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Redaktører af
temanummer:
Ester Appelgren
Bente Kalsnes

Interne redaktører:
Eva Mayerhöffer

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Editorial preface

EVA MAYERHÖFFER
Roskilde University

We are happy to present the 2022 issue of Journalistica. This issue marks the journal's successful transition to a more continuous publication format, where incoming contributions are published online first and published in a single issue at the end of each year.

The 2022 edition opens with a special issue on "Exploring the boundaries of Nordic journalism". The special issue gathers some of the most inspiring journalism-related research presented at the NordMedia 2021 conference, held virtually on 18-20 August 2021, and is guest edited by Ester Appelgren from Södertörn University (Sweden) and Bente Kalsnes from Kristiania University College (Norway), the current and former chair of NordMedia's journalism division. The two guest editors introduce the issue and its contributions in full detail on the following pages.

The issue also includes an article by Kresten Roland Johansen and Jakob Dybro Johansen from the Danish School of Media and Journalism. The article analyzes the use of expert sources in the three largest daily newspapers in Denmark (Jyllands Posten, Politiken, Berlingske Tidende) and compares its findings to earlier research. The results show that expert sources are predominantly used to comment on current events and third-party research rather than on their own research. Almost half of the expert sources used are privately employed and female experts remain heavily underrepresented. Building on these and other findings, the authors question journalistic criteria for selecting expert sources and whether journalists assign authority to expert sources on a sufficiently source-critical basis.

With the 2022 issue, we introduce a new format called the Journalistica methods section, edited by editorial board member Lene Heiselberg (SDU). In the methods section, Journalistica puts a spotlight on research methods used in journalism studies and/or journalism practice in an accessible format (a brief article, often also supplemented with a podcast episode) that can help students and researchers quickly get a grasp on both established and innovative methods in our field. The first piece in this section is by Lene herself, setting the spotlight on the Online Video Research Interview (OVRI) and the methodological considerations needed when moving traditional individual or group research interviews to a digital setting – a research technique that is certainly here to stay, also in

post-pandemic times. The methods section is open for submissions from all journalism researchers interested in sharing methodological insights and expertise. Please contact Lene (lhei@journalism.sdu.dk) if you are interested in contributing.

Finally, we welcome new editorial board members Kristoffer Holt, professor of Journalism at Linnaeus University in Sweden, and Teke Jacob Ngomba, associate professor at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University, Denmark. Last but not least, a special thanks to Tim Ramsland, Journalistica's editorial assistant, who has smoothly sailed the journal through the fundamental restructuring of our editing and publication processes this past year. God læselyst!

On behalf of the Journalistica group of editors,
Eva Mayerhöffer, editor-in-chief

EVA MAYERHÖFFER
Associate Professor
Department of Communication and Arts
Roskilde University
evamay@ruc.dk

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Exploring the boundaries of Nordic journalism: Introduction to special issue

ESTER APPELGREN
Södertörn University

BENTE KALSNES
Kristiania University College

Keeping journalism socially relevant and financially viable is more challenging than ever. It might seem like a paradox, but in a time when news media is challenged by inadequate business models, precarious labor conditions and competition from platform companies, and contested by populist politicians, the public is consuming more news than ever before. The changing media landscape, technological platforms and structural conditions are influencing journalism, its practices and its roles in everyday life, society, culture, and politics—central topics when communication scholars gather at international and national conferences dedicated to media and communication research.

The NordMedia Conference 2021 was arranged in the midst of an ongoing pandemic. It was supposed to be held in Reykjavik, Iceland, but was ultimately held virtually. Naturally, the topics tended to focus on how journalists were covering the pandemic, but they also included studies on truth, disinformation and facts as well as technology in journalism in the form of AI and automation. The presenters were later invited to participate in this special issue, which celebrates Nordic scholarship and the Journalistica journal.

In this issue, we bring together three studies that each illustrate the current developments within Nordic journalism research along with a book review of a book on political communication in the Nordics.

Ethics and trust are common threads that run through the three articles published in this special issue of Journalistica. The articles cover very different topics—from podcasting as a genre, alternative media and comment moderation to ethics in local news media — and ethics and trust are recurring themes in the discussions. What constitutes as news today is increasingly blurred as it mixes with commercial content (influencers and content marketing —

commercial genres that look like news), opinions (comments appearing as news) or false and manipulated content (fake news or disinformation). Many people, especially young adults, get their news from social media, and the newsfeed does not differentiate between different types of content. News from respected newsrooms has the same design as rumors from a suspicious website. Thus, users have to pay more attention to differentiate between the trustworthiness of the information.

This blurring of content and genres is challenging for journalism's trustworthiness. The articles in this special issue touch on some of the challenges appearing as a result of this blurring despite the long tradition of strong ethical guidelines for journalism in Nordic newsrooms. Nevertheless, the users of Nordic news are still demonstrating high levels of trust, among the highest in the 45 countries of the Reuters Digital News Report 2022 track. Finnish news users report the highest trust in news (69%), particularly the news they use (75%), followed by Denmark (58%/63%), Norway (56%/63%), and Sweden (50%/56%). Iceland was not included in Reuters' survey.

One factor that can help maintain and strengthen trust in news in the Nordic countries is strong ethical practices in newsrooms. Since the early 20th century, Nordic newsrooms and journalism organizations have developed ethical guidelines for journalism that are continually updated to reflect developments in the profession and society at large:

- Norway: Code of Ethics for the Norwegian Press
- Sweden: Rules of Professional Conduct
- Denmark: Press Ethical Rules
- Finland: Guidelines for Journalists
- Iceland: Rules of Ethics in Journalism

Ethical guidelines and their practical implementation in the newsrooms can help Nordic journalists navigate the challenges emerging from the changing media landscape, competition from technological platforms and structural conditions influencing journalism. The articles in this special issue of *Journalistica* each offer a unique contribution to address some of these challenges.

The article **Freedom of expression or censorship of antisemitic hate speech? Editorial and audience perspectives on comment moderation in far-right alternative media**, written by Norwegian scholar Birgitte P. Haanshuus, explores how three prominent and controversial Norwegian far-right alternative media sites perceive and perform comment moderation and how editorial and audience perspectives on the issue correspond. The overall aim of the article is to

disclose whether editorial and audience perspectives, respectively, correspond to an interventionist or non-interventionist approach to comment moderation and whether and how the arguments for and against comment moderation comprise normative, strategic or legal considerations. Based on semi-structured interviews with representatives from alternative media, including editors and main moderators, and a strategic selection of comment sections from editorial articles from each site, the article argues that comment moderation is crucial for all actors who seek to obtain or protect their legitimacy, regardless of their (counter-) position in the public sphere. Despite being strong defenders of freedom of expression, the editorial staff of the alternative media sites acknowledged that comment moderation is necessary, similar to how mainstream media perceive the responsibility for handling online debates (Anderson et al., 2016; Ihlebæk et al., 2013). The article contributes valuable insights into the strategy of comment moderation in alternative media — through both interviews and analysis of comment sections — and finds that these oppositional media actors are not so alternative after all. The main question, the article argues, is thus not whether interventions should happen at all but rather where the boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable should be set.

In the article **The ethics of journalism challenged: The blurring boundary between local journalism and communications**, the five Finnish scholars Jaana Hujanen, Mikko Grönlund, Juho Ruotsalainen, Katja Lehtisari and Viljami Vaarala explore the future of ethics in journalism by primarily investigating the current and future relationship between journalism and communications. Based on survey responses from editor-in-chiefs, the authors present alternative scenarios of the journalism-communications relationship. Hujanen et al. (2022) argue that paid content such as native advertising, but also other forms of influences from communication and PR, has had a major influence on ethics in Finnish journalism, and the process of blurring boundaries between the two industries presents ethical concerns. Hujanen et al. argue that journalistic ethics are an essential boundary for professional journalism and discourses on the future of journalism fundamentally concern its ethics. They point out that journalistic ethical codes do not address how to relate to native advertising. Nevertheless, 44 percent of the surveyed editor-in-chiefs were unsure whether the guidelines for journalists, a central element of journalism's boundaries, need updating. This is similar to previous research, which found that specialized journalists such as data journalists show limited interest in formalizing their new practices with regard to ethics in updated journalistic codes of conduct (Morini et al. 2022). At the same time, the results of Hujanen et al. (2022) indicate that Finnish editor-in-chiefs think audiences have a hard time distinguishing between journalistic

content and other forms of content; audiences simply do not know the boundaries of journalism. Furthermore, PR content mimics journalistic content to make it look more professional and trustworthy, or municipalities and local authorities prefer to send out "news" through their own PR channels rather than turning to journalists.

