Ingram, 2012; Lee, 2012), and the bottom line is that the economic foundation on which the news industry rests is much less secure than it used to be.

Simultaneous with this economic erosion, the news industry is becoming increasingly commercialized and subject to increased political deregulation. The commercialization is apparent in, for instance, large-scale media corporations’ bulk purchasing of other organizations and consolidation of conglomerates (The Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2012a; Lund, 2005). Take, for example, the case of Berlingske, which was founded in 1749 and is one of the largest news organizations based in Denmark. Since the turn of the millennium, it has been bought up by large, international media corporations twice: in 2000 by the Norwegian media group Orkla Media and again in 2006 by Mecom Group from Britain. These acquisitions have entailed expectations of operating profits, causing several cuts in the workforce and a broader scope of revenue-generating activities in the news organization. As Barland (2012) exemplifies from a transnational study how news organizations are expanding and rethinking the traditional understand-

ing of journalism in order generate revenues: if data-driven journalism about how to lose weight is what it takes to get audiences to buy memberships of weight-loss clubs, that kind of journalism will be conducted. Furthermore, the process of commercialization is characterized by the arrival of a number of new actors who circulate news but do, nonetheless, not have much to do with journalism. The most obvious example hereof is probably Google whose Google News is an aggregation site that, using algorithms, presents news from a vast number of news websites without conducting any journalistic work itself (Garber, 2012). Such activities contribute to emphasize the economic pressure on news organizations, bypassing the traditional revenue streams generated from news consumption.

### **Previous research**

Moving from the broader, societal context of this dissertation to the scholarly agenda it relates to, I start outside the realm of journalism research. Towards the end of his keynote speak “Public knowledge and popular culture – imbrication, tension, contradiction”<sup>2</sup> at the conference “The Blurring of Boundaries. High-tension Aesthetics: Aesthetics and Ethics in Contemporary Media” at the University of Copenhagen May 8-9, 2008, John Corner announced that he had now reached the point in the presentation where it had become custom to “say something about the internet” (quoted from memory). The remark was part joking, part serious; what he was aiming at was that the internet and the web had been of such a radical significance for all other parts of the media universe that media and communication scholars, no matter what their subject was, could hardly avoid addressing them.

Corner’s observation relates to almost all areas of media and communication research, but it is particularly true when it comes to research into news and journalism, where the influence from digital technology is pervasive. This development is reflected in the research literature, where news and news making on digital media technologies have moved to the top of the news and journalism research agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> Abstract available on [http://high-tension-aesthetics.com/Files/blurring\\_folder\\_final.pdf](http://high-tension-aesthetics.com/Files/blurring_folder_final.pdf), accessed March 8, 2012.



The result is an extensive and highly heterogeneous body of scholarly work. Consequently, this dissertation inscribes itself in a well-established research field which, on the one hand, reaches back through the long history of journalism research and, on the other hand, has been reinvigorated, redefined, and re-actualized. With the profound technological and structural changes in news and journalism, old questions can have new answers, and new questions can be asked.

In this section, I present a focused overview of the existing research literature on news on the web and the journalism that produces it, highlighting the central trends and the works with particular relevance for the research conducted and presented in this dissertation. For more extensive literature reviews, I recommend the overviews provided by Domingo (2005), Hartley (2011a, 2012), Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2009), and Steensen (2011b).

The scholarly literature from the earliest period of web-based news reflects a “technological utopianism” and is written by authors who “firmly believed that digital technologies would give a chance for better journalism” (Domingo, 2005: 3). This body of literature, written especially the mid-1990s when the internet and the web begun to penetrate the market and became the news industry’s preferred digital platform for news dissemination (Boczkowski, 2004), lies far from the moral panics that often meet new media technologies. Negroponte, for example, optimistically introduced the idea of “The Daily Me”, which would customize the news to every individual person in accordance with his or her interests and preferences: “Imagine a future in which your interface agent can read every newswire and newspaper and catch every TV and radio broadcast on the planet, and then construct a personalized summary” (Negroponte, 1995: 153). And some years earlier, in 1991, on the threshold of the release of the web protocol, Koch asserted that “intelligent use of these online resources is not the “same old journalism” (or public relations or position paper) but has the potential to fundamentally alter the rules of the public information game” (Koch, 1991: xxiii). The utopian perspective of these early texts has had a strong influence on also the more recent research literature where especially the participatory potential (to which I will return below) of digital media has inspired hope for an empowered citizenry and improved democracy. Gillmor, for example, writes about “journalism’s transformation from a twentieth

century mass-media structure to something profoundly more grassroots and democratic” (Gillmor, 2004: xxiii). And Russell strikes the same chord, claiming that “Amateurs extend the reach of traditional journalists as de facto researchers and reporters, and they expand the mediasphere exponentially in the quantity and quality of information available” (Russell, 2011: 44). The subtext in this part of the research literature is to some extent one of technological determinism; that is, an expectation that the specific features of technology will lead to certain, foreseeable outcomes. One other characteristic of the earliest examples of research literature is their unconcealed normative dimension; “It argued what online journalism *should* be and in many cases tended to be plainly prospective, without any empirical background” (Domingo, 2005: 4, emphasis added).

Already in this period of “digital utopias”, researchers identified a number of specific potentials of the new media technology – potentials which, were they actively implemented in the journalistic work, would lead to better and more fully developed journalism. A number of studies are dedicated to the measurement of the use of these potentials, and they do so from this normative position, asserting implicitly (and often also explicitly) that the use of the possibilities offered by the new technology would lead to augmented and enriched news. Jankowski and van Selm (2000), for example, examines the extent of “added value” that digital media give to the news compared to traditional media. A similar focus is found in a widespread approach in the earlier scholarly literature, namely that of comparisons between print newspapers and their website counterparts. One particularly comprehensive study of this type is the cross-European one with participation of researchers from 16 countries (van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005), while Engebretsen (2006) compares print and digital news in the Scandinavian countries, and Ilebekk (2000) does so in a Norwegian context exclusively. Measuring the use of multi-modal and interactive possibilities and the stability of the online news organizations’ servers on September 11, 2001, Salaverría (2005) assesses the maturity of news websites as a news medium. The framing of the measurement in terms of “maturity” signals in itself an underlying assumption of a medium that is still in the process of growing up, and from this perspective, his conclusion is somewhat discouraging: “Internet publications, in short, do not yet [in 2001] know who they are,

what their informative tasks are and how they can perform them with sufficient technological reliability” (Salaverría, 2005: 84).

Concretely, researchers identify four specific potentials or characteristics of news on the web, namely immediacy, multimodality (two terms that I argue against in the *Theoretical framework* chapter below), interactivity, and hypertextuality, even though they use slightly different vocabularies to describe them. Hall (2001: 40), to begin with, recognizes four “signifiers” of online news: “a capacity for real-time news or shifted time [...], the inclusion of multimedia elements, the direct referencing of sources, and the possibility of interactivity for readers”. Salaverría (2005: 81), in his study of real-time coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, examines the “development of the multimedia and the potential of hyperlinking and interactivity”. Deuze (2003: 205) lists three “defining characteristics of media production in an online environment: hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality”. In an exchange between Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996: 4), the latter “propose[s] focusing on five defining qualities of communication on the Net: multimedia, hypertextuality, packet switching, synchronicity, and interactivity”. Bardoel and Deuze (2001) identify “The key characteristics of journalism on the Net – convergence, interactivity, customisation of content and hypertextuality”. And Domingo (2005) uses hypertextuality, interactivity, and multimodality as the structuring principle in parts of his literature review. So, even though the exact terminology differs slightly (e.g., between synchronicity and real-time or between convergence and multimedia), other characteristics are occasionally mentioned (e.g., packet switching), and some researchers omit the potential of real-time in these summaries, the agreement on the four affordances is pervasive. As I will return to shortly, these four affordances play a most important part in this dissertation. I should also specify that I refer to the potentialities as affordances, a concept originally introduced by Gibson (1977), because they afford particular types of action for journalists; I elaborate on the concept of affordances in the *Theoretical framework* chapter below.

The scholarly literature on news on the web and the journalism that produces it is saturated with empirical studies and theory building which revolve around these four affordances. The most attention has been paid to news websites’ ability to

report the news in real-time, and according to Domingo (2011: xv), this focus is now so concentrated that “immediacy is the dominant paradigm of online journalism”. Karlsson (2010) claims that this focus changes how to think about news from it being a product to it being a process; instead of holding back publication until articles are finished by deadline, news websites often carry works in progress that end with some assurance that they will soon be updated. Findings by Hartley (2009b) support this observation of Karlsson’s empirically. One consequence of the news being a process is that audiences are allowed a glimpse into the practices of journalistic work as there is more openness as to the development of the news stories. This is a phenomenon that Steensen (2011a) also touches upon in his analysis of live blogging (see also Thurman & Walters, 2013), arguing that this new format for continuously updated reporting reflect a kind of liquid journalism (a term originally coined by Deuze, 2007, 2008a) where the journalists are in constant and immediate contact with their audiences.

Speed and the potential of fast reporting of occurrences are not only at the center of attention among researchers of digital journalism – it also constitutes an imperative for the practitioners of news making. From his ethnography of six German online newsrooms, Quandt (2008: 86), for instance, conclude that “the speed of the production cycles [...] is the main characteristic of the work in the [digital] newsroom”. Other studies report similar findings (e.g., Allan, 2006; Domingo, 2008c). Hartley (2011b) explains this journalistic preoccupation with the present tense from a field perspective. According to her, real-time news is the one area where journalists working on news websites can really outdo other departments of the news organizations, and for that reason, they are inclined to present news as “breaking news” in order to highlight its topicality. This way, she argues, they stand up for themselves in relation to journalists and departments that make news for other, less immediate news media.

A particular body of work within the scholarly literature on news websites’ affordance of instantaneous dissemination is that of methodological considerations as to how researchers can capture news on the web in the first place and make it a suitable object of analysis. Because websites can be continuously updated and changed, McMillan (2000) compares the challenges of analyzing web content to

that of examining a moving target with a microscope: while the object of analysis is in perpetual flux, one can only zoom in on a fraction of the entirety, trying to put together the full picture. Focusing specifically on news websites, which are likely to be updated even more frequent than other types of websites, Karlsson (2012) and Karlsson and Strömbäck (2010) propose capturing several versions of selected web pages and tracking the agenda over time as a viable method for making content analysis possible. Other researchers have developed methods for keeping track of changes on news websites over time (Kutz & Herring, 2005; Lim, 2012).

However, there are also researchers who take a critical stance on this prominence of immediacy. Lim (2012), for example, critiques what he perceives to be a mythologization of immediacy, demonstrating how the change in top stories on South Korean news websites actually takes place only slow-moving; this is an inertia which he reads as a lack of immediacy on news websites. Likewise, empirical findings from the news websites of the BBC, CNN, and al-Jazeera (Kutz & Herring, 2005) as well as Politiken (Hartley, 2009a) show that the idea of a 24 hour news cycle on the web is inconsistent with the observable reality; contrary to popular belief, publication on news websites takes place predominantly within normal working hours. A common reservation is also that high-speed news production and a journalistic ambition on real-time coverage pose a challenge to accuracy and the quality of the news; getting the news fast sometimes collides with getting it right (Engebretsen, 2006; Lewis & Cushion, 2009; Phillips, 2011; Salaverriá, 2005). As my second research article, “News Websites’ Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian Study”, shows, however, rapid reporting does not necessarily entail a lower level of accuracy.

The second characteristic of news websites, which the scholarly literature highlights, is their capacity of multimedia. The term multimedia refers to both news across multiple media and to the inclusion of multiple different modalities within one medium (Deuze, 2004). As I return to in the section *The four affordances of news websites*, I examine it from the latter perspective in the empirical analyses. Both meanings, however, are popular in the scholarly literature, and studies using the first meaning frequently focus on the social organization of news production in multimedia (or cross-media) newsrooms (see, e.g., Deuze, 2004; Erdal, 2007) and

on the news that are produced there (Grunwald, 2007). Studies that apply the second meaning of the term has tended to focus on how new constellations of modes of expression find their ways into news dissemination – but as Steensen (2011b: 320) summarize in a meta-analysis of studies on news on the web, “it seems that multimedia remains the least developed of the assets offered to journalism by Internet technology”. That also appears to be the case with regards to the scholarly literature. However, noteworthy studies do, of course exist. Dibeau and Garrison (2001) measure the quantitative distribution of among other things multimedia on US news websites, showing a limited albeit increasing use of multimedia elements such as audio and video. A similar study with similar results is reported by Greer and Mensing (2006). The probably most elaborate Scandinavian study of multimediality on news websites is Engebretsen’s (2006) comparative study of Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish news websites and their use of the technological affordances. His findings, however, tell that the news websites are barely using video and sound, especially in Sweden and Denmark. In a Danish context specifically, scrutinizing the popular format of web video, Michelsen and Rasmussen (2011) propose a typology of different genres of moving images on news websites. This typology clearly reflects well-known formats from television as it includes, for example, conventional news videos, “how-to” guides, and “see it happen” videos with raw footage of unbelievable, awkward, or simply important occurrences.

The third distinctive potential of news websites is interactivity. It is a contested term, and as Finnemann (2005a: 72) points out, there are numerous meanings connected to the term, “the most basic one being the user’s ability to influence the course of communication and its content” (for overviews of the interactivity literature, see Kioussis, 2002; McMillan, 2002). Within journalism studies, interactivity has likewise been understood as the instances where audiences can participate in, influence, or contribute to the news and/ or the journalism that produces it. Rosen (2006), acknowledging the ways digital technology can occasion the blurring of the boundaries in the relationship between producers and audiences, speaks of “the people formerly known as the audience”; by this phrase, he aims at how audiences have moved from “passive” (i.e., receivers) to “active” (i.e., not just receiving).

Early studies (Massey & Levy, 1999; T. Schultz, 1999), however, showed poor performance of news websites in actually enabling the audiences to be active in anything else than accessing news and sending emails to the news desk. Findings from more recent interview studies (e.g., Domingo, 2008a; Thurman, 2008) emphasize the important position of the *idea* of interactivity but also show how news workers are actually reluctant to embrace it, because it often demands supervision and editing of audiences' contributions.

Nevertheless, a particularly prominent research area in the literature on interactivity is the participatory potential of the digital media; that is, the instances where audiences can take part in the work of news workers. A recent and most important study with focus on exactly audience participation is the international collaborative research project reported in the anthology *Participatory Journalism* (Singer et al., 2011b), which conceptually applies a five-sided distinction between the stages of the news production process to distinguish between different kinds of audience participation: access/observation (where audiences participate in gathering or providing raw information), selection/filtering (choosing what will constitute the content of the news), processing/editing (conducting journalistic work), distribution (disseminating the news), and interpretation (discussing published material) (see also Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida et al., 2011; Vujnovic et al., 2010). The work of Bruns similarly plays an important part in the scholarly discussion of audience participation, as he introduces two influential concepts to understand how audiences contribute to the production and circulation of news. The first one is gatewatching (Bruns, 2005, 2008a), which, playing terminologically on the metaphor of the gatekeeper (cf. White, 1950), refers to the phenomenon that ordinary people are to an increasing degree active in deciding what journalistic products their peers get to read as they circulate news through digital media; the other one is produsage (Bruns, 2008b, 2011), which is a contraction of 'producer' and 'user' and indicates that the people who used to be users are now also producing content themselves.

A more critical approach to audience participation in the process of news production is found in a recent study of attitudes to user-generated content at the BBC (Wahl-Jorgensen, Williams, & Wardle, 2010; Williams, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Wardle,

2011). Here, the researchers found that while news workers and audiences alike appreciate substantial contributions in the form of eyewitness accounts, images, and footages (“audience content”), they are highly skeptical when it comes to opinion-based inputs (“audience comment”).

Finally, the fourth characteristic of news websites is hypertextuality. In a larger, primarily theoretical contribution, Engebretsen (2001) discusses the phenomenon of hypertext, illustrating how the potential of linking together different web pages transforms the narrative structure of news. A most recurrent theme in the empirical studies of news websites’ use of hypertextuality is the question of, where the clickable links on news websites lead to. One study shows that on the news websites of the largest US news organizations, only 13 percent of the links were to external destinations (Tremayne, 2006: 57). A more recent study from Sweden (Larsson, 2012) shows a similar trend, arguing that journalists’ practices for linking appear to be automated rather than reflexive. This practice of trying to keep audiences within the boundaries of the news website by avoiding external linking, however, may be counterproductive. A longitudinal study by Weber (2012) makes clear that existing news organizations which link to other websites experience an increase in page views.

Within recent years, a particularly prominent research interest has been that of ethnographic newsroom studies which focus on the production practices of journalism, an approach called for by both Boczkowski (2002), Cottle (2000), and Domingo (2005, 2008b). Production studies have constituted an important part of journalism research since at least the 1970s, where the field took a “sociological turn” (Hjarvard, 2012b: 87) with increased interest given to the processes and practices inside the newsroom. This sociological turn manifested itself in seminal studies such as Gans’ *Deciding What’s News* (1980), Golding and Elliott’s *Making the news* (1979), Schlesinger’s *Putting ‘Reality’ Together* (1978), and Tuchman’s *Making News* (1978). More recent studies within this tradition include Schultz (2007b) and Gravengaard (2010), who examined, respectively, broadcast and newspaper organizations in Denmark, focusing on the news values at work.

Following the technological development and move towards digital media, researchers have gotten a renewed interest in journalistic production practices, ask-



ing what happens in newsrooms when journalists have both new tools for news making and new potentials for news presentation at hand. So, after a number of years with diminishing interest in the newsroom, production studies have reclaimed a central position within news and journalism research. In this body of work, the normative stance from the earlier works on digital journalism is gone. On the contrary, it generally builds upon, as Boczkowski (2004: 87-88) formulates it, a

“rejection of the notion of technology-driven transformations in journalistic work. This is not to say that the features of the various technical alternatives do not matter, but rather that they do not determine by themselves the dynamics and output of newsroom practices”.

This increased attention paid to the ethnographic approach calls for more focused case studies, which provide richer and more detailed insights into specific instances, often in the form of “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 2003), but equally often does so at the expense of the representativity that follows from larger, broad samples. The exact empirical focus of such ethnographic studies differs. Anderson (2013), for example, maps the different nodes in a local network of news-making organizations and individuals in the Philadelphia area, while Boczkowski (2004) and Hartley (2011a, 2011b) apply multi-site ethnographies to map journalistic practices in traditional news organizations’ production for news websites. Steensen (2009) conducts a longitudinal ethnographic study of the feature-writing desk in on Norwegian newsroom. Some of these production studies distinguish themselves as particularly valuable and influential contributions to this branch of the research agenda. One such study is Boczkowski’s *Digitizing the News* (2004), which is one of the earliest multi-site ethnographies of digital newsrooms, inspiring much subsequent research into the digital newsroom. Others are the two editions of the anthology *Making Online News* (Domingo & Paterson, 2011; Paterson & Domingo, 2008), which gather newsroom ethnographies from numerous countries and news organizations and put together a nuanced picture of the state of affairs, illustrating similarities and differences across geographical and media systemic borders. In a Danish context, Hartley’s PhD dissertation *Radikalisering af kampzonen* [Radicali-

zation of the combat zone] (2011a) applies a Bourdieuan field perspective and render intelligible how pressures from especially the economic field influence journalism and radicalize a number of its practices.

A connecting thread that runs through this body of research literature is the interest in how changes in technology affect news and the journalism that produces it. The conclusion, which the academic community as a whole seems to arrive at, is ambiguous, but should one attempt at synthesizing it into one general trend, it would be in line with the quote above from Boczkowski (2004): technical change in itself does not transform journalism. But the fact that news workers as well as their audiences have digital technology at hand, and that this technology in the form of news websites holds a unique set of affordances, makes possible different kinds and constellations of both news and the journalism that produces it.

### **Hypothesis, research questions, and approach**

On the backdrop of this body of existing scholarly literature, this dissertation enquires into the use of the four affordances on Danish news websites, hypothesizing that the use reflects that news workers' have generally embraced the affordances of news websites, but that they, simultaneously, have done so in a way that does not threaten their institutional autonomy. Admittedly, Engebretsen's study (2006) shows that Danish news websites are only weakly inclined to use the potentials afforded by the new news medium, but other more recent studies (e.g., Russell, 2011; Singer, et al., 2011b; Steensen, 2011a) suggest that news workers are more likely to utilize the technology now. Furthermore, the findings by, for instance, Domingo (2008a), Hartley (2011a, 2011b) and Hermida (2011) gives reason to expect that even when the new technology is used, news workers aim at maintaining journalistic control.

Researching the hypothesis, this dissertation is guided by three general research questions, which relate empirically to some of the central trends in the scholarly literature:

RQ1: To what extent do Danish news websites use these affordances?  
(The 'how much' of the research.)

RQ2: Given they use these affordances, how do Danish news websites do that? (The 'how' of the research.)

RQ3: Why is it so? (The 'why' of the research.)

The individual research articles, furthermore, have more specific research questions, just as the first research article, "Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites", also tests two specific hypotheses, namely whether ownership and type of legacy media matter for the use of the four affordances.

In relation to RQ3, I propose mediatization theory as an explanatory model for the current changes in journalism, which the news on the web reflects. That proposed explanatory model carries the implicit, underlying assumption that the media institution and the institution of journalism are not the same; I will return to this distinction in the *Theoretical framework* chapter. As I will also return to in that chapter, mediatization theory is an outline of developments in contemporary society proposed to explain how the media institution is now an agent of change that influences other sectors and institutions of culture and society (Hjarvard, 2008a, 2008b, 2008d). It is a theory of structural, macro level changes and transformative processes, and as such, even though Schrott (2009) proposes a systematic approach for measuring degrees of mediatization, it has yet to find a formalized way of being assessed.

Answering the research questions, the dissertation addresses some of the fundamental questions that occupy the minds of journalism researchers as well as practitioners these years: what is happening with news and journalism in a digital environment? How do the technological developments affect the journalistic profession? What characterizes journalistic coverage in an increasingly real-time, multi-modal environment? What is the role of the (participating) audience? This way, in addition to corresponding to the current scholarly agenda, this dissertation is also one that contributes empirically and theoretically to comprehending matters of immediate importance for the news industry and the journalistic institution. These considerations as well as the research agenda are international, but for pragmatic

reasons, the scope of the dissertation is predominantly Danish; that is, the research questions explore news and journalism in a Danish context primarily. There is, however, no rule without exception, and I do occasionally include perspectives from other countries as well: two of my interviews are with American news workers, many of the introductory observations and discussions reaches into an international context, and the research article "News Websites' Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian study" also examines Norwegian news websites, thereby applying a Scandinavian perspective. These exceptions are motivated by an ambition to slightly spread out the scope of the research, but to do so without compromising the dominant Danish perspective: the American interviews are used as background information only, and because of the similarities between media systems and journalistic professionalisms in the Scandinavian countries (cf. Hallin & Mancini, 2004), the Norwegian news websites should not be expected to distort the results of a pure Danish study.

Charting the ways of researching news and journalism, Schudson (2005) distinguishes between four different (but in practice often overlapping and mutually inclusive) approaches, namely an economic, a political, a social organizational, and a cultural one. The economic approach focuses particularly on the framework which economic macro structures and commercial interests constitute for news making, often emphasizing questions of ownership and journalistic adaptation to audience preferences. This approach often results in a critique of the ways capitalism and the "invisible hand" of the market influence news and journalism ideologically. The political approach, in turn, focuses on how political macro structures such as state ownership, censorship, regulatory and legal frameworks, and different types of media subsidies influence journalism and the news it produces. Splitting up the otherwise traditionally close-knit nexus of the political-economy approach of news production (one which he himself maintains in the earliest version of the "The Sociology of News" article, see Schudson, 1989), Schudson seeks to detach the study of news production from much of its Marxist or critical heritage, but economic and political factors will, nevertheless, often impose comparable constraints on and offer similar possibilities to news organizations. The social organizational approach is one that focuses on the social arrangements and practices of news making, looking into the ways journalists and other news workers construct

the news. Research from this approach often emphasizes how news-making activities are alike across different organizations, thereby proposing an institutional understanding of journalism. And the cultural approach, finally, focuses on both the wider cultural context of news making and the culture of journalism itself. The culture of journalism comprises different norms and values in relation to both the practical news work and the texts it produces (see also the section *An institutional perspective on journalism* below).

Because mediatization theory is first and foremost an institutional theory (see the section *Mediatization* below), this dissertation also favors the approach to journalism that lies closest to this theoretical perspective, namely the social organizational one which emphasizes the institutional properties of news production. It should, however, be specified that I use the term institution in its sociological meaning here, not its political science one. This way, the dissertation inscribes itself within one of the most prominent traditions in recent Danish media research, namely the sociological-institutional one that focuses on the relationship between institutions, structures, and agency (Bondebjerg, 2000). The fact that the point of departure is predominantly institutional also means that institutional theory, specifically the theory of structuration as proposed by Giddens (1979, 1984), will flow as an undercurrent through the entire dissertation. As I will return to different aspects of the theory of structuration throughout the dissertation, I will only present a very brief overview of that theoretical position here:

The theory of structuration represents Giddens' ambitious project to synthesize and bridge two fundamental and in many ways contradictory positions within sociological theory. On the one side is the theoretical position that regards structures and social systems as determining for social action (Durkheim, Marx). On the other side is the theoretical position that gives primacy to agency, regarding social structures as the result of what human actors do (Weber). The difference is, this way, a fundamental one, divided at the question of to what shapes what in the interplay between structure and agency, between institutions and the actions of the human actors within the institutions. Giddens' point is that both of these positions are, to some extent, correct as social structures constitute, simultaneously, the framework and the result of human agency (Giddens, 1979, 1984). The constitution

of society is, this way, the result of relationship of mutual influence between structure and agency. This mutual influencing is what Giddens calls the “duality of structure”, and so, within it, human actors’ possibilities of action are constrained by the social structures they exist within, while these structures are also created and reproduced by that same action. It is an important facet of the theory of structuration that structures do not only exist around or outside actors, but that they also exist as internalized rules and resources for social activity (Giddens, 1984: 17). This way, structures, institutions, rules, and resources are not only external, physical properties – they are also cognitive schemata that regulate, reproduce, and change social activity.

While its theoretical foundation is, this way, relatively narrowly limited, this dissertation is located somewhere at the intersection between three different research fields: journalism studies, mediatization theory, and the research into computer-mediated communication. But first and foremost, it is a research project that focuses on news and journalism through the prism of computer-mediated communication research, using mediatization theory as an explanatory framework, not any other way around. Furthermore, in line with the normatively neutral stance of mediatization theory (Hjarvard, 2004), I should stress that I aim at not taking any normative position here. The dissertation analyzes, explains, and describes changes and transformative processes in contemporary journalism, but it does not aim at passing judgment on whether these developments are “good” or “bad”.

### **Character and structure of the dissertation**

This PhD dissertation is a portfolio of research articles rather than the conventional monograph and consists of three major parts. The first part, which this introduction is also part of, sets the stage as it introduces and contextualizes the research project and outlines its terminology, theoretical framework, and methodology. The *Terminology* section, first, clarifies some of the terminological issues connected with the research. The *Theoretical framework* section, next, goes through the most important theoretical constituents of the dissertation, namely its institutional understanding of journalism, the concept of mediatization, and the four affordances

that news websites constitute for journalists (instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality). The *Research design*, last, presents the scientific theoretical approach of the dissertation (subtle realism) and the methodology of the empirical studies, which consists of a combination of content analysis, case studies, and semi-structured lifeworld interviews. The second part of the dissertation consists of four research articles, which are all at different stages in the peer-review process at the time this dissertation is submitted. The third part provides a summary of the arguments put forth throughout the dissertation, draws conclusions, identifies the most important contributions of the dissertation, and sketches the perspectives for further research which they propose.

The first research article, “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites”, presents a large-scale mapping of the diffusion of the use of the four affordances on Danish news websites. Operationalizing the four affordances, the research article breaks them down into measurable variables whose presence on a sample of 93 news websites has been registered content analytically over a period of almost one month. This way, the research article generates insight into the extent to which Danish news websites use the four affordances in an everyday context. Furthermore, the results are correlated with ownership types and legacy media of the news websites, thereby testing two hypotheses: 1) that ownership matters for the extent of use of the affordances, and 2) that “web native” news websites (i.e., news websites that do not descend from a print or broadcast organization) are more likely to use the affordances. While the first hypothesis is confirmed, the second one is not supported by the findings. This research article is currently in review for the academic journal *Journalism Studies*.

The second research article, “News Websites’ Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian Study”, presents an analysis of the use of the four affordances in the real-time coverage of the terrorist attack in Norway, July 22, 2011. This research article supplements the first one in two ways: first, it qualitatively examines the use of affordances, adding a case-sensitive dimension to the quantitative, statistical measuring; second, it focuses on one particular and highly unusual incident, supplementing the preceding study of the ordinary with a study of the extraordinary. This research article was presented in the “Issues on International News”

panel on the III International Conference on Media and Communication: Media and journalism in an evolving ecosystem in Porto, May 2012; it is currently in review for the academic journal *Norsk Medietidsskrift*.

The third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion” [Forms of reader participation in the news production of news websites], analyzes two critical cases of audience participation in the news production for Danish news websites. On the basis of this analysis, it presents a typology of different forms of audience participation in the news production for news websites, arguing that this participation comes in the form of information provision, collaboration, conversation, or meta-communication. Each of these forms represents different constellations of the journalist-audience relationship. In addition to this theory-building on the basis of empirical finding, the research article contains a theoretical discussion of the very concept of participation. It is a concept which Carpentier (2011) criticizes for being overused in the scholarly literature, and for this reasons he conceptually encircles it to only cover those instances where audiences take part in proper decision-making and, thereby, exercise of power. The argument of the research article, however, is that this understanding is too narrow to be viable in the context of media and communication research. Instead, drawing upon the concept of action from the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1979, 1984), it proposes a broader, yet conceptually focused, way of understanding participation. This research article was presented at the “New Media – New Journalism?” research seminar in Copenhagen, March 2012. It is currently in review for the academic journal *Journalistica*; as this journal is Danish-language, so is this research article.

The fourth and final research article, “The mediatization of journalism”, amalgamates some of the perspectives outlined in the introductory chapters and the three first research articles and argues that the current developments in journalism can be understood as a process of mediatization. The article goes through four prominent trends in contemporary journalism, namely the use of the four affordances (drawing here upon especially the first and second research article), the radical commercialization and the way it plays together with digital technology in influencing news selection, the participation of the audiences (drawing upon the third



research article), and the simultaneous multi-skilling and de-skilling of journalists. Each of these four developments, the article claims, represents an area where the logic of the media institution shapes the journalistic institution that accommodates to the demands of the medium. That way, the trends are illustrative of a mediatization process within journalism. This research article is accepted for publication in the academic journal *MedieKultur*.

The choice of the portfolio format, of course, has some consequences for the dissertation, and I will briefly go through some of the areas where it differentiates itself from the more conventional monograph. First, as each research article must necessarily constitute an independent entity which can be read by readers, who read a journal and do not have at hand this entire dissertation, there will unavoidably be some degree of repetition of methodological, empirical, analytical, and theoretical points and observations. Most striking is the repetitions of the four affordances of news websites, which constitute a major part of the *Theoretical framework* chapter, make up the foundation of the framework in the first two of the research articles (“Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites” and “News Websites’ Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian study”), and plays an important part in the last one (“The Mediatization of Journalism”). Such repetitious writing, however, comes with the territory when writing the dissertation as a portfolio of research articles. Second, the space dedicated to empirical analysis probably turns out more limited than in a monograph PhD dissertation because the actual analyses exists primarily in the research articles. Third, the coherence between the research articles may appear somewhat weaker than it would be between chapters of a monograph. This condition is due to the pragmatic consideration that I have adjusted the focus of some of the research articles slightly in order to accommodate the different publication processes. With the fourth research article (“The mediatization of journalism”), for example, I have followed the recommendations of the peer reviewers and put more emphasis on the aspect of commercialization than I had originally intended to do. Similar adjustments have been undertaken in each of the three other research articles. This way, the analytical part of the dissertation does not have *one* general argument as would a monograph normally; rather, its empirical studies are independent but interconnected studies, whose results do, however, point in the same

direction and amalgamate in the conclusion. The consequential risk of weaker inter-article coherence is mended with the introductory and conclusive chapters, which present a shared theoretical framework and draw conclusions on the basis of the entire dissertation. Simultaneously, one considerable advantage of the portfolio format is that the different research articles have been subject to peer review throughout the period of dissertation writing, improving the quality of the research.



# Terminology

Before moving on to the theoretical framework, I will spend a few pages clarifying some of the terminological issues that could arise from reading the dissertation. These issues have to do with the often overlooked distinctions between journalism and news and between internet and web as well as with the ontological status of news websites. As such, this short chapter touches upon the underlying assumptions of the dissertation, as does the theoretical chapter that follows.

## **Journalism and news**

As stated earlier, this research has an institutional, sociologically-informed point of departure, focusing attention on the relationship between institutions, agency, and texts. As I will return to in the *Research design* chapter, the scientific theoretical foundation of the dissertation is moderately influenced by constructivism as it regards knowledge, both journalistically and academically produced, as the result of work processes conducted by human actors. This knowledge production, however, must, of course, be grounded in reality (cf. Schudson, 2005). So, I distinguish sharply between journalism and news, even though journalism often “Literally taken, [...] refers to the product or the work of professional ‘news-people’” (McQuail, 2000: 498, emphasis added). Throughout the dissertation, journalism, on the one hand, refers to the institution that produces news and the work that takes place within that institution. As journalism is a complex phenomenon, I have dedicated

a major section of the theory chapter (*An institutional perspective on journalism*) to discuss it, and for this reason, I will not get deeper into it now.

News, on the other hand, is used as an umbrella term that refers to the outcome of journalistic work; that is, it is what is in the printed newspapers, the radio and television broadcasts, and on the news websites. It is the result of news workers information gathering and processing in connection with presenting occurrences in the news media; that journalistic processing is constituted by the practices of journalism (see, again, the section *An institutional perspective on journalism*) and rests on a selection among all the occurrences that happen every day. This way, news is a “socially constructed representation of reality” (I. Schultz, 2006: 15, my translation), the form, frame, and specific content of which depend on choices made by knowledgeable actors within the institution of journalism (see, e.g., Gravengaard, 2010; Hjarvard, 2012b; Tuchman, 1973). With this constructivist informed understanding of news, this dissertation is in opposition to the prevalent, but also yielding, metaphor among journalists that journalism is simply a mirror with which “News is equated [...] to all that happens, without any filtering on the part of the journalists” (Zelizer, 2005b: 69). That being said, however, I do, of course, acknowledge Schudson’s point that journalists “do not produce news out of nothing. They act on ‘something’ in the world” (2005: 172).

In a glossary entry, McQuail (2000: 500) defines news as:

“The main form in which current information about public events is carried by media of all kinds. There is a great diversity of types and formats as well as cross-cultural differences, but defining characteristics are generally held to be timeliness, relevance and reliability (truth value).”

Even though this definition does not specify what exactly constitute that “main form”, it nonetheless identifies a number of important characteristics of news. Each of these characteristics could be the subject of longform writing, but I will only go through them briefly here. First, news is timely (key words in the quote from McQuail: “current” and “timeliness”). This characteristic ties to the key temporal dimension of news which is also apparent in the etymology of the very word

‘news’ that descends from ‘new’ (and similar etymological connections exist for the words for news in numerous other languages, cf. Rantanen, 2009: 1). Old occurrences can, however, also provide a basis for news if they were not publicly known before; in these instances, it is the hitherto unshared knowledge that constitutes the news (Rantanen, 2009). Second, news has to do with information (“information”). Third, news concerns public as opposed to private matters (“public events”), as it is intended for a wider audience than, for example, interpersonal communication. Fourth, news is not tied to only one specific medium (“carried by media of all kinds”) but can be produced for, circulated on, and consumed on any kind of media. Fifth, news is relevant (“relevance”); was it not, it would not be interesting for the public. And sixth, news is truthful (“reliability”): in spite of high-profile examples of the, the news must be in compliance with the actual, objective course of occurrences – otherwise audiences would lose trust in the news organizations and the journalistic institution.

This listing of McQuail’s, however, only constitutes an encirclement of what characterizes news; as Eide (2011: 15, my translation) points out, “the concept of news [is] more diverse than many textbooks would have it”...

### **Internetization, internet, and web**

In an early stage of my research, a senior researcher from another university introduced me to the term ‘internetization’ and asserted that what I was actually researching was the “internetization of news”. To some extent, I agree with him – but as the term internetization is both weakly defined and terminologically flawed, a short digression to touch upon it in relation to this dissertation is in place. It is also directly related to a central ontological dichotomy concerning computer-mediated communication which many researchers as well as lay persons have gotten wrong.