One of the reasons why the Finnish case is interesting is that, in Finland, local news media, while strong, is dependent on advertising and subscriptions. However, citing research by Newman et al. 2020, the Finns have been found to be slightly less willing to pay for news than the residents of many other Western countries. This conundrum calls for local news media to be ever more relevant. As Hujanen et al. (2022) find, the future looks grim for local media in terms of ethics: while profits are going down, non-journalistic content is becoming more professionalized, and as "communications exploit professional journalism, the democratic function of news media deteriorates" (p.16).

In the article **Podcast — commentary journalism in a digital public**, Norwegian scholars Lisbeth Morlandstø and Birgit Røe Mathisen explore the genre of editorial commentary podcasts. This article is based on a case study of four editorial podcasts in 2020 and 2021: Omadressert, produced by Adresseavisen in Trondheim; Nokon må gå, produced by Bergens Tidende in Bergen; Giæver og gjengen, produced by Verdens Gang in Oslo; and Norsken, svensken og dansken, produced for a Scandinavian public body and broadcasted by the national broadcasting companies in Norway (NRK), Sweden (SR) and Denmark (DR).

The article builds on a text analysis of several podcast episodes and six interviews with people involved with the podcasts. Morlandstø develops a set of binaries to capture important dimensions of the differences between the podcasts. These binaries are:

- monologue vs. dialogue
- factual vs. personal
- reflexive vs. assertive
- intellectual discussants vs. expert

The findings show that commentary journalism in the form of podcasts has a dual purpose: publicity and advertisement. The article contributes insights into how the podcast format innovates the genre by moving it in a dialogical direction and, further, how this development is grounded in both commercial and societal considerations. On the one hand, the article argues that podcasts bring audiences closer to the discussions, making reflections and explanations in the episodes more understandable and thus serving a democratic function. On the other hand, it argues that the columnists in the podcasts have increased their power by personalizing communication and combining podcasts and

social media to become visible, famous and celebrified, rather than facilitating public debate. Such cross-platform persona construction (Usher, 2020, p. 14) transforms opinion-based journalism from an analytical, reflective act into a channel for an authoritative political influencer's focus on their own opinions.

The final article in this special issue is Jakob Linaa Jensen's review of the book ***Power, Communication and Politics in the Nordic Countries*** **edited by Eli Skogerbø, Øyvind Ihlen, Nete Nørgaard Kristensen and Lars Nord**. The book was published most recently by Nordicom in 2021, and a previous version was published in 2008. The book investigates how political communication in the Nordics differs from the same communication in other areas of the world. Linaa Jensen (2022) argues that the comparative perspectives reflected in the book are particularly well suited for introducing researchers outside of the Nordics to the media systems and political landscapes in the Nordic countries. Linaa Jensen believes the book functions as a good introduction for readers outside of the Nordics.

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ESTER APPELGREN
Associate Professor
Natural Sciences, Technology and Environmental Studies
Södertörn University
ester.appelgren@sh.se

BENTE KALSNES
Associate Professor
Departement of Communication
Kristiania University College
bente.kalsnes@kristiania.no

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Freedom of expression or censorship of antisemitic hate speech?

Editorial and audience perspectives on comment moderation in far-right alternative media

BIRGITTE P. HAANSHUUS
The Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies

Abstract

Taking the dilemma between freedom of expression and censorship of antisemitic hate speech as a point of departure, this article explores how three prominent and controversial Norwegian far-right alternative media perceive and perform comment moderation and how editorial and audience perspectives on the issue correspond. Based on a critical discourse analysis of interviews with key staff members and a strategic selection of comment sections, the article demonstrates how both moderators and debaters understand the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate expressions and how transgressive content should be dealt with. The article argues that when it comes to regulating comment sections, these oppositional media actors are not so alternative after all. The study illustrates how comment moderation is crucial for all actors who seek to obtain or protect their legitimacy, regardless of their (counter-) position in the public sphere. While there is widespread agreement on antisemitic hate speech as illegitimate, there is, however, more tolerance for generalising statements about Muslims and immigrants, which underpins these actors' antagonism towards these groups.

KEYWORDS
far right, alternative media, comment moderation, online comments, editorial control, audience participation, hate speech, antisemitism, freedom of expression, anti-Muslim prejudice

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, the far right has undergone an ideological development in which freedom of expression and opposition to antisemitism have emerged as two crucial but conflicting values. The starting point for this study is an observation of an ongoing debate across the three most prominent alternative media in Norway, which, in addition to being controversial actors, can be characterised as "anti-Islamic" and part of the transnational far-right political landscape (Berntzen, 2020). All three sites have published editorials condemning antisemitism, arguing that it is illegitimate and harmful. However, this does not mean anti-Jewish expressions have been eradicated, nor is there agreement on how to deal with such views. In 2018, the editor-in-chief of *Resett* discussed the dilemma between advocating for unlimited freedom of expression and censorship of antisemitic hate speech, arguing that "the principle of an open comment section" is more important. He further encouraged debaters to "take extra good care of the Jews in Norway" and to contribute to constructive discussions without making antisemitic remarks since the Jewish minority is threatened from many sides (Lurås, 2018). Shortly after, *Rights.no* harshly criticised *Resett* for lack of moderation and for allowing "grotesque Jew-hatred" and support for Nazism in their comment sections (Storhaug, 2018). In 2019, *Document* also criticised *Resett* for giving a platform to people promoting antisemitism and Holocaust denial, both online and at a public debate meeting, arguing that antisemites have the same view on free speech as Islamists (Rustad, 2019).

With this debate as a backdrop, the present article explores the arguments used and the tensions that arise when the dilemma between defending freedom of expression and denouncing antisemitism is dealt with by editorial staff and discussed by audience members in the comment sections of these alternative media. This is of importance because, in addition to informing discussions on where and how antisemitic hate speech is expressed in a fragmented and digital public sphere, this case can illuminate how alternative media, which by definition "represent a proclaimed and/or (self-) perceived corrective" to the public discourse and the dominant mainstream media (Holt et al., 2019, p. 862), perceive and perform comment moderation in general. While many studies have demonstrated why and how mainstream media handle their comment sections (e.g. Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Singer et al., 2011), less attention has been paid to how this unfolds in alternative media. Examining whether, why and how new media actors control the debates they facilitate is essential for understanding the wider dynamics of the digital public sphere. Given their stated editorial position on antisemitism, the alternative media investigated can

function as gatekeepers who can prevent this specific type of hate speech.

Far-right alternative media represent an interesting case because compared to the mainstream media they criticise, they presumably have different understandings of where the boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable should be set. Of particular interest is that these sites may attract highly diverse audiences, from mainstream and immigration-critical to extremist voices. Since the dilemma in question has sparked debates among readers, this case can also provide valuable insights into the relationship between the editorial line of such media and their audiences. While studies of editorial control in mainstream media have shown how moderators and participants in such online debates have different expectations of how moderation should be carried out (Løvlie et al., 2018; Robinson, 2010), research on audience participation in far-right alternative media is scarce (Holt, 2020). Taking the dilemma between freedom of expression and censorship of antisemitism as a point of departure, this article contributes to this literature by posing the following research questions:

1. How does far-right alternative media perceive and perform comment moderation?
2. How do audience perspectives correspond with editorial views?

The overall aim is to contribute with knowledge on the different positions and arguments used about comment moderation of hate speech across and within alternative media, which in recent years have influenced the digital public sphere (Holt, 2020; Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021). Of particular interest is whether the arguments reflect interventionist or non-interventionist approaches to comment moderation (Ihlebæk et al., 2013; Løvlie et al., 2018). Based on a critical discourse analysis of interviews with key editorial staff members and a selection of comment sections that address the dilemma outlined above, the article demonstrates how both facilitators of and participants in the comment sections in these alternative media understand the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate expressions, how transgressive content should be dealt with, and the risks associated with specific approaches to comment moderation. The article argues that when it comes to regulating comment sections, these oppositional media actors are not so alternative after all, as the findings illustrate how comment moderation is crucial for all actors who seek to obtain or protect their legitimacy, regardless of their (counter-) position in the public sphere. However, while there is widespread agreement on the

illegitimacy of antisemitic hate speech, there is more tolerance for negative generalising statements about Muslims and immigrants, which underpins their antagonism towards these groups.