On a terminological level, the very term internetization was introduced in media studies by Fortunati (2005) who, unfortunately, somewhat forgets to define it. The closest she gets to a definition per se is that it has to do with “the influence of the internet style on classic media” (Fortunati, 2005: 27) and “the use of internet layout” (Fortunati, 2005: 39) in mass media; what exactly constitutes the internet style

and layout that she refers to, remains unspecified, however. This way, Fortunati seems to use internetization as an almost common-sensical term to describe what happens to media content when it comes in contact with the internet. A more concrete definition of internetization can be found within economics and business studies where, for instance, Etemad et al. (2010: 319) use the term “to refer to the process of increasing adoption, diffusion, and deployment of internet-based technologies and processes”; that is, the utilization of the information-conveying infrastructure of the internet.

This connects to the second problem with the term internetization as used by Fortunati, namely that it ties in with the common misunderstanding that the concepts ‘internet’ and ‘web’ refer to the same phenomenon and can be used interchangeably. That is not the case. The internet, on the one hand, is “the global, interconnected network of computer networks” (Featherly, 2003: 247) that enables the transfer of information in the form of pieced-up packages through cables or wireless connections; this way, the internet is basically a communicative infrastructure which a variety of technologies can connect to. The web (properly called the World Wide Web), on the other hand, is a hypertext-based application that runs on top of the internet and enables navigation between different websites; if conducted in a browser, this navigation can be graphical. While the internet was developed in a cooperation between military, research, and commercial interests since the late 1960s (Castells, 2003), the web protocol was not published until 1991 by CERN scientist Tim Berners-Lee and is only one of several applications that utilizes the interconnectedness of the internet. Other such applications include email, FTP (File Transfer Protocol), and various music-on-demand and video-on-demand service.

When Fortunati refers to internet style and layout, it seems to have more to do with the aesthetic representations made possible by the web application than with the information traffic made possible by the internet. For this reason, ‘webification’ would appear to be a more appropriate term for what she describes. As such, I do not agree with my peer that the internetization of news is what I research; since the style and layout of news websites comprise different instantiations of the four affordances mentioned above (instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality), he would have been much more correct in asserting, that I research

is the webification of news. That, however, is such an inept term, that I will abstain from using it.

### **News on the web**

When I say that my focus is on news on the web, it means that the type of news that is pivotal in this research is that on news websites. One should not automatically mistake news on the web with online news, even though the latter is often used in the meaning of the former, for example in the titles of the book *Online News. Journalism and the Internet* (Allan, 2006). According to Nguyen (2007), “online news [is] news over point-to-point communication networks”; that is, electronic or digital news which audiences can access individually at their own time of choosing (as opposed to broadcast news which audiences must receive simultaneously with the broadcaster’s sending out). With this definition, online news include, in addition to news on the web, also the now terminated Videotex (see the section *Context of the dissertation* above), teletext news. and news for mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers (“news apps”). While I have conducted my research and written the dissertation, especially mobile news has gained a prominent position in news consumption as well as the scholarly literature (Westlund, 2013). This type of news does, however, not play a part in this research project because even though it uses the internet infrastructure to be disseminated, it can exist entirely separate from the web. So while I do acknowledge the increasing importance of mobile news, I leave it out of this account. However, even though a computer will normally be the medium used for accessing news websites, audiences can, of course, also access news websites on smartphones; but they will still be news websites even though they appear on smaller, mobile screens.

### **News websites**

The last section of this terminologically clarifying chapter concerns one of the most central terms in the dissertation, namely news websites. News websites are



often referred to as “internet newspapers” (Falkenberg, 2009; Li, 2006b) – in Danish, the common term for news websites is exactly ‘netavis’, which literally translates to ‘net newspaper’ – but that is a term I will refrain from using<sup>3</sup>. The reason is that it privileges terminologically the websites of newspapers, even though many news websites come from broadcast legacy media or are “web natives” in the sense that were started for the web, not in an offline medium; in the research article “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites”, for example, 24 of the 93 examined Danish news websites (equivalent to 25.8 percent) are not from newspaper organizations. The term internet newspaper suggests some degree of remediation – that is, “the representation of one medium in another” (Bolter & Grusin, 1999: 45) – of the printed newspaper. The remediation thesis might have been more viable in the early days of web-based publishing where so-called shovelware (i.e., the knee-jerk repurposing of content from the printed newspaper on websites) constituted most of the content of news websites (cf. Massey & Levy, 1999; Neuberger, Tonnemacher, Biebl, & Duck, 1998). However, as quite a few news organizations have “digital first” publication strategies (Andreassen, 2012; Boczkowski, 2004; Indvik, 2011), the empirical reality seem to have superseded this thesis in connection with news.

Fundamentally, I apply Falkenberg’s definition of “internet newspaper” to news website, even though I do use another term. In his definition, it is:

“A website, or a part of website, with editorial content that informs the public about current events of general or more specialized interest and that additionally can contain a broad range of other content, services, entertainment and/ or advertising” (Falkenberg, 2009: 93, my translation).

Falkenberg’s definition is valuable in the sense that it goes beyond the websites of newspapers specifically (even though he uses the label internet newspapers) and simultaneously highlights the presence of editorial content and acknowledges that this content does not constitute the entirety of what is on the news websites. It is a definition that helps demarcate what are the boundaries of the dissertation – a

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<sup>3</sup> Except in the Danish-language third research article, “Former for læser-inddragelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, where I follow normal Danish terminology.

demarcation that, for example, the news dissemination and distribution taking place on social media fall outside of. Even though social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter play an increasingly important role in both the public's news consumption (Bødker, forthcoming/2013; Newman, 2011) and the scholarly literature on news and journalism (Hermida, 2010; Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012), they quantitatively constitute a fringe phenomenon compared to the news websites of established news organizations: for instance, "getting links to the general flow of news is typically an added bonus when you are on Facebook anyway. It is not a medium you actively use to get news" (Schrøder & Kobbernagel, 2012: 42, my translation).

The question remains, however, how we are to ontologically understand news websites. The central tension concern whether news websites should be considered a (news) medium in its own rights or a genre of the web, for according to both Hjarvard (1999a) and Finnemann (2005a), old media becomes genres of new media when they are embedded in the digital technological structure and its binary alphabet. In the discussion of this tension, one influential meta-analysis of media and communication research is particularly helpful, namely the one of Meyrowitz (1993) who, asking the elementary question of what media actually are, identifies three different metaphors for media which permeate the research literature: media as conduits, media as languages, and media as environments. These metaphors mirror the often implicit understandings researchers have of the subject of their studies, and they can help approximate the ontological status of news websites, which I take in this dissertation.

The first metaphor is that of a medium as a conduit "that is important insofar as it delivers *content*" (Meyrowitz, 1993: 56, emphasis in original). Here, the medium is a channel or vehicle for conveying content from sender to receiver, and the content may transfer from one medium to another relatively unproblematic. From this perspective, which is the most common in media and communication research, the internet is a medium of which websites – including also news websites – constitute a large part of the content. Subscribers to this understanding of media would consider news websites a particular genre of the web because they are only one among many other kinds of content delivered by the internet. The second and third meta-

phors, however, lead to opposite interpretations of the ontology of news websites. The second metaphor is namely that of a medium as a language: the point here is that media have different “grammars” in the sense that they hold different inclinations concerning form and presentation. In the same way that different languages can express the same meaning but must do so differently because of differences in grammar and vocabularies, different media can also have the same content but the differences in media grammar will make the presentation different. Subscribers to this understanding of media would consider news websites a particular news medium because they have their own distinctive grammar compared to other news media (printed newspaper, radio, and television); news websites simply do have variables that other news media do not and that is “altering the presentation and meaning of content elements” (Meyrowitz, 1993: 59). The third metaphor is that of a medium as an environment. Here, the understanding is that media constitute a setting or context for communication, and the focus is on the material characteristics of the medium, often in relation to other types of media. Subscribers to this understanding of media would also consider news websites a news medium in its own rights because the interconnected web of websites constitutes a wholly different environment for news than does, say, the range of printed paper in terms of functionalities and possibilities regarding presentation and circulation.

This dissertation focuses on technological dimension of news websites, and its affordances for news workers, and on how these affordances are used. As such, it does not examine specifically the content of the news (i.e., that which could also exist in other news media: narrative structures, sources, framings, etc.). This way, the research is to begin with closest to the language and the environment metaphors identified by Meyrowitz, and its ontological understanding of news websites is obviously marked by that point of departure. For this reason, acknowledging the perspective that news websites can also be understood as a specific genre or type of websites, I understand them first and foremost as a separate news medium that has its own possibilities in terms of presentation and dissemination and holds a unique set of affordances (see the section *The four affordances of news websites* below) for actors working with news production.

# Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework which the analyses unfold within. This exposition serves dual purposes in that it both emphasizes the theoretical positions I take and apply throughout the rest of the dissertation and expounds the underlying assumptions of the arguments. The theoretical framework consists of three main parts, two of which are founded in sociological, institutional theory while the third one is closer connected to technology studies. First, in line with the theoretical cornerstone of this dissertation's approach, the chapter discusses the concept of journalism from an institutional perspective, focusing on the rules and resources which the institution consists of. Second, it reviews mediatization theory, which can provide a theoretical perspective for grasping institutional transformative processes in contemporary society. Third, on the basis of both the existing scholarly literature and interviews with news workers (the methodology of which I return to in the chapter *Research design*), it outlines the four affordances that constitute one dimension of the media logic of news websites.

Since the concept of affordances is a relational one, which describes the point of connection between a motivation and an object or technology, it is situated on another theoretical and analytical level than journalism and mediatization. While affordances relate to agency, to how individual actors interact with technology in specific situations, both journalism and mediatization are here understood in structural, institutional terms. There is, however, no contradiction connected with working across these separate levels. For this dissertation is about how journalism appropriates the technological features of the new news medium of news websites.

It is an appropriation that does not take place on an institutional level but on the micro level of actors' individual behavior. Here, they use (or do not use) the affordances of news websites in conducting their day-to-day work, and the institutional appropriation of the technological affordances, then, occurs when that aggregated use reaches institutional scope. As both Giddens (1979, 1984) and Schrott (2009) point to, institutional macro structures are shaped by micro-level behavior (which is, in turn, also shaped by the institutions).

### **An institutional perspective on journalism**

While I do acknowledge that several different perspectives on journalism exist (see, e.g., Zelizer, 2005b) and do constitute both valid and valuable contributions to understanding the multi-faceted concept of journalism, I apply an institutional perspective here in accordance with the sociological-institutional approach of this dissertation (see also the fourth research article, "The mediatization of journalism"). It is a position which also, for example, Cook (2005), Eide (2011), Hjarvard (1999c), and Ørsten (2005) assume. In connection with news on the web specifically and the journalism that produces it, the institutional perspective has often not been the most prominent one in the scholarly literature. Instead, a cultural perspective which might better capture the news work conducted by individuals beyond news organizations has proliferated here (cf., e.g., Russell, 2011). However, in order to treat journalism as an institution, it will first be necessary to move back one step and determine what sociological theory understands by the concept of institution in the first place.

According to Giddens, whose theory of structuration (Giddens, 1979, 1984) does, after all, constitute the theoretical undercurrent of this dissertation, "Institutions [...] are patterns of social activity reproduced across time and space" (Giddens, 1986: 11). Being such patterns of social activity, institutions consist of rules and resources, constraining and enabling properties, which regulate the agency of the reflexive, knowledgeable actors who continuously reproduce and thereby sustain the institutions. They are the structures within and through which human agency is employed. Such a description, however, calls for unpacking and terminological

clarification. The point is that institutions, on the one hand, are constraining as they represent limitations (or rules) concerning how actors within the institution can behave without violating the institutional norms, beliefs, and role expectations. But on the other hand, institutions also create possibilities for agents because they represent a knowledge reservoir concerning what constitutes adequate action in specific social situations, enabling human actors to behave in the first place. An important insight of the theory of structuration is that the knowledge about and conventions concerning adequate action in social situations is constantly renegotiated and reproduced by agents as they engage socially. This way, institutions are reproduced and maintained by human actors who continuously conduct the actions (i.e., the social activities), which constitute the institutions. What then characterizes institutions specifically and distinguish them from any other kind of social activities is the way they extend their patterns of social activity across time and space: “Those practices which have the greatest time-space extensions [...] can be referred to as *institutions*” (Giddens, 1984: 17. emphasis in original).

So, institutions consist of rules and resources, and so does the journalistic institution as well. Some rules are formal, as it is the case with regulatory frameworks concerning competition laws and the news media’s relation to the state, press councils and other watchdogs of journalistic rectitude, and written guidelines for press standards (see also Kristensen, 2000). But because most of the rules are shared and implicit conceptions of how to behave as a journalist, they are informal, rather – and as in other social situations, violations of the rules for adequate behavior is followed by social sanctions. Equally important are the resources that the journalistic institution represents: as Giddens (1984) specifies and Hjarvard (1999c) elaborates upon, these resources are both physical and mental. The physical resources are, for example, the working tools of journalists (e.g., note pads, dictaphones, cameras, and computers – now all combined in smartphones and tablet computers) as well as the technological and organizational infrastructure of news organizations that make news work practically possible in the first place. Also the affordances of news websites, the use of which I examine in especially the first two research articles, constitute parts of the physical resources. The mental resources, for their part, exist primarily in the culture of journalism and the norms and values it comprises. As Schudson’s (2005) overview of the different sociologically in-

formed approaches to journalism research (referenced in the section *Hypothesis, research questions, and approach* above) indicates, the cultural perspective on journalism is a particularly prominent one (Hanitzsch, 2007; Russell, 2011; Ryfe, 2012; Zelizer, 2005a). According to Zelizer, journalism is a culture in the sense that it functions “through a shared reliance on meanings, rituals, conventions, symbol systems and consensual understandings” (Zelizer, 2005a: 201) of what news work is and how it is conducted.

Central to this cultural perspective is the understanding of journalism as the collection, presentation, and circulation of publicly relevant information in order to secure an informed citizenry and, so, the best possible conditions for democracy. Journalism and the news it produces must enable its audience to participate in the public sphere, and, furthermore, the news media often constitute the very space or forum where such public participation takes place (cf. Habermas, 1989). An important constituent of this foundation of journalism is the self-perception among news workers of the news media as a fourth estate of democracy which reviews the legislative, judiciary, and executive estates (Eide, 2011; Hjarvard, 1995b). It is a perception which also exists among a large number of their audiences. Even though this watchdog function of the press is frequently criticized for being an ideal, which much actually conducted journalism does not live up to (Davies, 2009), it nevertheless constitutes an important point of orientation in many journalists’ inner compass. Such a position also presupposes autonomy from other societal institutions.

Journalism holds a number of shared professional practices. These practices include, prominently, the use of news values. News values are characteristics which occurrences can have or not have, and the basic assumption is that the more news values they represent, the more likely they are to be picked up by news workers and transformed into news. In a seminal study, Galtung and Ruge (1965: 65, emphasis in original) ask “*how do ‘events’ become ‘news?’*” (even if it may actually have been more accurate to ask *why* events do become news); that is, which characteristics of occurrences is it that make some qualify for news making and disqualify others? Answering this question, they identify eight universal news values, namely frequency, intensity, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance (with

mental images of news workers), unexpectedness, continuity, and composition (i.e., balancing in relation to other news). To these eight, they add the more context dependent news values of reference to elite nations or to elite people, personification, and negativity. Even though their list has received criticism for being a theoretical construct rather than empirical reality of much news making (Hjarvard, 1995a), for being skewed by its focus on the coverage of major international crisis rather than day-to-day journalism (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001), and for not sufficiently taking the situated context of news production and the imperative of presenting *something* as news into account (Gravengaard, 2010; I. Schultz, 2006), the overall framework and mindset of Galtung and Ruge, nevertheless, remains relevant. There may be disagreement among journalism researchers regarding the precise identification of news values, and different news organizations, editors, and journalists do assess and apply news values in different ways. But even so, only few would dispute that news work is, to a large degree, conducted in accordance with such news values; the discussion about news values is about nuances, not fundamentals. As I return to in the fourth research article, however, this traditional understanding of news values is currently undergoing some transformations.

Another practice exists in the relation between journalists and sources. Sources are “the actors who contribute to the journalistic research and the concrete news story with information” (Kristensen, 2004: 14, my translation) and are as such a necessity for journalists who cannot produce news stories without information. However, the dependency is reciprocal because sources also need journalists in order to have their points of view represented in the news media<sup>4</sup>. For this reason, the relationship between journalists and sources is a relationship of negotiation, where both parties have particular interests to tend to, and where journalistic professionalism entails some basic ground rules. Kristensen (2004) mentions four main aspects of these rules, namely that journalists select their sources with primarily the story and the preferred avoidance of single-source stories in mind, that they remain critical to their sources, that the information exchange between journalist and source

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<sup>4</sup> With the proliferation of social media, however, sources have gotten new possibilities for communicating directly to their stakeholders and members of the public. For example, when Barack Obama won the US presidential election in 2012, he announced the victory on Twitter instead of through traditional mass (news) media. Nevertheless, when sources want to reach larger segments of the population, the news media are normally still a key factor.



builds upon some degree of trust, and, finally, that journalists protect their sources (in case they appear anonymous or have provided background information “off the record”). Other “consensual understandings”, which journalists draw upon, are a relatively stable repertoire of journalistic genres (Meilby, 1996) and a preoccupation with the present tense (Lewis & Cushion, 2009; Rantanen, 2009).

Most important, however, is probably the journalistic commitment to objectivity (Andrén et al., 1979; Eide, 2011; Kristensen, 2000). At its core, the notion of objectivity relates to truth, to give the audiences accurate, unbiased accounts of the issues and occurrences in question; it is, to paraphrase an integral part of US courtrooms and crime shows, an ideal which places an obligation on journalists to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”. Such objectivity is deeply rooted in journalistic self-understanding, even if geographical differences in the ways news workers understand the norm and translate it into the news exist. In a historical exposé, Schudson (2001) ties the norm of objectivity to journalism in the US primarily, and the comparative study of media systems and journalistic professionalism conducted by Hallin and Mancini (2004) support this claim as they find a more explicit inclination in European news media to advocate political positions. Nevertheless, objectivity is also hailed as a journalistic hallmark in Europe (Kristensen, 2000; Meilby, 1996). But as the postmodern perspective that journalists are not omniscient and that objective readings of events do not exist (a position which, for example, Lichtenberg, 2000, opposes) has proliferated, impartiality has to some degree taken over the place of objectivity, claiming instead that journalists are fair and balanced in their reporting and represent the points of view of all the actors in a given story (Kinsey, 2005).

These constituents of the culture of journalism are closely connected to the informal rules of journalism inasmuch that a violation of them will be followed by social sanctions from other actors within the institution. In 2010, for example, the Danish journalist Kurt Lassen disclosed details from an interview “off the record” in connection with a biographical book about the then Director-General of Danmarks Radio, Kenneth Plummer. He allegedly did so because the subject of the book offered him confidential information in exchange for the protection of his private life – and Lassen thought that this careless handling of confidential information

should be part of the book. While some sympathized with Lassen's motives, most members of the Danish journalistic society promptly distanced themselves from his practice because it violated the normal standards for relationships between sources and journalists; if that was how journalists treated sources who spoke off the record, the argument was, the sources would stop doing so. This point of view was expressed in an official press release from the professional association of Danish journalists, for instance (Johannesen, 2010). So, the consequence for Lassen was widespread disapproval from peers and colleagues as well as conspicuous critique from his trade union.

In an effort to link journalism more closely to the sociological theory of institutions, Cook (2005) draws upon a theoretical framework provided by Huntington and Dominguez (1975) and identifies three distinguished characteristics of journalism as an institution. The first characteristic is that social patterns of behavior, norms, and values exist. These patterns largely consist of the "consensual understandings" outlined above as well as certain work routines, for example that editorial meetings often start with an overview of what the competing news organizations have on their agenda (I. Schultz, 2006) or that journalists in the field attend a fairly consistent selection of locations ("beats") to seek out stories (Cook, 2005; Schudson, 2003). The second characteristic is that institutions expand over time and space, and according to Ryfe (2012: 5-6), the conception of journalism (as opposed to those of 'news' and of a 'journalist') dates back to the 1830s. This way, journalism has a quite long history, and so, in the very first paragraph of their 2nd edition of *The Elements of Journalism*, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007: ix) claim that "the elements of journalism remain fundamental and enduring". However, as Cook (2005: 68) notes, "such endurance needs not be equated with stasis", and even though the fundamentals of the institution are stable, journalism, of course, develops. In a Danish context, for example, journalism has dowsed from being a propaganda platform for political interests to being an entirely autonomous institution to now again moving back towards realigning with particular political and commercial interests (Hjarvard, 2007; I. Schultz, 2007a). In a broader context, Hallin (2011) argues, journalism has also taken a turn towards postmodernism as it is increasingly fragmented, opinionated, populist, entertainment oriented, and com-

mercialized. This way, it is the fundamentals of journalism that remain stable, not necessarily the many instantiations of it in day-to-day journalistic work.

While these first two characteristics are very closely connected to the conceptualization of institutions in Giddens' theory of structuration, the third one rather relates journalism to democracy and societal structures. The third and final distinctive characteristic of institutions, that Cook mentions, is namely that they preside over social domains: the family is the institution that has traditionally structured intimacy, love, and child-rearing (Laslett, 1973), and the political institution is the one that manages the authoritative distribution of values in society (Easton, 1971). Journalism is the institution that produces and publicly circulates new knowledge about current events; or as Eide puts it, "*Journalism is a modern institution that collects, processes, and communicates information which claims to be true and that can be democratically relevant*" (2011: 10, emphasis in original, my translation). This institutional aspect ties to the understanding of the news media and journalism as a fourth estate of democracy. This is the part of journalism that many researchers focus most extensively on when they deal with journalism as an institution, namely its functioning vis-à-vis the political institutions of society.

It is a feature of institutions that they do not exist in and of themselves; rather, they are reproduced, maintained, and over time changed by the actions of those actors who act within them. These actors are what Giddens (1979, 1984) calls "knowledgeable"; that is, they have tacit or explicit (or, in Giddens' terminology: practical or discursive) knowledge about how to deal reflexively with the concrete situations they appear in, drawing upon mental schemata of adequate behavior and how to conduct it. It is, however, also important to remember that:

"such knowledge does not specify all the situations which an actor might meet with, nor could it do so; rather, it provides for the generalized capacity to respond to and influence an indeterminate range of social circumstances." (Giddens, 1984: 22)

Action is reflexive, and it is always situated: actors act on the basis of interpretations of the concrete social context and, consequently, adjust their behavior to suit the specific situation. That actions builds upon interpretation, however, does not

necessarily mean that actors thoroughly contemplate every single act they undertake – on the contrary, much action appears to be just the natural way to behave, because it draws upon experience from earlier, similar social situations. This way, most social activity is conducted as tacit, practical knowledge about adequate behavior in social situations. Within the institution of journalism, this kind of enabling tacit knowledge takes the form of a “journalistic gut feeling” (I. Schultz, 2007b) or a “sixth sense of news” (Zelizer, 2005b: 68) that guides the journalists. This kind of gut feeling or sixth sense comes from training and experience, and it is one which the long trainee periods in journalism education is aimed at cultivating. That tacit knowledge is highly valued within journalism, and tellingly, a survey among Norwegian editors recently showed that they would prefer journalists with two extra years of practice to journalists with two extra years of formal education (Eide, 2011: 31).

The question, then, is who these knowledgeable actors of the institution of journalism are. The immediate and apparently self-evident answer would be journalists and editors. According to Kristensen (2000), journalists are professional actors working in the cross field between routinized paid employment, idealistic vocation, and creativity in news organizations. But just answering professional journalists and editors would not take into account those recent developments within journalism, which has blurred the boundaries of who are journalists and what they do. For one thing, “Thinking journalistically is not something that journalists have a monopoly of” (Eide, 2011: 36, my translation), and there are innumerable examples of actors who are outside news organizations but do nevertheless adhere to the culture of journalism and conduct journalistic work. There are several different terms and concepts thrown around concerning this kind of journalistic work, but what they share is the underlying premise of broadening journalism beyond organizational settings: “citizen journalism” (Allan, 2009) is journalistic work conducted by non-professional, ordinary people; “participatory journalism” (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Lasica, 2003; Singer, et al., 2011b) is journalism that is conducted by organizational actors with participation from ordinary people; “public journalism” (Bro, 1998; Glasser, 1999; Rosen, 1999) is a movement which aims at reconnecting news media, journalists, and the public by engaging ordinary people in the news-making process; and “networked journalism” (Jarvis, 2006; Russell, 2011) is journal-

ism that is conducted collaboratively in inconstant configurations of both amateurs and professionals. What these different perspectives all have in common is that they also challenge traditional notions of who conducts journalism and of what journalism is. In a related study, Lowrey and Latta (2008) conclude that the larger audiences bloggers reach and the more influential their writing becomes, the more their working routines resemble those of professional journalists, thereby blurring the boundaries of 'journalists' even more.

Furthermore, within news organizations as well, the demarcation of 'journalists' is unclear. Here, the tasks of journalists have expanded, and multi-skilling has become a new norm in the newsroom. Multi-skilling is that journalists' professional competencies go beyond mere information gathering and processing to also include skills such as photographing, copy-writing, and typesetting (Bromley, 1997), and this type of journalists has become increasingly prominent in the digital environment (Deuze, 2007; Steensen, 2009). Likewise, after the transition to a digital environment, "every journalist needs to understand at a basic literacy level what code is, what it can do, and how to communicate with those who are more proficient" (Anderson, Bell, & Shirky, 2012: 38), simply because coding is becoming an increasingly important part of producing content for websites. The underlying logic is one of both technology and economy: as media have converged and all steps of the news-making process take place on compatible digital platforms, news organizations under commercial pressure can save resources by having journalists do more of the practical as well as journalistic work connected to news making and news dissemination. This trend of multi-skilling of journalists is one I will return to in the fourth research article, "The mediatization of journalism".

Simultaneously, people, who are related to the newsroom but have traditionally not been directly involved in doing journalism, now also undertake journalistic work. When the news website of Danish tabloid Ekstra Bladet, for example, covered the demonstrations in connection with the COP15 summit in Copenhagen, December, 2009 (see the third research article, "Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion", and Kammer, 2011), some of the most memorable reporting was conducted by technical staffers who had constructed a portable video device and broadcast live web video from the frontline of the demonstrations.

So, because of both external and internal changes in who conducts journalism, the term ‘journalist’ may cover only some of the knowledgeable actors involved in the reproduction of the institution of journalism. In order to avoid that ambiguity, I use the term ‘news worker’ throughout this dissertation when referring to professionals who work with news making.

## **Mediatization**

The next central part of the theoretical framework of this dissertation is that of mediatization. One of the most important recent contributions to the theoretical vocabulary of media and communication research, mediatization theory is a macro-sociological theoretical perspective that emphasizes media as an independent institution and as agents of societal and cultural change. It has been used at a theoretical framework for understanding current developments in such diverse fields as, for instance, politics (Dindler, 2011; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2011; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009), religion (Clark, 2008; Hjarvard, 2005b, 2008b; Petersen, 2012), and consumption (Jansson, 2002). With this dissertation, I suggest to add to this line of mediatized institutions that of journalism; it is a proposition that has earlier been made by Hjarvard (2008a, 2010), who, however, has not further pursued that theoretical perspective.

As is often the case with novel theoretical positions, the central concept of mediatization remains disputed, and it is telling that ‘mediatization’ is one of the only keywords in the Danish *Media and Communications Encyclopedia* (Kolstrup, Agger, Jauert, & Schrøder, 2009) that has two separate entries (Finnemann, 2009; Hjarvard & Finnemann, 2009). According to Krotz (2009), mediatization constitutes a meta-process which, alongside globalization, commercialization, and individualization, shapes modernity, making human communication increasingly dependent on media. Similarly focusing on communication, Finnemann (2009) proposes mediatization to describe the level of “medianess” of a medium technology; electronic media such as television are, for example, more mediatized than writing as they depend on more sophisticated media technology than the earlier stages in media history.

First and foremost, however, mediatization theory is an institutional (or macro-sociological) theory. From this point of view, which especially Hjarvard (2004, 2005b, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2009, 2010, 2012a; Hjarvard & Finnemann, 2009) adduces and also Schrott (2009) advocates, mediatization is a geographically and historically contingent process that accelerated in highly industrialized societies in the second half of the 20th century where the media started to develop into a social institution in its own rights. While the media used to operate in the service of other institutions (e.g., as communication tools for political or religious institutions), they now serve primarily themselves. And as the media have such gained institutional autonomy and have simultaneously come to play a central part in modern society where media presence is crucial for social actors, other institutions of society begin to adjust in order to accommodate the logic of the media. By doing so, they become mediatized; “The core of mediatization consists in the mechanism of the institutionalization of media logic in other societal subsystems” (Schrott, 2009: 42). As a foundation for this perspective, Hjarvard defines mediatization as basically “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (Hjarvard, 2008d: 113). Here, even though Hjarvard refers explicitly to “society” as that which is being mediatized, it is clear from his larger body of writing about mediatization that “society” also encompasses its different institutions more specifically and the activities within them.

It should be noted that as mediatization applies to different institutions or spheres of society, it does so with different impacts. For this reason, Hjarvard (2004) introduces the distinction between weak and strong mediatization. By strong (also called direct) mediatization, he refers to processes where activities that were previously not dependent on media assume a mediated form; home banking, for instance, constitutes an example of such strong mediatization as a previously non-mediated activity (the face-to-face encounter with a bank clerk) now takes place by means of a computer. Weak mediatization, on the contrary, consists of processes where activities are increasingly influenced by media logic; one illustrative example of such weak mediatization is the way politicians are increasingly speaking in “soundbites” when interviewed for television news because they know that short statements have better chances of being used in the news broadcasts (Hjarvard,

1999b). Furthermore, because mediatization is about change and transformation, it should not be confused with mediation, which entails first and foremost that communication does not take place face-to-face but relies on some sort of medium technology.

One particularly vocal critic of the theory of mediatization is Couldry (2008), who takes exception to two points of the theoretical framework. First, he critiques the framing of mediatization as a linearly progressing historical development “from ‘pre-media’ (before the intervention of specific media) to ‘mediatized’” (Couldry, 2008: 375), arguing that such a linear perspective cannot capture the plurality of dynamics that are at play in the transformations of different social institutions. Later (in Couldry, 2012), he, however, adopts Krotz’ perspective and accepts mediatization as a meta-process of modernity. More central in the critique by Couldry is his reservations about mediatization theory’s underlying assumption of a media logic. Media logic, which both Hjarvard (2008a, 2008d) and Schrott (2009) explicitly reference as a conceptual cornerstone of mediatization theory, was introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979) to describe how media work and which forms and formats they indirectly sustain:

“In general terms, *media logic* consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how material is organized, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena.” (Altheide & Snow, 1979: 10, emphasis in original)

The critique from Couldry – which has also been voiced by, for example, Lundby (2009b) – addresses the notion that *one* such media logic should exist. Encircling the concept, Hjarvard specifies that by media logic, he understands “the institutional, technological and expressive characteristics of media” (Hjarvard, 2008d: 126), but Couldry makes the objection that what characterizes different media is not necessarily the same. On the contrary, there will often be fundamental differ-



ences between the institutional, technological, and expressive (i.e., aesthetic or rhetorical) formats of different media. Different logics are at work with different media, and for this reason Couldry considers mediatization theory reductionist as it cannot capture the heterogeneous developments and transformations that take place. However, the necessity that follows from this position of differentiating the media logic seems to be already inscribed in Hjarvard's conceptualization of mediatization theory as he just accentuates that the concrete instances of mediatization must be subject to empirical analysis (Hjarvard, 2004). Such analyses must also include an exposition of the specific mediagenic context in question, including the logic of the medium which is the subject of the research. As such, Couldry is right when he disputes the idea of *one* media logic as a structuring force in relation to the institutions of society. But that position is not in opposition to mediatization theory. For within mediatization theory, media logic might above all be a heuristic device which should be subject to empirical analysis and contextualization when applied in a concrete research situation.

In the section *A media logic of news websites*, I return to Altheide and Snow's concept of media logic and argue that the presentational features, which the four affordances of news websites makes possible, can be understood in terms of media logic.

It is an important underlying assumption of this dissertation that the media institution is not the same as the institution of journalism, even though the two are closely related and to some degree overlap. The media institution, on the one hand, is a diverse and complex constellation of different types of media with all their different formats, presentational characteristics, audience perceptions, and processes of production, distribution, and consumption. This way, the media institution seems rather diffuse as it does not consist of certain stable social patterns of rules and resources. The institution of journalism, on the other hand, relates strictly to the rules and resources of journalism, the cultural and professional characteristics outlined above, and has to do solely with the production and public circulation of new knowledge about current events. But the line between these two institutions (to the degree that one can talk about *the* media institution) is blurred. It is so because the logic of the media, to which other institutions accommodate when

they become mediatized, is actually first and foremost the formats of journalism. For example, when researchers talk about the mediatization of politics, it often relates to how political actors adjust their behavior and the presentation of their messages in order to accommodate the news values of journalism and fit the formats of journalism.

Being an institutional theory, mediatization theory occupies itself primarily with developments and changes on a structural macro level while processes on mezzo and micro levels are rarely the subject of mediatization research; this is a shortcoming which, for example, Petersen (2012) has called for an adjustment of focus in order to comply with. From the macro focus of attention, a bias towards societal changes follows, and the relationship between macro processes of mediatization and micro processes of social behavior remains a blind spot in much mediatization research. Schrott (2009), however, is one who addresses this blind spot of the theory and asks how media-induced transformations in social structures and situations on the macro level translate into changes in individual behavior on a micro level, and how that behavior in turn influences what happens at the macro level.

According to Schrott, mediatization processes occur in precisely the interplay between social situations and individual behavior, between macro and micro. Social situations and structures are affected by the media being an independent institution. For this reason, the media and their logic have to be taken into consideration by human actors who are situated in and must respond to the specifics of the social situations. These considerations naturally influence the individuals' behavior, which will adjust to the demands and formats of the media in the way that seem most rational and attending to the actor's interests. The actors are, after all, knowledgeable and deal with situations reflexively. The adjusted behavior, then, will affect the social situations in return, influencing them with the taking into account of the media and the accommodation to their logic, and at this point, the situation (or structure or institution, if you will) is increasingly mediatized because it has accommodated to the media logic and is shaped by it. This way, mediatization comes into existence in the mutually influencing and shaping relationship between institutions and the actors that reproduce, maintain, and develop the institution through their agency. This is a perspective that echoes Giddens'

duality of structure, which similarly emphasizes the mutually shaping interplay between social situations and individuals' behavior. And Schrott's conceptualization of mediatization in the interplay between institution and agency is one I will return to in the fourth research article, "The mediatization of journalism".

Leaving the concept of mediatization for now, I will not return to it until in that fourth research article and the concluding chapter where mediatization theory provides a theoretical frame for conceptualizing current developments in journalism as they are expressed through news on the web. First, however, I will leave the institutional level and address in more detail the ways news websites afford different actions for news workers. The central concept in that connection is that of affordances.

### **The four affordances of news websites**

The term 'affordance' was first coined by Gibson (1977) and refers to the possibilities for action that an object or environment offers; in Gibson's own words, the "*affordances* of the environment is what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill" (Gibson, 1979: 127, emphasis in original). Gibson was a perception psychologist and conceptualized affordance to describe how living organisms visually perceive objects and environments, but Hutchby (2001a, 2001b) suggests that the concept can be broadened beyond the savanna to also describe the relationship between media technologies and social actors. In line with Gibson, he understands affordances as "functional and relational aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object" (Hutchby, 2001b: 444). He argues that technologies afford certain kinds of action on the basis of their materiality and shaping: "different technologies possess different *affordances*, and these affordances constrain the ways that they can possibly be read" (Hutchby, 2001a: 26, emphasis in original). Though not uncontested (for an enlightening discussion of the concept, see Hutchby, 2003; Rappert, 2003), this approach to affordances has been widely influential within media and communication research where affordances have come to be a central metaphor for the ways media technologies enable action (see, among others,

Hjarvard, 2008a; K. B. Jensen, 2010). It is exactly in this meaning of the concept, not the perception psychological one, that I use it. As I return to shortly, it is, however, not every action that is enabled by media technology. On the contrary, the affordances represent certain rules and resources, and I argue that the affordances of something are that which on the one hand enables certain kinds of action (resources) while on the other hand also constrains in the sense that it excludes or makes impossible other kinds of action (rules). Hutchby (2001b: 448, emphasis in original) even states that affordances “are *functional* in the sense that they are enabling, as well as constraining, factors in a given organism’s attempt to engage in some activity”.