The far right's liberal turn and changed views on Jews

The *far right* is an umbrella term for a variety of political actors, which main common denominator is that they promote a worldview based on nativism, the idea that states should be populated by the native in-group and that alien out-groups pose a threat to the homogenous nation state (Mudde, 2007). While the *extreme* right is profoundly anti-democratic and may support or use violence, the *radical* right operates within a democratic framework but opposes key liberal democratic values, such as political pluralism and minority rights. Another but also partly overlapping distinction can be made between those who see Jews as the main threat and those who are antagonistic to Islam and Muslims. However, the boundaries between ideological camps can be fluid, particularly on digital platforms where different audiences meet.

Considering that far-right ideology historically has been characterised by authoritarianism, it may seem paradoxical that large parts of the far right in Western Europe have taken an ostensibly liberal turn over the last few decades. This is linked to what Berntzen (2020, p. 1) labelled "the anti-Islamic turn and expansion of the far right", in which there has been an ideological transformation where *race* has been replaced by *culture*; Jews have been replaced by Muslims as the predominant enemy, and authoritarianism has been replaced by a "semi-liberal equilibrium", referring to how far-right actors have adopted liberal positions on many issues – such as gender equality and LGBTQ rights – to denounce Islam (Berntzen, 2020). As part of this liberal discourse, far-right actors portray themselves as the true defenders of free speech in a world where this profound democratic freedom is threatened by "the elite", the political left, and political correctness (e.g. Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Moffitt, 2017). Studies have demonstrated how the Muhammad cartoon controversy (Yılmaz, 2011) and the terrorist attack targeting satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* (Castelli Gattinara, 2017) functioned as key events used by far-right actors to highlight freedom of expression as a fundamental Western value that is incompatible with Islam. A main argument is that freedom of expression should be as broad as possible – or even absolute (Moffitt, 2017).

Another feature of this ideological development is the changed view of Jews. Historically, hostility towards Jews has been a core feature of far-right ideology. Now, however, it is primarily neo-Nazis who promote antisemitic ideas – most notably conspiracies about Jewish power and

Holocaust denial (e.g. Haanshuus & Ihlebæk, 2021). Following the discredit of antisemitism in the public sphere after the Holocaust, other far-right actors have largely distanced themselves from Nazism and antisemitism to reach a wider audience (Jackson & Feldman, 2014). Some even embrace the Jewish minority, support Israel, and have adopted a critical position towards antisemitism. This "anti-antisemitism" may serve as a way of distancing themselves from Nazism, as well as fending off Muslim immigration, which is claimed to be threatening the security of the Jewish population (Kahmann, 2017). Moreover, support for Israel, Jews and Judaism is often linked to a worldview in which Judeo-Christian values are exalted and equated with Western values that are in conflict with Islam and Muslims (Berntzen, 2020; Kahmann, 2017). Although one can argue that the change in far-right views on Jews is strategic, it may also be a result of genuine ideological differences since the far right is not one unified bloc. The aim here is not to determine the motivations behind this change but rather to scrutinise how an anti-antisemitic editorial position affects how far-right alternative media perceive and perform comment moderation, as well as the arguments used for and against censorship of antisemitism among their audiences, who may or may not share their views.

Audience participation and comment moderation in mainstream and alternative media

Comment sections provide an increased opportunity for citizens to engage in public discussions (Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015) and for interactivity between news producers and their audiences (Larsson, 2011). Facilitation of online debates has, from early on, been motivated by democratic ideals about deliberative participation and by financial incentives (Reich, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2011). While concerns for hate speech and harmful content have led many news organisations to strictly regulate or remove their comment sections, they are still offered by alternative media, but research on the moderation policies and practices of such actors is limited.

Studies on mainstream media have demonstrated that the motivations behind comment moderation may vary. As a way of facilitating democratic discussions, conducting content moderation may be a moral duty. Depending on a country's legislation, preventing hate may also be a legal obligation (Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Singer et al., 2011). Considering how incivility and hate speech can damage the credibility and commercial interests of actors who facilitate online discussions, handling such content may also be strategically important (Anderson et al., 2016; Reich, 2011). Since alternative media are in

opposition to mainstream media, it is not obvious whether these actors feel the same responsibility towards dealing with hate speech. When it comes to far-right alternative media specifically, research has demonstrated that they criticise the established press for being biased, elitist, leftist and politically correct (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019).

When analysing how media actors perceive and perform comment moderation, it is useful to distinguish between interventionist and non-interventionist strategies (Ihlebæk et al., 2013). While an interventionist approach indicates a high level of editorial control and may involve identification requirements and active regulation of content, a non-interventionist approach implies that the media in question perform as little editorial control as possible, based on the ideal of comment sections as a free marketplace of ideas (Løvlie et al., 2018). How these strategies play out in practice is context-dependent, and they should be seen as opposite ends of a continuum rather than two fixed positions. Studies on comment moderation by mainstream media have demonstrated how moderation practices are often based on guidelines that determine what type of content is unwanted and how it should be handled (Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Reich, 2011). A key question for all moderators is where boundaries between the acceptable and unacceptable should be set. Where the boundaries are drawn is likely to vary, depending on the position of the media actors in the public sphere and what they consider uncivil and harmful.

The participating audience may also have different views on where boundaries should be drawn. While the audience of alternative media comprises user groups with different motivations (Schwarzenegger, 2021) who may engage in varying ways (Larsson, 2011), the focus here is on active participants who write comments. Studies on participation and editorial control in mainstream media have highlighted a certain tension between media professionals and audiences concerning questions about the deliberative value, quality and degree of openness in participatory services (Bergström & Wadbring, 2015; Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Robinson, 2010). Although comment moderation is seen as valuable and necessary by many, a study by Løvlie, Ihlebæk and Larsson (2018) showed that commenters who have been moderated are critical of comment moderation, which may be due to lack of transparency in the moderation process or that those with non-interventionist attitudes also have a tendency towards discussing controversial topics with a confrontational style, lack of digital literacy or understanding of editorial policies.

When it comes to audiences of far-right alternative media, studies have indicated that users are motivated by scepticism and mistrust of mainstream media, particularly regarding news coverage about immigration and Islam (Noppari et al., 2019; Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2020). Given that the audience of such media believes that

the issues that occupy them are silenced in public, it is not unreasonable to assume that many will support a non-interventionist approach to moderation. Moreover, considering how far-right actors are strong defenders of free speech, comment moderation may be seen as a threat to this freedom.

Data and method

The cases investigated are the three most-read alternative media in Norway, regardless of political leaning: *Resett*, *Document* and *Rights.no* (see Table 1 for an overview of sites and key characteristics). Although the backgrounds for their establishment are different, the sites can be characterised as alternative media due to their self-ascribed oppositional role in the media landscape (Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021). Ideologically, they are similar, focusing particularly on the negative aspects of immigration and Islam. All three sites have published editorials that condemn antisemitism. Within media studies, these types of actors have been labelled "right-wing" or "immigration critical" alternative media (Holt, 2020; Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021) or "right-wing digital news" (Heft et al., 2020). Within political sociology, however, such actors are considered to be part of the far right due to their support for nativism and exclusionary views on Islam and Muslims (Berntzen, 2020). Although they might oppose the "far right" label, it is more precise and essential for this study to place them within this ideological landscape.

Site	Established	Weekly readership (%)[1]	Commenting rules	Log-in required for commenting
Document	2003 – as a blog	7	"We do not accept statements that are obviously spam, obscene, racist or that in other ways are a violation of Norwegian law or a minimum of common decency."	Yes
Resett	2017 – as an alternative news site	8	"Dehumanisation, personal attacks, incitement, threats and incitement to violence, war rhetoric, spamming, trolling, complaints about moderation and derailment of the debate are not allowed. Normal courtesy is encouraged."	Yes
Rights.no (Human Rights Service)	2001 – as a think tank	5	"When commenting, you accept our debate rules. We expect a serious debate without personal attacks. HRS reserves the right to moderate and remove inappropriate comments."	Yes

Table 1: Overview of sites and key characteristics

In the Norwegian context, the media actors examined are considered to be controversial and have been the subject of much debate, including how they portray immigrants and Muslims and the lack of regulation in their comment sections (Ihlebæk & Figenschou, 2022; Nygaard, 2020).[2] Concerning regulatory frameworks, it is worth mentioning the Norwegian Media Liability Act, which applies to all media that regularly produce and publish news, debates or other content of public interest. It states that editors may be held responsible for illegal user-generated content (e.g. threats and hate speech), and if the media has rules for user-generated content, they must provide information about the rules and how they are enforced. The commenting rules of the alternative

media under study are presented above (see Table 1). Also relevant is the Code of Ethics for the Norwegian Press, which is a self-regulatory framework that is supervised by the Norwegian Press Council (PFU) and applies to members of the Association of Norwegian Editors. Since the editor of *Document* became a member in 2018, they must act accordingly, which implies responsibility for removing user-generated content that is not in compliance with the ethical code.[3] *Resett* and *Rights.no* also claim to follow the Code of Ethics, although they are not formally members of this system.