A conceptual strength of affordances is the way in which it positions itself theoretically between technological determinism and the social construction of technology. On the one hand, the concept rejects the determinist view that the configuration of technology determine the very use of it; even though Norman (1988) argues that the affordances embedded in the specific design of everyday things invites and structure certain ways of usage, the close theoretical nexus between affordances and the material and technological being or the object (or medium) in question does not mean that the affordances of an object determines the use of it. On the contrary, as Helles (2009: 15, emphasis in original, my translation) stresses, “when we speak of affordances, it primarily concerns what is possible – not what *must* happen”. On the other hand, the concept of affordance stays clear of the potential relativistic problems of the social construction of technology perspective which, argues Hutchby (2001a, 2001b, 2003), accepts practically every interpretation of a technology. Hutchby’s argument is first and foremost written in opposition to Grint and Woolgar’s (1997) relativistic observations that practically every kind of action is possible with every kind of technology. In Pinch and Bijker’s early and programmatic article of the social construction of technology paradigm (Pinch & Bijker, 1984), however, the point is actually another one. Here, Pinch and Bijker introduce the concept of “interpretative flexibility” as a means for embracing how “different social groups [can] have radically different interpretations of one technological artefact” (Pinch & Bijker, 1984: 423). This concept, imported from the soci-

ology of scientific knowledge, refers to the way different people or social groups<sup>5</sup> interpret or understand technologies in different ways dependent on their backgrounds and motivations; the interpretations of technology, however, remain firmly grounded in the actual device (see also MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1999). And applying the idea of interpretative flexibility to media technologies, one arrives at the same place as with affordances: within the possibilities of action certain object or technology offer, different social actors use media technologies differently and sometimes in different ways than intended. But they cannot do so beyond what the technology affords in the first place; a shortwave radio, for instance, just cannot be used for receiving moving images the same way as a television can. There are limits to interpretative flexibility.

That being said, one important circumstance has changed with the concept of affordances as Hutchby lifted it from Gibson's conceptualization and into the realm of technology. Gibson writes that affordances cannot change because of changes in the observer's needs or motivations (even though a lizard needs shelter, running water cannot offer that). With technology, however, the objects that hold affordances can actually change in accordance with the agents' wishes as they (the objects) are continuously tweaked and adjusted by the actors using them. The change can both be brought about by the producers and by the users; "how people actually use the object will be one factor guiding the development of the core technologies and thus shaping the affordances of future iterations of the object" (Graves, 2007: 337). However, as Pinch and Bijker argue (1984: 409), technologies are primarily open to interpretative flexibility in their earlier stages before they reach a point of stabilization and work sufficiently well for the actors. Also media technologies stabilize at some point even if new developments beyond the particular medium may broaden again its interpretative flexibility and invite new developments; printed newspapers, for example, have had a quite stable material being since at least the introduction of the offset press around the turn of the 19th century (I. Schultz, 2007a), but, for instance, with the microchip at hand the current Interactive Newsprint project in Britain aim at reinventing the newspaper with

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<sup>5</sup> Even though Pinch and Bijker talk of social groups, I see no reason why their concept of interpretative flexibility should not also apply to individuals.

“cutting-edge printed electronics and internet-enabled paper augmented with capacitive touch capabilities” (Egglestone & Mills, 2012: 4).

It is a most important aspect of the theory of affordances that they are not the very properties of an object but rather the variety of actions it makes possible for a particular actor in a particular context (Gibson, 1979; Hutchby, 2001a, 2001b, 2003); as Finnemann (2005a: 67) argues, affordances are “functional relations between motivation and (one or more) characteristics of the environment”. An object or environment does not necessarily afford the same action for different agents; a forest river, for example, affords very different actions for a fish (breathing), a mammal living in the forest (quenching its thirst), and a fugitive on the run with a couple of bloodhounds hard on his heels in a Hollywood movie (blurring the scent trail). It is the same case for media, where the technology is relatively stable but offer completely different possibilities of action for different actors: for journalist, for example, the medium of the printed newspaper affords conveying text and still images (but not interactive graphics and moving images) to an audience, while it affords wrapping paper for fishmongers. As such, affordance is a relational concept that establishes itself contextually in relation to which actors are in question.

This sensitivity to which actors are in question when measuring affordances is of course also important in connection with measuring the affordances of news websites. The web has numerous affordances that are quite different dependent on who the actors are and what their desired actions are. Baym (2010), for example, lists seven key concepts or affordances of the web in connection with maintaining personal relations, and Graves (2007), likewise, identifies three journalistic affordances of blogging. However correct their listings of affordances are within their specific contexts, they are not necessary exhaustive in connection with this dissertation. Here, the focus is on what news websites affords news workers. As such, the identification of affordances of news websites must be related to news workers’ motivations; for this reason, in the following sections, I will go through the four affordances of news websites as they are constituted in the meeting between technology and news workers’ motivations. The four affordances are instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality, and the sections are grounded in the existing scholarly literature (see the section *Previous research*

above) as well as interviews with news workers (see the section *Semi-structured lifeworld interviews* below).

### 1. *Instantaneity*

The first affordance is instantaneity. News has always been about that which is new (Lewis & Cushion, 2009; Rantanen, 2009; Saltzis, 2011). As such, news workers are fundamentally motivated for getting the news out fast, and because of this journalistic preference for topicality, “New media have placed an added premium on the immediacy of news” (Hjarvard, 2012b: 99). It is, this way, a welcomed characteristic of news websites that the technological infrastructure of the underlying internet affords instantaneous transfer of information from one place to another. Technically, this transfer takes place by parceling messages into smaller parts (packets) which are then by, literally, the speed of light send to their destinations through fiber-optic cables. Such instantaneous transfer makes possible a synchronicity in the communication between senders and receivers; on news websites, the news can be accessible for the audiences right after the news workers’ upload of it has finished (even though such instantaneous use, of course, presupposes an interested audience in the first place, cf. Lim, 2012). “Time lags are created by the time it takes a person to check for new messages and respond, not by the time messages spend in transit” (Baym, 2010: 8). On the basis of newsroom ethnographies, scholars confirm that there is, indeed, an intense fixation on getting the news out fast on news websites (Domingo, 2008c; Hartley, 2011a, 2011b; Quandt, 2008).

The scholarly literature on journalism refers to this affordance as ‘immediacy’. That, however, may not be the most adequate term to use when referring to the phenomenon of real-time information transfer. For as Tomlinson (2007) points out, immediacy is a highly ambiguous term because it refers to three different phenomena: temporal closeness, spatial proximity, and a reliance on media technology in communication. Of these three meanings, it is the first one that journalism researchers usually draw upon, namely that immediacy implies *instantaneity*; it is a phenomenon that characterizes “a culture accustomed to rapid delivery, ubiquitous availability and the instant gratification of desires” (Tomlinson, 2007:

74). That means that instantaneity is the dimension of immediacy that has to do with temporality, and in connection with news dissemination, it refers to the instances where “enunciation, utterance and reception coincide in time” (Hjarvard, 1992: 112).

Second, immediacy implies *proximity*; that is, spatial closeness. Instantaneity is connected to temporality, proximity to spatiality. This dimension of immediacy connects to the term’s etymological root, namely the term ‘immediate’ which means something non-mediated, something that is without a medium because it is in direct contact. This is not to say that the sense of spatial proximity cannot – at least in a figurative sense – be mediated. Consider, for example, the opening lines of Meyrowitz’ *No Sense of Place* (1985: vii):

“On November 24, 1963, Jack Ruby shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald, the suspected assassin of President John F. Kennedy. The shooting was broadcast live to millions of Americans. Those who saw the event on television would probably claim that they “witnessed” the murder—that is, that they saw it “first-hand”.”

The point is that electronic as well as digital media has changed the relationship between physical and social places. Through broadcasting or other kinds of telecommunication, one can be present without actually being there: “Where we are physically no longer determines where [...] we are socially” (Meyrowitz, 1985: 115). Tomlinson calls this ‘telepresence’, “a distinctive existential mode of presencing, existing alongside direct, embodied relations of presence” (2007: 111). Elaborating on what he calls “the immediacy effect” of television, Hjarvard (1992: 112) likewise puts emphasis on these sensuous qualities of immediate news dissemination as it visually and auditively “bring[s] the great, wide world in sound and picture to the viewer”. But it is another kind of immediacy than the one reported in the news-room studies.

Third, immediacy “involves a clear implication of the crucial significance of the *media* in modern culture” (Tomlinson, 2007: 74, emphasis in original). This is to say that in modern society, immediacy often presupposes mediation. With the above-mentioned etymology in mind, this third dimension of immediacy might



seem paradoxical, but it has to do with the matter of fact that proximity in time and space can often only be possible by means of a medium which connects separate places instantly. Most of the time, one will need a telephone, a computer, or another technological device (i.e., a medium) to be in immediate contact with someone; the exception in this case being, of course, face-to-face encounters. This third meaning of immediacy, however, appears somewhat problematic because Tomlinson situates it on another level than the first two ones. While temporal and spatial proximity has to do with the qualities or characteristics of a given situation or course of interaction, the question of mediation relates to the means or technologies used to create or make possible the situation or interaction in the first place. This way, mediation as described by Tomlinson as a third dimension of immediacy is not so much a quality as it is an approach and to an increasing degree a way of instrumentalizing social activity.

## *2. Multimodality*

The second affordance in multimodality. Websites (as other digital media) afford multimodality because they are based in one binary alphabet that allows for a recombination of “all previous media and genres of representation and interaction on a single platform of hardware and software” (K. B. Jensen, 2010: 69-70). The binary alphabet consists of mechanically effective signs (zeros and ones) that describe all content of digital media (Finnemann, 2005b; Negroponte, 1995). Because the different modalities are all stored and reproduced using that same technological format (the alphabet), they are disengaged from the close connection to certain media technologies in which they used to exist, and through proper programming, such a common format allows for websites to present written text, audio, moving images, etc., which would traditionally require different media forms, side by side. Even though their terminologies differ slightly, both Engebretsen (2010) and Finnemann (2005a) underscore that this possibility of including different modes of expressions has a long history and is by no means exclusive to digital media or news websites. What appears on a TV screen, for example, is often a combination of sound, text, and moving images. However, with digital media, a combination of

different modes of expression is much easier and, consequently, widespread on news websites than in traditional news media.

As I hinted at in the *Previous research* section, what I refer to as multimodality is often referred to as multimedia in the research literature. As mentioned in that section, Deuze (2004), encircling the very term ‘multimedia’, distinguishes between two different uses of that term. Both these uses are common in the scholarly literature, but as they refer to quite different phenomena, his distinction is appropriate, even though it is neither the primary focus of his article, nor elaborated further upon. On the one hand, Deuze argues, multimedia is a term that is often used to describe news across different media. When, for instance, broadcasting corporations such as the BBC or Danish Danmarks Radio present the news in an interplay between television, radio, and news websites, it is multimedia news dissemination in the sense that it takes place on several media. On the other hand, multimedia is also used to describe news that employs a number of different modalities but does so within the same medium.

According to Engebretsen (2010), modalities are types or classifications of semiotic resources; that is, modes of expression that convey meaning in distinct ways. For example, written text, sound, still and moving images communicate differently and constitute different modalities. Multimodality, consequently, is when texts or other kinds of expressions are put together by a number of such modalities and become what he calls “composite texts”. Representing a similar perspective, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001: 20) define multimodality as “the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event”; that is, the simultaneous inclusion of multiple different modes of expression. On December 28, 2012, for example, Jyllands-Posten published a news story about “The Ethiopian Caterpillar” (a bejewelled automaton from 1820)<sup>6</sup>, which tells the story both in text and with a short video that shows the golden caterpillar in action.

Because the latter meaning of the term multimedia (cf. Deuze, 2004) has more to do with a multitude of modalities than with a multitude of media (which, on the

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<sup>6</sup> “Lækker larve på 197 år vrikker stadig” [Exquisite caterpillar on 197 years still wriggles], available on <http://jyllands-posten.dk/kultur/historie/article4963463.ece>, accessed on December 28, 2012.

contrary, the former focuses on), I prefer the term ‘multimodality’ in this context. It is just this characteristic of digital media, the possibility of combining different modalities within one medium, that constitutes an affordance of news websites for news workers. Presenting news on news websites, they have exactly the possibility of being multimodal and choose the format that suits any given story best. And judging from my interviews with news workers, there is an interest in actually using these different modalities. The following statements come from two editors, who both confirm that they prioritize multimodal presentation on their respective news websites:

“We have a clear ambition that our stories must be more than text, that they must contain rich content, that is, video, galleries, and links of any kind and preferably out of the site. [...] So we want to make something on the premises of the net.” (Troels B. Jørgensen, online editor at Berlingske, my translation)

“The strategy is to be inspired by the possibilities that exist and try to use them as good as possible. [...] So we still use live video, and we frequently use CoverIt-Live. We use social media such as Twitter and Facebook to a limited extent.” (Geir Terje Ruud, editor-in-chief with responsibility for online operations at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

So, there exists a journalistic motivation for using the multimodality, which news websites afford. And, needless to say, that afforded multimodality can take numerous shapes and forms on news websites. Most of these appear to be a legacy from traditional news media (written text as in newspapers, sound as in radio, and moving images as on film and television) while some are new in a news dissemination context. The American news website ProPublica (<http://www.propublica.org>) has, for example, experimented with turning some of their article series of investigative journalism into songs and music videos (e.g., “The Great American Foreclosure Song” about the financial crisis<sup>7</sup>).

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<sup>7</sup> Available on <http://www.propublica.org/article/video-the-great-american-foreclosure-song>.

### *3. Interactivity*

The third affordance for journalists of news websites is that of interactivity. The technical arrangement of computers and the internet allow for both in-coming and out-going information, thereby enabling two-way communication where receivers can also work as senders (cf., for instance, J. F. Jensen, 1998). Finnemann (2005a) names “the interactive potential” as one of the defining features of the internet, and as I earlier quoted him for saying (Finnemann, 2005a: 72), interactivity basically has to do with the audiences being able to influence content and communication.

There are various ways they can do so. In a review of the literature on interactivity, McMillan (2002) identifies three prominent understandings of interactivity in the research literature, namely user-to-user, user-to-system, and user-to-document interactivities, each of which highlights different ways for users (or audiences) to exercise their influence. User-to-user interactivity, first, has to do with interpersonal interaction through a medium (such as, e.g., commenting personal profiles on social network sites). User-to-system interactivity, second, is more technically oriented and has to do with the users’ ability to manipulate the medium technology (by, e.g., moving a cursor or pushing a button). While the former kind of interactivity is related to research into human communication, this latter kind is, rather, concerned with human-computer interaction (HCI) and the interfaces that enable it.

User-to-document interactivity, third, has to do with the ways users can influence or even create the content of media. It is not exclusive for digital media that audiences can participate in shaping the content; on the contrary, media history has many examples of users creating content for traditional media such as, for instance, letters-to-the-editor in newspapers and call-in shows on talk radio. What is new, however, is the way it is built into the very technological structure of the medium, and the ease with which it can be applied. As Gillmor (2004) writes, the web is a read/write medium where one can both be at the receiving end and be the sender oneself.

The journalistic motivation for this kind interactivity reaches back to one of the cultural and ideological cornerstones of the institution of journalism, namely that it enables the citizenry to engage in and contribute to the public sphere (Habermas, 1989; Hjarvard, 1995b; T. Schultz, 1999). One way of achieving such public engagement is let the audiences participate in the news production process and thereby grant them agency in relation to the content of the news media. Hermida (2011), however, draws attention to the fact that news workers are more inclined to welcome contributions from audiences in the stages of the news production process that cannot compromise journalistic autonomy. Hartley (2011a), likewise, describes a situation where news workers have ambiguous attitudes towards the participating audience: on the one hand, audiences can contribute to the news production process with specific knowledge and sources, but on the other hand, it also compromises the position of the journalists and often threaten to deteriorate the quality of the news. Even so, the news workers I interviewed unanimously emphasize their appreciation of the interactivity affordance in the form of audience participation. These are just two/three examples:

“Why do they [the audiences] have that possibility [of commenting on the news articles]? Well, it’s crucial that a newspaper is open for debate. That’s what the prominent persons think, but I also think so, and so have all the people working with newspapers done any day. It’s not enough that we journalists just assess [the contributions we get from the audiences]. There must be a debate.” (Allan Aistrup, editor-in-chief at Kjerterminde Avis, my translation)

“In connection with your articles, you get all kinds of emails and comments where you shake your head in disbelief. But then, sometimes someone has some really good points: a story you hadn’t discovered, or a source you didn’t know of. [...] We benefit from our users.” (Mikael Rømer, journalist at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

It is obvious from this second statement, however, that news workers’ motivations for interactivity are not only grounded in idealized notions of citizenship and public engagement. On the contrary, a more self-seeking motivation is also at play, as the interactive potential can be used to draw on the audiences as resources. That

is, the audiences can function as sources for the news workers, drawing their attention to facts, occurrences, or perspectives, which they were not aware of beforehand (aspects of this kind of audience participation in the news production process is something I return to in the third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”). Including the audiences can simply enable the news workers to better conduct the work they do. This way, audience participation is not only about securing the public’s voice in democracy but also about securing the best possible working conditions for the actors who make the news. Nevertheless, that is still a motivation among news workers for using the interactive potential.

#### *4. Hypertextuality*

The fourth affordance of news websites, which the scholarly literature identifies, is hypertextuality. It is directly related to the very building block of the web, namely hypertext, which is the system that ties together different locations on the internet and structure this network (Liestøl, 2009). Engebretsen (2001: 61), exploring the morphological components of the term, argues that as hyper denotes something above or beyond, hypertext relates to another structural level than does conventional text. This level is the one where different entities or locations are linked together in a network structure of links and nodes rather than in a consecutive order. Websites are built up by databases from which audiences pull content, and hypertext is what makes it possible to access the different parts of the database (i.e., open different web pages). Since such a structure does not distinguish between old and new entries in the database (just as a bookshelf can contain both classics and more recent publications), Finnemann (2005a) frames this affordance of hypertextuality as a potential for integration between real-time communication and archive. That means that websites represent a type of medium where the most recent content co-exists right next to older content and is connected to it by clickable links. This way, the strong temporal binding that exists in traditional news media is potentially circumvented on news websites.

Concretely, the hypertextuality affordance will often constitute itself in the form of hyperlinks (Paulussen, 2004) – that is, clickable parts of web pages, which lead the audiences to other web pages when clicked. But this affordance also makes possible the embedding of content from other websites; when news websites, for instance, embed YouTube videos or Google Maps, both of which remain manipulable outside their original domain, it is because of the hypertextuality affordance. As Deuze (2003: 212) underlines, “the whole purpose of hypertext in fact is to open up and make available all kinds of documents (content) as much as possible”. And hypertext is exactly a means for potential integration of different and diverse online content components.

Ironically, while hypertext is at the core of the web technology, the news workers’ motivation for using this affordance is neither very predominant nor explicit. In the interviews, it was generally the one of the four affordances which the interviewees had the least to say about, and it was also the one they dwelled by for the shortest amount of time. Nevertheless, they did express some motivation for using hypertext actively:

“I usually tell the journalists that they’re not allowed to release the article until they’ve identified three relevant tags on the basis of the running text. And actually, they shouldn’t be allowed to release the story before they have linked either within or out of the website in the running text.” (Troels B. Jørgensen, online editor at Berlingske, my translation)

“We actually have the policy that with all stories, which we get from other news organizations, we link directly to the source. [...] We’re not a primary medium, and we’re not afraid of losing audiences along the way. We’ll rather provide a good experience. Furthermore, there is also the effect that Google loves it when you link to relevant stuff.” (Niels Thimmer, online editor at 24timer and metroXpress, my translation)

”It is an unwritten rule that this is the way you do it.” (Grith Jørgensen, site and community manager at Aarhus Stiftstidende, my translation)

From this last statement, we learn that the practice of linking to other news websites is an “unwritten rule”; that is, it is apparently a consensual understanding among journalists that this is just the way you do it. Even so, the online editor from 24timer and metroXpress states that they have a policy for doing so, which means that it is not just a consensual understanding but actually constitutes a formalized rule or policy in that news organization. These statements are, however, not supported by earlier empirical studies, which found that websites are generally reluctant to use external links (Larsson, 2012; Steensen, 2011b; Tremayne, 2006).

### **A media logic of news websites**

In the section *Mediatization*, I specified that the media logic of any given medium was an empirical question, which the researcher should address in the concrete research project. My presentation of the four affordances of news websites above constitutes just such an encirclement of part of the media logic of news websites.

In their definition of media logic, Altheide and Snow (1979: 10) emphasize that that concept has to do with the formats of the media, with “how material is organized, the style in which it is presented”. Since the four affordances, which I have just gone through, are exactly presentational formats when they are used and actualized in concrete instantiations (see the first research article, “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites”), and since both the existing scholarly literature and statements from my interviewees illustrate a journalistic motivation for actually using them, I will argue that the four affordances constitute a media logic of news websites. The actualizations of the affordances are to a large degree the style in which news on news websites is presented (see also the section *Internetization, internet, and web* above) and a way for news workers to organize it. This way, actual use of the four affordances on Danish news websites would suggest a journalistic accommodation to the logic of the medium, supporting the



proposition that mediatization theory would provide a reasonable explanatory framework for contextualizing current developments in journalism.

That claim, however, presupposes that the affordances are actually in use. In the following chapter, I will outline the research design intended for examining that use specifically.

# Research design

Answering the main research questions of the dissertation and the more focused research questions of the individual research articles, I apply different methods in order to gain different perspectives on the empirical domain. This multi method procedure comprises both quantitative and qualitative approaches and various and diverse data sets. Dealing with RQ<sub>1</sub> (“To what extent do Danish news websites use these affordances?”), I use content analysis to measure quantitatively the extent to which the four affordances instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality are in use on a large sample of Danish news websites (n=93); this content analytical study answers the ‘how much’ of the research and is reported in the first research article, “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on Danish news websites”. Building upon this quantitative knowledge of the extent of use of the affordances, which this quantitative study generates, the dissertation proceeds to examine the ‘how’ of the research in the second research article, “News Websites’ Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian Study”. Here, I use the real-time coverage of the July 22, 2011, terrorist attack in Norway as a case study to answer RQ<sub>2</sub> (“Given they use these affordances, how do Danish news websites do that?”), adding a more qualitative dimension to the description of the use of the affordances. RQ<sub>2</sub> is also addressed in the third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, and through semi-structured lifeworld interviews, which I have conducted with 13 actors who produce the news on the web. Statements from these interviews have already appeared in the *Theoretical framework* chapter as illustrations of news workers’ motivations for using that which news websites afford, and they are also used in the two last research

articles. Finally, RQ<sub>3</sub> (“Why is it so?”) does not relate to one specific method as I propose a theoretical explanatory model to it through the fourth research article, “The mediatization of journalism”, rather than scrutinizing it empirically.

However, before I go through the different methods and my specific operationalization of them, I will briefly account for the scientific theoretical position of the dissertation, namely that of subtle realism.

### **Subtle realism**

Subtle realism, as presented by Hammersley (1992), is a science theoretical position situated between naïve realism and relativism, that claims to connect their normally incommensurable philosophies.

The realist position, first, is connected to positivist or post-positivist paradigms. The fundamental assumption of these paradigms is that an objective reality does exist, which can be subject to scrutiny and can, properly measured, give researchers all the answers they are looking for. Generating knowledge is first and foremost a matter of developing sufficiently sophisticated procedures and instruments to confirm or reject hypothesis. This way, the ontological position is a realist one. The difference between positivism and post-positivism lies in the latter’s recognition of the inability of human actors to grasp reality in its multi-faceted entirety. For post-positivists, “Reality is assumed to exist but to be only imperfectly apprehendable because of basically flawed human intellectual mechanisms and the fundamentally intractable nature of phenomena” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 110), and so, reality can only be described imperfectly or probabilistically.

The positivist paradigms are in opposition to constructivism and its relativist position. Over the last years, constructivism (including its branch in the social sciences, social constructivism) has become the “default paradigm” of much Western media and communication research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Fundamentally, it is a postmodern paradigm that does not acknowledge that phenomena have a stable or singular core. Instead, it emphasizes an ontological relativism and regards knowledge, society, and reality as liquid, negotiable phenomena which are con-

constructed by human actors. Phenomena do not have a stable or singular core in themselves – the core (i.e., what to make of the phenomenon) is constructed by human actors and the meaning they ascribe to it. Because of this relativism, the ontological and epistemological levels of constructivism are much closer connected than within other paradigms: the core of a phenomenon (ontology) cannot be separated from the way(s) we construct and thereby understand that phenomenon (epistemology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). For this reason, there is not *one* truth about any given phenomenon which researchers can uncover. Rather, there are *several* descriptions (or constructions) of the phenomenon, dependent on the perspectives and approaches of the researchers, the methodological choices and processes, and the underlying assumptions of the research.

Explaining this possible multitude of viable perspectives upon the same subject matter, Richardson uses the metaphor of a crystal: “Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting of in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose” (Richardson, 2000: 934, emphasis in original). What knowledge the researcher generates from the research depends on what prism he or she sees through, which methods and approaches constitute the research design. But, as Markham rightfully points out, that does not mean that anything goes: “all research is situated and personal – a thoroughly human endeavor. Yet order and rigor are necessary to preserve the integrity of the outcome” (Markham, 2009: 192). What researchers must do is to be reflexive about methodological choices and to address questions of validity and reliability, thereby granting peers and audiences a transparent account of how research results are reached, and of how knowledge is generated (see also K. B. Jensen, 2012a).

Hammersley’s position of subtle realism draws upon both of these paradigmatic positions. Its ontological position is one which accepts that phenomena exist regardless of the way human actors understand, describe, and represent them; “There are phenomena independent of our claims about them which those claims may represent more or less accurately” (Hammersley, 1992: 51). This way, it is informed by the positivist paradigms rather than the constructivist one, for the latter would claim that reality and knowledge are what human actors make of it in the

course of social interaction (i.e., how it is constructed). Epistemologically, however, subtle realism is influenced by constructivism. While it acknowledges that not everything is a construction, its epistemological standpoint is that knowledge about these phenomena can be achieved only from the individual perspective that the individual researcher brings to the table. As Hammersley (1992: 51) puts it, “representation must always be from some point of view which makes some features of the phenomena represented relevant and others irrelevant”.

All things considered, however, Hammersley’s subtle realism does not seem very subtle; its ontological position is, after all, a realist one very much aligned with post-positivism. And the question of ontological status constitutes a crucial point in the paradigm discussion. But subtle realism has the merit compared to the post-positivist paradigm that it acknowledges the far extent to which the actions and choices conducted by the researcher shape and inform the research. The knowledge generated by the research not only depends on the subject of the research but also by the frames, pre-understandings, choices of theoretical foundation, and methodologies of the researcher; there is, for instance, a difference between how subscribers to institutional and cultural perspectives on journalism would interpret current transformative processes in the news industry (for two such perspectives, see, e.g., R. K. Nielsen, 2012; Russell, 2011). This way, the position is almost a hermeneutical one, acknowledging the integrity of the research object while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of interpretation.

In addition to the news media, a central locus – though not the only one – for the production of knowledge is the academy, instantiated also in this dissertation. As the research is conducted by someone (in this case, me) and is so from a certain research design (the very term research *design* implies an element of construction), I acknowledge the constructivist influence and agree with Schultz (2005: 76, my translation), when she states that “Research is a knowledge construction that begins with the first formulation of the subject in the research process, continues with the choice of the theoretical framework, and does not end until the i’s have been dotted and the t’s crossed”. But, as Schudson (2005: 181) observes, “The reality-constructing practices of the powerful will fail (in the long run) if they run roughshod over the world ‘out there’”. The powerful ones that he refers to are

journalists, but it is the same case for researchers; just as news workers cannot sustainably construct news without correspondence to actual occurrences and real sources (even though there are, of course, isolated examples of that malpractice), researchers cannot in the long run detach themselves and their research from any real-world reference. Even though the knowledge that research generates is highly influenced and shaped by the formulations of questions, the assumptions of the researchers, the methods of choice, and the strategies for selection and collection of empirical data, limits do exist as to the spectrum of viable interpretations of reality that researches can reasonably arrive at. These are limits which are grounded in the realities of the researched empirical domain; when Boczkowski (2004), for example, describes the inner workings of digital newsrooms, his observations must necessarily be grounded in the actual actions of the news workers he observed<sup>8</sup>.

In this dissertation, this position of subtle realism is put into practice through a research design that both acknowledges objective properties of the studied domain (the news on the web and the journalism that produces it) and emphasizes the interpretive authority of the researcher (cf. Markham, 2009, 2012). On the one hand, an objective, tangible reality, which I as a researcher can subject to scrutiny, exists on news websites and in the work news workers do; but on the other hand, as the scrutiny is conducted by me and is the result of my methodological choices and assumptions, the results I arrive at are not necessarily the exact same as other researchers of news on the web would arrive at.

Concretely, I apply a variety of methods throughout this dissertation: content analysis, case studies, and semi-structured lifeworld interviews.

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<sup>8</sup> Markham (2012), however, argues that fabrication can be an acceptable practice for researchers under certain circumstances. Such circumstances have to do with protecting the respondents in empirical studies on online behavior, ensuring, for example, the anonymity that can otherwise be impossible to secure in an online environment where online actions are logged and relatively easy to find on search engines (see also Lomborg, 2012). Fabrication does not mean that researchers can create statements from respondents out of the blue; it means that researchers can reformulate statements from the respondents or alter the description of identifiable situations.

## Content analysis

Content analysis, first, is a method well-suited for dealing with a large empirical material with a focus on characteristics of presentation or content. And as it is a quantitative method that presupposes statistical treatment of the data in order to sketch frequencies and relations across large samples, it is an appropriate method for answering RQ1 of this dissertation, the ‘how much’ of the research.

Berelson (1954: 489, emphasis in original) famously defines content analysis as “*a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication*”. The concrete procedure of content analysis of media texts is that different characteristics of the content are assigned numerical values on the background of standardized coding matrices and systematic procedures; the researcher can then treat the resulting quantitative, numerical data material statistically and draw conclusions on frequencies and general trends across the entire examined data material. One must, however, remember that in spite of the name of the method, content analysis is not only applicable in connection with analyzing content; “Beyond ‘content’ in the narrow sense of ‘representation’, the approach also lends itself to systematic studies of the formal features of media” (K. B. Jensen & Helles, 2005: 101). My application of content analysis focuses on exactly such formal features rather than content.

Berelson’s definition is frequently criticized for its lack of sensitivity to the fact that even so-called objective analysis will always be a result of some degree of human interpretation of or interaction with the empirical material. Critiquing Berelson’s description of the content analytical approach, Hjarvard (1995a: 50, my translation) makes the observation that “any ascription of numerical value entails an interpretative operation, where it is evaluated whether a given categorical classification or more are present or not; it also presupposes a definition of the relation between numerical value and categorical classification”. His point is that the “objective” character of content analysis remains the result of subjective, interpretative action performed by human actors. As the quote from Hjarvard (1995a) illustrates, the objective character of content analysis is also challenged by the unavoidable condition that the theoretical framework and the specific research design, both of which are determining for the carrying out of the study, are constructed by the individual

researcher and therefore rest on considerable subjective foundations (see also Kristensen & From, 2011: 66-67). Krippendorff gives voice to a similar objection when he writes that "all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers" (Krippendorff, 2004: 16). It is, however, important to keep in mind that those objections do not mean that Hjarvard and Krippendorff dispute the justification and applicability of content analysis. On the contrary, they introduce light and shade into the epistemological dimension of content analysis as described by Berelson because they acknowledge the human, interpretative operations conducted in the process of analysis.

While this general, epistemological discussion of objectivity relates to the first adjective of Berelson's definition, the content analysis in this dissertation relates more closely to the last one, namely 'manifest'. Riffe et al. (2005: 36-37) draw a distinction between manifest and latent media content; that is, between the kind of content that can offhand be decoded and does not need any subjective interpretation, and the kind of content that does demand some degree of subjective interpretation in order to be assigned numerical value. Riffe et al.'s distinction is characterized by a strictly binary line of thinking but the question is whether most media content would not situate itself somewhere along a continuum between a manifest and a latent pole. At the one end of such a continuum would be discrete entities such as certain key words or the presence or absence of illustrations in articles – specific and unambiguously definable entities, which can be identified objectively. At the other end of that continuum would be entities which can only be recognized (and often so, ambiguously) after a process of subjective interpretation; such entities could, for example, be the different genres that news workers use, but that often demand thorough consideration to be precisely identified. Most media content, however, would probably lie somewhere between the two extreme poles, being simultaneously relatively easy to decode while demanding some degree of subjective operation by the coding individual.

The content analysis in the first research article is an analysis of the formal features of news websites. And as it examines formal features, its focus will tend to be towards the end of the continuum where the manifest content is; as such, it is also important keep in mind that what I research through the content analysis is not



the content of the journalistic production (i.e., the content in the form of the articles the news workers produce, their sources and framings). It is the use of certain formal features that corresponds with the four affordances outlined above in the *Theoretical framework* chapter.

Conducting content analysis on the web poses certain methodological challenges compared to content analysis of other types of media (Karlsson, 2012; Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010; McMillan, 2000). Most importantly, websites are an unstable object of analysis as they can continuously be updated, changed, and terminated; according to Brügger (2005), 40 percent of all the material on the internet disappears within one year, 40 percent changes, and only 20 percent remains the same. Such a rapid replacement of content is most likely accelerated further on news websites because their very purpose will often be to present the most recent information. For this reason, researchers who aim at conducting content analysis (and all other types of analysis of web content for that matter) must take measures to stabilize the unstable, dynamic object of analysis in a way that makes both later analysis and documentation possible.

In the study reported in this dissertation's first research article, the coding of the news websites was conducted by student assistants (whose work I will return to shortly) in real-time on live websites because it would be too resource-demanding to download the entire empirical material (93 news websites) prior to the concrete coding. However, in order to secure documentation and create a stable object of analysis, the student assistants also made screenshots of the web pages where the formal features they coded for were encountered; this process of simultaneous coding and micro-archiving (cf. Brügger, 2005) generated a library of screenshots that constitutes the documentation necessary for the final analysis and reporting.<sup>9</sup>

Another challenge has to do with the precise delimitation of the unit of analysis. Because the content analytical part of the research deals with the extent to which Danish news websites use the four affordances, the unit of analysis is the individual news website. Websites are, however, porous entities where content can relatively unhindered flow between websites through the hypertext structure of the internet and the web. Fundamentally, HTML makes it easy to, for example, embed

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<sup>9</sup> Those screenshots are attached as appendices for the assessment committee.

still or moving images on other websites than they were originally uploaded to, and more recent initiatives such as Storify have made such embedding even more friendly to operate. In this dissertation, I take a pragmatic approach to defining the website as the unit of analysis. Concretely, I regard the specific news website as delimited by their URLs; that is, the “addresses” of the websites. What can be seen on the website, without leaving it and going to other websites, is understood as being on the website<sup>10</sup>. A concrete instance to exemplify the porosity is the news website UgeAvisen Øboen which is located on <http://www.oeboen.dk/>. All the articles that the front page of the news website links to, however, do have URLs that begin with <http://www.fyens.dk/>, and this way, they are actually located on the news website of Fyens Stiftstidende, the media organization that owns UgeAvisen Øboen. While Fyens Stiftstidende is a regional newspaper for the large Danish island Funen and the smaller islands in its vicinity, UgeAvisen Øboen is targeted on a more specified audience of the citizens on the smaller islands Langeland, Strynø, and Tåsinge. And because of the redirection character of all the links, UgeAvisen Øboen appears as a very small news website in the analysis, devoid of the possibilities that the technology offers, even though the front page is actually quite elaborate and has plenty of referrals to web pages with technically sophisticated content.

Sampling for the content analysis, I departed from Falkenberg’s definition of the news website (see the section *News websites* above) and applied four additional criteria in order to delimit which news websites qualified for the sample.

First, as my research concerns news and journalism, it was a criterion that the websites in question should have news dissemination as their primary objective, not just as a secondary one among others. This criterion means that websites such as Google News (<http://news.google.com/>) or Yahoo! Danmark (<http://dk.yahoo.com/>), both of which aggregate and distribute news, are not parts of the sample because the news is only a secondary part of the two main websites Google and Yahoo!, which are search engines. Likewise, the news sections on websites of corporations such as Coca-Cola and Samsung are not included. I apply this

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<sup>10</sup> With regards to embedded material such as, for example, YouTube videos, government documents, and Twitter messages, the student assistants were instructed to code for what they could see on the website.

criterion to weed out the websites that arguably carry news but are not the product of a journalistic process, focusing solely on news websites of the kind that are actually related to my research questions. Furthermore, this first criterion also excludes the two Danish websites Netavisen 18ograder.dk (<http://www.18ograder.dk/>) and Netavisen Pio (<http://piopio.dk/>); even though they label themselves news websites, news is a remarkably absent content category on both websites which are rather sites for debate with emphasis on opinion and heavy political biases (see also Kammer, 2012).

Second, again with reference to the research questions, the news websites in the sample should be in Danish and address a Danish audience in Denmark. This second delimitation entails that, for example, Danish-language news websites written by and for the descendants of Danish immigrants in the USA, news websites in the two autonomous countries within the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and news websites that address the Danish minority in Northern Germany are not included in the sample. For this reason, neither Bien (<http://www.biendk.com/>) and Den Danske Pioneer (<http://www.dendanskepioneer.com/>) – the digital equivalents to the emigrant press in the USA (cf. Thomsen & Søllinge, 1991: 707) – nor Sermitsiaq (<http://www.semitsiaq.gl/>), Sosialurin (<http://www.sosialurin.fo/>), or Der Nordschleswiger (<http://www.dernordschleswiger.dk/>) will be treated further in this dissertation. One could make the argument that applying such a delimitation, I run the risk of shutting out valuable perspectives from my research as I do not include examples from other countries. I acknowledge this potential objection as Danish news websites are not always cutting edge, but even so, because the scope of the research and its research questions is Danish, I do maintain that restriction.

Third, the sampling strategy excludes mono-thematic news websites, favoring an omnibus selection of news. The very term ‘omnibus’ comes from Latin where it means ‘for all’, and the concept is precisely related to a very broad selection of content which aims at reaching the largest possible audiences. Omnibus is a common term in the Scandinavian countries where it describes news and journalism that subscribe to an ideal of “addressing principally everyone and having content about preferably all aspects of life” (Poulsen, 1996: 95, my translation). Likewise, in an

institutional, historical account of newspapers in Denmark, Thomsen and Søllinge (1991: 94, my translation) describe the omnibus newspaper as one in which there is

“a very large variation in the prioritization and placing of all common content. Especially on the first pages, fires, super-power politics, international soccer matches, actors’ anniversaries, cattle shows, government crises, and crimes of passion compete for space and large headlines on fairly equal terms on a daily basis. This principle [is probably] the core of the omnibus newspaper”.

Translated into this dissertation’s research design, the omnibus criterion means that thematically narrow websites such as Starlounge (<http://msndk.starlounge.com/>) and Dagens Medicin (<http://www.dagensmedicin.dk/>), which focus exclusively on “Inside Celebrity News” and the Danish health sector, respectively, do not constitute parts of the sample. However, because the omnibus principle is here defined from content rather than audiences, news websites of specialized newspapers can also enter the sample. Specialized newspapers are newspapers such as Information, Kristeligt Dagblad, and Weekendavisen, which address clearly defined segments of the population while still selecting which occurrences to cover from a broader omnibus principle. Not including mono-thematic websites, I also exclude most blogs from my research as they will usually focus on one particular subject which the author has special expert knowledge about (Rettberger, 2008). The choice to disregard blogs is founded in the fact that even though blogs play a prominent part in the research literature (Bruns, 2008b; Lowrey & Latta, 2008; Matheson, 2004; Russell, 2011), they remain outliers in Danes’ news consumption (Schröder & Kobbernagel, 2012) as well as the original news production, which is primarily undertaken by journalists on printed newspapers (Lund, Willig, & Blach-Ørsten, 2009).

Fourth, the news websites in the sample should constitute individual editorial and/or judicial entities (cf. Finnemann, 2005b: 173). This criterion is one that parries off the circumstance that many news websites are sharing domains. In the South-Western part of Jutland, for instance, 14 local news websites have partnered strategically in sharing their web presence on <http://www.ugeavisen.dk/>; here,

Digeposten is located on <http://www.ugeavisen.dk/digeposten>, Ugeavisen Tønder on <http://www.ugeavisen.dk/toender>, etc. But because they represent autonomous news organizations, I also understand them as distinct news websites. Likewise, the regional departments of Danmarks Radio's news branch all have news websites with the domain <http://www.dr.dk/>, but because they have separate news desks, physically located in their respective local areas, they are considered individual news websites rather than sub-sites of DR Nyheder (<http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/>). This fourth criterion is a fundamentally pragmatic one from my side, being a tool for drawing the line between different news websites that are ordinarily difficult to distinguish from each other because of shared ownership or strategic partnerships.

Applying those four criteria, by February 2012 I identified more than 200 Danish news websites through a combination of explorative searches on search engines (Bing, Google, and Yahoo!), collector sites (such as Onlineaviser.no and Vidar Falkenberg's list of Danish news websites 1993-2006, <http://www.internetaviser.dk/liste.aspx>), and Danish media organizations' online portfolios of publications as well as referrals from acquaintances, colleagues, and professionals within the news industry (cf. Weare & Lin, 2000). These more than 200 news websites constitute the total universe from which I extracted the sample for the content analysis in first the research article, "Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites". The strategy, then, to select the final sample for the content analysis (which consisted of 93 news websites, approximately half of the total universe) was a combination of purposive and simple random sampling. On the one hand, I applied purposive sampling – that is, nonprobabilistic sampling intended on including certain publication because of their centrality in connection with the research question (Riffe, et al., 2005: 100-101) – to make sure the most popular and voluminous Danish news websites were part of sample; as these news websites are the ones that come into contact with most members of the Danish audience (Danske Medier, 2012), they are important to have in the sample. On the other hand, I applied simple random sampling – that is, sampling where "all units in the population have an equal chance of being selected" (Riffe, et al., 2005: 106) – to find the remaining news websites for the sample for the content analysis; after the purposive sampling, the remaining news

websites were predominantly local ones which were very much alike. 33 of the news websites in the sample were sampled purposively, 60 randomly.

As noted earlier, the work of coding and documenting the use of the four affordances on the 93 news websites in the sample was conducted by student assistants. They conducted this work over a period of a good three weeks, from February 8 through March 4, 2012. In order to make possible the coding, I had operationalized the four affordances by breaking them down into a number of variables that are – in contrast to the more theoretically founded and less tangible affordances – concrete and countable (a table of these variables – 27 in all – is in the first research article, “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites”). In the concrete coding procedure, each of these 27 variables were subject to a binary assessment based on whether they were in use on the news website. From the starting point, every variable was coded as not manifest (“0” in the binaries, “no”) and it was then up to the coders to go through the empirical material and identify manifestations of the variables (thereby changing the code to “1” in the binaries, “yes”). Specifically, the student assistants applied the following procedure to each news website in the sample: first, they checked the front page for all variables and documented each manifestation with a digital copy of the page; second, they generated a list of all internal links (i.e., links that did not go beyond the website in question), using an online link-ripping tool; third, they went through every internal link on this list, checking for the variables they had not found on the front page; fourth, having checked each web page for all 27 variables, they keyed in their coding in online spreadsheets, which only the respective student assistant and I had access to. For the sake of quality control, the student assistants occasionally returned to already coded news websites.

### **Case studies**

The second analytical approach is case studies. As Yin (2003) points out, case studies are affable for investigating ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions concerning contemporary events or phenomena that the researcher can exercise only little or no control over (in contrast to, for example, experiments). With case studies, the researcher ana-

lyzes in depth a minimal sample of occurrences instead of – as with, for example, content analysis – looking at quantifiable characteristics of a large sample of occurrences. This way, the case study is a method that can generate in-depth knowledge about a limited number of occurrences, and it is, accordingly, appropriate for answering RQ2 of this dissertation. It is, however, knowledge which can only difficultly be extrapolated to larger contexts or generalized. Furthermore, case study in itself does not entail any particular method for conducting the analysis. Rather, it is an approach, which presupposes that the researcher operationalizes his or her own theoretical framework; it is research questions and theoretical concepts that guide what to look for and how to look for it in the case study.

A most important issue in connection with conducting case studies is the considerations in connection with case selection, with sampling. Two of the dissertation's research articles conduct case studies, but they apply slightly different strategies for choosing which cases to study. Both of these case studies were conducted on the basis of their theoretical frameworks, respectively the four affordances of news websites and the concept of participation in news production.

The first case study is presented in the second research article, "News Websites' Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian Study". While the preceding content analysis measures quantitatively the use of the affordances in a day-to-day context, this case study analyzes the (potential) use of the affordances qualitatively with focus on only one particular event within a very limited time frame. So, the case study provides an in-depth study of the use of the affordances in the immediate coverage of one extra-ordinary event, namely the terrorist attack in Norway on July 22, 2011. As such, it constitutes a much more focused study in terms of temporality and also of the breadth of the object of analysis; while the content analysis examines 93 news websites, the case study only analyzes 13 news websites, namely the largest ones in Denmark and Norway.

The choice of this particular case instead of, for example, the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami and subsequent meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan on March 11, 2011, or election night in Denmark on October 3, 2011, is motivated by several factors. First, the terrorist attack was a highly unexpected event. There had been no previous indicators pointing in this direction, and so it consti-

tuted an appropriate extreme case for analyzing how news workers respond in real-time to emergent crisis (cf. Kuzel, 1999; Neergaard, 2001). Second, because of the geographical and cultural proximity between Norway and Denmark, the event was one which every national news organization in Denmark would without a doubt cover. This way, the case also allowed for a relatively wide selection of different news websites.

The second case study is presented in the third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”. The purpose of this research article is, ultimately, theory-building, and for this reason the two cases of the study are specifically selected as critical cases; that is, they are particularly information rich, and if certain phenomena of the studies domain is not present in these cases, they probably do not exist in the first place (Kuzel, 1999: 39-40). The research article analyzes two specific cases, both of which fulfill these demands, namely Berlingske’s “Forbrydelsen”, which is an article series based almost entirely on audience contributions, and Ekstra Bladet’s live-coverage of the demonstrations in connection with the COP15 summit, which audiences ultimately played an important part in.

### **Semi-structured lifeworld interviews**

Finally, in order to generate insights into the production of the news on the web and into news workers’ motivations and inclinations for using the four affordances, I conducted a series of semi-structured lifeworld interviews (Kvale, 1997) with a number of respondents from different news organizations. These interviews provided me with background information for the dissertation entire and generated the statements which I have used in both the previous theoretical chapters and some of the following research articles. The interview is a research method that is appropriate for “tapping the perspectives of users (and other communicators) on media” (K. B. Jensen, 2012b: 270) through more or less structured questioning or conversation with respondents, thereby generating qualitative data about the lifeworld of the interviewees; “From the alternative point of view that follows from a post-modern perspective on knowledge construction, the interview is a conversa-



tion in which data emerge from a human-to-human relation” (Kvale, 1997: 158, my translation). Qualitative interviews, where researchers go in-depth with a smaller number of respondents, are good for situating numbers (or other kinds of theoretical or quantitative data) in social and cultural contexts, adding contextual nuances to quantitative data (McCracken, 1988).

The interview research is based upon interviews of between half an hour and one and a half hour’s duration with 13 news workers who work with news websites. The somewhat low number of respondents, which render generalization difficult, is due to both limited resources and the status of the interviews in the dissertation: the interviews are not a primary kind of empirical material but rather serve to qualify theoretical and analytical points (see also Kristensen & From, 2011: 95). Statements from the interviews serve as elaboration that nuance or substantiate observations made from the existing research literature and the other empirical material, but they are generally not analytical objects in themselves. However, in the fourth research article, “The Mediatization of Journalism”, statements from the news workers do also constitute empirical material in themselves and are subjected to analysis.

Before each interview, I constructed an interview guide<sup>11</sup> consisting of usually 10-15 questions; most of these questions were repeated from interview to interview because it was generally the same issues I wanted the respondents to elucidate, but the differences in the respondents’ organizational affiliation and hierarchical status meant that I adjusted some of the questions to fit the individual interviews. Furthermore, information I had obtained in earlier interviews of course also influenced the construction of later interview guides. The questions were open-ended and were formulated in a manner that could hopefully generate long answers from the interviewees (cf. Gentikow, 2002: 129) – it was, after all, the respondents’ perspectives and reflections, I was interested in, not my own talking. Because the interviews were semi-structured, I only loosely followed the precise sequence and wording of questions in the interview guides, allowing the conversation to take other turns than I had planned when the respondents offered unexpected but rele-

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<sup>11</sup> The interview guides for as well as transcripts of the 13 interviews I conducted are attached as appendices. For reasons of confidentiality, the interview transcripts are only available to the dissertation’s assessment committee.

vant perspectives. The purpose of the interview guides were for that reason both to structure the interview situations and secondary to secure that I did not forget any of the aspects I wanted to talk about.

Prior to the interviews, the respondents were briefed about the research project and received the interview guide so that they could estimate whether they would be the right person for interview in the particular news organization. Furthermore, the respondents were offered to get copies of the statements that I used from the interviews for inspection before I finished the research articles and the dissertation; this way, they could correct possible misunderstandings and clarify potential ambiguities. The content of the statements was not subject to negotiation, neither was the question of which quotes from the interviews I could use; the decision concerning including or omitting statements was mine alone.

Composing the sample of respondents, I aimed at a large degree of spread along different dimensions. Most importantly, I prioritized interviewing news workers on all levels of the formal editorial hierarchy as such a spread would provide me with most different perspectives on news production for the web: editors-in-chief, editors, and producers, on the one hand, could give information about editorial priorities and approaches, while writing journalists and technical staffers, on the other hand, could provide me with first-hand accounts of the practicalities of everyday news work for news websites. This distinction echoes the distinction between informants and respondents (K. B. Jensen, 2012b; Kvale, 1997; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011); that is, between actors with special, privileged insights into the researched subject matter and actors that represent a lifeworld perspective (or lived experience) of it.

This distinction as well as the theoretical sampling (i.e., sampling based on the theoretical framework, cf. Kuzel, 1999) that ensured that spread, however, turned out to be somewhat dispensable, because there was large overlaps of the workings of different employment categories and hierarchical positions. Several of the editors also made news articles, several of the journalists were involved in both editorial and technical affairs, and several of the technical staffers produced news content for the news websites. This merging of work assignments not only supports my point about journalism being conducted to an increasing degree by other kinds of news workers than just journalists (see the section *Journalism in an institutional*

*perspective* above and the fourth research article, “The mediatization of journalism”). It also raises the value of the research interviews as each of them gave more diverse information than I had expected beforehand. Furthermore, composing the sample, I prioritized interviewing news workers from different types of news websites: tabloids, general interest, and specialized ones; local, regional, national, and global ones; web-only and news websites that descend from other types of news media; and broadcast and print organizations.

In the end, my sample of respondents consists of (in the order they were interviewed):

- Thomas Willman, technical producer (web video) at Ekstra Bladet
- Morten Ildal, project leader (web video) at Ekstra Bladet
- Geir Terje Ruud, editor-in-chief with responsibility for online operations at Ekstra Bladet
- Heine Jørgensen, managing editor at Ekstra Bladet
- Michael Rømer, political reporter at Ekstra Bladet
- Frederik Bjerre Andersen, front page editor at Danmarks Radio and former journalist at Ekstra Bladet
- Grith Jørgensen, site and community manager at Aarhus Stiftstidende
- Jesper Woldenhof, journalist at business.dk and former journalist at Berlingske
- Troels B. Jørgensen, online editor at Berlingske
- Niels Thimmer, online editor at 24timer and metroXpress
- Allan Aistrup, editor-in-chief at Kjertermind Avis
- Jeffrey DeViscio, producer at the New York Times
- Eric Umansky, senior editor at ProPublica

As my readers will notice, there is an over-representation of news workers from Ekstra Bladet in my sample of respondents. The high number of respondents from this particular news organization follows from a more limited study I did of Ekstra Bladet’s real-time coverage of demonstrations in connection with the COP15 climate summit in Copenhagen, December 2009 (Kammer, 2011). These news workers were sampled through a process of snowball sampling (i.e., sampling where each

informant generates further informants until a saturation point is reached; cf. K. B. Jensen, 2012b; Kuzel, 1999) in order to make sure I got to interview all relevant actors: this way, the developers of a prototype mobile broadcasting device directed me to the managing editor of web video and the editor-in-chief, who connected me to two of the journalists who had covered the occurrences from the field. Even though I draw upon an aspect of this case of news production in the third research article “Former for læser-inddragelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, this study of Ekstra Bladet does not constitute a part of this dissertation. The interviews, nevertheless, still provided information that I have used in the dissertation, and for this reason the respondents appear on the list above.

### **Quality control: validity and reliability**

Two types of assessment must be taken into account when evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the research design and its implementation in the actual studies, namely validity and reliability.

Validity, on the one hand, has to do with whether the research design is constructed in such a way that it actually captures what it is supposed to capture and answers the questions it is supposed to answer (Carmines & Zeller, 1979; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Since the over-arching methodological issue in this research project has to do with making the theoretical concept of affordances manageable for empirical scrutiny, the question of internal validity relates to the ways that concept is operationalized and whether these maneuvers properly capture the different concrete instantiations of the affordances. In order to create the best foundation for the empirical studies, I support my argument by reference to earlier studies (e.g., Hermida, 2011; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; T. Schultz, 1999; Zamith, 2008) as well as several pilot studies, which have served to eliminate some possible sources of faults. However, one aspect of affordances, which this study does not capture, is the social dimension of the affordances that plays out in the interaction between news workers and the technology. I simply have not observed news workers actually conducting their everyday work. What I have, instead, is their descriptions of how they use or do not use the affordances and their reflections about doing so.

Furthermore, the variables in the content analysis and the qualitative case studies can only capture that, which is on the news websites, and deduce from that what news workers do. In the third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, for instance, my analysis cannot capture how audiences and news workers communicate via other channels than the news websites; this possible source of error is then dealt with by interviewing most of the news workers, who were engaged in the specific cases of journalism, and actively discuss these issues.

External validity is pursued by involving a broad range of interviewees and empirical material that represents several different parts of Danish web-based news and journalism. My assumption here is, that the broader this range is, the more probable is it that most sub-sets of Danish news on the web and the journalism that produces it are represented. As for the content analysis, external validity is secured by analyzing a sample of a scale that makes it representative. Since almost half the Danish news websites in the total universe are also part of the sample (93 out of a good 200 news websites), the patterns disclosed in the content analysis are likely to appear also on those Danish news websites, which are not part of the sample.

Reliability, on the other hand, has to do with the consistency of the research and the level of trust one should put to it. Basically, reliability is an assessment of whether other researchers would arrive at the same results, did they conduct similar studies of the same data material (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Measuring the reliability of the content analysis, I conducted an inter-coder agreement test by having 20 randomly selected websites from the sample (equivalent to 21.5 percent of the total sample) coded by more than one student assistant. Even though this number of re-coded news websites might be too low to confirm the level of agreement with proper statistical significance (Riffe, et al., 2005: 144-146), it remains above the average of reported reliability-test samples in comparable studies. There, it is usually between 10 and 20 percent of the total samples, if it is reported at all (McMillan, 2000). Based on the re-codings, Krippendorff's Alpha was calculated as a measurement of agreement between the coders. According to Krippendorff (2004: 241), content analyses with an Alpha value below .667 ( $\alpha < .667$ ) should be disregarded, those with Alpha values below .8 but equal to or above .667 ( $.800 > \alpha \geq .667$ )

should be used only for drawing tentative conclusions, and only those with Alpha values equal to or above .8 ( $\alpha \geq .8$ ) should be considered reliable. As the overall inter-coder agreement of the content analysis in the research article is .856, it is sufficiently high for drawing conclusions, and so I consider this study statistically reliable.

For the qualitative studies in the second and third research article, however, no such method exists for numerically assessing the reliability of the research conducted. And according to Lindlof and Taylor (2011: 272), reliability measurement is often not a great concern for qualitative researchers because their studies are often of a nonrepeatable character, interpreting unique occurrences within particular frameworks. So, they will not be replicable in the first place. What I have done to increase the reliability of the qualitative studies, however, is to aim at transparency and openness concerning the different steps in my conducting of the analysis, inviting the readers to look me over the shoulder in the research process. This way, while the results or the qualitative studies may not be measurably reliable in the same sense as the quantitative ones, the road leading to them will be transparent.

Finally, in connection with interview research specifically, reliability is further challenged by the fact that one cannot be sure that the respondents actually speak the truth (K. B. Jensen, 2012b). Even if they do not downright lie to the interviewer, they might deliberately or unconsciously skew their answers and reflections in order to look their best or be influenced by subsequent rationalization, or they may withhold information. However, as the information I got from the interviews is generally consistent with the information provided by the other interviewees as well as my other findings, I do consider the interview study reliable as well.



**Research article 1:**

**Ownership, legacy media, and  
the use of affordances on news  
websites**

**In review for Journalism Studies**





## Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites

**Abstract:** *Because of their technological constellation, news websites hold a set of affordances different from that of other news media, namely one consisting of instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality. Developing a methodological framework on the basis of content analysis, the article quantitatively examines the use of these affordances on a sample of Danish news websites. The article scrutinizes the relationships between this use and the ownership and legacy media of the news websites. It tests the explanatory force of, respectively, earlier empirical findings (which suggest that type of ownership is a determining factor in relation to appropriation of new technology) and path dependence theory (which suggest that organizational history will determine that appropriation). While the analysis shows a correlation between ownership and the use of the affordances, there is no correlation between legacy media and the use of the affordances. This finding suggests that ownership is a more powerful explanatory model than path dependence theory when it comes to news organizations' use of the affordances of news websites. Furthermore, the article contains a baseline study of the use of the four affordances on news websites. This baseline study shows that news websites are likely to primarily use the affordances in ways that support existing news organizations and maintain journalistic control.*

**Key words:** *affordances; content analysis; legacy media; news websites; ownership; path dependence*

### Introduction

As news websites holds a unique set of technological affordances (instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality), the conditions for news dissemination have changed. This article presents a baseline study of the extent to

which Danish news websites use the formal features that web technology affords news workers; doing so, it also tests the correlations between that use and the ownership and legacy media (i.e., the media types from which they descend organizationally) of the news websites. This research addresses a tension between two different explanatory models of organizational and institutional use of new technology. On this area, a tension between theory and empirical findings exists.

On the one hand, institutional theory suggests that established organizations with institutionalized practices will be less likely than new ones to change the ways things are done. As Powell (1991: 192) points out:

“Organizational procedures and forms may persevere because of path-dependent patterns of development in which initial choices preclude future options, including those that would have been more effective in the long run. These processes occur both at the level of the individual organization and at the collective level of the industry or the field.”

The central concept here is path dependence, that is, the organizational inertia caused by earlier decisions and established routines heavily influencing or even determining future action. Paths already taken are more likely to be followed than are new ones, as they will not jeopardize earlier investments that staked out organizational directions or force actors within organizations to change behavioral patterns (Mahoney, 2000; Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010). From this institutional perspective, traditional news organizations should be reluctant to begin to use the affordances of news websites in their online news dissemination. This, at least, is the case for legacy media organizations that have an organizational background in another media type (printed newspaper, radio, or television) and have later moved on to the web; news organizations that started on the web (the “web natives”) will of course not be subject to this kind of path dependence. Within news organizations particularly, both Domingo (2008a) and Thurman (2008) show how news workers are reluctant to use interactive possibilities on news websites.

On the other hand, empirical studies tell us that large organizations are actually faster than small ones at using and implementing new technology and the possi-

bilities it offers, even though one could expect change to be more difficult to implement there as more employees would need to change their working habits. Rogers (2003: 409), for example, writes: “The size of an organization has consistently been found to be positively related to its innovativeness.” Further, Deuze (2009: 87) notes that: “The economic foundation of the news organization is a strong predictor of the appropriation and implementation of technologies in newswork”. In a recent study, Krumsvik, Skogerbø and Storsul (2012) investigated the relationship between, on the one hand, size and ownership structure of news organizations and, on the other hand, their strategies of implementing innovation in the form of tablet publication. They concluded that such a correlation exists and that corporate ownership increases the likelihood of the news organization being innovative in using new technology. And before that, Schultz (1999) demonstrated a connection between large circulation of the legacy newspaper and the likelihood of using interactive features.

Based on this tension between theory and empirical findings, this article proposes two hypotheses. First, it hypothesizes that *ownership matters*. Either way, whether path dependence or resource possession explains news websites’ use of their affordances, there is a relationship between ownership and the use of the affordances; even though the explanatory models of path dependence and resource possession disagree, both perspectives presuppose that ownership matters. The question then is whether it matters positively or negatively. Second, the article hypothesizes that *news websites without legacy media use the affordances of news websites the most*. Because they do not carry over established journalistic practices from another type of medium, news workers on news websites without a print or broadcast predecessor might be less path dependent, and they might be more likely to use the affordances of news websites.

I ask three research questions, for which answers will indicate the explicatory force of the hypotheses:

*Research question 1: To what extent are the affordances of news websites in use on Danish news websites?*

*Research question 2: What is the relationship between ownership and the use of the affordances?*

*Research question 3: To what extent is there a correlation between the use of affordances and the type of legacy medium, from which the news websites descends?*

This kind of questions resembles earlier studies by, for instance, Engebretsen (2006) and Zeng and Li (2006).

### **Theoretical framework**

Affordances are a core concept of this study. It is a relational concept, which Gibson (1977) originally introduced to describe the possibilities of action that an object or environment offer in relation to certain actors. In a highly influential theoretical elaboration of the concept, Hutchby (2001a, 2001b, 2003) argues that affordances could also be used to describe the relationship between media technologies and social actors; the same way as a rock affords something for animals in a desert, media technologies offer possibilities of action for the individuals who use them.

The concept of affordance is a relational one in the sense that it does not refer to the very properties of the technology (or the mediacy of the media technology), but rather to the possibilities of action it offers a certain actor in a specific context. Different media are well-suited for different purposes for different people in different situations; what the web, for example, affords teenagers in terms of maintaining social relations on social networking sites is different from what it affords journalists and editors in terms of disseminating news to a wider public. Because of this relational character, the use of affordances at the core of the theoretical framework demands that the researcher clarifies what actors are in play, and, consequently, what relation is being researched. As this study is about web-based news dissemination, it takes its point of departure in the affordances of news websites, focusing on what they offer news workers exactly in terms of news dissemination.

Measuring this relationship, researchers have identified a number of different affordances – even though their exact terminology might differ – of news websites (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2005; Hall, 2001; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Salaverría, 2005): instantaneity (the potential of covering events in real-time), multimodality (the potential application of several different modalities beyond only but also including text), interactivity (the potential influence from audiences on the news work and the content of news websites), and hypertextuality (the potential linking together of different documents, databases, and web pages through clickable links) (see also Kammer, 2013).

## **Methodology**

Content analysis, which is “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1954: 489, emphasis in original) that “also lends itself to systematic studies of the formal features of media” (K. B. Jensen & Helles, 2005: 101). Using this method, this study provides a quantitative framework for measuring to what extent the four affordances of news websites are actually used by news workers in the daily course of news dissemination on news websites. In order to make possible such measurement, I have operationalized the four affordances (instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality) by breaking them down into a number of variables that are concrete and countable. Table 1 presents an overview of the variables, which are inspired by earlier studies (Hermida, 2011; T. Schultz, 1999; Zamith, 2008). For each variable, I applied a binary coding according to whether it was in use on news websites in the sample (coded as “1” in the binaries, “yes”) or not (coded as “0” in the binaries, “no”); the underlying assumption here is that the more of the variables within each affordance are found in use, the larger degree of use of that affordance can be said to exist. The approach echoes Schultz’ (1999) study of interactive features across 100 American news websites, Jensen and Helles’ (2005) examination of the actualization of participatory affordances on different types of websites, and Zamith’s (2008) proposed grid for measuring the use of potentialities of news websites. Each of these studies operationalizes theoretical con-

cepts and makes them measurable through breaking them down into smaller entities that allow for statistical processing.

*Table 1: The affordances of news websites broken down into measurable variables.*

<b>Affordances</b>	<b>Measurable variables</b>
Instantaneity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaking news</li> <li>• Live updates</li> <li>• List of latest news</li> <li>• Time mark on referral on front page</li> <li>• Time mark on article</li> <li>• Updated article</li> </ul>
Multimodality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Image</li> <li>• Gallery</li> <li>• Animation/graphics</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Sound</li> <li>• Radio</li> <li>• E-paper</li> </ul>
Interactivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing by e-mail</li> <li>• Sharing by social medium</li> <li>• Comments</li> <li>• Audience-authored articles</li> <li>• Reader blog</li> <li>• Automated contact possibility with journalist</li> <li>• Poll</li> </ul>
Hypertextuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal link</li> <li>• External link</li> <li>• Tags</li> <li>• Embedded map</li> <li>• Embedded feed from social media</li> <li>• Embedded audio-visual content</li> <li>• RSS</li> </ul>

This way of measuring the use of the affordances makes comparison between different categories of news websites possible. Following the focus of this study, I use types of media ownership and the legacy medium of the news websites as the comparative categories. First, applying a crude typology of media ownership in Denmark, I distinguish between five different types of ownership: large Danish

publishing organizations (JP/Politikens Hus and Nordjyske), large international publishing organizations (Berlingske Media, Bonnier, and Metro International), broadcasting corporations (Danmarks Radio and TV 2 Danmark), other/independent media organizations (such as Kjerterminde Avis and other predominantly local and regional news organizations), and private individuals (such as Gadepressen). Second, regarding the different types of legacy media, that is, on what types of news media the news organizations have their foundations, I distinguish between printed newspapers, broadcast media (radio and television), and news websites that do not descend from an offline predecessor.

### *Sample*

The sample for this study consists of 93 Danish news websites. To limit the universe of Danish news websites, I applied four different criteria that a website would have to meet to be included: 1) it should be in Danish and address a Danish audience in Denmark; 2) it should have its main focus on news dissemination, which excludes news aggregating websites such as Google News and Yahoo! News that have their main business model in web searches; 3) it should select the news from an omnibus<sup>12</sup> perspective; and 4) it should constitute a delimited editorial and judicial entity (cf. Finnemann, 2005b). Through a combination (cf. Weare & Lin, 2000) of explorative searches on search engines (Bing, Google, and Yahoo!), collector sites, Danish media organizations' online portfolios of publications, and tips from acquaintances, colleagues, and professionals within the news industry, by February 2012, I identified more than 200 websites that met the four criteria and accordingly constitute the total population of Danish news websites. The sampling strategy to select from this universe was a combination of purposive and simple random sampling (Riffe, et al., 2005): on the one hand, I included the largest news websites in the sample as these are the ones that come into contact with most members of the Danish audience (Medier, 2012); on the other hand, because of resource limitations I could not include the entire rest of the population of Danish

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<sup>12</sup> "Omnibus" is a common term in the Scandinavian countries, which describes mainstream news and journalism that subscribe to an ideal of "addressing principally everyone and having content about preferably all aspects of life" (Poulsen, 1996:95, my translation). Etymologically, the term descends from Latin *omnibus*, "for all".



news websites in the sample, I performed a random selection among the remaining predominantly local news websites.

The unit of analysis was the individual news websites. The coding, however, included only the top two layers of the news websites (i.e., the front page and all the web pages on the website it linked to) because of the assumption that if the affordances were in use, the manifestation of them would be present there.

### *Coding, documentation, and inter-coder reliability*

Having received instructions and training in the coding procedure, three student assistants coded the 93 news websites in the sample in the period February 8 through March 4, 2012. This period of time constitutes an ordinary “normal period” without political elections, large-scale sports events, or other predictable extraordinary events that could distort the results of the analysis; even though it is obviously longer, the nature of this period resembles that of an ordinary “news week” (Lund, 2004; Lund, et al., 2009), and it is accordingly to be considered representative for the everyday workings of Danish news websites. Because of the uncertainties in connection with downloading the entire empirical material prior to the coding process (where it would, for example, be impossible to go back and reconstruct flawed downloads of web pages, should something go wrong in the downloading), the coding took place in real-time on live websites. In addition to representing a temporal snapshot of the use of the affordances of news websites, this kind of “synchronous coding” poses certain challenges to content analysis because the content, the very object of analysis, might change gradually or vanish entirely (Brügger, 2005; McMillan, 2000).

For this reason, in addition to conducting the coding, the student assistants also produced the documentation necessary to validate the findings: using the website archiving software Web Snapper (version 3.0 or 3.1 dependent on the operating system of their computers), they micro-archived (Brügger, 2005) a copy of those particular web pages that contained the used variables. In this way, I apply a photographic mode of documentation (cf. Jessen, 2010:264), which is appropriate as I research the formal features on news websites rather than, say, dynamic content or

users' on-site navigation (Brügger, 2005). The student assistants were consequently responsible for both coding the websites and securing satisfying documentation for the variables they coded.

In the concrete coding procedure, each of the 27 variables presented in Table 1 were subject to a binary assessment based on one question: is the variable used on the news website, yes or no? From the starting point, every variable was coded as not manifest ("0" in the binaries, "no") and it was then up to the coders to go through the empirical material and identify manifestations of the variables (thereby changing the code to "1" in the binaries, "yes"). Specifically, the student assistants applied the following procedure to each news website in the sample: first, they checked the front page for all variables and documented each manifestation with a digital copy of the page; second, they generated a list of all internal links (i.e., links that did not go beyond the website in question), using an online link-ripping tool; third, they went through every internal link on this list, checking for the variables they had not found on the front page; fourth, having checked each web page for all 27 variables, they keyed in their coding in online spreadsheets which only the respective student assistant and I had access to. For the sake of quality control, the student assistants occasionally returned to already coded news websites.

In order to measure the level of agreement and coding consistency among the three student assistants, I conducted an inter-coder reliability test by having 20 randomly selected websites from the sample (equivalent to 21.5 percent of the total sample) coded by more than one student assistant. Even though this number of re-coded news websites might be too low to statistically significantly confirm the level of agreement (Riffe, et al., 2005 :144-146), it remains well above the average of reported reliability-test samples in comparable studies (cf. McMillan, 2000). Using Krippendorff's Alpha, the overall inter-coder reliability of the study is .856, indicating a satisfying level for drawing conclusions (Krippendorff, 2004: 241). For the affordance of instantaneity, the average reliability was .784; for multimediality it was .913; for interactivity it was 0.886; and for hypertextuality it was .829. The marginally lower reliability for instantaneity suggests that the use of the variables of

this affordance might be more difficult to measure quantitatively because of their temporal transience.

## Results

### *Correlation between ownership and use of affordances (RQ2)*

Table 2 presents data on the relationship between ownership and the use of the affordances of news websites. Using the binary coding, I calculated the score for each affordance (an “affordance score”) on a scale of 0 and 1 (an affordance score of 0 meaning that no variables were in use on any news websites of the specific type; 1 that all variables were in use on all of them). The mean represents the average score of that affordance across the entire sample. As the affordances are broken down into different numbers of variables, however, the means cannot be compared across affordances but should only be used for comparison *within* the same affordance.

*Table 2: Ownership and affordance scores*

	<b>Instantaneity</b>	<b>Multimodality</b>	<b>Interactivity</b>	<b>Hypertextuality</b>
Large Danish publishing organizations ( <i>n</i> = 20)	.567	.686	.657	.607
Large international publishing organizations ( <i>n</i> = 16)	.552	.589	.732	.732
Broadcasting corporations ( <i>n</i> = 20)	.550	.564	.507	.507
Other/independent media organizations ( <i>n</i> = 33)	.374	.506	.333	.403
Private individuals ( <i>n</i> = 4)*	.208	.393	.107	.321
Mean	.477	.567	.499	.522

\* = less than 5.

The most important finding concerning the relationship between ownership and the use of affordances is that the news websites from both the large Danish and international publishing corporations score higher across all of the four affordances than news websites with any other kind of ownership. In comparison to the mean, news websites with these types of ownership are the only ones above average with regards to use of the affordances, while broadcasting corporations' use of both instantaneity and interactivity is also above the mean. This finding indicates that large-scale organizations within the newspaper industry are more likely to use the affordances. Simultaneously, the small news websites owned by private individuals (such as, e.g., Hareskov-Værløse Avis, also known as Kaj's Avis, which is owned, authored, edited, and published by a 90-year-old veteran editor-in-chief) score lowest on each affordance and are accordingly least likely to put them into use. News websites from broadcasting corporations use the different affordances to an extent quite close to the overall mean, while the smaller, independent publishing organizations are well below the mean for all affordances. Testing the statistical significance of these relationships, a Kruskal-Wallis test leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, indicating that the correlation between ownership and the use of affordances is indeed significant ( $H = 16.64$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p < .005$ ).

One interesting finding is that the news websites owned by private individuals score remarkably lower on interactivity (.107) than news websites from all of the other ownership categories (which range from .333 to .732). Though not statistically significant (again,  $n < 5$ ), this finding suggests that this kind of news organization tends to spend its often very limited resources on making and disseminating news rather than involving the audiences in these processes. This finding is somewhat surprising; one could expect news websites not affiliated with established media organizations to have a more inclusive relation to non-institutional and non-organizational actors than this finding suggests.