In the analysis, the aim was to identify the different positions and arguments about comment moderation. To include both editorial and audience perspectives, this study is based on two types of data. First, semi-structured interviews with representatives of the alternative media, including editors and main moderators (N = 5, see Table 2 for an overview).[4] Although the number of interviewees is small, they are considered key informants, as they are the only ones in the Norwegian context who can provide information – from an editorial perspective – on how this type of alternative media perceives and performs comment moderation. The informants were asked about their perceptions of antisemitism in Norway, how they deal with antisemitism in their comment sections, their moderation policies and practices in general and how they perceive freedom of expression in this context. Although the focus was on moderating antisemitic hate speech specifically, it was also an ambition to examine perspectives on comment moderation more generally. Second, the empirical material includes a strategic selection of one comment section from each site that addresses the dilemma of interest. The selected comment sections contain the reactions to the editorials mentioned in the introduction, which have been published on each site. These comments (N = 561) represent the views of active audiences across the sites, which can give insight into whether and how audience perspectives correspond with editorial views. The comments were collected on 10 and 12 May 2021, prior to the interviews, which were conducted in June and July 2021.[5]

Alternative media site	Position of the informant	Interview conducted by
Document	Chief editor	Video call
Resett	Chief editor	Video call
Resett	Head of moderators	Video call
Rights.no	Information manager	Video call
Rights.no	Main moderator	E-mail

Table 2: Overview of informants

Analytically, this study was inspired by the discourse-historical approach (DHA), a variant of critical discourse analysis that is

interdisciplinary, problem-oriented and context-oriented and has a special focus on the historical embedding and change of language (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). The DHA was developed to analyse the emergence of antisemitism in public discourses in post-war Austria but is now used to analyse ideology, power and discriminatory language of all kinds. Of particular relevance here is the text or discourse immanent critique, a specific aspect of the DHA that aims to discover inconsistencies, (self)-contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in text or discourse. As a first step, the analytical questions proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2016, p. 32) were adjusted and used to conduct an exploratory close reading of the transcribed interviews and the selected comment sections:

- How are freedom of expression and antisemitism referred to separately and in relation to each other?
- What characteristics are attributed to freedom of expression and (censorship of) antisemitism, respectively?
- What arguments are employed?
- From what perspective are the arguments expressed?
- Are the statements articulated explicitly or implicitly?

The questions served as guidelines to identify the different positions and arguments used regarding the dilemma between (absolute) freedom of expression and censorship of antisemitism.

Subsequently, the interviews and comment sections were coded using the NVivo software for qualitative research. For both types of data, the coding process was hermeneutic and recursive, and the categorisation of positions and arguments was informed by previous research addressing the liberal turn of far-right ideology, perspectives on why and how mainstream media organisations perform comment moderation and the tensions that may arise between facilitators and participants in online debates. The overall aim was to disclose whether editorial perspectives and audience perspectives, respectively, correspond with an interventionist or a non-interventionist approach to comment moderation and whether and how the arguments for and against comment moderation comprise normative, strategic or legal considerations. Another overall aim was to uncover any inconsistencies, (self)-contradictions or paradoxes that might occur when dealing with and discussing the dilemma in question, both within and across the alternative media and between their editorial policies and their audiences.

The examples of comments have been translated, cut and in some cases slightly adjusted by the author so the study is in accordance with

the Norwegian Personal Data Act and the national ethical guidelines for internet research.

Perspectives on comment moderation in far-right alternative media

The first part of the analysis explores how far-right alternative media perceive and perform comment moderation, based on the perspectives of editorial staff members. The second part examines how audience perspectives correspond with editorial views.

Editorial perspectives: Consensus about interventionist strategies

Although they are strong advocates of freedom of expression, there is consensus among the editorial staff that comment moderation is necessary. This applies to antisemitic hate speech specifically but also to other types of harmful content. The arguments for why comment moderation is important and details on how it is practised are presented below.

The importance of comment moderation

In general, the editorial staff of the alternative media perceive freedom of expression to be restricted – in Norwegian society and in the media system. A key aim is to contribute to a more open public debate, particularly regarding topics such as immigration and Islam. When asked about the significance of comment sections, the arguments were similar across all three sites: they want to facilitate enlightening discussions and have a platform where many different voices can be heard, and some explicitly referred to how online debates have become an essential part of democracy. The information manager of *Rights.no* stated that it is "very important that people who feel powerless as citizens have arenas where they can express themselves". The chief editor of *Document* criticised mainstream media for "failing its task" by closing their comment sections. This illustrates how these actors consider the facilitation of online discussions a social responsibility that the established media do not take seriously enough.

Despite concerns about limited freedom of expression, no editorial staff members argued that it should be absolute, at least not in the context of dealing with unwanted and harmful content – such as antisemitism – in their comment sections. An overall finding is that the alternative media believe that they have a responsibility to conduct comment moderation, thus supporting interventionist strategies. The following quote from the main moderator of *Resett* illustrates this point: "I very much protect freedom of speech. But we have no obligation to publish." Reflecting on how the dilemma between advocating for free

speech and conducting moderation plays out on their platforms, she added, "I might say that I do not exactly protect it [free speech] in our comment sections". The interviews also revealed that while *Resett* used to have what was described by the editor-in-chief as a "more idealistic approach", both when it came to publishing a wide range of opinions and allowing "as much as possible" in the comment sections "as long as it was within the law", in August 2019 they decided to regulate comment sections to a much greater extent. This illustrates a shift in *Resett*'s editorial line from a non-interventionist to an interventionist approach. As discussed in more detail below, this change probably reflects the need to protect their credibility. Also of relevance, although not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, is that *Resett*, around the time of this shift, had applied for membership in the Association of Norwegian Editors and was criticised for their lack of comment moderation (Ihlebæk & Figenschou, 2022).

Echoing studies on why mainstream media perform comment moderation, the arguments put forward by the representatives of the alternative media in question varied between normative, legal, and strategic considerations. Those who argued for comment moderation as a moral obligation emphasised the importance of preventing incivility and hate in society. A representative from *Rights.no* stated that they "do not want to be a place where people can spread hate and vulgarity", and for them, antisemitism and racial discrimination "have nothing to do with free speech". The main moderator of *Resett* emphasised that they have a great responsibility to help "combat the Jew-hatred that has arisen", which she claimed was especially salient in Muslim communities. Although no one saw this as a particular concern in the comment sections, the argument about Muslim antisemitism as a significant problem was also mentioned by other informants throughout the interviews, which demonstrates how discussions about antisemitism substantiate their opposition towards Islam and Muslims.

The editor-in-chief of *Resett* focused more on strategic reasons for conducting moderation. In addition to briefly mentioning a legal responsibility and consideration for targeted individuals, he argued that it is mainly about "the reputation and image the public has of *Resett*". Feedback from readers and the fact that people identify the comment sections with their editorial line meant that the "idealistic" approach to moderation was no longer sustainable. The chief editor emphasised how their idealistic approach and view on free speech had a negative impact on their readership and finances and added, "We do not get around the fact that the comment sections must be handled". The arguments put forward by the chief editor of *Document* were also about strategic considerations. He emphasised how they are "bearing the costs" when people write antisemitic or other types of harmful comments. As an example, he highlighted how "unpleasant" it was when

it became publicly known that extreme-right terrorist Anders Behring Breivik had posted comments on their site. Moreover, since becoming a member of professional press associations, it is important for *Document* to act in accordance with their ideals, which means that dealing with harmful comments is necessary (see Ihlebæk & Figenschou, 2022).

Overall, this shows that despite a previous tension between the alternative media, there is now editorial consensus concerning how they perceive comment moderation, as they all expressed support for interventionist strategies. The next section provides details on what this approach entails when it comes to moderation of antisemitic hate speech specifically, as well as other types of content.

Policies and practices

Like mainstream media, the alternative media investigated have moderators who follow the comment sections closely to deal with unwanted and harmful content. Their moderation practices are informed by guidelines that are similar across the sites. Examples of what was claimed to be unacceptable include threats, unreasonable personal attacks, harassment, spam, and racism and hate speech against groups. Speaking in more general terms, the editor-in-chief of *Document* stressed, "We want people to think before they write and express themselves in a civilised language". When asked about antisemitism in the comment sections, the interviewees acknowledged that it may occur, albeit to varying degrees, and emphasised that it is unacceptable to promote antisemitic ideas on their platforms. The most common practice when someone breaks the rules is to not approve comments for publication (on the websites) or to hide or delete comments (on Facebook). If someone crosses the line several times, they may be blocked.

When asked whether it is difficult to know where the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate content should be drawn, the interviewees recognised this as a recurring challenge. When asked specifically about antisemitism in this context, the informants said that it is not particularly difficult to assess, even if it may be characterised by coded language or if the antisemitic message appears as an underlying idea. The informants expressed no tolerance for any statements that may be perceived as antisemitic. Such statements may, for instance, be conspiratorial ideas about Jewish power or someone questioning whether the Holocaust happened. The chief editor of *Resett* emphasised that since they rejected their "idealistic" approach, they now have "zero tolerance" for antisemitism. The chief editor of *Document* characterised antisemitism as "sui generis", something so unique that there is no doubt about where "the red line" goes. In cases of doubt, the interviewees stated that it is better to delete such comments than to let

them be. In sum, this indicates a relatively strict regulation of comment sections, particularly regarding statements that may be perceived as discriminatory or hostile towards Jews. It also shows how these actors can function as efficient gatekeepers who may contribute to the prevention of antisemitism in the digital public sphere.

Probing into the question of difficult boundaries, the interviews further disclosed that the argumentation is different when it comes to comments about other minorities. Despite having guidelines that define racism and hate speech against (all) specific groups as illegitimate, the editorial staff members expressed ambivalence and more tolerance regarding generalisations about immigrants and Muslims. To illustrate, the chief editor of *Resett* claimed, on the one hand, that they have become less tolerant when it comes to how Islam and Muslims are referred to in the comment sections, as it may be "difficult to distinguish between criticism of Islam and criticism of Muslims". While criticism of Islam is considered legitimate, criticism of Muslims is, in principle, illegitimate. On the other hand, he also expressed ambiguity about whether this distinction really makes sense. The chief editor of *Document* similarly described it as "meaningless" to draw a specific line on what you can say when it comes to "the conflict between the West/Europe and Islam". The information manager of *Rights.no* mentioned generalising allegations about Somalis as examples of comments they sometimes let through because "statistically, there are big problems among Somalis" and "not everyone is very good at making reservations" when writing a comment. Although the editorial line of the alternative media is based on an interventionist approach to comment moderation where all forms of hate speech are prohibited, this illustrates that their policies and practices are not consistent, particularly regarding groups that they are antagonistic towards.

Audience perspectives: Conflicting views on comment moderation

Regarding how audience members perceive the dilemma between free speech and censorship of antisemitism, an overall distinction can be made between those who believe that freedom of expression should have certain limits, which means that interventionist moderation strategies are considered necessary, and those who argue for unlimited freedom of expression and thus are critical of comment moderation. Both positions exist within and across the comment sections of the alternative media under study, which means that all three sites have been subject to praise and criticism for how they handle their comment sections. The arguments for and against comment moderation are presented next. Since the latter was more salient, these arguments are given more space.

Arguments for comment moderation

The supporters of an interventionist approach believe that freedom of expression is of major importance but maintain that it should have certain restrictions. The discussions include arguments that refer to the dilemma between freedom of expression and opposition to antisemitism in general and what it means for how online debates should be handled particularly. Many of these commenters have argued from a normative perspective in which antisemitism and Holocaust denial are considered illegitimate, evil, and harmful to society. The main argument is that certain types of political views should not be accepted, even within the framework of wide freedom of expression, and that antisemitism and Holocaust denial are clear examples of the unacceptable. The following statement illustrates this point: "We will stand on the barricades for freedom of expression, but that does not include defending hatred and lies." Other commenters have emphasised that "Jew-haters, whether Islamists or Nazis, do not belong in civilised societies" and that antisemites and Holocaust deniers are "on the sideline" of what free speech is about. Consequently, they disqualify themselves from debates and should not be allowed to express themselves in the comment sections.

Another common argument is that the alternative media have no obligation to publish extreme voices, conspiracy theories or statements that contradict well-documented facts, such as the systematic killing of Jews during World War II. As one commenter has put it: "No one is entitled to have unhistorical chatter published" because it is up to the editor-in-chief of any news outlet to decide what to publish, and "that is how freedom of expression works". Another debater has similarly stated that criticising *Resett* for inviting right-wing extremists to debates is "not to gag freedom of expression, but rather to use it". In this context, some have stressed that those who promote antisemitic and neo-Nazi views are free to establish their own platforms. Moreover, among those who believe that comment moderation is necessary, some explicitly argue from a strategic point of view. For instance, one commenter urged not to let "these people destroy the alternative media so that they end up as unreadable, poisoned sites for extremists", which is claimed to be "the highest wish" among the political left and "old media". Other commenters have referred to the acceptance of antisemitism in the comment sections as "too including" and as "self-harm". Overall, this indicates an agreement between the editorial line of the alternative media in question and parts of their audiences regarding how they perceive comment moderation, especially when removing antisemitic content. However, many audience members were also highly critical of comment moderation. Their arguments are presented next.

Arguments against comment moderation

The supporters of a non-interventionist approach argue for freedom of expression as a fundamentally important liberal principle, which should be (almost) absolute and limited only in cases of threats or incitement to violence. Consequently, the non-interventionists across all alternative media sites have expressed support for how *Resett* performed comment moderation before tightening the rules. In addition to the overarching main argument about the value of absolute free speech, these debaters argue for the importance of an open debate and point to the risk associated with blurry boundaries, which can backfire if freedom of expression is restricted.

In discussions on whether antisemitic or neo-Nazi beliefs should be allowed in the comment sections, those who support the non-interventionist position emphasise the value of exposing different opinions, no matter how incorrect or illegitimate they are. A common statement in this regard is that "we should not censor voices we do not like". The main argument is that debate and counterarguments are better than censorship and no-platforming, which are considered undemocratic and illiberal measures. In this context, some commenters expressed concern about extreme voices moving to closed platforms, where they would not meet any resistance. A recurring argument is that it is bad to censor conspiratorial and "paranoid" people because then they get their worldview confirmed. In a worst-case scenario, censorship can lead to something that is "more dangerous". Other commenters argued that by allowing and exposing antisemites and Holocaust deniers in the comment sections, it is likely that more people will become aware of what these actors stand for, and as a result, those who promote such illegitimate ideas make themselves irrelevant. As one commenter has put it: "Idiotic things like Holocaust denial cannot stand the light of day."

A closer look at the arguments against censorship of comments revealed that these audience members are worried about what restrictions on freedom of expression may lead to – for society in general and for the alternative media actors in question. Many asked rhetorical questions about where the boundaries should be drawn and emphasised that it can be difficult to distinguish between hate speech (as defined by law) and criticism of religion – both in the case of Jews and Judaism and in the case of Muslims and Islam. A key argument is that it should be legitimate to criticise all religions and ethnic groups, including Jews, which the editorial line of the alternative media in question does not allow for. As for Holocaust denial, several debaters have pointed out that it should be legitimate to ask questions, even if it is a well-documented historical event – and a "problematic opinion". The following comment illustrates this point: "If a specific topic gets special treatment, it becomes a slippery slope argument." The overall message of the non-interventionists is that true freedom of speech can

be achieved only if everyone can express their views on all types of issues.