### *Correlation between origin and use of affordances (RQ3)*

Whereas the cross-tabulation between ownership and the use of affordances showed some noteworthy differences between the different types of news websites,

the relationship between the legacy medium of the news websites and their use of the affordances is much more similar. As Table 3 shows, all scores, except for one, within each of the affordances vary by a maximum of .1. The only exception is the affordance of hypertextuality, where the news websites without a legacy medium score remarkably higher than the news websites from organizations rooted in off-line news dissemination; the number of news websites without a legacy medium in the sample, however, is too low for the result to be statistically significant ( $n < 5$ ). Also, the Kruskal-Wallis test failed to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the correlation between legacy medium and the use of affordances is not significant ( $H = 1.42$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p > .2$ ). So while ownership matters for the use of affordances, this study cannot confirm that legacy medium does too.

*Table 3: Legacy media and affordance scores*

	<b>Instantaneity</b>	<b>Multimodality</b>	<b>Interactivity</b>	<b>Hypertextuality</b>
Printed newspaper ( $n = 69$ )	.459	.576	.507	.524
Broadcast ( $n = 21$ )	.540	.551	.483	.490
None (/web) ( $n = 3$ )*	.444	.476	.429	.714
Mean	.477	.567	.499	.522

\* = less than 5.

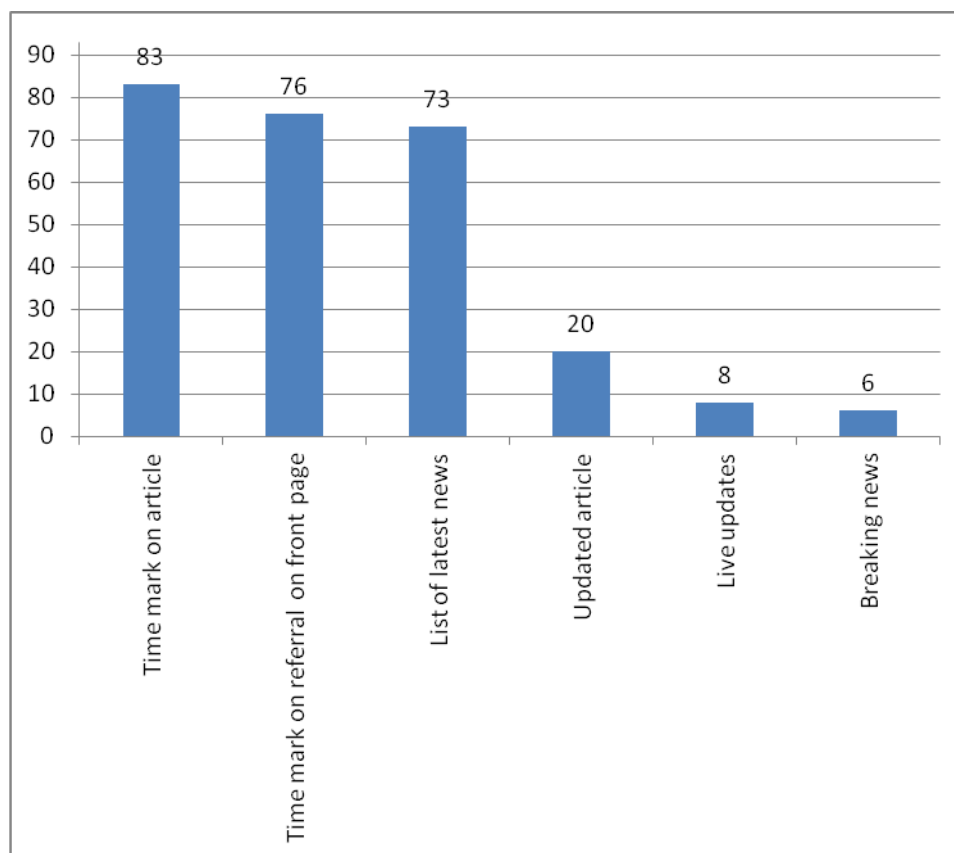
A number of interesting findings appear from the simple frequencies of the use of the variables of the separate affordances, in the baseline study.

### *Instantaneity*

From the frequencies of the use of variables of the instantaneity affordance (see Figure 1), it is clear that the actual use is closely connected with the resources demanded for using the variables; there is a clear dividing line between the variables

that are easily and inexpensively applied on news websites and the variables that are more resource-intensive. On the one side of the dividing line, time marks on articles and front page referrals and lists of the latest news on the news websites are in use on 83, 76, and 73 of the 93 news websites in the sample (equivalent to, respectively, 89.2, 81.7, and 78.5 percent). These variables are characterized by being relatively cheap and easy to apply to the news websites, as they can be automated through the technical setup. On the other side of the dividing line are the more resource-intensive variables, namely the continuous updating of already published articles, live updates in connection with, for example, sports and developing events, and presentation in breaking news; these variables are only used on 20, 8, and 6 news websites (21.5, 8.6, and 6.5 percent respectively). In contrast to the widely used variables, these variables cannot be completely automated, but demand on-going time from news workers in order to be put into use.

*Figure 1: Frequencies of instantaneity variables (n = 93)*

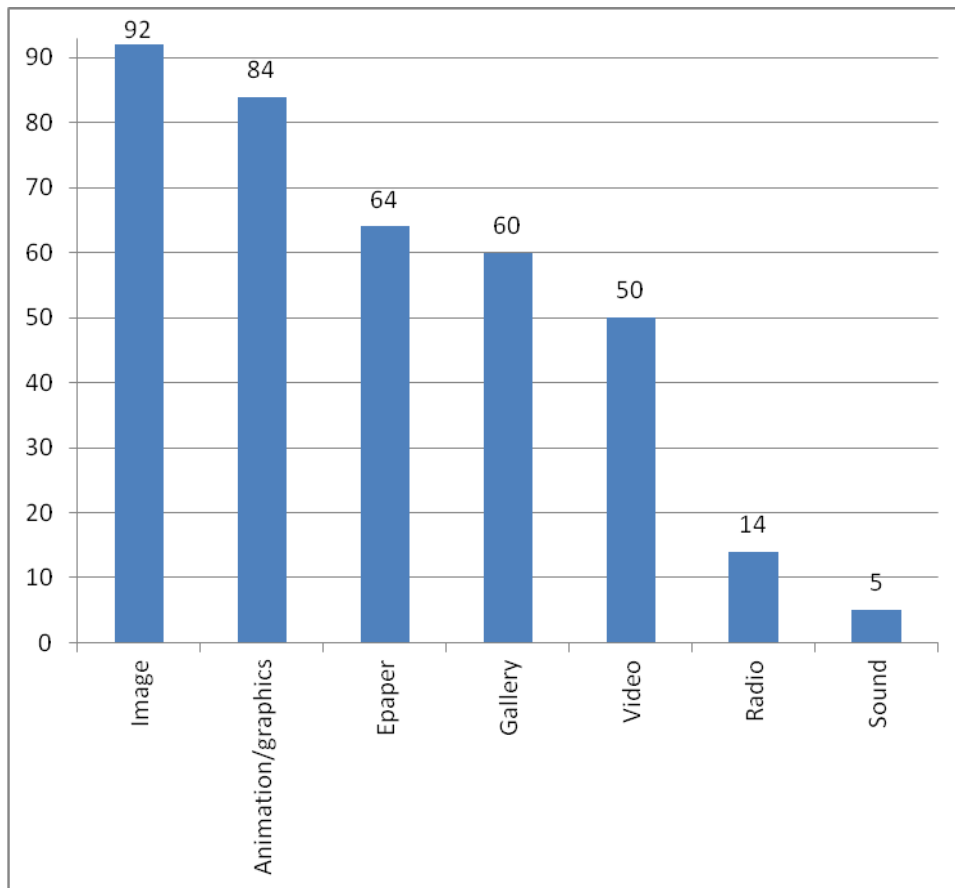


It is worth noting that only the national news websites attach the “breaking news” label to stories; only 6 of the 93 news websites in the sample (6.5 percent) emphasized something as breaking news throughout the coding period and all of them were large, national news organizations (tabloids B.T. and Ekstra Bladet, morning newspapers Berlingske and Politiken, specialist newspaper Børsen, and the news branch of broadcaster TV 2). The suggestion of this finding that only major news websites prioritize covering events and disseminating news in real-time, however, is contradicted by another finding, namely the local or regional scope of the majority of the news websites that use rolling live-updates. This variable is likely to be the most resource-intensive one of this affordance as it presupposes a news worker continuously covering the same event (typically sport, trials, or the like, see Steensen, 2011a; Thurman & Walters, 2013). The ambiguity as to what types of news websites use these “real-time variables” indicates that further studies are needed in order to determine which individual organizational or institutional factors influence the choice concerning real-time coverage.

### *Multimodality*

The frequencies of the multimodality variables show widespread use of non-text features (see Figure 2). Images, a handing down from both print and broadcast legacy media, are the most used multimodal formal feature, as they are present on 92 of 93 news websites (98.9 percent), while different kinds of animation or graphics are in use on 84 of 93 news websites (90.3 percent). The least used variables of multimodality are those that have to do with audio. Radio (i.e., obviously constructed montages of sounds) is in use on 14 of 93 news websites (15.1 percent) while “pure” sound (e.g., raw recordings or interviews) is available on only 5 of 93 news websites (5.4 percent). This relatively scarce use of audio might be explained by the fact that audiences primarily visit news websites at work (Boczkowski, 2010) where sound would constitute an intrusion of co-workers’ work spaces as well as an embarrassment of the person who was supposed to work instead of listening to the news.

Figure 2: Frequencies of multimodality variables ( $n = 93$ )



Within the affordance of multimodality, there are some interesting connections between ownership, legacy media, and the use of especially the audiovisual features. First, moving images are in use on 50 of 93 news websites (53.8 percent). Both news websites owned by large, Danish as well as international publishing organizations and by broadcasting corporations use moving images to quite a large extent (respectively 90, 50, and 60 percent of those types of news websites). But the difference in their use of this variable is striking: of the news websites that use this variable, 7 of 18 (38.9 percent) of the ones owned by large, Danish publishing organizations and 6 of 8 (75 percent) of the internationally owned one embed videos from other websites (typically YouTube), while only 2 in 20 (10 percent) of



news websites owned by broadcasters do the same<sup>13</sup>. Second, 10 of the 14 news websites (71.4 percent) that use radio are owned by broadcasting corporations and have a broadcasting legacy medium. These relationships between uses of audiovisual features and organizational background – as well as the fact that 58 of 64 instances of use of e-papers (90.6 percent) are on news websites of publishing organizations, that is, the kind of news organizations that work with print on paper – support the above finding of a correlation between ownership and the use of affordances.

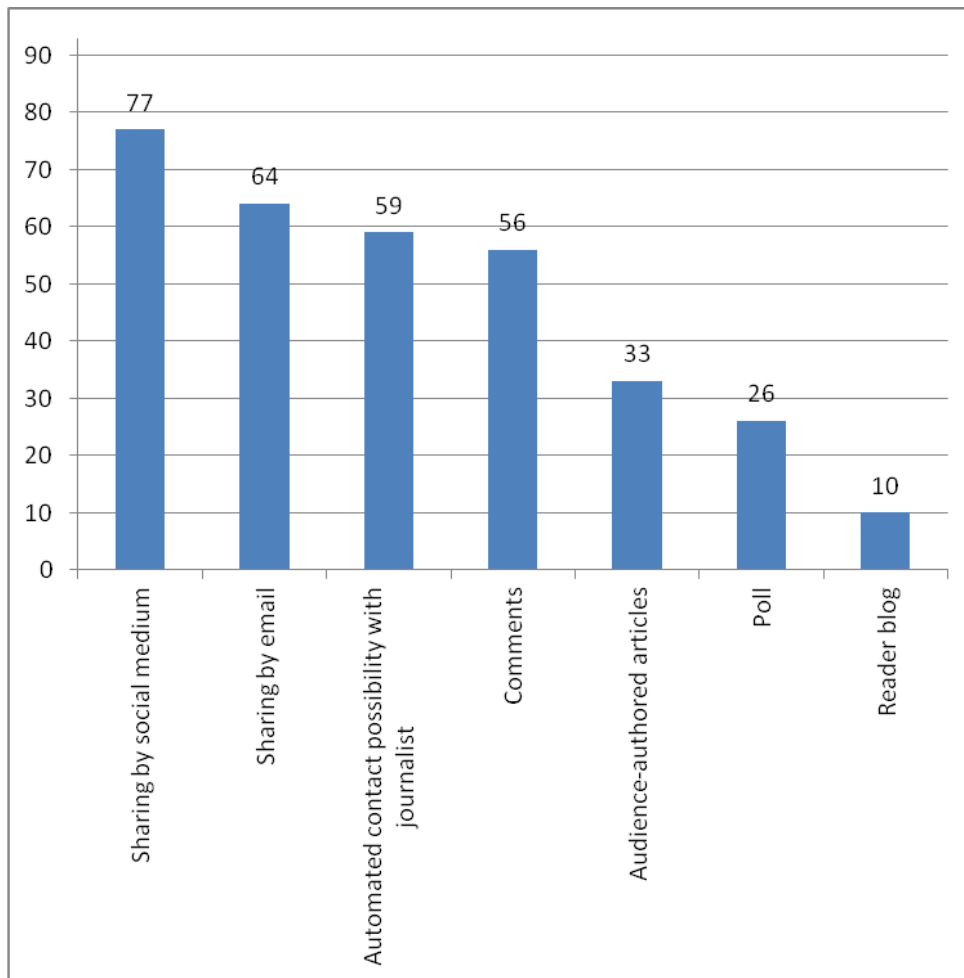
### *Interactivity*

Among the variables of the interactivity affordance (see Figure 3), there appears to be a tendency on the Danish news websites towards primarily using the variables where the audience can disseminate content from the website: on 77 and 64 of 93 news websites (82.8 and 68.8 percent), the audiences can share articles through, respectively, social media plug-ins and with standardized mail formats. Following these possibilities for sharing comes the possibility of contacting through a clickable link the journalists who authored the articles; this variable is in use on 59 of 93 news websites (63.4 percent). Only the fourth most widespread of the seven variables is one where the audiences can directly influence the very content of the news websites (what I have elsewhere identified as participation, cf. Kammer, 2013), namely the comment function that is in use on 56 of 93 news websites (60.2 percent). Following this quite widespread variable, there is a remarkable drop in possibilities of audiences' authoring articles by themselves (33 of 93 news websites; 35.5 percent), of polling on given subject matters (26 news websites; 28 percent), and finally of audiences having their personal blogs (10 news websites; 10.8 percent).

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<sup>13</sup> The methodology of this study, however, cannot measure whether this relationship means that the news websites of large publishing organizations (Danish and international) do not have both embedded and domestically produced audiovisual content.

Figure 3: Frequencies of interactivity variables (n = 93)

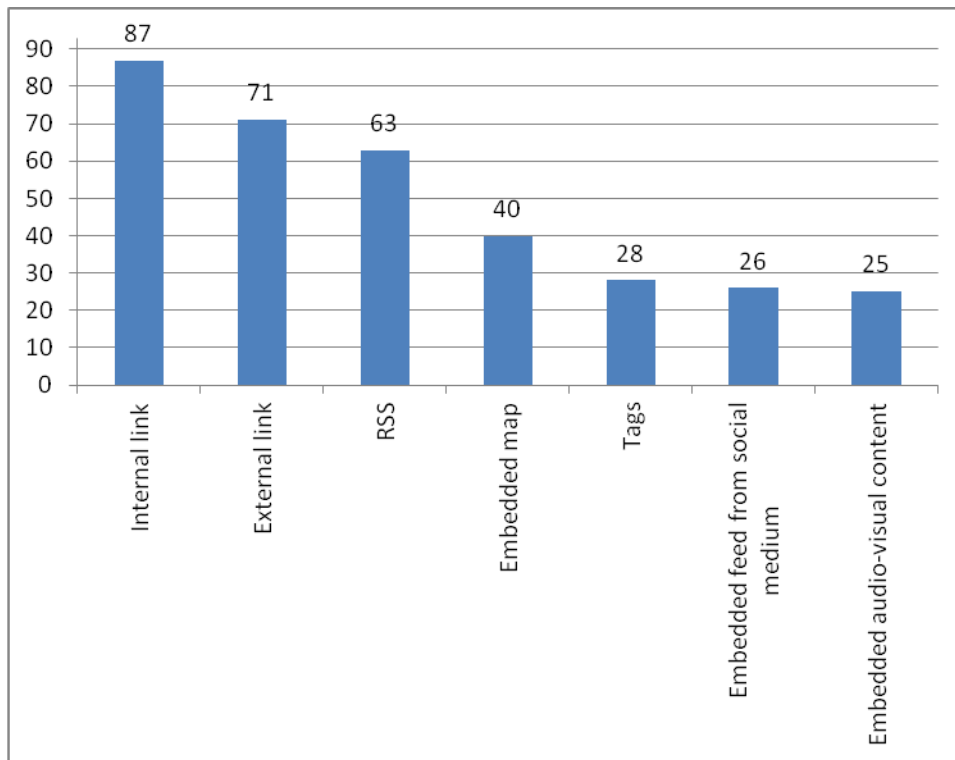


In this way, the inclination seems to be that Danish news websites are more likely to operationalize the possibilities of interactivity in forms that support the news workers' control over their work (i.e., forms that allow audiences to circulate news and supply information) than direct content creation by audiences. This finding corresponds with an international study that shows that while news workers appreciate audiences' contributions to the journalistic process, they are highly reluctant to hand over control of the content of the news websites to audiences: here, Hermida (2011: 21) writes that "None of the newspapers [in the study] allowed readers any meaningful agency over what went into the main news product at this [selection/filtering] stage of the journalistic process".

### *Hypertextuality*

The most surprising finding within the hypertextuality affordance (see Figure 4) is the large extent of external linking (i.e., clickable links to content beyond the website's own domain), which exists on 71 of 93 news websites (76.3 percent). Conventional economic logic would have it that news organizations aim at keeping the audiences on their own news websites and exposing them to their advertisers' messages, using internal linking, such as 87 of the 93 news websites do (93.5 percent). One explanation for this widespread possibility of passing audiences along might be the close organizational connections that exist between most of the news websites, either in the form of shared corporate ownership or of strategic collaborations (such as, e.g., Ugeavisen.dk, where 13 local news organizations co-exist on one shared news portal), while only a few are completely organizationally disconnected from any other news websites. Future studies will have to look into the destination of these external links to examine whether they direct audiences to other websites owned by the same organizations (which would reaffirm the conventional economic logic) or to other non-affiliated places on the internet (which would not).

Figure 4: Frequencies of hypertextuality variables ( $n = 93$ )



## Conclusion and discussion

The first hypothesis of this study proposed that ownership matters when it comes to the extent of use of the affordances of news websites. The findings of this study support this hypothesis, as differences exist between the levels of use of affordances across different categories of ownership, the general tendency being that large publishing organizations tend to use the affordances more on their news websites than do broadcasting corporations, independent media organizations, and in particular private individuals. Especially the relatively low affordance scores of news websites owned by broadcasting corporations (scores quite close to the overall averages) are somewhat surprising because of the historical background; Danmarks Radio, the Danish public service broadcasting corporation, was, after all, a very early adopter of web technology for news (Brügger, 2012). Nevertheless, when it comes to multimodal features, ownership seems to be a strong predictor for the use of especially the audiovisual variables.

The second hypothesis proposed that news websites, that do not descend from an offline legacy medium, would use the affordances of news websites the most. The findings in this study, however, do not support this hypothesis, as the use of affordances appeared to be quite similar across different categories of legacy media. For this reason, path dependence theory seems less likely to explain patterns of media organizations' use of affordances than the theoretical position would assume. The one exception from this pattern, the only finding in this study that suggests path dependence might play a role in the extent of use of the affordances on news websites, is the remarkably widespread use of hypertextuality on news websites without a legacy medium; because of the sample sizes, however, this finding is not statistically significant.

The confirmation of the first hypothesis and lack of support for the other one indicate that ownership and the organizational possession of resources are a more powerful explanatory model than path dependence theory when it comes to news organizations' use of technological possibilities. Thus, this study supports the other empirical findings referred to in the opening of the article. But that does not mean that path dependence theory should necessarily be abandoned altogether. Even though this study suggests it has limited explanatory force on a large, trans-organizational sample, it might still provide a productive theoretical point of departure in more qualitative studies of the workings of single organizations that have moved beyond their legacy media and on to the web.

This study was not only a test of the two hypotheses; it was also a quantitative baseline study of the prevalence of the technological possibilities on Danish news websites. Across the frequencies of the individual variables of each affordance, one pattern emerges: news websites tend to use the variables to the extent that they are cheap, do not gravely contradict traditional work patterns, and do not compromise journalistic independence. This finding applies across the entire sample, and overall, the simple frequencies of the different variables in use on news websites reflect a conservative approach to the use of the affordances of news websites. Across the sample, it is clear that the news workers are more likely to put into use the variables that are not resource-intensive (e.g., time marks and images) than the ones that are (e.g., radio and live-updates). Furthermore, the news workers are conser-

vative in the sense that they seem reluctant to hand over control of the content of the news websites to audiences; the frequencies of use of the interactivity variables suggest that audience contributions are primarily welcomed when they take the form of aiding the circulation of content or informing news workers rather than actually creating content.

This study is not a normative one and does not regard a conservative approach, such as the one employed by the Danish news websites, as “good” or “bad” in itself. Likewise, one should not necessarily equate a high degree of use of the four affordances with more advanced or sophisticated news dissemination or with a higher quality. There can be many good reasons for *not* using the affordances and their variables, for example that they will not help the news organization reach its goals. The absence of use can very well be a deliberate choice; using the variables excessively, news organizations run the risk of being all about form at the expense of content. That being said, the positive correlation between organizational resources at hand and the use of the technological possibilities at least suggests that larger organizations also find ways of putting the affordances to use; Graves (2007: 335) asserts that “sometimes an affordance is an invitation”, and it seems that the news organizations with most resources are most likely to accept this invitation.

The baseline study provides only a snapshot of the use of affordances on Danish news websites. In future research, there will be two obvious ways to build upon its findings, namely to expand it in time and in space. First, later studies could replicate this study in order to track changes and continuities in how news websites use the different variables of their affordances in connection with news work and news dissemination. Even though the two studies are not offhand comparable, the differences between the findings of this study and the ones in Engebretsen’s (2006) suggest that news workers’ appropriation and use of these technological possibilities develop over time. Second, similar baseline studies could be conducted in other countries and contexts in order to map similarities and differences across national borders and media systems (cf. Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Such international studies of this subject would furthermore generate more detailed and empirically supported insights into the correlation between ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites.

## **Acknowledgements**

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**Research article 2:**

**News Websites' Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian study**

**In review for Norsk  
Medietidsskrift**





## News Websites' Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian study

**Abstract:** *This article examines how news websites covered the terrorist attack in Norway, July 22, 2011, in real-time. However shocking the violence in Oslo and on Utøya was, the coverage of it offers a rare opportunity to study how journalists working on news websites cover highly dramatic and unexpected events. Analyzing micro-archived front pages and selected articles from Danish and Norwegian news websites, the article assesses whether and how the four affordances of news websites (instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality) were a part of journalists' response to emergent crisis, and whether their use eroded journalistic professionalism. The findings suggest that while journalists have adapted to the forms and formats of news websites, this adaptation did not compromise journalistic professionalism. On the contrary, the use of the medium-specific affordance seems to constitute a part of the journalistic response to the real-time unfolding of events.*

**Key words:** *affordances; online journalism; news websites; real-time; terrorism*

Assessing how journalism for news websites covers highly unexpected events while they are unfolding, this article examines Scandinavian news websites' coverage of one such example of emergent crisis. The concrete example of such crisis is the July 22, 2011, terrorist attack in Norway. In moments of crisis, news media, especially the ones able to continuously update, play an important role for the public which is in urgent need for timely information. As news websites have become one of the most important sources of news consumption (PEW, 2010; Schröder & Kobbernagel, 2012), they also constitute a central medium for public communication during crisis (Allan, 2006). This article is about how news websites communicate during crisis and about the journalistic practice reflected in that communica-

tion. The article examines whether and how Danish and Norwegian news websites use the specific affordances of the news medium in the real-time coverage of emergent crisis and, analyzing also the accuracy of the coverage, it argues that they actually did so without compromising journalistic professionalism.

As numerous scholars have outlined, journalism has institutionalized practices for covering the unexpected (Gans, 1980; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Hartley, 2011b; Schlesinger, 1978; I. Schultz, 2007b; Tuchman, 1978); these practices include the use of familiar, pre-established frames and narrative structures, the involvement of expert sources, and constant discursive reminders of the recency of the event. Concerning terrorism specifically, which provides the empirical basis for this article, Mogensen (2008) further identifies, for instance, involvement of the public, explanations of the conditions for news production, and considerations of national security as parts of the journalistic practice. But for what is undoubtedly due to media historical reasons, most of this earlier research concerns journalism for traditional news media: radio, television, and print newspapers. News websites, however, distinguish themselves from other news media as they hold a distinctive constellation of affordances for journalists, each of which are either unique to the web or shared with other types of media. These affordances of news websites are instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2005; Hall, 2001; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Salaverría, 2005). I will return to these affordances below.

The earlier research has, however, not examined what happens at the intersection of on the one hand the institutionalized journalistic practices and on the other hand the different affordances of news websites. What role do these affordances play in journalism's practices for covering the unexpected through this particular news medium? Or put slightly different: how do journalists working for news websites respond to emergent crisis, and do the affordances of news websites constitute a part of that response? These considerations lead to the first research questions of this study:

*RQ1: Do Scandinavian news websites reflect a use their affordances in the coverage of emergent crisis? (And if so, how?)*

In a related study, Engebretsen (2006) found that Scandinavian news websites generally fail to take advantage of what digital technology offers. One reason for such a reluctance to appropriate the new technology might be that of path dependence (Powell, 1991): journalism as an institution is not native to the online format, and neither are most of the actors within the institution. Following path dependence theory's central claim that actors and organizations are likely to meet changes by doing things the way they have always done it, one could argue that journalists and news organizations making news for websites would be reluctant to use the affordances of the new medium (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009). Following this argument, one should expect that putting the affordances of news websites into operation might affect the journalistic professionalism of the coverage negatively because the journalists would have to use resources on other practices than reporting correctly. This reflection leads to the second research question:

*RQ2: To what extent do the journalists, who produce this coverage, circulate accurate information and correct errors?*

There can be different measurements for journalistic professionalism but I have chosen to focus on the degree of accuracy in the reporting. Accuracy constitutes one of the pillars of trustworthy journalism (Hall, 2001: 41) and can – as I will return to – be particularly difficult for journalists to achieve in high-pressure situations such as the terrorist attack in Norway. This way, I interpret the circulation of accurate information as an indication that the journalists in question managed to deal with the situation and cover the event professionally (and, accordingly, the other way around with false information). Measuring the degree of accuracy, I compare the information that the news websites circulated to the facts we today know to be true (cf. the official report on the terrorist attack: Norges offentlige utredninger, 2012).

In order to make the two research questions analytically approachable, I focus on one specific case, namely the journalistic real-time coverage on Scandinavian news websites of the terrorist attack in Norway, July 22, 2011. A powerful car bomb exploded in the political centre of the Norwegian capital Oslo at 15:25 (local time), ravaging several buildings among which was the one with the office of the Prime Minister. Nearly two hours later, at about 17:10, the terrorist, disguised as a police-

man, started shooting at the participants of a political youth camp on the small island Utøya approximately 30 km from the capital. After having killed what amounted to a total of 77 persons, 69 of which were children or adolescents, the perpetrator surrendered himself to the police at 18:27.

This two-step terrorist attack constitutes an extremely rare and unexpected event in a Scandinavian context. Except for a few isolated incidents over the last 30 years, Scandinavian countries do not have the same history of politically motivated violence or of terrorism being an actual risk as do other European countries such as Germany (the *Rote Armee Fraktion*), Great Britain (the IRA), and Italy (the *Brigate Rosse*). The explosion of a car bomb in a major city is simply unprecedented in Scandinavia, as was the mass-murder on Utøya. Beyond this societal factor, the temporal extension and continuous development of the event kept it on the agenda of the news organizations just as was the case on September 11, 2001. Both these factors make the Norwegian terrorist attack a most suiting example of the kind of highly unanticipated and developing events that are useful for studying journalism's real-time response to the unexpected.

In many regards, this study echoes Salaverría's (2005) examination of the first couple of hours of coverage on international news websites when al-Qaeda terrorists attacked New York City and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001. Salaverría asserts that the events provided "the opportunity to measure the grade of both technical and professional development reached by the digital media at the beginning of the 21st century" (2005: 70) but he arrives at a somewhat discouraged conclusion: "online publications, just a decade old, have not yet reached their maturity" (2005: 84). The reason was their failure to take full advantage of the interactive, multimedial, and hypertextual potentialities of digital technology as well as their circulation of information that later turned out to be false. Salaverría further criticizes the news websites in his sample for having neither sufficient bandwidth nor server power to technically accommodate the overwhelming interest from audiences. However, even though there are similarities in terms of both the journalistically covered event, the nature of the empirical material, and to some degree the analytical framework, this article does not represent a replication or update of Salaverría's study: our samples of news websites, international scopes, systematics

of data collection, and time frames in relation to the terrorist attacks are different. Nevertheless, Salaverría's study does provide a historical perspective and reference point for contextualizing my study.

### **Analytical framework: the affordances of news websites**

Among researchers of web-based journalism and news dissemination, there exists a general consensus that news websites hold four different affordances for news workers, namely instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2005; Hall, 2001; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Salaverría, 2005). These affordances have been the pivotal point in much of the scholarly literature on online news (for extensive literature overviews, see Domingo, 2005; Hartley, 2011a; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009), and some researchers even criticize what they perceive to be a too overspecialized focus on the affordances (e.g. Steensen, 2011b). In this section, I present a brief overview of the concepts of instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality in order to account for the analytical framework. One should remember, however, that the analysis focuses on two dimensions: first, the use of these affordances in the real-time coverage; second, the degree of accuracy. The two dimensions intersect in the question of whether journalism maintains its professional standards (here exemplified with accuracy) when it adapts to the formal characteristics of news websites by using the affordances (given, in the first instance, it does so).

#### *Instantaneity*

With digital technology, the flows in news dissemination have accelerated. Broadcasters have always had the possibility of interrupting scheduled programs with special bulletins about extraordinary events, newspaper publishers of making special issues. But on news websites (and before that on 24-hours news television channels) where the publication cycle is potentially liquid and the news potentially published at once much news dissemination occurs in real-time. Timeliness has always been a constituent part of newsmaking (Rantanen, 2009) but with digital

platforms such as the web it is intensified. Resonating with Domingo's (2008c: xv) ascertainment that "immediacy is the dominant paradigm of online journalism", Hjarvard (2012b: 99) observes that "New media have placed an added premium on the immediacy of news". Immediacy is, however, an ambiguous term as it refers to both temporal closeness, spatial proximity, and a reliance on media in communication (Tomlinson, 2007: 74). To avoid this ambiguity I prefer to use the term instantaneity to describe the "temporal concept which refers to the time which has elapsed between an occurrence of an event and its reporting as a news story" (Schlesinger, 1978: 87) because it emphasizes the temporal dimension specifically.

### *Multimodality*

Digital technology further has the possibility of integrating different modalities into the same medium; this is an affordance which researchers most often refer to with the term multimediality. Boczkowski (2006: 199), for example, says that "By multimedia I mean the combination of text, still and moving images, audio, and computer animation in the production of editorial content", Negroponte (1995: 18, emphasis in original) says that "The mixing of of audio, video, and data is called *multimedia*", and Pavlik (2001: 18-19) uses the term in a similar way. I do, however, have a terminological objection in connection with this affordance too as there appears to be a discrepancy between the term multimediality and the phenomenon it refers to: multimediality implies a multitude of media whereas what researchers most often talk about is actually a multitude of *modalities* contained within one medium. In Boczkowski, Negroponte, and Pavlik's statements, they refer to different ways of expression rather than to different types of media. Aiming at clarifying the concept of multimedia journalism, Deuze (2004: 140) makes a similar distinction to the one I am aiming at, namely between on the one hand journalism that integrates a variety of forms of expression (text, images, video, audio, etc.) within the same medium and on the other hand journalism that disseminates news across a number of different media. In this study, I focus on the first type of multiplicity as I look only at one type of medium – but I refer to it using the term multimodality, because I consider it more precise for the reason given above.

### *Interactivity*

The third affordance of news websites is interactivity which, however, remains a highly contested concept within media and communication research (Kioussis, 2002; McMillan, 2002). According to Finnemann (2005a: 72) the term refers “to several different formats and activities, the most basic one being the user’s ability to influence the course of communication and its content” and the understanding of an influencing audience is central in connection with interactivity. When it comes to journalism, one of the most important implication of interactivity is that “the people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006) can now easier and more directly influence the actual content of the news outlet. On news websites, this kind of influence on content typically manifests itself in the shape of comments to articles, polls, content hierarchies susceptible to influence, blogs, and audience initiated stories (cf. Hermida, 2011: 17).

### *Hypertextuality*

Finally, news websites afford hypertextuality in the form of clickable links that connects different web pages and documents. Finnemann (2005a: 75) asserts that one consequence of hypertextuality is the integration of “communication and archive”; that is, closer connection between current news and previously published, related news articles. In continuation of this perspective, Boczkowski (2004: 82) claims that the possibility of instant access to other articles through links “affected the character of storytelling by reducing the space devoted to background within the article [...] authors provided a series of links to past articles instead of including one or two paragraphs summarizing context and history”. Links on websites can be both internal and external, that is refer to web pages on respectively the same or other websites. Furthermore, the affordance of hypertextuality enables the embedding of material from other websites and internet applications, for example in the form of Google maps (Ishøj, 2009) or feeds from social networking sites and micro-blogging applications such as Twitter and Facebook.



## Sampling and data collection

Just as the case was for the journalists that covered the events in Norway, I as a researcher had to make some decisions of great importance to my work quickly after the car bomb went off in Oslo. Here, however, the decisions had to do with sampling and data collection rather than talking to sources and communicating to the public. As websites are a dynamic medium they can be constantly updated, changed, and deleted, and so their content is transient. This condition poses certain challenges to researchers – what you see on a webpage today is not necessarily the same as you will see tomorrow and it is unlikely to be what you see in a year (Brügger, 2005; McMillan, 2000). This transience applies in particular to news websites where the whole idea is that they are constantly updated. In order to deal with this challenge and create an empirical material suitable for scrutiny and documentation, I stabilized the unstable object by micro-archiving (Brügger, 2005) parts of the news websites, that is, archived offline copies on my computer.

I started the process of micro-archiving at 16:10, 45 minutes after the explosion in Oslo. Using the free software WinHTTrack Website Copier (version 3.43-9), I archived offline copies of the front pages of the major Danish and Norwegian mainstream news websites<sup>14</sup> as well as a more selective sample of news stories, typically the articles highlighted with “Breaking News” banners on the front pages. From 16:20 to 20:35, I manually repeated this procedure every five minutes; this schedule gives a total of 56 archiving sessions and has resulted in a rich and diverse material for analysis.

This procedure for sampling and micro-archiving, however, holds certain limitations. First, I could have included more news websites in the sample, thereby creating an even richer empirical material with more opportunities for nuanced analysis. The delicate balance in this connection was between on the one hand getting a

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<sup>14</sup> From Denmark, the sample consists of material from the websites of tabloids B.T. (<http://www.bt.dk>) and Ekstra Bladet (<http://ekstrabladet.dk>); of morning newspapers Berlingske (<http://www.b.dk>), Jyllands-Posten (<http://www.jp.dk>), and Politiken (<http://politiken.dk>); of niche newspaper Information (<http://www.information.dk>); and of the news branches of the two Danish national broadcasters DR (<http://www.dr.dk/nyheder>) and TV 2 (<http://nyhederne.tv2.dk>). The Norwegian websites in the sample are those of tabloid Verdens Gang (<http://vg.no>); of broadsheet newspapers Dagbladet (<http://dagbladet.no>) and Aftenposten (<http://aftenposten.no>); and of broadcasters NRK (<http://nrk.no>) and TV 2 (<http://tv2.no>).

wider and more extensive empirical material and on the other hand being able to maintain a steady archiving cycle with short intervals; each archiving session had to have finished before I could start the next one. As the inclusion of up to 13 news websites would provide me with plenty of material, the former consideration carried the greatest weight. Second, I could also have continued archiving for a longer period of time, especially since the full extent of the horrors on Utøya did not dawn on people until later in the evening. The purpose of the study, however, is to examine how journalists on news websites cover a highly unexpected event while it happens; with this focus, the timeframe of almost four and a half hour of archiving (that ended more than two hours after the arrest of the perpetrator) provides ample material for answering the research questions.