These audience members further stressed that the arguments used in defence of comment moderation and censorship of antisemitism can just as easily be used by political opponents, mainstream media and the general public to silence alternative media and the people who share their views, particularly on issues such as Islam, immigration and racism. Commenting on the arguments used by *Document* in favour of comment moderation, one debater claimed, "You're shooting yourself in the foot – with a shotgun". Another commenter criticised *Rights.no* for their position on the issue by stating, "You are now using the same rhetoric as your opponents in the mainstream public". An overarching argument is that there is a serious risk of hate speech legislation being abused, since "many people want criticism of Islam and the questioning of mass immigration to be illegal". Consequently, these debaters argued that an interventionist approach to comment moderation will backfire and that the comment sections should be as open as possible with little or no editorial control.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that while the non-interventionists in the comment sections of *Document* and *Rights.no* show little tolerance for antisemitism and Holocaust denial, some of those who defended free speech in the comment section of *Resett* (before they changed the rules) did so because they also supported antisemitic views. A meta debate about Jews and Judaism has also triggered conspiratorial ideas about Jewish power and influence in media and society at large. Some of these commenters questioned why it is illegal or illegitimate to "criticise" Jews, implicitly or explicitly arguing that powerful Jews are suppressing freedom of expression. Others have claimed that Jews undermine society by being responsible for "mass immigration" and "multiculturalism", which is a common antisemitic trope among neo-Nazis. Consequently, this illustrates that a non-interventionist approach to comment moderation can attract and facilitate debaters who promote antisemitic and extremist views.

Conclusion

While comment sections certainly provide an increased opportunity for people to engage in public discussions and for interactivity between news producers and their audiences, they also pose a challenge to facilitators of such debates. This study has explored how far-right alternative media perceive and perform comment moderation and how audience perspectives correspond with editorial views. Taking the dilemma between two important but conflicting values – defence of freedom of expression and opposition to antisemitism – as a point of

departure, the study has contributed with new insights into the positions and arguments used in debates about comment moderation across and within alternative media, which, in recent years, has influenced the digital public sphere (Holt, 2020; Ihlebæk & Nygaard, 2021).

Despite being strong defenders of freedom of expression, which they believe is restricted in media and society, the editorial staff of the alternative media acknowledged that comment moderation is necessary. Mostly reflecting normative or strategic considerations, their arguments were similar to how mainstream media perceives the responsibility for handling online debates (Anderson et al., 2016; Ihlebæk et al., 2013; Ihlebæk & Krumsvik, 2015; Singer et al., 2011). This article has thus argued that when it comes to regulating comment sections, these oppositional media actors are not so alternative after all. The findings illustrate that comment moderation is crucial for all actors who seek to obtain or protect their legitimacy, regardless of their (counter-) position in the public sphere. The wish to be taken seriously and to gain influence and legitimacy were also important motivations when two of the sites examined, *Document* and *Resett*, applied for membership in the Association of Norwegian Editors in 2018, thus seeking insider status in the professional media landscape (see Ihlebæk & Figenschou, 2022).

The main question is thus not whether interventions should happen at all but rather where the boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable should be set. In the digital public sphere, negotiations of boundaries may take place on different levels – for instance, between the editorial line of the media in question and the wider public, between media actors and their loyal audiences and among different audience members. This study has shown that while there is a general agreement on the need for censoring violent rhetoric, which can be important to create distance to and prevent extremism, questions of what constitutes transgressive hate speech and how it should be handled have raised discussions and dilemmas. When it comes to antisemitism specifically, both editorial staff and most audience members described it as unacceptable. This points to a widespread agreement in the public sphere about antisemitism as a marker of a particularly illegitimate and harmful political stance, even among actors who criticise the media and the public discourse for being narrow and biased. Considering how the editorial staff expressed zero tolerance for any statements that may be perceived as antagonistic towards Jews, the study indicates how these alternative media can function as important and efficient gatekeepers for counteracting antisemitic hate speech, which appears to be increasing in the digital public sphere (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). However, the removal of such content may cause dissatisfaction among their most active audience members since

many of them emphasised freedom of expression as a more important value.

Regarding other types of discriminatory content, the study has demonstrated how the boundaries are blurrier. Although their guidelines prohibit all forms of hate speech, the editorial staff across all sites expressed more tolerance for negative, generalising comments about Muslims and immigrants. Furthermore, the argument about the importance of "criticising" Islam, Muslims and (mass) immigration occurred repeatedly among commenters. This points to a common understanding between the editorial line of the alternative media and their audiences concerning the legitimacy of antagonistic statements about these specific out-groups. Considering how prejudice against Muslims is significantly more widespread (34%) in the Norwegian population than prejudice against Jews (8%), allowing anti-Muslim content in the comment sections is probably less risky (Hoffmann & Moe (eds.), 2017).

The present study has some limitations, considering that it covered only a specific subset of alternative media in one country. Future research should investigate perceptions of moderation policies and practices and the boundaries between the legitimate and the illegitimate across and within alternative media with different ideological leanings and across country-specific (digital) public spheres. Moreover, this study is based on interviews and a selection of comment sections, which means that the findings reflect the expressed views of editorial staff and a subset of the participating audience. Future studies should use other methodological approaches to provide more details on the relationship between policies and practices and to gain insights into the views of the less active audience members. Despite these limitations, this study provides important knowledge about the potential for the diffusion and prevention of different types of hate speech in a rapidly changing digital media landscape.

NOTES

[1] Weekly readership (%) from Newman et al. (2020).

[2] For more on organisational features and these actors' role in the Scandinavian media landscape, see Ihlebæk and Nygaard (2021). To place them within a broader national and transnational ideological context, see Figenschou and Ihlebæk (2019).

[3] See https://presse.no/pfu/etiske-regler/vaer-varsom-plakaten/vvpl-engelsk/. Since 2018, Document has been sanctioned 10 times, five of which were due to a lack of comment moderation. For PFU statistics, see https://presse.no/avansert-sok/?_sft_redaksjon=document-no.

[4] Due to one informant's wish for full anonymity, this interview was conducted by email. It was thus less extensive, and there was limited opportunity for follow-up questions, which probably had an impact on the scope and depth of the information given. The main moderator of *Document* never responded to interview requests.

[5] All of the comment sections were publicly available at the time of data collection.

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BIRGITTE P. HAANSHUUS
Doctoral Research Fellow
The Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies
b.p.haanshuus@hlsenteret.no

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The ethics of journalism challenged
The blurring boundary between local journalism and communications

JAANA HUJANEN
University of Helsinki

MIKKO GRÖNLUND
University of Turku

JUHO RUOTSALAINEN
University of Turku

KATJA LEHTISAARI
Tampere University

VILJAMI VAARALA
University of Helsinki

Abstract

The article examines Finnish news professionals' views on the ethical challenges that ensue from emerging and intertwining forms of local professional journalism and communications. Besides describing the current situation, the article employs data from a survey of editors-in-chief to investigate how news professionals anticipate the relationship between journalism and communications evolving in the future. Respondents perceived a blurring of the boundary between local journalism and communications. They observed economic pressures creating incentives for news media to compromise their journalistic ethics and ethical concerns arising from professional communications' adoption of journalistic practices. Editors-in-chief maintained that the boundaries between journalism and other forms of communication are clear in their media but indistinct in other local news media outlets and in society in general. They predicted an ambiguous, even grim, future of local news media in Finland. However, local news media may have a positive future if they become distinct, attractive and relevant again to citizens.

KEYWORDS
blurring boundaries, boundary work, Finland, futures of journalism, journalism ethics, local media, scenarios

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Introduction

The boundary between local journalism and communications is becoming increasingly blurred (Hagelstein & Zerfass, 2020). In digital media, since all communication takes place through the same medium, the boundaries between different forms of media content have become difficult to maintain (Carlson & Lewis, 2020). Moreover, the influences of communication, public relations (PR), marketing and advertising on journalism are growing as news outlets search for new business models (Ikonen et al., 2017; Macnamara, 2016). As professional journalists are working with fewer resources, they have become more open to content produced outside the newsroom, such as native advertising (Kantola & Lounasmeri, 2014). Consequently, new forms of local journalism, commercial communication, social media practices, algorithmic media logics and public relations are intertwining, combining an array of ideals, practices and characteristics (Jenkins & Graves, 2020). The ethical code of practice regarding hybrids of journalism and other forms of communication remains ambiguous and unstable (e.g. Poutanen et al., 2016). Concurrently, the credibility of the fields of communication and journalism is threatened, for example, via non-transparent native advertising (Macnamara, 2014).

In this article, we examine how media professionals from local news media in Finland perceive the shifting boundary between professional journalism and communications, related ethical concerns and the possible futures of the relationship between the two fields. As the field of communications is varied and new forms of communication continue to emerge, we refer to *communications* foremost as strategic and commercial communications, such as PR, marketing and advertising. The emergence of communications in the journalistic field is of particular interest in Finland, which is considered a Nordic media welfare state where professional journalists have a strong professional ethos and audiences have high trust in the news media (Ala-Fossi et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2020; Syvertsen et al., 2014). However, media professionals in Finland have called for a more critical attitude when reporting on economic power holders and private companies (Ala-Fossi et al., 2021). This suggests that ethical and normative concerns touch even relatively healthy news ecosystems.

The reshaping of journalistic means and the ensuing ethical challenges are in their initial stages. To make better sense of actors' expectations for the journalistic field to evolve, this article presents alternative scenarios of the journalism–communications relationship. Thus, it situates among approaches that integrate an explicit investigation of projected futures in social sciences research, including journalism studies (Ananny & Finn, 2020; Mische, 2009; Urry, 2016). These approaches diverge from futures studies as their research

interest concerns present representations of futures rather than possible futures as such (Poli, 2010). Representations of futures matter because they influence people's decisions, from everyday choices to investment decisions, for example (Brown et al., 2000). Thus, we do not purport to anticipate the futures of local journalism but to examine how Finnish journalists make sense of the times to come and participate in debates regarding the present and future boundaries between journalism and communications – debates which influence the changes they pursue in their everyday and strategic work.

The context of Finnish local news media

Local media play a crucial role in helping people feel attached to their communities, providing relevant news and a space for public debate and supplementing the national news agenda of large national newspapers (Hujanen, 2000; Syvertsen et al., 2014). Despite their essential functions, local news media have decreased significantly in Western media systems (Nielsen, 2015). The local news media, which operate on thin margins, are confronted with changing news consumption habits and a shift from print to online news, which reduce the viability of current business models and the desirability of existing products and services (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018).

Finnish local media remain relatively vibrant. Regional newspapers, supplemented by a diverse local press, constitute a cornerstone media in the Finnish news ecosystem. However, Finnish news media companies still significantly depend on advertising revenue from their print editions, which makes them sensitive to the amount and targeting of advertising (Ala-Fossi et al., 2020). Attracting new paying, particularly younger, subscribers has proven challenging (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018) – the Finns are slightly less willing to pay for news compared to many other Western countries (Newman et al., 2020). Though Finland still has a large number of newspapers, titles and circulation have decreased since the early 1990s. Therefore, diversity risks can be seen in people's possibilities to access local news (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018). Simultaneously, new social media groups and hyperlocal initiatives offer online news or content services pertaining to particular communities (Hujanen et al., 2021).

Like other Nordic countries, professional journalists in Finland highly respect ethical standards and codes (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hujanen, 2009; Pöyhtäri et al., 2016). The high modern ideal of autonomy has referred to a dispassionate and impersonal journalist with an outsider, matter-of-fact perspective. Autonomy has presupposed that journalism is independent of economic, political or other influences (Deuze, 2005). Following this, journalists have recognised the importance of being just

and independent of outside influences, functioning as gatekeepers of economic and political spheres of influence and citizens (Hujanen, 2016). However, pursuing independent journalism is not necessarily easy. In 2020, the majority (79%) of newspaper editors claimed that they had experienced attempts by politicians, readers or advertisers to influence journalistic content within the last couple of years (Kivioja, 2020).

The ethical guidelines for journalism in Finland place the public first: journalists must be accountable, first and foremost, to their audience – readers, listeners and viewers (Council for Mass Media in Finland [CMM], 2013). The principle of public good has also been central to journalists' professional identity. However, a reinvention of journalistic ideals can be seen in the reimagining of the principle of public service – journalists increasingly understand public service as catering to the needs of their audiences and interacting with them (Pöyhtäri et al., 2016).

Blurring boundaries and the projected futures of journalism

Conceptualisations of the blurring boundaries of journalism situate the shifting relationship between local journalism and communications as part of broader digital media trends. The notion of blurring boundaries has become a pervasive, catch-all diagnosis of the processes of change and transformation in journalism and digital media (Loosen, 2015). Proponents of this notion argue that since anyone, in principle, can participate in the production, interpretation and distribution of news online, the distinction between professional journalism and other forms of content production becomes impossible to maintain (Carlson & Lewis, 2020). The processes of de-boundedness are intensified by journalism's dependence on technology providers as well as commercial pressures which create incentives for journalists to abandon their strict adherence to journalistic norms (Loosen, 2015). Consequently, the boundaries have become blurred within journalism as well: many perceive that digital media have rendered traditional journalistic dichotomies, such as editorial desks vs. marketing departments, obsolete (Chadwick, 2013).

The concept of blurring boundaries implies a relational view and ontology of journalism, where journalism is conceived of as relations between mutually influencing actors, positions and interests, instead of defining essences, such as journalistic norms (Loosen et al., 2022). From a relational perspective, an investigation of the blurring boundaries between journalism, PR and communications sheds light on what journalism is *becoming*, not only on the de-bounding processes as such (Deuze & Witschge, 2020). Since the concept of blurring boundaries

denotes ongoing processes of change, it is a temporal term that focuses on forces and trends that are remaking journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2020). A temporal, future-oriented perspective unveils the normative undertones of the notion of blurring boundaries. It implies a particular future where journalism is a decentralised, distributed and participatory process rather than a distinct institution and profession (Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Starkman, 2011). The seemingly neutral description of journalism's unbounding thus appears as a deeply ethical concern.

Abbott (2001) argues that instead of the boundaries of things, researchers should look for the things of boundaries – the 'things' that draw boundaries between actors and fields. Journalism is distinct from other forms of communication particularly owing to its ethics and related journalistic practices (Singer, 2015). Therefore, one way to examine how the blurring of boundaries between journalism and communications is changing both fields is to investigate how actors in both fields articulate and rearticulate journalistic ethics and norms. In this article, we examine ethical principles and practices as the 'things' of boundaries by probing journalism professionals' views on them in the context of local journalism and communications.

The blurring boundaries and consequent transformations in the practices, ideals, technologies and business models of journalism have made the futures of journalism open and uncertain. The uncertainty and fluidity have increased the demand for trend analyses, predictions and other types of foresight that promise to offer insight into the futures of journalism (Lowrey & Shan, 2018). Journalists themselves, implicitly and explicitly, anticipate what the futures of journalism will be like as they develop new journalistic practices and adapt to the digital media landscape (Franklin, 2014). The increased interest in the futures of journalism raises questions about what future actors will anticipate for journalism, whose interests the anticipated futures serve and how these imaginations and expectations influence current practices (see Poli, 2010). Since journalistic ethics are an essential boundary object of professional journalism, discourses on the futures of journalism fundamentally concern its ethics. Moreover, journalistic ethics and normative underpinnings are a crucial dimension of journalism's anticipated futures also as imagined futures address different interests and create normative expectations of the times ahead (Brown et al., 2000).

Ethical concerns and the blurring of boundaries

Recent research on journalism ethics shows that ethical challenges connect to the blurring boundaries between (i) journalistic and non-

journalistic content within news media and (ii) journalism and advertising from the viewpoint of the casually employed and (iii) the emergence of public organisations claiming to provide news and journalism.

i) The blurring boundaries between journalistic and non-journalistic content

The merging of journalism and communications is perhaps most explicit in native advertising and sponsored content – advertisements or sponsored articles that mimic the style and form of news. These forms of marketing and PR are ethically concerning because they disguise their inherent commercial or otherwise non-public intent (Beckert, 2022). Disguising non-journalistic content as journalism contradicts the ethical norm of news media being transparent about the nature of their content. The production of sponsored content and native advertising requires the input of both marketing and journalism professionals, which erodes the firewall between journalistic work and commercial content. Researchers are concerned about how marketing ventures and corporate profits impact editors' decision-making (Beckert, 2022; Poutanen et al., 2016). A particularly worrying development is the shifting of responsibility for detecting commercial content and associated ethical burdens to audiences. As the ethical codes, regarding sponsored content, is not up to date, the importance of establishing shared ethical guidelines for marketing and journalism has been asserted. (Ikonen et al., 2017; Macnamara, 2014).