A third and perhaps more substantial objection concerns the technical procedure of collecting and creating the data. The software that I used for archiving saves the elements of the web pages and their structure instead of photographing the pages as they appear on screen. This technical matter has one unfortunate consequence: the parts of web pages where dynamic content is embedded on the news organizations' servers (e.g. lists of latest news) are not necessarily saved as they appeared on the time of archiving. Instead, the software saves the programmed command to embed that content, and the result is that when I today look at my archived versions of the web pages from July 22, 2011, some of the content I see is from today. This matter, however, does not affect the text, images, and page structures which are the elements I examine in this study but it does pollute the empirical material.<sup>15</sup>

### **The use of the four affordances**

Of the four affordances, the use of instantaneity is the most striking and outspoken characteristic of the coverage of the terrorist attack. Almost all the news websites continuously updated their front pages and published new articles and cables from the news agencies as the event developed. Even the website of Danish niche news-

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<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, some of the archived material is incomplete because I had not looked into the redirection structure of the websites from the beginning of the archiving process; for example, when I thought I archived Politiken's front page from <http://www.politiken.dk> I actually just archived a redirection link to <http://politiken.dk> which is the correct URL. For this reason, the material from a few of the news websites is incomplete.

paper Information published new cables about the events in Norway throughout the afternoon even though this particular news website is normally disinclined to update frequently and cover events as they happen. Across the news websites, the journalists not only continuously updated the front pages and articles, they also diligently emphasized the very recency of the event by frequently using terms such as “Siste” [Latest], “Breaking News”, “direkte” [live], and “direkte nå” [live now], often in capitals. At 18:45, for example, richly colored Breaking News banners highlighted no less than seven of the headlines on the front page of Ekstra Bladet’s website.

Instantaneity permeated all parts of the coverage and also related to the use of multimodal elements. B.T., for instance, had an image of the ravaged government building on the front page of their website during my first archiving session 45 minutes after the explosion (at 16:10); it is possible that the image was on the website even earlier but that I cannot tell from my archived material. Berlingske published the same image at 16:13, and at 16:16, Danmarks Radio also had it on their website. All things considered, images were a prominent feature on most of the news websites where ravaged buildings, smoke, police officers, and victims provided a dramatic visualization of the event; several of the news websites also had image galleries where readers could see all the images from the event. Throughout the afternoon and evening, new images continuously appeared on the news websites to illustrate what was currently going on in Oslo. As such, also the visual representation of the events occurred in at least near real-time.

At 16:50, which is the first archiving session where I included this news website, the website of Norwegian tabloid Verdens Gang broadcasted live television from the site of the explosion (which was, incidentally, also right next to the editorial offices of the newspaper). One could have expected that this modality would primarily be a feature of the websites of broadcasting corporations that have a historical background in audiovisual news dissemination. As the example from Verdens Gang illustrates, this was not the case. On the contrary, quite a lot of the websites of printed newspapers broadcast video: during the four and a half hours I archived web pages, the front pages of the websites of newspapers Dagbladet, Ekstra Bladet, Jyllands-Posten, Politiken, and VG contained links to video clips. This widespread

use of video alongside other modalities – where Verdens Gang, for example, also published a graphic representation of the site of the explosion quite early in the course of events (it first appears in my material at 17:35) – suggests that use of the multimodal affordance constitutes a part of the practices of journalists working on news websites also when they cover unexpected events.

The use of the multimodal affordance should, however, not be overstated, for written text remained the preferred modality in the real-time coverage of the terrorist attack in Norway on Scandinavian news websites. Even though, in the early years of the web, Dahlgren (1996: 64) predicted that the “lingering text bias of cyper-journalism is starting to give way to an audio-visual version”, Brügger (2011) discovers a preference for text in an analysis of file formats across all Danish websites, and Finnemann (2005a: 78) likewise asserts that “So far, there has been a strong cultural tendency to select text as the predominant semiotic form” on websites. My empirical material seems to support Brügger and Finnemann’s claims to some degree but the affordance of multimodality *did* play an important part in the news websites’ real-time coverage of the terrorist attack.

So too did the affordance of interactivity though not to the same extent. From the beginning, news websites were eager to get in contact with members of the audience who knew something about the event or were in Oslo and could act as sources. Politiken’s website, for example, asked “Er du i Oslo?” [Are you in Oslo?] and elaborated: “Hvis du har øjenvidne-beretninger eller oven i købet billeder, hører vi meget gerne fra dig” [If you have eyewitness accounts or even images we would very much like to hear from you]. Similar requests appeared on most of the news websites in the sample. With explicit reference to the terrorist attack, the websites of Aftenposten, NRK, Norwegian TV 2, and Verdens Gang encouraged audiences to contact them by phone, text messages, email, or contact form (the latter only on Verdens Gang) if they had any information; Dagbladet (the remaining Norwegian newspaper in my sample) had a generic phone number for information in their website header. It is, however, difficult to assess the consequences of that kind of interactivity because it is not clear whether the journalists did actually receive any contributions from the audiences and how they used them. Nevertheless, there are examples such as Ekstra Bladet’s “Danskere i Oslo: Der er blod

overall” [Danes in Oslo: there is blood everywhere] that seem to come from this use of the affordance of interactivity as it builds upon an interview with two Danish eyewitnesses.

Another and more transparent kind of interactivity appeared on the website of, among others, NRK and Verdens Gang where journalists live blogged about the event (which is again also an example of instantaneity). In this rolling blog feed, members of the audience could write comments and thereby influence the content of the website and interact with the journalists. Many of the audience comments were condolences and expressions of mourning but a large part of the them – especially in the first two hours after the explosion – dealt with the factual matters of the event; it was questions to the journalists concerning the number of victims, whether there was a danger of more explosions, what happened at the airport, and so on. The journalists answered most of these questions as thoroughly as their limited resources in terms of information and time allowed, and through such exchanges the audiences consequently influenced what the journalists published on the news website. Interestingly, the prevalent kind of audience comments where ordinary people can leave a statement at the bottom of any give article was almost not available that day as journalists had disabled comments on almost all articles about the terrorist attack. In my sample, I have only been able to identify two articles where audiences could discuss the event through comments, namely “Bombe sprunget i Oslo” [Bomb exploded in Oslo] on Information’s website and Ekstra Bladet’s article “Skyderi på norsk ungdomspartis sommerlejr” [Shooting on Norwegian youth party’s summer camp].

The final affordance of news websites is hypertextuality. As hypertext is one of the very building blocks of the web, it comes as no surprise that there was a large amount of links to related articles, but external links were also a more prominently occurring feature than one could have expected. As page views constitute the central foundation of the business model of most commercial news websites, commercial logic would suggest that they are not inclined to link externally and thereby direct audiences to other websites. In the coverage of the terrorist attack in Norway, however, links to other news websites and their sources appeared frequently. Throughout the entire archiving period, Verdens Gang, for example, linked from

its front page to an article on the specialized business website E24 where a journalist described his experience of the explosion<sup>16</sup>.

Further to directing audiences to other websites, the news websites used the affordance of hypertextuality to embed content from other websites or applications. Two kinds of embedding were prevalent. First, Google maps that positioned the events geographically were a part of both Ekstra Bladet and Danish TV 2's coverage. Second, several news websites embedded material from the micro-blogging application Twitter. Norwegian TV 2, for example, used the CoveritLive application to embed all tweets containing the #oslo hash-tag in one continuous feed which gave the audience real-time information about the public discourse surrounding the events. This way, the news website let go of some of its control over the content as it could not edit what people wrote on Twitter. That being said, Ekstra Bladet was probably the news website that most assiduously used the affordance of hypertextuality. The article "TV: Oslo ramt af eksplosion" [TV: Oslo hit by explosion], for example, contained links to two different articles on Verdens Gang's website and embedded three images from a private Twitter profile (@chaglen) while the article "Skyderi på norsk ungdomspartis sommerlejr" [Shooting on Norwegian youth party's summer camp] linked to NRK and had an embedded Google map with the location of Utøya marked. This news website further transmitted a live signal from NRK's broadcast in an embedded video player and linked to this player from the front page.

As this part of the analysis shows, the four affordances of news websites were in use to a rather large extent throughout the first hours after the car bomb exploded in Oslo. In the following section, I will assess whether this actualization of the affordances collided with traditional journalistic standards, here measured by the level of accuracy.

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<sup>16</sup> Both Verdens Gang and E24 were, however, owned by Schibsted Media Group, so the commercial logic still applies if only at a higher level.

## Accuracy

In the first instance, I will use the question of how many explosions actually occurred in Oslo on July 22, 2011, as the test case for assessing the degree of accuracy in the coverage. We know today that only one explosion occurred. But in my first archiving session at 16:10 the website of for example Berlingske had a news story with the headline “Regeringsbygning raseret efter eksplosioner i Oslo” [Government building ravaged after explosions in Oslo] and “To eksplosioner har rystet Oslo” [Two explosions have shook Oslo] as its introductory paragraph. Likewise, at 16:20 one of the front page articles on B.T.’s website had the headline “Ny eksplosion i Oslo: Nu er byen ramt af to eksplosioner” [New explosion in Oslo: now the city is hit by two explosions]. B.T. corrected this error quite early so that 10 minutes later, the article was off the front page and another article called “Knuste ruder førte til ny eksplosionsalarm” [Broken windows caused new explosion alert] had taken its place. Simultaneous with this downgrade, however, Danish TV 2 actually upgraded the scale of the attack from “Bombe ryster det centrale Oslo” [Bomb shakes central Oslo] to “Bomber ryster det centrale Oslo” [Bombs shake central Oslo]. TV 2 had readjusted the number to the correct one explosion in the material from my 16:55 archiving session. At this point in time, Berlingske nonetheless still communicated that two explosions had occurred – and at 16:40, the situation was apparently so confused that different headlines on the front page of Berlingske’s website indicated different numbers of explosions.

It is understandable that the news websites circulated some instances of incorrect information; in fact, it is probably unavoidable when covering ongoing events such as the terrorist attack in Norway. This kind of highly dramatic and unexpected events constitutes a challenge to journalists as the supply of validated information is scarce and the demand for updated and trustworthy information insatiable. In high-pressure situations, journalistic errors seem bound to happen. According to Mogensen (2008: 38), “Such conditions require professional methods to secure continued trust in the media. One of these methods is to tell the audience bluntly about the uncertainty of facts and to correct misinformation as soon as it is recognized”. Reporting the terrorist attack, journalists certainly undertook the second half of this method by continuously correcting the false pieces of information. Go-

ing through all the front pages and articles of my latest archiving session (at 20:35), I have been able to identify only four examples of downright wrong information:

- First, Berlingske did not remove the headline “Ekspllosioner i Oslo sender aktiemarkedet i minus” [Explosions in Oslo send the stock market in the negative] from its front page even though the other articles on this website stated there had been only one explosion. Berlingske’s front page was accordingly somewhat ambiguous when it came to clarifying what had actually happened.
- Second, Politiken’s article “Adskillige skud på ungdomslejr” [Numerous shots on youth camp] claimed that “Gerningsmanden er endnu ikke pågrebet” [The perpetrator is not yet apprehended] even though the police actually arrested him more than two hours earlier. This way the article gave the impression that the terrorist attack was of a much larger temporal scale than it actually was, and it presented the event as a kind of “rolling news” (Lewis & Cushion, 2009) even after it had ended. Other articles on Politiken’s website did report the arrest.
- Third, B.T.’s article “Blond norsk-talende mand bag massacre” [Blond Norwegian-speaking man behind massacre] reported the time of arrest as shortly before 19:20, which is almost one hour later than the correct point in time. This piece of information was not corrected.
- Fourth, Jyllands-Posten’s article “Flere skudt af udklædt mand på ø” [Several shot by disguised man on island] specified the distance from Oslo to Utøya as 10 km even though in a straight line it is 30 km. This piece of information was not corrected.

These four errors are the only ones in the 41 web pages that constitute the latest archiving session, and only the first two are decidedly problematic because they blur the understanding of the factual course of events. This low number of articles with incorrect information suggests a high degree of journalistic professionalism in the newsrooms of the news websites; it is one thing for a television journalist to mention that an earlier piece of information was wrong, but it is something else entirely for journalists on news websites to continuously go back to already pub-



lished articles and correct errors. Especially in the heat of a developing and highly dramatic event when the demand for news, new sources, and more information has not yet calmed down.

The journalists' relationship to the first part of the method Mogensen describes – being candid about uncertainties – seems more dubious. As the examples above show, the news websites did not communicate many provisos that some of the facts were uncertain; on the contrary, several headlines and articles presented it as a matter of fact that two explosions had indeed occurred. One example of such an admission of limited knowledge, however, is Verdens Gang's live blog where the journalists answered quite a lot of the questions from audiences with different variations of "Det vet vi ikke sikkert" [We don't know that for sure]; this is, however, a rare example of such provisos.

Interestingly, when the terrorist attack developed with the shooting on Utøya, the articulation of certainty changed on some of the news websites. The news websites generally had the information about the shooting correct from the beginning but the frequency of provisos was nonetheless much higher than in connection with the bombing. The website of NRK was the first news website in my sample to report the shooting on Utøya. At 18:00, the headline of its main article was "Siste: Skyting på AUF-leieren – flere mennesker skadde" [Latest: shooting on AUF camp – several people hurt]<sup>17</sup>. Five minutes later, the article "Meldinger om skyting på AUFs sommerleir" [Reports of shooting on AUF summer camp] on Norwegian TV 2's website had the following introductory paragraph: "Flere ubekreftede meldinger om skyting på Utøya" [Several unconfirmed reports of shooting on Utøya]. Here the reporting was not unconditional, and the journalists put emphasis on the unconfirmed status of the circulated information. Ekstra Bladet used the same way of expression in its most prominent headline at 18:45, "Ubekræftet: Skyderi på norsk ungdomspartis sommerlejr" [Unconfirmed: shooting on Norwegian youth party's summer camp], and other news websites did so too.

Another measurement of the accuracy of the news dissemination is the degree to which news workers resorted to speculation instead of keeping with the facts. After an event as shocking and initially incomprehensible as the terrorist attack it is only

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<sup>17</sup> AUF is the Workers' Youth League, the youth organization of the governing Labor Party.

natural that people start to look for answers, and in my empirical material there is one article that to some degree assigns the responsibility for the explosion and one reference to another similar article, which is unfortunately not archived. In the decade that has passed since 9/11, the term terrorism (at least in a Danish context) has become almost synonymous with Islamic terrorism rooted in al-Qaeda's ideology. This framing is the most prevalent one, and Danish news media most often use it to contextualize events of terrorism (A. S. Nielsen, forthcoming). In the coverage of the Norwegian terrorist attack, one Danish news website suggested such a link to al-Qaeda in one article: under the headline "Dr. Død truede Norge med terror" [Dr. Death threatened Norway with terror], a journalist from Ekstra Bladet wrote that "Ingen har endnu taget ansvaret for bomben i Oslo, men terrorgruppen al-Qaeda har før truet Norge med død og ødelæggelse" [No one has yet claimed responsibility for the bomb in Oslo but the terror group al-Qaeda has earlier threatened Norway with death and destruction]. The article does not say that al-Qaeda inspired Islamists were indeed behind the terrorist attack, but the context and presentation of the article implies it. Further to this article, the front page of Jyllands-Posten's website has a link to an article called "Ekspert: Bombe ligner Al Qaidas værk" [Expert: Bomb looks like the work of al-Qaeda]; this article consists primarily of quotes from one of the leading European terrorist experts. Those two articles are, however, the only ones in my empirical material that links Islamic terrorism to the Norwegian terrorist attack, which turned out to have been carried out by a Christian right-wing extremist. The absence of more such articles in my empirical material indicates that speculation about who was responsible for the terrorist attack was not very prevalent on the news websites in my sample within the first couple of hours.

## Conclusion

This study shows that the use of the use of affordances of news websites constitutes a part of the journalistic practices connected to covering emergent crisis in real-time. In the coverage of the terrorist attack in Norway, July 22, 2011, instantaneity permeated the coverage as all news websites in the sample covered the event in real-time and continuously updated their front pages and published new arti-

cles. This way, recency was re-emphasized as a central news value and a most important one in a web-based context. Multimodality likewise played a central part in the coverage as especially images and video clips appeared across the news websites of the sample; written text was, however, the preferred modality. And finally, journalists also used the affordances of interactivity and hypertextuality extensively in the coverage. The answer to RQ<sub>1</sub> is accordingly that covering emergent crisis, journalism for Scandinavian news websites did use the medium-specific affordances. And they did so in a way that suggests journalism has adapted to the forms and formats of news websites.

Furthermore, the high level of accuracy in the coverage suggests that this journalistic adaptation to the media logic of news websites has not compromised journalistic professionalism. Throughout the archiving period, some errors occurred, but at the end of the day only very few instances of false information were present in the sampled material. The answer to RQ<sub>2</sub> is accordingly that the circulated information on the Scandinavian news websites was generally accurate. Taken together, the answers to the research questions indicate that the journalistic adaptation to the workings of digital technology, here news websites, has reached a point where it is attended to even in connection with the kind of high-pressure situations that emergent crisis constitute.

It is not possible to extrapolate these findings beyond a Scandinavian context. The media systemic characteristics of the news within the democratic corporatist model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), which the Scandinavian countries epitomize, do not necessarily translate into similar formal features of news within countries of the Anglo-American liberal or Southern European political pluralist models; on the contrary, Benson et al. (2012) identify some differences in the formal features of both online and offline news dissemination across the media systemic models. On an empirical level, this finding is supported by the very sparse live-coverage of the Norwegian terrorist attack on the international websites of al-Jazeera (<http://www.aljazeera.com/>), the BBC (<http://www.bbc.com/>), and CNN (<http://edition.cnn.com/>). The lack of immediate proximity to the events might, however, account for at least some of the differences in the agenda-setting power of the terrorist attack. If we want to be able to say something about journalistic

practices regarding the use of news websites' affordances during emergent crisis in a wider, international perspective, we will have to wait for grievous but unfortunately not improbable comparable cases in other countries in the future.



**Research article 3:**

**Former for læserdeltagelse i net-  
avisernes nyhedsproduktion**

**In review for Journalistica**



## Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion

**Abstract:** *Det interaktive potentiale og læsernes deraf følgende mulighed for at deltage i nyhedsproduktionen er en af de vigtigste forskelle på netaviserne og de traditionelle nyhedsmedier. Denne artikel er et induktivt, eksplorativt studie af, hvilke former denne læser-deltagelse så rent faktisk antager, når den foregår som en del af netavisernes nyhedsproduktion. Artiklen rummer to hovedargumenter, hvoraf det ene er overvejende teoretisk, det andet overvejende empirisk. For det første diskuteres deltagelsesbegrebet i forbindelse med nyhedsproduktion, og ved en specificering af et generelt, sociologisk handlingsbegreb (Giddens, 1979, 1984) defineres deltagelse som de aktiviteter, hvor læserne gennem handling intentionelt påvirker produktionen af nyheder. For det andet genereres på baggrund af to kritiske cases en typologi over fire forskellige men dog forbundne former for læser-deltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen, nemlig 1) deling af information, hvor læserne optræder som kilder og er en ressource for journalisterne, 2) kollaboration, hvor læserne påtager sig en journalist- eller produser-rolle, 3) konversation, hvor læserne engagerer sig i samtale af ofte selskabelig karakter, og 4) meta-kommunikation, hvor læserne reflektivt forholder sig til selve nyhedsformidlingen.*

### Indledning

Hvad er det egentlig, der foregår, når læserne har muligheden for at deltage i de etablerede medieorganisationers online nyhedsformidling? I denne artikel kommer jeg med ét svar på dette spørgsmål, idet jeg på baggrund af en kvalitativ analyse af to eksempler på dansk læserinddragende nyhedsformidling foreslår en typologi over former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion. Overordnet præsenteres der to argumenter i artiklen, hvoraf det ene er af overvejende teoretisk karakter, det andet overvejende empirisk. For det første diskuteres deltagelsesbegrebet i forbindelse med nyhedsproduktion, og ved en specificering af det generel-



le, sociologiske handlingsbegreb, der findes hos Giddens (Giddens, 1979, 1984), defineres deltagelse som de aktiviteter, hvor læsere gennem handling intentionelt påvirker produktionen af nyheder. For det andet foreslås en typologi bestående af fire forskellige men dog forbundne former for læserdeltagelse, nemlig *deling af information, kollaboration, konversation og meta-kommunikation*.

### **Læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen**

I første omgang vil jeg imidlertid præcisere, hvordan jeg forstår læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktion. Formålet med denne teorigennemgang er tosidet: På den ene side indkredser den, hvad det helt præcist er for et fænomen, artiklen beskæftiger sig med; på den anden side opbygger den et teoretisk, sociologisk informeret fundament under det deltagelsesbegreb, som i journalistikforskningen ofte savner netop sådan en afklarende begrebsliggørelse.

Dog først en kort ekskurs: 24. september 2011 bragte den danske netavis Rokokoposten en opsigtsvækkende nyhed om, at danske forskere som de første nogensinde havde "identificeret en politisk debat på en webavis, hvor flere deltagere fremsatte originale synspunkter og behandlede modparten med respekt". Artiklens forfatter citerede videre en af forskerne bag opdagelsen for at sige, at alle deltagere i debatten "accepterede, at modpartens synspunkter hverken skyldtes sympati for totalitære ideologier eller psykiske sygdomme, men at der ganske enkelt lå fornuftige overvejelser bag. Ufatteligt" (Rokokoposten, 2011). For at kunne forstå denne opdagelse i sin rette sammenhæng må man imidlertid være opmærksom på, hvad Rokokoposten egentlig er – nemlig en netavis, som med fiktive nyheder giver et satirisk perspektiv på aktuelle forhold, en dansk pendant til amerikanske The Onion eller svenske Grönköpings Veckoblad. Med sin ironiske undertone skal den pågældende artikel således først og fremmest læses som et eksempel på den i offentligheden udbredte opfattelse, at læsernes muligheder for at deltage på netaviserne sjældent udmønter sig i substantielle bidrag. Det er en opfattelse, der også har eksisteret i den trykte avis' redaktionslokaler, hvor eksempelvis Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) har beskrevet, hvordan medarbejdere ofte omtaler avisens læserbrevsskribenter som vanvittige.

Læserdeltagelse på netaviserne er – som denne artikel også illustrerer – flere forskellige ting. Ligesom brugerinddragelse i brugen og skabelsen af interaktive mediers indhold kan inddeles i forskellige grader (Sandvik, 2011), skelner Wahl-Jorgensen mfl. (2010) i en nyhedsmæssig sammenhæng mellem ”audience comment” og ”audience content” (altså læserbidrag af henholdsvis holdnings- og faktabaseret karakter) og påviser, hvordan både nyhedernes producenter og publikum værdsætter sidstnævntes substantielle bidrag og er trætte af førstnævntes forstyrrende støj. Det er netop ”audience content”, altså læsernes bidrag til og deltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen på netaviser, jeg i denne artikel koncentrerer mig om, selvom jeg naturligvis anerkender, at der også foregår et dynamisk samspil mellem medieorganisationer, redaktioner og læsere på sociale medier som Twitter og Facebook.

Historisk set har nyheder og journalistik – forstået som henholdsvis en genre til formidling af aktuel og/eller tidligere ukendt information (Rantanen, 2009) og det institutionaliserede, professionelle arbejde, nyhederne er et resultat af (Kristensen, 2000) – ikke altid været så nært sammenhængende, som tilfældet er i dag. Inden avisen etableres som det centrale nyhedsmedie i Danmark i midten af det 18. århundrede, udgjorde breve eksempelvis det centrale nyhedsmedie, idet de foruden en privat del også ofte bestod af en såkaldt *cedula*, som indeholdt nyheder af en mere almen karakter og var skrevet med henblik på udbredelse til en bredere offentlighed (Hjarvard, 2000: 130). Nærmere end at være journalistiske foretagender blev nyhederne altså i denne periode produceret af private borgere og cirkuleret af postmestre. Et lignende fænomen findes i amerikansk pressehistorie, hvor eksempelvis den allertidligste avis Publick Occurences allerede i 1690 afsluttedes af en tom side, som læserne selv kunne udfylde med yderligere information eller nyheder, før papiravisen blev givet videre (Hermida, 2011: 13).

Læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen er således ikke noget nyt fænomen som sådan, men der kan næppe herske nogen tvivl om, at det som følge af internettet og webbens potentiale for interaktivitet (Finnemann, 2005b) er et mere fremtrædende fænomen nu, end det har været i aviser, radio og tv. Med digitale, interaktive medier flyder nyhedsformidlingens kommunikationsstrøm ikke kun fra en afsender til en modtager, sådan som klassisk kommunikationsteori (tænk Lasswell, 1972) foreskriver. Tværtimod har digitale medier muliggjort et flervejs kommunika-

tionskredsløb (J. F. Jensen, 1998), hvor "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen, 2006) har forbedrede muligheder for mere direkte at påvirke og deltage i udformningen af (nyheds)mediernes indhold. Det betyder, at en almindelig opfattelse af nyheder som noget, der bliver produceret af aktører med en bestemt professionel (journalistisk) baggrund inden for bestemte institutioner og organisationer, ændres, i og med nyhedsproduktion nu ligeledes finder sted andre steder. Bruns (2008b) har introduceret det i denne sammenhæng relevante begreb *produser*, som i sin sammentrækning af *producer* og *user* (bruger) indfanger den forandring, der er sket med publikumsrollen, nemlig at den nu også potentielt rummer et element af produktion. Den har altså udviklet sig fra kun at være passiv (i betydningen modtagende) til også at kunne være aktiv.

I takt med at læserne på den måde har mere at kunne have sagt, har også journalisterne rolle undergået forandringer. Et populært billede på disse forandringer tegnes af Bruns (2005), som i en videreudvikling af en af journalistikforskningens klassiske metaforer argumenterer for, at nyhederne ikke længere kontrolleres af ganske få, centralt placerede *gatekeepers* (White, 1950) men derimod af en meget bredere kreds af *gatewatchers*, som er opmærksomme på cirkulationen af information og har mulighed for at indtage en redigerende, modererende rolle. *Gatewatchers* "observe what material is available and interesting, and identify useful new information with a view to channeling this material into structured and up-to-date news reports" (Bruns, 2005: 18). En vigtig pointe i Bruns' begrebsliggørelse af *gatewatching* er imidlertid, at det ikke er begrænset til de etablerede medieorganisationers nyhedsformidling men også omfatter den deling af nyheder og information, som eksempelvis finder sted på blogs og via sociale medier. Udvalgelsen af formidlingsværdige nyheder er i forlængelse heraf, lyder argumentet, ikke længere forbeholdt journalister men varetages nu ligeledes af læserne, som altså også er at forstå som *gatewatchers*.

Det bør imidlertid bemærkes, at læsernes reelle muligheder for at indtræde i en sådan udvælgende og redigerende rolle generelt er yderst begrænsede, når de skal foregå inden for rammerne af de etablerede netaviser. Her er læserdeltagelse først og fremmest mulig i form af kommentarer og lignende fortolkningsformater, hvor der reageres på allerede producerede nyheder (Domingo, et al., 2008; Hermida,

2011). I og med netaviserne således stadig redigeres af aktører inden for organisationerne – men med større eller mindre input fra læserne – kan det dog diskuteres, i hvilken udstrækning der vitterligt har fundet et sådant skifte fra *gatekeeping* til *gatewatching* sted inden for journalistikken. Empiriske studier (eksempelvis Domingo, et al., 2008; Hartley, 2011a; Hermida, 2011) synes at indikere, at det ikke er tilfældet, hvorfor Bruns' begreber måske først og fremmest er værdifulde som "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1954), altså begreber til at tænke nærmere end at arbejde konkret med.

Hvorom alting er: Denne form for nyhedsproduktion beskrives med flere forskellige men dog beslægtede begreber såsom eksempelvis *collaborative*, *networked* og *participatory journalism* (se eksempelvis Bruns, 2005; Russell, 2011; Singer, et al., 2011b), der alle har det til fælles, at læsernes rolle som ressource eller samarbejdspartner for journalisterne står centralt for nyhedsproduktionen. Af de tre betegnelser, der alle fortsat har til gode at finde ordentlige dansk oversættelser, forekommer den sidstnævnte mest rammende, idet denne term "captures the idea of collaborative and collective – not simply parallel – action" (Singer et al., 2011a: 2). Bowman og Willis (2003: 9) definerer i overensstemmelse hermed *participatory journalism* som "The act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information".

Der er imidlertid også kritik af den anvendelse af deltagelsesbegrebet, som citerer som dette er eksponent for. Carpentier (2011) anfører eksempelvis, at deltagelse (*participation*) efterhånden er så begrebsmæssigt udvandet, at det ikke længere finder meningsfuld anvendelse; "participation is still used to mean everything and nothing, remains structurally under-theorized and its intrinsically political nature [...] remains unacknowledged" (Carpentier, 2011: 14). Når mange forskellige fænomener omtales med det samme begreb, mister det reelt sin betydning. I bestræbelser på at afgrænse deltagelsesbegrebet og derved genetablere dets anvendelighed som analytisk værktøj definerer Carpentier med udgangspunkt i politisk teori deltagelse som de aktiviteter, hvor aktører tager del i en beslutningsproces og den magtudøvelse, der følger deraf (Carpentier, 2011). Og ifølge Carpentier tager man *ikke* del i nyhedsproduktionens beslutningsproces ved at varetage de arbejdsopga-

ver, Bowman og Willis for eksempel oplister. For selvom læserne har mulighed for at skrive kommentarer i tekstlige live-feeds som det, jeg analyserer nedenfor, og på andre måder bidrage til den journalistiske proces, forudsætter publiceringen af disse input alt andet lige godkendelse fra de redaktionelle medarbejders side. Herved placerer denne form for aktiviteter sig i den kategori, Carpentier kalder interaktion, som dækker "socio-communicative relationships within the media sphere" (Carpentier, 2011: 29).

Hvor agtværdig Carpentiers begrebshygieniske arbejde end er, rummer det imidlertid også en risiko for at afgrænse deltagelsesbegrebet så snævert, at det lige modsat hans ambition reelt mister sin anvendelighed inden for det medie- og kommunikationsvidenskabelige område. For den fokusering og afgrænsning af begrebet, som Carpentier foreslår, relaterer sig fortrinsvis til deltagelse i en politisk offentlighed, hvor netop spørgsmålet om at påvirke politiske beslutningsprocesser er omdrejningspunktet. Det er det imidlertid ikke i medie- og kommunikationsmæssige sammenhænge, som nærmere handler om offentlig produktion og cirkulation af viden; her er retten til at bestemme ikke nødvendigvis det vigtigste, hvorfor Carpentiers deltagelsesbegreb her kan forekomme at være ganske begrænsende. Nok er der forskel på, om man som læser kan skrive hvad som helst på en net-avis, eller om der fra nyhedsorganisationens side foregår en redaktion af læsernes bidrag, men ligefrem at fremføre, at læserne blot interagerer med nyhedsproducenterne men ikke tager del i nyhedsproduktionen, forekommer at være for hård en stramning. I stedet for at have beslutningskompetence som kardinalpunktet i relation til deltagelsesbegrebet vil jeg derfor argumentere for, at man inden for det medievidenskabelige område i stedet fokuserer på handling. Udgangspunktet flyttes da fra spørgsmålet om, hvem der bestemmer, til spørgsmålet om hvem der handler. Hvem er det helt konkret, der *gør* noget i forbindelse med nyhedsproduktionen?

Et mere rummeligt deltagelsesbegreb, som anerkender Carpentiers fokus på magt-udøvelse men samtidig udvider begrebets anvendelsesradius, kan uddrages gennem Giddens' strukturationsteori og en specificering af dens handlingsbegreb. Centralt i strukturationsteorien står det gensidigt påvirkningsforhold mellem på den ene side de materielle og kognitive strukturer, som danner rammerne omkring

og muliggør individers handlinger, og på den anden side kyndige, reflektive aktører, hvis handlinger påvirker, former og (om end muligvis kun ganske langsomt) forandrer strukturerne (Giddens, 1979, 1984). Inden for denne "strukturdualitet" forstås magt som aktørernes muligheder for at handle og derved påvirke de strukturer, de agerer indenfor. Magt består følgelig i den "transformative kapacitet", som ligger i handling, og den indflydelse, der derved udøves (Giddens, 1984: 15). Handling – altså der, hvor den transformative kapacitet udøves – skal i Giddens' terminologi ikke forstås som en række af enkeltstående og adskilte aktiviteter men derimod som den kontinuerlige strøm af handlinger, som udgør de individuelle aktørers hverdagslige aktiviteter: "Action' or agency, as I use it, thus does not refer to a series of discrete acts combined together, but to a *continuous flow of conduct*" (Giddens, 1979: 55, oprindelig fremhævelse). Hvis læserdeltagelse forstås som en form for handling, breddes det ved en sammenknytning til den giddenske forståelse af handling og magt ud, således at det ikke nødvendigvis er bundet til tilfælde af konkret beslutningstagning (som hos Carpentier) men i stedet omfatter alle former for læserpåvirkning af indholdet i nyhedsmedierne.

Hvor Carpentier kan kritiseres for at gøre deltagelsesbegrebet for snævert, kan Giddens' handlingsbegreb omvendt kritiseres for at være så bredt, at det kan være svært at omsætte konkret i en analytisk sammenhæng. For at gøre den her opridsede forståelse af deltagelsesbegrebet analytisk anvendelig i forbindelse med spørgsmål omkring nyhedsproduktion, kan det derfor være givtigt at skelne mellem forskellige former for deltagelse. En nyttig distinktion her kan inspireres af forskningen i interaktivitet. I en oversigt over litteraturen inden for dette område identificerer McMillan (2002) tre fremtrædende perspektiver på interaktivitet, nemlig bruger-til-bruger-, bruger-til-system- og bruger-til-dokument-interaktivitet. Bruger-til-bruger-interaktivitet har at gøre med medieret interaktion mellem forskellige brugere gennem eksempelvis chat eller kommentarer på personlige profiler på sociale medier, mens bruger-til-system-perspektivet fokuserer på menneske-computer-interaktion (HCI) og de fortrinsvis grafiske *interfaces*, der muliggør det. Endelig fokuseres der inden for bruger-til-dokument-perspektivet på de muligheder, brugerne har for at udøve indflydelse på selve indholdet af den medierede kommunikation, og det er især set gennem denne linse, deltagelsesbegrebet bliver anvendeligt i forbindelse med nyhedsproduktion.

Læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen kan nemlig forstås som de handlinger, læserne udfører, hvorigennem de direkte og intentionelt påvirker netavisernes *indhold*. Det skal i denne sammenhæng præciseres, at 'intentionelt' bruges i den sociologiske betydning, at læserne har til hensigt at bidrage til indholdet og gør noget aktivt for at deltage (eksempelvis at uploade et billede eller vælge en svarmulighed i en afstemning), ikke nødvendigvis at trække indholdet i en bestemt (politisk) retning. Den her skitserede tilgang ligger i praksis meget tæt op ad eksempelvis Bowman og Willis' definition men giver den samtidig et mere solidt teoretisk fundament, ligesom den samtidig udskiller former for læserpåvirkning, som ikke hører under begrebet læserdeltagelse. Dette gælder eksempelvis det forhold, at net-redaktionerne i i hvert fald de store medieorganisationer løbende følger besøgsstatistikken for deres netsteder og lader deres redaktionelle prioriteringer af forskellige historier om ikke styre så i hvert fald kraftigt påvirke af disse opgørelser (Hartley, 2011a). Her påvirker den enkelte læsers handlinger indirekte indholdet af netavisen, idet data om navigationen optræder i brugsstatistikken – men eftersom der er tale om bruger-til-system-interaktion (hvordan læserne interagerer med netstedets brugerflade), og læserne næppe klikker sig ind på bestemte artikler med en intention om at påvirke netavisens prioriteringer, er der ikke i det tilfælde tale om læserdeltagelse i min terminologi. En anden udgrænsning er i forhold til de kommentarer, læsere på de fleste netaviser (Domingo, et al., 2008) kan skrive til de allerede publicerede artikler; denne fortolkningsrelaterede aktivitet har mindre at gøre med nyhedsproduktion end med debat, hvilket flere af de interviewede redaktører i Hermidas studie (2011: 25) også anfører, hvorfor jeg heller ikke i dette tilfælde vil tale om læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktionen. Læserdeltagelse i *nyhedsproduktionen* handler om "audience content", ikke "audience comment".

### **Fremgangsmåde og cases**

Dette studie er en induktiv og eksplorativ undersøgelse af, hvilke former for læserdeltagelse, der egentlig forekommer inden for netavisernes nyhedsproduktion, og hvilke roller journalisterne tilsvarende indtager. Disse åbne og med vilje løst formulerede forskningsspørgsmål besvares nedenfor tentativt ved inddragelse af de to nok mest bemærkelsesværdige eksempler på dansk nyhedsproduktion med læser-

deltagelse inden for de seneste år, nemlig Berlingske Tidendes' artikelserie "Forbrydelsen" (2008-2009) og ekstrabladet.dk's live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationerne (2009). Disse to nyhedsproduktioner blev tildelt henholdsvis Cavling-prisen i 2008 og guld ved Danske Dagblades Forenings præmiering af Årets Netavis 2010 og må derfor anses for at være "best practice" inden for dansk journalistik. Relateret til mit forskningsspørgsmål udgør de dermed såkaldte kritiske cases, altså den form for informationsrige cases hvor forskellige manifestationer af fænomenet (her læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktion) med størst sandsynlighed vil forekomme, hvorfor netop denne type cases er mest velegnede for den form for analytisk generaliserbarhed, jeg tilstræber i denne artikel (Halkier, 2011; Kuzel, 1999; Neergaard, 2001). Flyvbjerg (2006) skriver således om logikken bag kritisk case-udvælgelse som, at hvis et givent fænomen ikke optræder i netop de kritiske cases, skyldes fraværet givetvis, at det slet ikke eksisterer.

Den konkrete analytiske fremgangsmåde har bestået i, at funktionen og journalist-læser-relationen i de forskellige eksempler på læserdeltagelse i de to cases gentagne gange er kodet for, indtil et mætningspunkt nåedes og fire forskellige former for læserdeltagelse efterhånden udkrystalliserede sig. Denne form for iterativt, kvalitativt kodningsarbejde udspringer af *grounded theory*-tilgangen (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), hvor målet er at identificere kategorier og typer i et empirisk materiale frem for som ved kvantitativt kodningsarbejde at måle frekvenser og fordelinger. Her genereres teori på baggrund af empiriske observationer. Det har således været formålet med analysen at undersøge, *hvorvidt* der kunne identificeres forskellige former for læserdeltagelse og i givet fald *hvilke* – ikke nødvendigvis at finde lige præcis fire (ikke tre eller fem) forskellige former eller at kortlægge hyppigheden af dem. Det skal samtidig bemærkes, at der med de nedenfor præsenterede former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion er tale om idealtyper – altså om abstraktioner udledt af det empiriske materiale, der ved at opstille typer og kategorier anskueliggør forskelle og variationer (M. Weber, 2003). I forlængelse heraf vil skillelinjerne mellem konkrete tilfælde af de forskellige former for læserdeltagelse ofte være mindre tydelige, end de fremstår i præsentationen nedenfor, idet de må forventes at være mindre entydige end idealtyperne.



Den første case er altså "Forbrydelsen", som er Berlingske Tidendes Cavling-prisvindende kombinerede digitale og trykte dækning af politireformen (2006-2007) og dens konsekvenser. Med udgangspunkt i et mord i november 2007, som politiet sandsynligvis kunne have forhindret ved at reagere på de ikke mindre end fire henvendelser fra en bekymret borger, stillede avisens journalister i en stort opslået artikelrække hen over sommeren 2008 læserne et tilsyneladende simpelt spørgsmål: Kom politiet, da du ringede til dem? De mange henvendelser fra læserne, dette spørgsmål affødte, dannede så efterfølgende udgangspunkt for en lang række artikler om politisvigt, ligesom der på artikelseriens netside<sup>2</sup> var både lyd- og videoklip med vidner, ofre og gerningsmænd, databaser over henlagte politisa-ger og et samlet arkiv over hele artikelrækken. Mest effektfuldt var dog sandsynligvis det indlejrede landkort fra Google Maps (se også Ishøj, 2009), hvor samtlige læsernes henvendelser om politiets fravær i nødsituationer blev markeret med simulerede knappenåle, hvilket på en letforståelig måde visualiserede problemets omfang. Ved at blive klikket på kunne hver markering samtidig foldes ud, hvorved læsernes beskrivelser af deres oplevelser blev tilgængelige for andre.

Den anden case er ekstrabladet.dk's live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationerne i december 2009, som med kraftig inspiration fra The Guardians live-dækning af G-20-protesterne i London tidligere samme år kombinerede direkte levende billeder (streamet video) fra demonstrationernes forreste rækker med korte tekstlige opdateringer (sendt via Twitter fra journalister, der ligeledes befandt sig i demonstrationerne). Disse tweetede rapporter blev automatisk indlejret i et CoveritLive<sup>3</sup>-feed, der lå på samme netside som den streamede video<sup>4</sup>, hvilket muliggjorde et samspil mellem de to formidlingsformer. Foruden journalisterne i marken bidrog også en redaktør, som befandt sig i redaktionslokalerne i JP/Politikens Hus, til nyhedsformidlingen i det tekstlige live-feed ved at videreformidle yderligere oplysninger og opdateringer fra telegrambureauer og andre medier, præcisere og supplere de udsendtes indsendte materiale og – hvad der er mest interessant i denne sammenhæng – moderere og reagere på de kommentarer, der kom fra læserne. I det tekstlige live-feed var CoveritLives mulighed for inddragelse af læserkommentarer nemlig aktiveret, og ifølge Ekstra Bladets daværende chefredaktør med ansvar for netavisen, nordmanden Geir Terje Ruud, indgår en sådan læserinddragelse i strategien for ekstrabladet.dk:

”I tillegg forsøker vi å kommunisere med leserne fordi leserne alltid har mer kunnskap om det, vi selv skriver om, enn vi selv har: Altså uansett hva som foregår er det alltid minst 50, sannsynligvis 500 hvis ikke 5.000 mennesker, som kan mere om det, en journalist skriver om. Så hvis du klarer å åpne opp i din artikkel for å få informasjon og kunnskap og råd og opplysninger fra leserne, så vil din journalistikk bli bedre.” (Geir Terje Ruud)

COP15-toppmødet og med det dækningen af de tilhørende demonstrationer løb over perioden 7.-18. december 2009. For overskuelighedens skyld inddrager jeg imidlertid kun eksempler på live-dækningen onsdag d. 16. december 2009<sup>5</sup> i analysen nedenfor; dette var den dato, hvor aktivister havde varslet, at de ville forsøge at trænge ind i Bella Center for at overtage klimaforhandlingerne, hvilket ikke overraskende resulterede i sammenstød mellem politi og demonstranter. Kommentarsporet var ligeledes netop denne dag mere aktivt end i forbindelse med de øvrige dages demonstrationer og rummer samtidig de forskellige former for læserdeltagelse, jeg i forberedende analyser af den samlede live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationerne stødte på.

Det skal desuden nævnes, at COP15-casen repræsenterede det empirisk rigeste materiale i forhold til fokuset i dette studie, og at denne case derfor fylder betydeligt mere end ”Forbrydelsen” i den analytiske gennemgang.

### **Fire former for læserdeltagelse**

Som angivet ovenfor er der gennem det iterative kodningsarbejde med de to cases identificeret fire forskellige former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion, nemlig deling af information, kollaboration, konversation og meta-kommunikation.

## *Information*

Den første form for læserdeltagelse findes i sin måske reneste form i Berlingske Tidendes "Forbrydelsen", hvor læserne reagerede på journalisternes opfordring til at delagtiggøre dem i eksempler på politisvigt. Her deltager læserne i en relativt traditionel rolle som kilder, altså som "de aktører, som journalister og andre redaktionelle medarbejdere dagligt enten selv opsøger eller opsøges af, og som er hovedleverandører af journalistikkens råstof – den information, hvorpå det journalistiske output funderes" (Kristensen, 2003: 2). Ifølge både Harrison (2010) og Hermida (2011) er denne form for læserdeltagelse en af de mest udbredte på netaviser – sandsynligvis fordi den på én gang trækker på læsernes ressourcer og lader journalisterne bibeholde kontrollen over nyhedsproduktionen. I forlængelse heraf viser tidligere studier ligeledes, at denne form for læserdeltagelse især er udbytterig for medieorganisationerne, når læserne forsyner journalister med billeder eller videoklip fra steder eller begivenheder, hvor der ikke er journalister; Allan (2006: 147-148) angiver eksempelvis, at BBC modtog mere end 1.000 billeder og 20 videoklip fra læserne i de første timer efter terrorangrebet i London 7. juli 2005. Det er samtidig præcis denne form for læserdeltagelse, hvor der bidrages substantielt, der ifølge Wahl-Jorgensen mfl. (2010) værdsættes af netavisernes læsere.

Denne form for læserdeltagelse i nyhedsproduktion vil ofte være svær at identificere og kortlægge, eftersom den som regel foregår i det skjulte; dette skal dog ikke forstås som noget fordækt, blot som at det oftest ikke vil fremgå af selve nyhederne eller på netavisen, hvorvidt og hvordan læserne har stillet information til rådighed for journalisterne. I tilfældet "Forbrydelsen" har Danmarkskortet med de markerede historier om politisvigt imidlertid samlet de "rå" data i en åben database, som er tilgængelig for alle via netavisen, hvorved læserdeltagelsen er synlig. Det ændrer imidlertid ikke ved, at der her i høj grad er tale om en form for læserdeltagelse, som ikke udfordrer eller forandrer den institutionaliserede journalistrolle som den, der (blandt andet) udvælger fra og redigerer i det til rådighed stående kildemateriale og altså indtager den klassiske *gatekeeper*-rolle. Der er således fortsat et hierarkisk forhold mellem de redaktionelle medarbejdere og læserne her.

## Kollaboration

Dette hierarki er imidlertid om ikke udvisket så i hvert fald mere udjævnet i den anden form for læserdeltagelse, kollaboration. I denne anden form for læserdeltagelse optræder læserne nemlig mere aktivt i forhold til den egentlige nyhedsdækning og indgår i et journalistisk samarbejde med journalisterne, således at der er tale om en kollaborativ proces i nyhedsproduktionen. I ekstrabladet.dk's live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationerne er der flere tilfælde af, at læsere påtager sig en journalist- eller *producer*-rolle, og at de redaktionelle medarbejdere ligeledes indtager en *gatewatcher*-funktion, hvor de tillader eller forhindrer, at læsernes rapporter passerer den metaforiske port. Dette eksemplificeres nok bedst med en kortvarig episode, da der et par timer, før selve demonstrationen nåede Bella Center, pludseligt opstod tumult nær Ørestad station, som godt nok ligger i umiddelbar nærhed af topmødeområdet men ikke tilnærmelsesvis var i nærheden af den planlagte demonstrationsrute. Denne metrostation ligger til gengæld lige ved siden af storcentret Fields, og de formodede antikapitalistiske tilbøjeligheder blandt fraktioner af demonstranterne taget i betragtning rummede denne uventede drejning af begivenhedernes gang derfor et stort dramatisk potentiale og kunne udvikle sig til en vigtig nyhed. De redaktionelle medarbejdere omtalte den således også i kommentarer som "Lige nu kommer der også meldinger om uro ved Ørestad Station: Stave trukket og partisansøm smidt på vejene!"<sup>6</sup> (COP15 Jourhavende<sup>7</sup>, 09:48) og "#cop15 (demo) en gruppe aktivister bliver anholdt under tumult v et hjørne af Fields modsat ørestad st." (ebcop15\_1, 09:49). Hvad der er mere interessant i forbindelse med netop dette sammenstød er imidlertid den måde, hvorpå læserne bidrog med deres viden om den pågældende situation gennem helt korte rapporter såsom "80 anholdt ved Fields" (Poul, 09:58) eller "Der er trukket stave og blev brugt hunde ved ørestaden" (Martin, 09:58). Gennem denne form for kommentarer transcenderer læsere, som tilfældigvis var på det rigtige sted på det rigtige tidspunkt, deres rolle som øjenvidner og bliver i stedet en form for amatørjournalister, der er medvirkende til at sløre grænsen mellem læsere og nyhedsarbejdere. Det samme kommer endnu klarere til udtryk i denne udveksling:

"der er afspærret i parkeringen ved fields ..er der demonstranter inde i Fields?" (Guest, 10:30)

"Ikke os bekendt - men politiet har gjort meget for at rydde områder for demonstranter, så de kun er på vejen/i fri luft..." (COP15 Jourhavende, 10:30)

[...]

"Der er ingen demonstranter i Fields. Har netop snakket med ansatte derinde." (jakob, 10:31)

I denne sidste kommentar bliver det kollaborative aspekt ved læserdeltagelsen og den derved sammenhængende udskridning af grænserne mellem afsender og modtager særligt tydeligt, idet den er udtryk for, at en læser rent faktisk har undersøgt sagen og selv formidler sin information videre til både nyhedsmediet og dets andre læsere. Ved at interviewe kilder (de ansatte i Fields) påtager læseren jakob sig en del af den rolle, som ellers normalt er forbeholdt journalister, og indgår samtidig i et kortvarigt og på alle måder uformelt samarbejde med ekstrabladet.dk om at rapportere fra begivenheden. Dette samarbejde betyder samtidig, at selvom det naturligvis fortsat er redaktionen, som i formel forstand har kontrol over nyhedsproduktionen, opstod der en form for fælles ejerskabsfølelse omkring nyhedsproduktionen, sådan som en af de tekniske nyhedsarbejdere også udtrykker det i det følgende citat fra et senere gennemført interview:

"vi var alle sammen enige om, at det ikke kun var vores live-udsendelse. Jo, vi sendte live, men det var vores alle sammens live-udsendelse. For der var også folk, som sad og gav hinanden oplysninger om, at nu er vi derhenne, og nu er vi dér. Så det blev sådan et lille *community*, ad hoc-*community*, som sad og fulgte med i det her." (Morten Ildal)

En anden nuance af kollaboration omkring nyhedsproduktionen gennem læserdeltagelse findes i en lang række eksempler på, at læsere korrigerer forkerte oplysninger, som enten nyhedsarbejderne eller andre læsere er fremkommet med. Kl. 09:46 spørger læseren Per eksempelvis til, hvor lang en rute demonstranterne egentlig skal tilbagelægge fra samlingsstedet ved Tårnby station på Amager for at frem til Bella Center, hvor klimatopmødet blev afholdt, og efter en anden læser har svaret seks-syv km, tikker kommentaren "i følge krak.dk er ruten ca. 3 Km fra tårnby st.

til Bella center.” (Axel, 09:51) hurtigt ind. Noget lignende er synligt i denne udveksling, som følger umiddelbart efter sammenstødet mellem demonstranter og politi uden for Bella Center:

”#cop15 (demo) davids øjne er helt røde og han kan næsten ikke se. Han blev også slået med knippel da han stod i kæde foran aktivisternes lad” (ebcop15\_1, 12:16)

”#cop15 (demo) ...ladvogn” (ebcop15\_1, 12:17)

”Det er jo meningen med peberspray! Han skal ha sine øjne skyllet med lunkent vand! Så går der lige et par minutter så kan han sagtens se igen..” (Henrik, 12:18)

[...]

”Peberspray forsvinder ikke ved lunkent vand... Har selv forsøgt op til flere gange under kontrollerede forhold... prøvet med 20 forskellige ting... der er kun en ting at gøre.. slappe af og vente 30 min..” (Lasse, 12:20)

På denne måde medvirker læserne i nogle tilfælde også til at kvalitetssikre de informationer, der cirkulerer i nyhedsformidlingen, om end dette først og fremmest sker i forbindelse med faktuelle spørgsmål såsom netop afstanden mellem to punkter eller effekterne af at få peberspray i øjnene. Når det kommer til den journalistiske dækning af begivenhederne, hvor der rapporteres ”fra frontlinjen”, er denne form for læserdeltagelse mere sjældent forekommende, om end der dog også er eksempler på det: Kl. 12:05 rapporterer læseren Michal eksempelvis, at ”Der er blevet lagt luftmadrasser ud i voldgraven.” På dette tidspunkt var det blot tre minutter siden, politiet formelt opløste demonstrationen, og konfrontationen lå på et sådant leje, at også de udsendte nyhedsarbejdere fra Ekstra Bladet ifølge CoveritLive-feedet kunne mærke tåregassen og pebersprayen i luften. En mulig forklaring på den lavere frekvens af læserkommentarer her under dagens dramatiske højdepunkt er imidlertid ikke kun den oplagte, at hovedparten af læserne hverken befandt sig midt i begivenhedernes centrum eller havde overskud til at rapportere fra det. Det kan dog også blot være, at redaktøren i JP/Politikens Hus i dette dramatiske mo-

ment simpelthen havde så meget at holde styr på, at han kun i mindre grad kunne bruge ressourcer på at gennemlæse og godkende læsernes kommentarer. *Gatewatcher*-rollen tilsidesattes altså i dette konkrete tilfælde til fordel for det praktiske, koordinerende arbejde, redaktøren også varetog.

### *Konversation*

Den tredje form for læserdeltagelse er konversation, som oftest er af selskabelig karakter. Netop selskabelighed er et udbredt kendetegn ved en stor del af de samtaler, der foregår gennem digitale medier; Hjarvard (2005a: 14) skriver således, at "meget ofte er kommunikationen et mål i sig selv. Eller rettere: den har til formål at skabe samvær mellem mennesker og gøre det behageligt, hyggeligt, underholdende – kort sagt selskabeligt." Denne behagelige selskabelighed betyder imidlertid ikke nødvendigvis, at emnerne, der tales om, ikke må være alvorlige – selskabelighed konstrueres gennem den måde, der tales om ting på, nærmere end gennem hvad der tales om. Som Simmel anfører i et klassisk essay om selskabelighed (*sociality*), er det afgørende ikke så meget emnet eller omdrejningspunktet for en given samtale, som det er fraværet af et problemløsende eller afklarende formål – formålet med den selskabelige samtale er i stedet selve den sociale interaktion:

"Not that the content of sociable conversation is a matter of indifference; it must be interesting, gripping, even significant—only it is not the purpose of the conversation that these qualities should square with objective results, which stand by definition outside the conversation. [...] It therefore inheres in the nature of sociable conversation that its object matter can change lightly and quickly" (Simmel, 1971: 136-137).

Den form for konversation kommer til udtryk i eksempelvis kommentarer som "Der er ca. 5-8 cm sne i Roskilde og det er på vej til København. Det bliver spændende at se hvordan man handler snebolde som kasteskyts ;o)" (Allan Jensen, 10:58) og humoristiske udvekslinger som denne:

"Hvem er dem der er klædt i hvidt?" (nick, 09:22)

"Det er en lille drille-demo inde i demoen...men også lavet af demonstranterne selv..." (COP15 Jourhavende, 09:22)

"Ideen er at sige: Klimasvingeri er ok..." (COP15 Jourhavende, 09:23)

"de hvide er små miljø engler hahaha" (peterikast, 09:23)

Det kan diskuteres, hvorvidt konversation overhovedet skal forstås som en del af nyhedsformidlingen, eller om der nærmere er tale om en variation af "audience comment". Jeg vil imidlertid argumentere for, at der er tale om "audience content", så længe konversationen drejer sig om den dækkede begivenhed og de dele af den, der eksempelvis indgik i den streamede live-video (som nicks spørgsmål ovenfor refererer til). For som citatet fra Simmel indikerer, handler selskabelighed mere om samtals karakter end dens indhold, og i udvekslinger som den just refererede bringes ny eller uddybende information jo til torvs gennem den selskabelige konversation, hvorfor denne form for læserdeltagelse også kan medregnes til nyhedsproduktionen. Denne form for live-nyhedsformidling iblandet selskabelig konversation er imidlertid ingenlunde unik for ekstrabladet.dk's COP15-dækning. Steensen (2011a) har eksempelvis påvist, hvordan anvendelse af CoveritLive-applikationen til live-dækning af fodboldkampe har medført en form for hyggelig (*cozy*) journalistik på norske Verdens Gangs netavis, hvor journalister og læsere mødes i øjenhøjde og ikke holder sig tilbage fra at benytte eksempelvis humor og ironi i interaktionen. Her diskuteres en fælles interesse på samme måde, som den offline bliver det i private sammenhænge, hvilket påvirker den karakter og tone, nyhederne præsenteres i. Selvom Boczkowski (2009) har påvist, at grænsen mellem *soft* og *hard news* er udflydende på netaviser, kan det imidlertid indvendes, at sportsbegivenheder i kraft af at være klassisk *soft news* uden afgørende samfundsmæssige konsekvenser sandsynligvis vil være mere tilbøjelige til at fungere som bagtæppe for en sådan hyggelig stemning end *hard news*, der typisk vil beskæftige sig med mere betydningsfulde og ofte voldsomme sider af tilværelsen.

Forventningen om, at der i *hard news* vil være mindre tilbøjelighed til selskabelighed, kræver imidlertid yderligere empiriske undersøgelser for at blive be- eller afkræftet, men i det analyserede live-feed sker der tydeligvis en ændring i kommentarernes karakter i takt med, at den dækkede begivenhed udvikler sig og tilspidser.



Konverserende kommentarer af selskabelig karakter optræder således i betydeligt omfang i den tidlige og ganske rolige periode, hvor demonstrationen samles og venter på at gå i gang på Tårnby station og senere bevæger sig gennem de amagerkanske gader, mens de helt forsvinder, da der sidst på formiddagen er sammenstød mellem demonstranterne og politiet uden for Bella Centret. I tidsrummet mellem kl. 11 og 12, hvor de voldsomste sammenstød finder sted, er læserkommentarer således praktisk talt fraværende – og de få, der er, er nærmere udtryk for kollaborativt arbejde, idet de har et helt faktuel fokus på, hvad der præcist sker, sådan som kommentaren fra læseren ved navn Michal ovenfor ("Der er blevet lagt luftmadrasser ud i voldgraven.") var et eksempel på. Om det skyldes læsernes tilbageholdenhed med selskabelige kommentarer af konverserende karakter i kampens hede, eller at redaktøren, som skulle godkende læserkommentarer til publicering, var travlt optaget af at koordinere dækningen, kan ikke læses ud af det tilgængelige empiriske materiale. Men forandringen i læserkommentarernes karakter er tydelig og fremhæves yderligere af, at der senere på eftermiddagen efter sammenstødet igen sker en kvantitativ opblomstring af de selskabelige, konverserende kommentarer.

### *Meta-kommunikation*

Endelig er den fjerde form for læserdeltagelse meta-kommunikation, altså kommunikation *om* selve den kommunikation, nyhedsformidlingen på netavisen udgjorde. Også dette er en form for læserdeltagelse, som var særligt fremtrædende i ekstrabladet.dk's live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationerne, hvor blandt andet løsningen af den teknologiske udfordring, det var at transmittere live-video fra inde i demonstrationerne, diskuteredes flittigt. Teknologien omfattede blandt andet en hjemmelavet "videorygsæk", som ved hjælp af en bærbar computer og en trådløs internetopkobling kunne transmittere direkte lyd og billede til ekstrabladet.dk, og eftersom denne form for teknisk løsning var hidtil uset i 2009, var netop denne taske og udformningen af den genstand for nogen interesse fra læsernes side:

"Tal for super live dækning. Hvor meget udstyr har i ude på gaden og hvordan transmitterer i det hjem? Jeres kameramand virker meget mobil. Det er super fedt." (Tue, 13:25)

"Vi har et hold på to mand: En fotograf og en, der styrer teknikken. Blandt andet sørger den sidstnævnte for at regulere på bit-rat og sikrer kameramanden undervejs..." (COP15 Jourhavende, 13:26)

[...]

"Kan i så "kun" bruge det i kbh?" (Mads, 13:31)

"Vi kan bruge vores live-tv over hele verden..." (COP15 Jourhavende, 13:31)

Her optræder journalisterne på den ene side som *gatewatchers*, lader de interessante spørgsmål slippe gennem, og på den anden side en form for kilde for læserne, der giver stiller den information til rådighed, læserne efterspørger. Relationen mellem læsere og journalister er dermed vendt om i forhold til den traditionelle kommunikationssituation i nyhedsformidling, idet det her er førstnævnte, der sætter dagsordenen.

Jensen beskriver meta-kommunikation som den kommunikation, der foregår "above and beyond the exchange of literal information" (2010: 94), og det er netop det, der foregår her: Gennem udvekslinger som den her gengivne synliggøres præmisserne og processen bag nyhedsformidlingen, således at læserne udover at følge med i den begivenhed, der dækkes, også kan følge med i, hvordan den dækkes på et niveau "above and beyond" den umiddelbare nyhedsdækning af begivenheden. Meta-kommunikation medvirker således til at skabe en transparent nyhedsformidling, der er mere gennemskelig for læserne. Her refereres eksplicit til nyhedsformidlingens medierede karakter, hvilket står i modsætning til den form for "usynlig" mediering, der ellers normalt tilstræbes. Opmærksomheden rettes således mod nyhedsformidlingen i sig selv og mod, hvad der ligger i og bag den, ligesom den også gør det i spørgsmål som "Kan I ikke rykke kameramanden dér hvor de autonome er så man kan se noget mere? :)" (Dennis, 09:32), der på samme måde handler om dækningen nærmere end begivenheden. Der er tale om en refleksiv tilgang

(jf. Giddens, 1994) til nyhedsproduktionen fra læsernes side, idet de udover at forholde sig til den dækkede begivenhed også forholder sig til og italesætter de praksisser og processer, der udgør rammerne for dækningen.

## Konklusion

Når det kommer til netaviserne, kan læserne altså deltage i nyhedsproduktionen ved at optræde som kilder og stille information til rådighed for de professionelle journalister, ved at samarbejde med journalisterne om selve nyhedsdækningen, ved at konversere med hinanden og nyhedsarbejderne og ved at bruge journalisterne som kilder til at skabe mere transparens i nyhedsproduktionen. Disse fire former for læserdeltagelse er ikke blot forskellige med hensyn til, hvilke roller læserne indtager – de adskiller sig ligeledes i forhold til den rolle, journalisterne må påtage sig, og følgelig den relation, der eksisterer mellem læser og journalist. Ved deling af *information* er relationen mellem læser og journalist traditionel i den forstand, at journalisten er den, som står for at producere nyhederne, mens læseren fungerer som en ressource i form af at være en kilde for journalisten. Dette forhold er imidlertid anderledes og mere hierarkisk udjævnet, når det kommer til *kollaboration*, eftersom læseren her kan fungere som en journalistisk *producer*, der er medvirkende til at producere nyhederne. Journalistens rolle er i herved forandret fra at være *gatekeeper*, som suverænt kontrollerer nyhedsmediets indhold, til nærmere at være en *gatewatcher*, der udvælger og videreformidler interessante og relevante bidrag fra den deltagende læser. Journalistens *gatewatcher*-rolle går igen ved både *konversation* og *meta-kommunikation*, hvor den dog er kombineret med en rolle som henholdsvis samtalepartner, der indgår i en mere ligeværdig selskabelighed med læseren, og en rolle som informationsgivende kilde for læseren i kommunikation om selve nyhedsformidlingen. Det skal dog huskes, at journalisten som regel vil være redigerende i den forstand, at læsernes bidrag som et minimum skal godkendes, hvilket kan ske mere eller mindre kritisk, inden de indgår i nyhedsformidlingen; at journalisten indtager rollen som *gatewatcher* er derfor fælles for de tre sidstnævnte former for læserdeltagelse. De forskellige roller er opstillet skematisk i figur 3.

Figur 3: Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion

	Læserens rolle	Journalistens rolle
<b>Information</b>	Kilde; ressource for journalist	<i>Gatekeeper</i>
<b>Kollaboration</b>	Journalistisk <i>produser</i>	<i>Gatewatcher</i> ; journalist
<b>Konversation</b>	Samtalepartner	<i>Gatewatcher</i> ; samtalepartner
<b>Meta-kommunikation</b>	Refleksivt publikum	<i>Gatewatcher</i> ; kilde for læseren

Udover at den besvarer artiklens indledende spørgsmål om, hvilke former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion, der eksisterer, stiller denne typologi imidlertid også nye spørgsmål – ikke mindst hvad angår det empiriske fundament under typologiens forskellige idealtyper. Kommende studier vil således med fordel kunne undersøge udbredelsen af de forskellige former for læserdeltagelse (både i en dansk og international sammenhæng) og derved afklare, i hvilken udstrækning de fire idealtyper forekommer i og korresponderer med den faktiske, observerbare læserdeltagelse på netaviserne. Dette vil kunne fastslå repræsentativiteten i typologien. Videre forskning vil ligeledes kunne kigge nærmere på eksempler på læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion, der ikke som "Forbrydelsen" og live-dækningen af COP15-demonstrationerne skiller sig voldsomt ud fra den hverdagslige, læserinddragende nyhedsproduktion. Eftersom denne artikel jo er en eksplorativ tilnærmelse af en bestemt form for cases inden for et empirisk felt, udgør den som sådan kun et første skridt på vejen til en fuldstændig typologi over former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion.

Og så kan der naturligvis helt grundlæggende spørges ind til præmissen for denne artikel: For hvori består det nye i forhold til nyhedsproduktion og -formidling i de traditionelle nyhedsmedier egentlig? Og kan man ikke ligefrem argumentere for, at ingen af de fire former for læserdeltagelse som sådan har været udelukket fra at kunne finde sted i radio, tv og aviser? Tv har eksempelvis en lang tradition for at bruge såkaldte almindelige mennesker som både kilder, øjenvidner og konsekvens eksperter (Hjarvard, 1999c), og især blødere aktualitetsformater i radio og tv har ofte haft et fremtrædende konverserende element (Hutchby, 1991). Denne indvending er både relevant og rimelig, men jeg vil ikke desto mindre argumentere

for, at det nye i forbindelse med læserdeltagelse i netop netavisernes nyhedsproduktion består i to forhold. For det første har læserne mulighed for simultant at udfolde alle fire former for deltagelse, når det foregår på netaviserne, hvorved afgrænsningen mellem de fire beskrevne idealtyper kan blive yderligere udflydende. For det andet fremgår det (i det mindste mere) tydeligt i nyhedsmediet, her netaviserne, hvilken rolle læserne har indtaget i nyhedsproduktionen. Selvom der naturligvis fortsat foregår mange processer, som ikke er synlige for den almindelige læser af netavisen, er det i forbindelse med eksemplerne Berlingske Tidendes "Forbrydelsen" og ekstrabladet.dk's live-dækning af COP15-demonstrationer mere gennemskueligt, hvordan læserne har deltaget i nyhedsproduktionen, og hvordan denne deltagelse har været med til at påvirke nyhederne.

På netaviserne kan døren til de tidligere så lukkede redaktionslokaler på den måde siges at være åbnet i mere end én forstand, nemlig både i kraft af, at læserne potentielt kan have en mulighed for at deltage, og i kraft af den øgede transparens.

**Research article 4:**

**The mediatization of journalism**

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## The mediatization of journalism

**Abstract:** *Proposing an explanation of current macro-sociological changes and institutional transformation in journalism, this article argues that journalism is currently undergoing a process of mediatization. Drawing upon the international research literature as well as statements from interviews with news workers working on Danish news websites, the article examines four current trends in journalism that are closely connected to the rise of news on the web, namely the use of the affordances of news websites, the radical commercialization, the increased participation of the audience in the production of news, and the increasing multi-skilling and simultaneous de-skilling of journalists. Taken together, these trends reflect a process through which journalism increasingly subsumes itself to the logic of the media, suggesting mediatization as an adequate explanatory framework. One implication of such a process is that the journalistic profession seems to be sliding from an occupational to an organizational one.*

## Introduction

Reviewing some of the most prominent trends in contemporary journalism and news on the web, this article argues that the developments currently taking place within journalism can rewardingly be understood as a process of mediatization. That is, journalism is increasingly subordinating itself to the imperatives of the media institution and the media logic it sustains, thereby changing the very professionalism in the institution. The article focuses on the branches of journalism that has to do with making news to digital media in general and to the web in particular. News on the web obviously only constitutes a subset of contemporary journalism, but because it is a subset that condenses the larger trends within journalism and simultaneously can be expected to become only more important in years ahead, it allows for drawing more general conclusions about the current condition



of journalism. It can be a prism or case with which to make broader inferences about journalism.

According to Örnebring (2009), the very professionalism of journalism is changing these years as more attention is given to organizational demands, and among practitioners as well as scholars, there is general agreement that journalism is changing these years. This is a claim which constitutes an undercurrent through most contemporary journalism research, regardless of whether it focuses on journalistic production practices (see, e.g., Anderson, 2013; Boczkowski, 2004; Deuze, 2007, 2008b, 2011; Hartley, 2011a), channels of distribution (Bødker, forthcoming/2013; Newman, 2011; Wallberg, 2012), convergence within and across different media organizations (Erdal, 2008; Krumsvik, 2009; Steensen, 2009), journalists' relationship with the audiences (Domingo, 2008a; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Singer, et al., 2011b; Steensen, 2011a), content (Ilebekk, 2000; Steensen, 2010; Thurman & Walters, 2013; van der Wurff & Lauf, 2005), business models (Barland, 2012; Bruno & Nielsen, 2012; Grueskin, et al., 2011; R. K. Nielsen, 2012), or any other particular sub-field. What further characterizes the main part of the academic literature on digital news and journalism, most of which has the form of focused empirical analyses, is the little attention paid to overarching explanatory models to come to terms with what journalism as an institution is going through these years, *how* it is changing on an institutional level.

So, this article proposes mediatization as a theoretical framework with which to understand these macro-level developments and structural changes within journalism. One approach to mediatization is that it is a theoretical perspective which provides a framework for understanding and analyzing the institutional changes that follow from the media constituting in themselves an institution in its own rights (Hjarvard, 2004, 2008a, 2008d; Schrott, 2009). Applying this approach to journalism, however, builds upon two underlying assumptions: that journalism is an institution, and that that institution is not the same as the media institution, even though the two are closely related and to some degree overlap.

The media institution, on the one hand, is a diverse and complex constellation of different types of media with all their different formats, presentational characteristics, audience perceptions, and processes of production and consumption

(Hjarvard, 2008a, 2008d). This way, the media institution appears somewhat diffuse as it does not consist of stable social patterns of rules and resource, the way institutional theory (Giddens, 1984, 1986) stipulates. The institution of journalism, on the other hand, relates strictly to certain rules and resources (see below) and has to do solely with the production and public dissemination of new knowledge about current events. The line between these two institutions (to the degree that one can talk about *the* media institution) is, however, a fine one, and it is often blurred. One reason for this blurring is that, historically, journalism has developed within the context of the media and has, as such, been shaped and influenced by their principles of operation from the beginning. As long as news has been carried by media technologies, the people producing the content (be they professionals or amateurs) have had to tailor what they made to fit the setting that the medium represented. Furthermore, the logic of the media, to which other institutions accommodate when they become mediatized (see below), is actually first and foremost the formats of journalism. For example, when researchers talk about the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009), it often relates to how political actors adjust their behavior and the presentation of their messages in order to accommodate the news values and formats of journalism.

Furthermore, the approach presupposes an institutional perspective on journalism. Such a position is proposed by, for instance, Cook (2005), who draws upon a social science framework presented by Huntington and Dominguez (1975), in which institutions have three distinctive characteristics. First, they comprise a shared set of social patterns, norms, and understandings of adequate behavior. Within journalism, that kind of social patterns exist in institutionalized practices such as the shared recognition of news values, common acknowledgements of valuable beats, an understanding of the news media as the fourth estate of society, et cetera. Second, institutions extend over time and space. Here, Cook is in line with Giddens, who defines institutions as the “practices which have the greatest time-space extension” (1984: 17). However, as the conclusion of this research article will also illustrate, extension across time and space does not imply that institutions cannot develop or change, but it is clear that despite historical developments, the basic constituents of journalism remain relatively stable. Third, institutions preside over

social domains. Just as, for example, the political institution attend to the distribution of values in society (Easton, 1971), journalism manages the production and public circulation of knowledge on current affairs.

This way, there is basis for considering journalism an institution, even though competing perspectives on journalism, of course, exist. A particularly prominent one is that of journalism as a culture (Russell, 2011; Zelizer, 2005a), which regards it as “a complex web of meanings, rituals, conventions and symbol systems” (Zelizer, 2005a: 198); from this perspective, journalism is primarily a belief system and a set of work practices which members of the profession behave in accordance with. In a related conceptualization, Deuze (2005) emphasizes the ideological aspects of journalism. But both the cultural and the ideological perspectives on journalism seem to cover only parts of what journalism is. While both do undeniably constitute valid and valuable contributions to the understanding of the work journalists do, they nevertheless fall short of encompassing journalism in its entirety as they neglect the societal commission of journalism with their emphasis on the concrete practices and beliefs. But as Eide underscores, “the self-perception of the profession is tied to its having a democratic key role to play” (Eide, 2011: 11, my translation), and this political and societal dimension of journalism is found primarily in the institutional perspective.

### *Empirical basis*

Empirically, the argument put forth in this article rests upon first and foremost the existing scholarly literature on news on the web. However, I use statements from semi-structured lifeworld interviews (Kvale, 1997) with news workers as illustrations of points from the literature; these interviews were conducted as part of an inquiry into journalistic transformations (Kammer, 2013). A total of 13 news workers from Danish and American news websites were interviewed from June 2011 through April 2012, and the interviews were centered around news workers' considerations and perceptions on working with news websites and the professional transformations connected with it. The interviewees were selected in order to obtain variation in editorial categories in the newsroom and seniority (they range

from technical staffers to editors-in-chief and from news workers with only a couple of years of experience to one very close to retirement) as well as in the kinds of news websites they work on (which range from the hyper-local Kjerterminde Avis, which covers a municipality of approximately 23,500 persons, to the New York Times).

### **Mediatization theory**

As mediatization is still a relatively new contribution to the vocabulary of media and communication research, its exact meaning remains contested (Lundby, 2009a). A particularly prominent perspective, however, is that of mediatization theory as an institutional (or macro-sociological) theory. From this point of view, which especially Hjarvard (2004, 2005b, 2008a, 2008c, 2008d, 2009, 2010, 2012a; Hjarvard & Finnemann, 2009) adduces and also Schrott (2009) advocates, mediatization is a geographically and historically contingent process that accelerated in highly industrialized societies in the second half of the 20th century where the media started to develop into a social institution in its own rights. While the media used to operate in the service of other institutions (as, e.g., conveyors of messages from the political or religious institutions), they now serve primarily themselves. And as the media have gained institutional autonomy and have simultaneously come to play a central part in modern society where media presence is crucial for social actors, other institutions of society begin to accommodate the logic of the media. By doing so, they become mediatized; “The core of mediatization consists in the mechanism of the institutionalization of media logic in other societal subsystems” (Schrott, 2009: 42)<sup>18</sup>.

As a foundation for this summation, Hjarvard defines mediatization as basically “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (Hjarvard, 2008d: 113). Here, Hjarvard refers only explicitly to “society” as that which is being mediatized, but it is clear from his additional writing about mediatization (Hjarvard, 2008a, 2012a) that “so-

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<sup>18</sup> Because mediatization is, this way, about change and transformation, it should not be confused with mediation, which entails first and foremost that communication does not take place face-to-face but relies on some sort of medium technology.

ciety” also encompasses its different institutions more specifically and the activities within them. As mediatization, this way, applies to different institutions or spheres of society and has different impacts, Hjarvard (2004) introduces a distinction between weak and strong mediatization. By strong mediatization, he refers to processes where activities that were previously not dependent on media assume a mediated form; weak mediatization, on the contrary, relates to processes where activities are only increasingly influenced by media logic.

One particularly vocal critic of the theory of mediatization is Couldry (2008), who takes exception to two points of the theoretical framework. First, he critiques the framing of mediatization as a linearly progressing historical development “from ‘pre-media’ (before the intervention of specific media) to ‘mediatized’” (Couldry, 2008: 375), arguing that such a linear perspective cannot capture the plurality of dynamics that are at play in the changes in and transformations of different social institutions. More central in Couldry’s critique is his reservations about mediatization theory’s underlying assumption of a media logic. Media logic, which both Hjarvard (2008a, 2008d) and Schrott (2009) explicitly reference as a conceptual cornerstones of mediatization theory, was introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979) to describe how media work and which forms and formats they indirectly privilege and sustain.

The critique from Couldry – which has also been voiced by, for example, Lundby (2009b) – addresses the notion that *one* such media logic should exist. Encircling the concept, Hjarvard specifies that by media logic, he understands “the institutional, technological and expressive characteristics of media” (Hjarvard, 2008d: 126), but Couldry makes the objection that it is not necessarily the same that characterizes different media; on the contrary, there will often be fundamental differences between the institutional, technological, and expressive (i.e., aesthetic or rhetorical) modes of operation of different media. The logics that guide the workings of a Hollywood movie are quite different from the ones guiding newspapers. Different logics are at work with different media, and he considers mediatization theory reductionist because it cannot capture the heterogeneous developments and transformations that take place.

However, the necessity that follows from this position of differentiating the media logic seems to be already inscribed in Hjarvard's conceptualization of mediatization theory as he just accentuates that the concrete instances of mediatization must always be subject to empirical analysis (Hjarvard, 2004). Such analyses must also include an exposition of the specific mediagenic context in question. As such, Couldry and others are right when they dispute the idea of *one* media logic as a structuring force in relation to the institutions of society. But within mediatization theory, media logic might above all be a heuristic device which should be subject to empirical analysis and contextualization when applied in a concrete research situation.

Being an institutional theory, mediatization theory occupies itself primarily with developments and changes on a macro level while processes on a mezzo and micro level are rarely the subject of mediatization research (Petersen, 2012). With such a focus on structural questions, attention to social and cultural change will often follow, and the relationship between macro processes of mediatization and micro processes of social behavior remains a blind spot in most mediatization research. This tendency echoes the central questions of sociology, namely what the relationship is between structure and agency, and what part individual human actors play in structural change. Schrott (2009), however, for one addresses this blind spot and asks how social structures and situations on the macro level translate into individual behavior on a micro level, and how that behavior in turn influences what happens at the macro level.

According to Schrott, mediatization processes occur in the mutually dependent interplay between social situations and individual behavior. To begin with, social situations and structures are affected by the media's status as independent institutions. For this reason, the media and their logic have to be taken into consideration by human actors who must respond to the social situations in which they find themselves in the course of everyday action. These considerations naturally influence the individuals' behavior, which will (according to Schrott's inspiration from rational choice sociology) be in the form of a rational adjustment to the demands and formats of the media. The adjusted behavior, then, will have consequences for the social situations, influencing them with the taking into account of the media

and the accommodation to their logic. And at this point, the situation (or structure or institution, if you will) is increasingly mediatized because it has accommodated to the media logic. This way, mediatization is constituted in the mutually influencing and shaping relationship between institutions and the actors that reproduce, maintain, and develop the institutions through their agency, and even though Schrott does not mention it, this perspective on mediatization processes obviously echoes Giddens' theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984), which similarly emphasizes the mutually shaping interplay between social situations and individuals' behavior.

The question, then, is how this theoretical framework relates to the current developments within journalism.

#### **Four trends in contemporary journalism**

I will address four prominent trends in contemporary journalism as expressed through news on the web. The four trends, which I will go through one by one in this section, are 1) the use of the affordances of news websites, 2) the radical commercialization, 3) the increased participation of the audiences in the production of news, and 4) the increased multi-skilling and simultaneous de-skilling of journalists. Exactly these four trends are chosen because they represent the most striking examples of how journalism, exemplified by news on the web, is developing. It is the claim of this article that taken together, these trends indicate that a mediatization process is taking place with the institution of journalism.

##### *1) The use of the affordances of news websites*

The first trend is the use of the affordances that news websites hold in relation to journalists. News websites are different from traditional news media (printed newspapers, radio, and television) in that they offer a different and unique set of affordances for journalists, namely instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001; Deuze, 2003; Domingo, 2005; Hall, 2001; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996; Salaverría, 2005). Not all of these affordances are unique

to news websites (radio and television, e.g., also afford instantaneity), but so is the specific constellation of them, which enables news dissemination in real-time, by a multitude of modalities, with interaction with the audiences, and through interconnected web pages. These affordances are, however, only potentialities as they represent what news workers can but do not have to do; just because something is possible does not automatically make it necessary or desirable to do. Nevertheless, in my interviews with the news workers, almost all of them acknowledge that they are highly attentive to using the four affordances, albeit to different extents.

The most focus is on instantaneity, which the research literature also highlights as a most central affordance of news on the web. Such a high priority of topicality is, of course, nothing new in connection with news production; as Rantanen (2009) points out, the very etymology of the word ‘news’ (in English as well as in many other languages) suggests a close connection to that which is new. But with digitally transferred news, its centrality is emphasized: according to Domingo (2011: xv), for example, real-time coverage has positioned itself as “the dominant paradigm of online journalism”, and Hjarvard (2012b: 99) notes that “New media have placed an added premium on the immediacy of news”. And overall, the news workers that I interviewed agree with the research literature. The editor-in-chief of the most well-attended Danish news website, for example, told me during an interview that:

”It’s in the nature of the web that ”breaking news” and the things that happen right now are that which works best on the web. That is where the web’s in its element and where the web’s better than all other media.” (Geir Terje Ruud, editor-in-chief with responsibility for online operations at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

The other three affordances also play important parts in the way news workers on news websites think of what they do, even if multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality do not figure equally prominent in the minds of the news workers. However, the editor of Berlingske’s news website expresses the overall attitude to including multimodal and hypertextual features on the news websites in the following statement (where he, however, does not mention interactivity, but I will return to the use of this affordance below in the presentation of the trend of participatory audiences):



“We have a clear ambition that our stories must be more than text, that they must contain rich content, that is, video, galleries, and links of any kind and preferably out of the site. [...] So we want to make something on the premises of the net.” (Troels B. Jørgensen, online editor at Berlingske, my translation)

The extensive attention given to the affordances of news websites is not just self-praising remarks from the interviewed news workers, the way earlier findings could lead one to expect. Engebretsen (2006), for instance, concludes from a comparative study of Scandinavian news websites that they use the affordances to only a very modest degree – and that Danish news websites, in particular, do not use them very much. But the high attention, that the interviewees express, is also apparent from two recent empirical studies of Danish news websites. First, a baseline study (Kammer, 2013) of 93 Danish news websites’ use of the concrete instantiations of the instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality affordances shows that the affordances are actually put to use in the everyday journalism on Danish news websites. This is a finding which supports the claims of the interviewees. Second, a case study of the real-time coverage of the July 22, 2011, terrorist attacks in Norway showed how Danish and Norwegian news websites also use the affordances when covering extraordinary and highly unexpected events (Kammer, 2013).

## *2) The radical commercialization*

The second trend is the radical commercialization of journalism which has characterized the recent years and is particularly evident in connection with news on the web. It is a central development within contemporary journalism, but it is nonetheless only one of several transformative processes currently going on. According to McQuail (2000: 105), commercialization, within the field of media studies, has to do with the increased influence of the market on media and their content. This is not to say that economic considerations and motivations has not always played a part in relation to media (see, e.g., Schudson, 2005), but much scholarly work ar-

gue that this dimension gains increasing importance and does even constitute a determining factor in, for instance, news selection (McManus, 1994).

These years, the news industry is becoming increasingly commercialized, and market pressures do increasingly influence journalism. The commercialization is apparent in, among other things, the way large-scale media corporations acquire other organizations, building conglomerates. Since the turn of the millennium, for instance, Berlingske, one of the largest Danish news organizations, has twice been acquired by large, international corporations (Norwegian Orkla Media in 2000 and British Mecom Group in 2006). This acquisition has fueled expectations of operating profits, causing several cuts in the workforce and a broader scope of revenue-generating activities in the news organization. As Barland (2012) describes from a transnational study how news organizations are expanding and rethinking the traditional understanding of journalism in order to conduct activities which can generate revenues; if data-driven journalism about how to lose weight is what it takes to get audiences to buy memberships of weight-loss clubs, that kind of journalism will be conducted.

Furthermore, the process of commercialization is characterized by the arrival of a number of new actors who circulate news but do, nonetheless, not have anything to do with journalism. The most obvious example hereof is probably Google whose Google News is an aggregation site that, using algorithms, presents news from a vast number of news websites without conducting any journalistic work itself. Such activities contribute to leading revenue streams away from the established news organizations.

Simultaneous with these developments, digital technology plays heavily into the work journalists do. In particular, it is the technological ability to measure in real-time and with great accuracy the readership of news on the web that has proliferated; this is an ability which, in the context of the economic stress news organizations are currently under (Grueskin, et al., 2011; R. K. Nielsen, 2012), plays increasingly into the journalistic judgment of news values. In earlier, pre-digital journalism, journalists almost took pride in not knowing their audiences and what parts of the newspapers they actually read (Willig, 2010). With digital technology, such self-imposed ignorance has faded, and news workers are now actively using real-

time tracking of readership patterns in prioritizing news stories and wording headlines. As Hartley (2011a) describes from ethnographic studies of news desks, editors of especially the front pages of news websites use live measurements of the audiences' behavior to make decisions about which news stories to give high priority and which to put in secondary positions. One consequence of this practice is that stories, which would normally not meet the traditional news values, are now published on the top of the front page as they generate page views (and, following, advertisement exposure and income to the news organization). So, a commercial criterion plays into the assessment of the news values. This claim gains support from, for example, this exchange from an interview I did with the online manager of a well-attended regional news website:

*Interviewer:* "So that [real-time tracking of readership] is a very important parameter in your prioritization of news?"

*Interviewee:* "It is actually the only parameter. We utterly do not care about how relevant we think the story might be." (Grith Jørgensen, site and community manager at Aarhus Stiftstidende<sup>19</sup>, my translation)

Even though the good mood of the interview situation might have caused this statement to be formulated somewhat more grandiloquent than intended, the meaning of it is clear: commercial considerations are of high priority and regularly outdo traditional news values such as topicality, importance, proximity, etc. Rather, popular appeal has become a news value in itself, and articles about celebrities and cute baby animals are found also on non-tabloid news websites. This way, news values are sliding from being an occupational instrument for determining journalistic salience towards honoring organizational demands for securing customers (cf. Örnebring, 2009). An even more radical development is the still budding kind of algorithmic news selection where programmed command lines if not substitute then supplement front-page editors, automatically conducting a prioritization of news stories on the basis of statistical measurements of readership patterns, intended to maximize readership (Anderson, 2011; Schudson & Fink, 2012).

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<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that since this interview was conducted, the news website has raised a paywall around all its content, changing the economic context of the news selection.

The bias towards popular content is, however, not exclusive to online news; non-subscription newspapers have always put stories on the front page which would sell newspapers rather than necessarily be the most journalistically significant ones (Hjarvard, Kristensen, & Ørsten, 2004). Even so, the points made here are examples of the way the medium and its institutional logic influences if not downright subsumes the working of the journalistic institution.

### *3) The participating audience*

The third trend is the increased participation by audiences in the production of news. This trend is closely connected to the interactivity which digital media afford as everyone with an internet connection can potentially upload content on the web, and the scholarly literature is ample with insightful accounts of how actors in the fringes of or beyond the journalistic institution do work which resembles that of journalists (e.g., Deuze, 2007; Lowrey & Latta, 2008; Russell, 2011). Also within the established news organizations, “the people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006) have come to play an integral part in much news making for the web.

According to Allan (2006), the event which constituted the breakthrough of audience participation in news production was the terrorist bombing of the London subway and a bus on July 7, 2005. Here, members of the audience uploaded more than thousand images and videos, shot with cell phones, and eyewitness accounts to the BBC’s website in the immediate aftermath of the explosions, thereby providing the news organization with a richer material for covering the emergent crisis than it would probably have been able to generate itself. Since then, there have been numerous examples of news workers drawing on the resources of their audiences: in 2008, for example, Danish newspaper Berlingske Tidende’s award-winning article series “Forbrydelsen” [The Crime] about failings of the police was based almost entirely on contributions from the audiences (see also Kammer, 2013), and in 2011, the Guardian had their audiences help them with mapping the

use of tracking cookies on websites.<sup>20</sup> These are only two of the more prominent examples, and the cases of such participatory projects are legion. Ruud, the editor-in-chief of Ekstrabladet.dk, explained the advantages of this approach to me in the following way:

“we try to communicate with the readers because the readers always have more knowledge about what we write about than we do. You see, no matter what is going on, there are always at least 50, probably 500 if not 5,000 people who know more about that which a journalist writes about. So if you can handle opening up your article for more information and knowledge and advices from the readers, then your journalism improves. In the same way, we ask our readers for help in getting, for example, images [...]. There are always some people who are close to where things happen, and we can’t be all over Denmark or in the entire world.” (Geir Terje Ruud, editor-in-chief with responsibility for online operations at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

It is nothing new in itself that audiences have the possibility of participating in some of the news production – such a possibility has earlier existed with both, for example, talk radio and newspapers. What is new is that it is not nearly as laboriously to have your say as it used to, that audiences can participate in all stages of the news production process (Singer, et al., 2011b), and that the participation can take several different forms. As I have argued elsewhere (Kammer, 2013), audience participation in news production for news websites comes in four different forms, namely that of information providing (where members of the audience act as sources), that of collaboration (where they conduct some of the reporting themselves), that of conversation (where they engage in more social activities), and that of meta communication (where they draw attention to the very process of news production, thereby emphasizing issues of transparency and trustworthiness of the news media). Bødker (forthcoming/2013) further describes how audiences are, to an increasing extent, operative in circulating news through, in particular, social

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<sup>20</sup> See <http://www.b.dk/forbrydelsen> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2012/apr/13/tracking-the-trackers-cookies-web-monitors>, respectively.

media, whereby they also participate in creating the frames for understanding the journalistic product.

Even though the trend of a participating audience is pervasive, it has not rendered institutional news workers obsolete. Through moderation and editing, it is still professional news workers who control what is published on their news websites, and together with news agencies they also remain the ones who produce by far the majority of the content (Hartley, 2009a). But the relationship between institutional actors and audiences in news production is transformed, and the professional role and the position of journalists are challenged.

#### *4) Multi-skilling and de-skilling*

The fourth and final trend is the simultaneous multi- and de-skilling (or simply re-skilling, cf. Örnebring, 2009) of journalists, the professional requirements of whom are changing in the digital environment.

Multi-skilling is that journalists' professional competencies go beyond mere information gathering and processing to also include activities such as photographing, copy-writing, and typesetting (Bromley, 1997). This type of journalists has become increasingly prominent in the digital environment (Deuze, 2007; Steensen, 2010). The underlying logic is one of both technology and economy: as media have converged and all steps of the news-making process take place on compatible digital platforms, news organizations under commercial pressure can save resources by having journalists do more of the practical as well as journalistic work connected to news making and news dissemination. Concretely, such multi-skilling leads to the kinds of work flows as the one described here by a journalist on a major Danish news website:

*Interviewer:* "Then, when you've made the article which are to go online, do you set it up in some [content management] system and attach an image or what?"

*Interviewee:* "Yes. We [the journalists] do it all ourselves. And you can say, it's both good and bad. The good thing is that you learn to set it

up, and you have a lot of influence concerning how your article is going to look. And where it's bad is that there is, of course, a margin or risk of errors. Well, we don't have a fully functioning system for proofreading on the net, which we have asked for for many years, and it's expensive, and I know something is being worked upon, and..." (Mikael Rømer, journalist at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

This way, journalists attend to a number of tasks which used to be assigned to other types of news workers. And as it is also apparent from this statement, this type of multi-skilling may be reasonable in terms of economics, but it often comes at the price of quality. There are more errors and more half-baked news stories when the journalists must also attend to technical tasks. Bardoel & Deuze (2001) make a similar observation when they posit that the most successful online newspapers are successful precisely because they resist the commercial logic to a certain extent and maintain a distinction between multi-skilled journalists and technical staffers. In their words, multi-skilling "does not mean that the journalist should be a technological freak, knowing her or his way around the complicated technology of today's newsroom [...] the technological team is integrated into the newsroom" (Bardoel & Deuze, 2001).

The movement towards multi-skilling seems to be connected to some degree of simultaneous de-skilling of journalists. In his study of German online newsrooms, Quandt (2008: 86) observes that "most of the time, the journalists are just regrouping, editing, and fine-tuning news agency stories" – an observation which corresponds with Hartley's (2009a) finding that the greater part of the news dissemination on the major Danish news websites consists of adjusted and perhaps marginally altered articles from news agencies. And in a Beneluxian study, Deuze and Paulussen (2002) observe that online journalists only rarely leave the newsroom but conduct both research and interviews through computers and telephones at their desks. The trend, then, is that as technology has made information gathering much easier, less journalistic activity takes place "in the field". These dual and opposing movements towards simultaneous multi-skilling and de-skilling may appear paradoxical (how can you simultaneously have more skills and be less skilled?), but as Avilés et al. (2004: 99) explain, "Multi-skilling leaves journalists less time to ful-

fil traditional journalistic practices, such as double-checking of sources and finding contextual information”. When they have to deal with many different tasks, less resources are available for what was traditionally the core task. This way, the trend in the online newsrooms is that journalists and other news workers increasingly become Jacks-of-all-trades, masters of none.

### **A weak mediatization of journalism**

Taken together, the four trends suggest that journalism is currently undergoing a mediatization process as the actors conducting it adapt to the logic of the medium rather than sticking to their institutionalized practices. The most telling expression of such a mediatization process within journalism probably comes from the journalist who also gave an account of the procedure for publishing news online. Answering a question about the news website’s use of breaking news and real-time coverage, the journalist explains how the competition about always having the news first plays out at the news desk:

“All the time, every time we have some story, regardless if it’s a crime story, if it’s a politics story, or sports, then we see that Ritzau’s also got it just a moment later [than us]. “Ritzau didn’t have it until 14:58; that’s funny, we had it at 14:54!” And it’s ridiculous, but that’s just the way it is...” (Mikael Rømer, journalist at Ekstra Bladet, my translation)

His point is that the competition of being the first news website to present the news is intense, that it is basically a fight for minutes and seconds. But as soon as the news workers publish the story, the other media organizations, all of whom follow the agenda on their competitors’ news websites, follow suit very rapidly and publish similar stories, cancelling the advantage of being the one with the newest news. In such a situation, does it really matter to work that fast?

The academic point to be made from the statement is, however, a different one, namely one of mediatization. The key is that the journalist considers this type of behavior “ridiculous”. To him, it is an inappropriate way of allocating resources –



but the point is that he nevertheless does respond to the demands of the media institution and does produce breaking news stories which the competitors can then replicate or versionize only moments later. This is Schrott's model in the works: a particular situation, where the demands of the media institution and its internal logic (which favors real-time news) influences the behavior of an individual so that he acts in a certain way (which he most likely would not have done otherwise) in order to accommodate the demand of the medium. His activity then again influences the social situation, emphasizing instantaneity as a constituent of the logic of the medium, thereby contributing to subsuming journalism to the media institution. This particular action of the journalist, an action which is reiterated again and again by himself and his colleagues and in other news organizations, this way constitutes a tangible example of a process of mediatization of journalism as an interplay between structural changes on the macro level and transformation of individual behavior on the micro level.

Over the last 15-20 years, transformations within journalism have taken place because of developments outside of the institution. This development of institutional submission, from a situation where the media served journalism to one where journalism serves the media (Hjarvard, 2010), is, however, not a strictly unidirectional and unequivocal one. On the contrary, individuals within the journalistic institution often opposes the mediatization process: in addition to the reluctance to follow the imperatives of the media institution, which the statement above expresses, recent findings about journalists' attitudes to the trend of participating audiences indicate a struggle between the imperatives of the media and the practices of journalism. An international research group (Singer, et al., 2011b), for example, distinguishes between five different stages of participation in the news production process, from conception over production to interpretation of the final product, and one of their conclusions is that news workers are much more prone to welcome audience participation in the stages where it does not interfere with the editorial selection and writing of the news. These stages are regarded as exclusive to the news workers, and judging from my baseline study of the use of the four affordances on Danish news websites (Kammer, 2013), the actualizations of the interactivity affordance are also primarily the ones that do not compromise journalistic autonomy. This finding suggests that a reluctance or resistance towards

mediatization exists within the journalistic institution, even while such a process is, none the less, in progress.

One implication of the mediatization of journalism is that its type of professionalization is changing. The professional aspects of journalism have particularly crystallized itself in the second half of the 20th century as a triangular hybrid between creative work, employment characterized by routines, and idealistic vocation (Kristensen, 2000). Drawing upon Evetts' (2003, 2006) sociology of professions, however, Örnebring (2009) describes how journalism is currently undergoing a transformation from being an occupational profession towards being an organizational one. This transformation means that the actors within the institution or profession increasingly respond to organizational (that is, primarily, commercial) demands than to the ones traditionally connected to the journalistic vocation. As a result, attention to public visibility and profitability have become more prominent while classic characteristics of journalism have receded. Hallin (2011), likewise, argues that post-modern journalism is more opinionated, fragmented, and commercially oriented than journalism used to be. This way, journalists act increasingly as media professionals who comply with what the autonomous media institution demands, conducting mediatized journalism.

As journalism and media form a close nexus in the first place, the transformative process of journalism outlined in this research article is one of weak mediatization only, even though the consequences for the institutions and the actors within it are profound. It is nothing new that journalism must accommodate the formal limitations of the media which, for instance, fixed deadlines and the dimensions of a newspaper page or the duration of a news broadcast dictate. What *is* new, and what is worth further academic scrutiny in future studies, is the ways in which this accommodation takes place and the increased radicalization of it in connection with news on both the web and other types of news media.



# Conclusion

Through its introductory chapters and four research articles, this dissertation is an enquiry into how institutional actors (news workers) appropriate new technology (the affordances of news websites). Compared to traditional news media such as newspapers, radio, and television, news websites hold a unique constellation of affordances in relation to news workers as they afford instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality. This constellation constitutes a specific condition for the production and presentation of news. Even so, the actions of news workers remain conducted within the enabling and constraining rules and resources of the institution they relate to, namely journalism. So, in one way, this dissertation deals with the meeting between a traditional institution and new, digital technology, hypothesizing that news workers do actually use the four affordances of news websites, but also that they do so in ways that preserve their journalistic control.

The four research articles reach their own conclusions, and I will not recapitulate all of them in this concluding chapter. Instead, I will call attention to those main points that relate directly to the hypothesis, single out the primary contributions of this dissertation, and, finally, sketch some future areas of research which this dissertation points to.

The analyses in especially the first three research articles generally support the hypothesis. The content analysis in the first research article, “Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites”, maps to what extent Danish news websites use the four affordances. While the methodological framework does

not allow for passing judgment on what exactly constitute large and limited extents of use in absolute terms, it does present a relative measurement of the appropriation of the affordances across different types of news websites. It is a measurement, which suggests that the use is connected to ownership in that news websites owned by larger corporations seem more likely to use the affordances. This finding is consistent with those of earlier studies (Krumsvik, et al., 2012; Zeng & Li, 2006). The second research article, “News Websites’ Real-Time Coverage of Emergent Crisis: a Scandinavian Study”, adds a qualitative dimension to the quantitative measuring in the content analysis, analyzing in depth how news websites use the affordances in one specific case.

These first two articles suggest a confirmation of the hypothesis. First, they show that the four affordances are generally in use on Danish news websites, in the course of day-to-day news coverage as well as in extra-ordinary situations. Second, they suggest that the news workers generally use the affordances in ways that do not challenge or compromise the position of institutional actors: the content analysis shows that, for instance, the most widespread concrete variables of the interactivity affordance are the ones where audiences do not produce news themselves, and the qualitative case study shows that the use of the affordances in real-time, high-pressure situations does not (at least in the analyzed instance) come at the price of accuracy. With the third research article, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, however, I present a typology of how the relationship between news workers and audiences is changed in a digital context where audiences can participate in the news production process. This research article does not follow the most utopian or emancipatory speculations in the scholarly literature, but it does broaden the understanding of the ways in which news workers are surrendering quite some influence on the content of their news medium to the audiences. It should be mentioned, that the same trend is also apparent in particular instances of the material analyzed in the second research article, namely the instance where news workers embedded live Twitter conversations with a particular hashtag on the news website.

Ultimately, as discussed in the fourth research article, “The mediatization of journalism”, this use of the four affordances can be understood as part of a

mediatization process within the institution of journalism. Mediatization is a process where other social and cultural institutions apply the logic of the media institution, and news workers' use of the four affordances just illustrates such an institutional adaptation to the workings of the medium. For instance, when journalists, who work in a news organization with a long history of print publishing, begin to produce web video, it is a response to demands from the media logic of news websites rather than from within journalism. The mediatization process, however, is not a unidirectional one, as the news workers' reluctance to comply with all aspects of the media logic indicates. For this reason, this dissertation propose mediatization theory as a contextualizing explanatory model as to why news workers on news websites are using the affordances, and why they are doing it the way they are.

The transformations in journalism in connection with production of news on the web are, however, not the only examples of a mediatization process within journalism. A similar development has taken place within, for example, television news. Here, Hjarvard (2008a) describes how the television news branch in Danmarks Radio adjusted their two evening news broadcasts in order to accommodate the preferences of two quite different audience segments. While the early broadcast was aimed at "Birte" (a prototypical 49 years old female nurse, who is married and whose children has left home, and who is primarily interested in issues close to herself), the late one targeted "René" (a prototypical 35 years old, self-employed male, who is married and has three small children, and who is primarily interested in business, politics, and foreign affairs). This way, the journalism producing the evening television news in Danmarks Radio accommodated to the demands of the medium by selecting and presenting the news differently in order to target two very specific conceptions and constituents of the audience. This development also illustrates a mediatization process of journalism, accommodating journalism to the forms, formats, and logics of the media institution rather than just its own institutionalized practices.

## Contributions

In addition to the knowledge generated by the measuring and qualitative assessment of the use of the four affordances in day-to-day and emergent crisis journalism, this dissertation represents three primary contributions to the large and heterogeneous body of scholarly literature on the intersection between digital technology and journalism, into which it inscribes itself.

The first contribution is a theoretical-methodological one that relates to the concept of affordances. This is a relational concept, which, re-conceptualized by media scholars (Engebretsen, 2006; Finnemann, 2005a; Hjarvard, 2008a; Hutchby, 2001a, 2003; K. B. Jensen, 2010), describes the relationship between any medium technology and human actors with shared or individual motivations for using it. However, this dissertation presents a concrete methodology for operationalizing this concept in such a way that its relational character can both be measured quantitatively and scrutinized qualitatively (as it is done in the first two research articles). This methodological framework is developed through a mapping of the interface between, on the one hand, technological possibilities and, on the other hand, the explicit motivations of news workers as well as the previous scholarly literature. As a part of this contribution, this dissertation proposes a concrete method for measuring systematically the formal features of news websites, thereby advancing earlier studies with comparable ambitions and frameworks (e.g., Engebretsen, 2006; T. Schultz, 1999; Zamith, 2008).

The second contribution is an empirical-theoretical one that relates to audience participation in news production. Such audience participation has often been understood in terms of the particularities of the news production process which it constitutes a part of (see, e.g., Domingo, et al., 2008; Singer, et al., 2011b) or on a more general level as the way audiences conduct the work traditionally conducted by journalists (see, e.g., Bruns, 2005, 2008b; Russell, 2011). The third research article of this dissertation, “Former for læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion”, however, presents a more multi-faceted qualitative typology of *how* audiences participate in the very production of news on news websites, also

contributing to a better and more nuanced understanding of how the journalist-audience relationship assumes different shapes dependent on the type of audience participation.

The third contribution is a theoretical one that relates to the existing knowledge about the implications of digital technology in journalism. Through its empirical analyses and, in particular, the discussion of transformative processes in journalism in the fourth research article, “The mediatization of journalism”, this dissertation adds to the existing knowledge of how journalism responds to and appropriate digital technology. As Boczkowski (2004) has made clear, the use of new technology in newsrooms is largely dependent on the resources and strategies in the specific organizations. But this dissertation, mapping overall trends, shows how patterns nevertheless begin to emerge across organizations; such overall trends suggest that practices on an institutional level also influences that decision about whether and how to take new technology into use. This use, this dissertation argues, is connected to the media logic of the medium technology in question; a media logic which, in the case of news websites, is constituted by the four affordances

### **Further research**

While contributing to and advancing the existing knowledge, this dissertation also points to future research. As I noted in the introduction, this dissertation is about an object in a state of flux, and that object has, of course, also developed during the research process. As Kabel (2009: 17, my translation) laconically observes, “just as it is a great challenge to cover the news, while it happens, it is also challenging to produce a viable non-fiction book about news and news dissemination, while a rapid development takes place in that field”. This continued development means that new trends and practices have emerged within the research domain while my research design and analytical framework were being developed and implemented, and while the final write-up of the dissertation was undertaken. These developments not been pragmatically possible to explore in this dissertation – not least because some of them fall outside of its focus – but they could constitute interesting objects for future research.



Most prominently, mobile news has become an important part of audiences' news consumption: in 2008, 7 percent of Danes got news through their mobile phones, and in 2011, that number had risen to 29 percent (Schrøder & Kobbernagel, 2012). A similar trend is apparent in the US (The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2012b). The increase in mobile news consumption is in all probability closely connected with the expansive proliferation of smartphones and tablet computers with ubiquitous internet access – a technical feature which has made mobile news consumption easier for a lot of people in the first place. Furthermore, news organizations are increasingly producing versions of their news outlets tailored specifically for mobile media. For these reasons, all aspects of mobile news would constitute an important venue for the research into digital journalism in the coming years.

Another dimension of digital journalism and news on the web that has developed profoundly in recent years is the business side of it. The economic crisis has really begun to drain on the resources of the news industry, the consequences of changed readership have begun to take effect, and news organizations have begun to act on it. In November, 2012, for instance, Berlingske Media raised paywalls around the content on their regional news websites in Central Jutland. Likewise, JP/Politikens Hus (the other large newspaper-publishing organization in Denmark) has announced that various metered or subscription-based models will be implemented on their major news websites at some point in 2013. So, in the future, audiences will increasingly have to pay for accessing news on the web. But the question is whether such payment structures will result in technological development on news websites; will audiences get any new developments in exchange for their fees? This dissertation's first research article, "Ownership, legacy media, and the use of affordances on news websites", shows that ownership type correlates with the use of presentational features on news websites, and, perhaps, there will also be correlations between the use of the four affordances and the business models of news websites. That, at least, is an empirical question.

Finally, several of my interviewees independently of each other and often spontaneously brought up two interesting questions, namely whether journalists' behavior on social media connect to their professional work or their private life, and

where the boundary between the two spheres is drawn. Much research is already going on with a focus on journalism and social media (see, e.g., Bødker, forthcoming/2013; Hermida, 2010; Lasorsa, et al., 2012; Newman, 2011), but future research could probably benefit from examining in more detail the relationship between professional, personal, and private information circulation. As journalism is sliding from an occupational towards an organizational profession (Örnebring, 2009; see also the fourth research article, “The mediatization of journalism”), and the distinctions between the different sectors of individuals’ lifeworld are fading, how do journalists manage their professional role on social media? And what are the institutional implications for journalism?

In a digital environment it is not only the news media and their presentational affordances that are changing – so is, most likely, also the way news workers behave with, adjust to, and appropriate the new technology.



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# Summary

Compared to traditional news media, news websites hold a unique set of affordances in relation to news workers, namely instantaneity, multimodality, interactivity, and hypertextuality. This constellation of affordances constitutes a particular condition for the production and presentation of news. This dissertation is an enquiry into how institutional actors (news workers) appropriate these potentials afforded by new, digital technology (news websites).

The enquiry is conducted with an integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, and the analyses generally support the hypothesis that news workers working on Danish news websites do, indeed, make use of the four affordances, and that they do so in ways so that they maintain journalistic control in the process. The analyses include a content analysis of formal features on 93 Danish news websites, a qualitative case study of real-time coverage of emergent crisis, and a theory-building case study of audience participation in news production for news websites. The dissertation propose mediatization theory as a means for contextualizing the current developments within the institution of journalism, arguing that it is an institution which is accommodating the logics and formats of the media institution – but not without some resistance from its actors.

The dissertation consists of introductory chapters (Introduction, Terminology, Theoretical framework, and Research design), four research articles, and a concluding chapter, which outlines the conclusion, identifies the most important contributions to existing knowledge, and points to future research in continuation of this dissertation. Except for one of the four research articles, this dissertation is written in English; the research article in question is Danish-language.

# Dansk resumé

Netaviser adskiller sig (blandt andet) fra andre, traditionelle nyhedsmedier ved at have en helt særlig konstellation af *affordances* i form af øjeblikkelighed, multimedialitet, interaktivitet og hypertextualitet. Disse *affordances* udgør et ændret rammevilkår for produktionen og præsentationen af nyheder.

Afhandling er en undersøgelse af, hvordan institutionelle aktører (nyhedsarbejdere) anvender de potentialer, som digital teknologi (netaviserne) tilbyder. Undersøgelsen er udført gennem en integration af kvantitative og kvalitative metoder, og analyserne støtter overordnet afhandlingens hypotese om, at nyhedsarbejderne på danske netaviser anvender de fire *affordances*, og at de gør det på en sådan måde, at de bevarer journalistisk kontrol. Analyserne omfatter en kvantitativ indholdsanalyse af 93 danske netaviser, et kvalitativt case-studie af realtidsdækningen af et uventet terrorangreb og et teorigenererende case-studie af læserdeltagelse i netavisernes nyhedsproduktion. Afhandlingen foreslår i forlængelse heraf medialiseringsteori som et greb til at kontekstualisere de aktuelle udviklingen inden for journalistikken, fordi journalistikken netop tilpasser sig medieinstitutionens logik og formater – men dog ikke uden nogen modstand fra nyhedsarbejderne.

Afhandlingen består af en række indledende kapitler (introduktion, terminologi, teoretisk ramme og undersøgelsesdesign), fire forskningsartikler og et afsluttende kapitel, som præsenterer afhandlingens konklusion, fremhæver de vigtigste bidrag til den eksisterende forskningslitteratur og udpeger en række fremtidige forskningsområder i forlængelse af afhandlingen. Bortset fra en enkelt af artiklerne, som er skrevet på dansk, er afhandlingen skrevet på engelsk.