Across the domains of communication, advertising and journalism in the United States and Finland, only eight of 40 ethical codes explicitly address sponsored content (Ikonen et al., 2017). The ethical guidelines for Finnish journalists do not include native advertising or sponsored content, although a clarifying statement by the Council for Mass Media in Finland (CMM) acknowledges them. This statement encourages all media to disclose advertorials, advertisements, marketing materials or commercial blogs as 'advertisements' or to indicate that the content was created in a 'commercial collaboration' with an advertiser (CMM, 2015). The guidelines also require journalists and news outlets to make a clear distinction between advertisements and editorial content.

ii) Casually employed journalists and advertising

The economic instability in the media industry has led to greater precarity in the job market, employment insecurity and a growing number of freelancers and casually employed journalists (Gollmitzers, 2021; Mathisen, 2018). Ethical challenges arise as the affiliation between journalism and advertising deepens, both as a consequence of the changing professional roles of news producers these developments

bring about and in terms of ensuring continued journalistic autonomy, credibility and translparency. These ethical challenges are particularly highlighted for freelance journalists who also do public relations work. These individuals tend to experience inter-role conflicts when trying to merge conflicting professional norms and ethical codes in their work (Obermaier & Koch, 2014).

iii) Public organisations producing quasi-journalistic content

PR practitioners, such as public organisations, municipalities and cities, have expanded who can claim to produce journalistic content for local audiences (Grafström & Rehnberg, 2019). This development is likely to blur the boundary between journalism and communications because these organisations are not independent of the local administration and public officials. Their emergence has also caused ethical concerns. For example, Swedish local journalists perceive a threat to their profession when municipalities and organisations communicate directly with their audiences (Nygren, 2020). Furthermore, an analysis of digital news sites operated by Swedish county councils has raised concerns about the trustworthiness and credibility of such operations: how strategic communication can be combined with journalistic goals (Grafström & Rehnberg, 2019).

The Finnish ethical guidelines of PR, marketing and advertising underline that professionals must work in accordance with the interests of their employer or client (see e.g. Council of Ethics for Communication, 2015; Finnish Association of Marketing, Technology and Creativity, 2017). The convergence of these fields with journalism creates a substantial ethical conflict where the ambitions of the employer or client and the public service ideal of journalism could be incompatible. In addition, the guidelines applying to strategic communications, PR, advertising and marketing professionals are various and less unified than those for professional journalists, and it is not clear which guidelines communications professionals should follow owing to the potentially varying job descriptions and positions (Ikonen et al., 2017). In the case of public organisations, several ethical guidelines apply simultaneously, since the professionals must also consider, for instance, the ethical guidelines and laws concerning civil servants.

Research questions, data and method

The article aims at answering the following three research questions: (RQ1) How is the boundary between local journalism and communications perceived to blur and why? (RQ2) What are the ethical challenges and contradictions that emerge from the blurring of boundaries between local journalism and communications? (RQ3) How

can the blurring boundaries with communications change local journalism and its ethical-normative stances by 2025? These questions will be answered using data from an online survey of media professionals.

The survey was conducted in December 2020, and invitations to participate were sent to 272 people. The target group was the editors-in-chief of all member publications of News Media Finland (NMF). Editors-in-chief of other non-NMF member publications, including newspapers, free newspapers and hyperlocal media, known to the researchers supplemented the target group. In total, 103 responses were collected (38% response rate). Almost all (95%) respondents were editors-in-chief. A few acted simultaneously as editor-in-chief and CEO. More than half (61%) of the respondents represented paid-for local newspapers, one fifth (18%) free-sheets and city papers and one tenth daily newspapers (12%). Almost half (43%) of the represented publications covered one municipality and one fifth covered two or more municipalities (22%). One fifth (18%) were provincial newspapers.

The survey covered the content, goals and cooperation networks of the respondents' publications, journalists' guidelines and ethical principles, and the relationship and boundaries between journalism and commercial, strategic, social or other forms of communication. The survey comprised Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions (12 in total) and two open-ended questions addressing (i) the emerging ethical conflicts between professional journalism and communications and (ii) how the respondents anticipate the relationship between the two will develop.

The Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions were analysed statistically. Direct quotations from the open-ended questions illustrate the results of the multiple-choice questions, which were thematically categorised to reveal core conceptions of local media actors in making sense of journalism's relation to communications and its future pathways. The response categories of the second open-ended question were analysed to build scenario outlines of the futures of local journalism and communications in 2025. The outlined alternative futures are scenario sketches rather than proper scenarios because they are based on the survey results and do not include additional information from other sources (see Bell, 2003). The scenario sketches are employed as 'heuristics' that illustrate the respondents' views on the near future of local news in Finland and its relationship with other actors in the field of local media and communications.

Results

Analysis of the Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions

To answer RQ1 and RQ2, we first present the results of the Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions using illustrative quotations. Then we proceed to the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions to answer RQ3.

To serve both residents and advertisers

The content and objectives of the publications were mapped using eight statements (see Figure 1). The views of respondents representing different types of publications did not differ significantly. The publications' most important goals are to serve the residents of the circulation or distribution area as well as advertisers. Nine out of 10 respondents fully agreed that the purpose of their publication is to provide a corporate advertising channel (91%) and to serve local people (89%). Thus, the ideal of public service is being reinvented in a way which enhances the blurring of the boundary between journalism and communications.

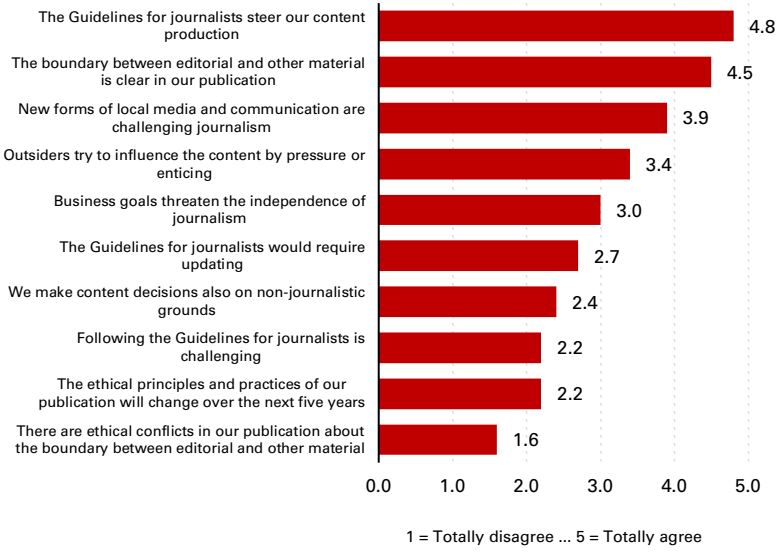

Figure 1: Respondents' views on the guidelines for journalists and ethical principles, average (n = 103).

One explanation for the need to serve the interests of advertisers can be that Finnish newspapers are strongly attached to a business model based on subscription revenue from readers and advertising revenue from advertisers (Picard, 1989). The need to serve advertisers and local businesses likely enhances both the development towards market-

oriented local media and news as services to customers and businesses. As the quotation below shows, advertisers are perceived as a key target group alongside readers, who are seen as consumers of local events:

> I would not say that there are major contradictions; however, practices have changed over the years. For example, event times and ticket prices were previously clearly excluded from editorial material and were part of the announcement material, but now they are automatically part of the article. (R#71)

Critical reporting is not the most important task

Somewhat surprisingly, critical reporting on local decision-making fell short of the goals listed as most important. There were differences by type of publication. Almost all representatives of daily papers fully agreed that critical reporting on local decision-making is important, whereas only half (53%) of the editors-in-chief of free-sheets and city newspapers fully agreed with this. However, just over one-ninth (11%) of respondents from free city newspapers at least agreed somewhat with this statement.

Critical reporting on local issues did not appear to be as relevant as in previous research on journalists' self-perceptions (Hujanen, 2009). The fact that the business model of free-sheets and city newspapers is based solely on advertising revenue may affect the willingness to report critically on local business and politics. In addition, city papers usually have a small editorial staff and minimal resources to pursue time-consuming information acquisition. The results may also evince the difficulty in obtaining information about issues within municipalities. According to another survey of editors-in-chief, blocking access to information is a problem in some municipalities, and in such cases, decision-makers seek to curb negative news coverage, and all publicity is an abomination to incumbents (Kivioja, 2020). The intensifying effort to curb negative and critical news coverage is a prime example of the heightened need for ethical considerations among local news professionals, as communications professionals play an increasingly central role in the local information environment.

'We don't know if the guidelines for journalists should be updated'

Questions around ethics in journalism are topical but problematic for Finnish local media professionals. Almost half (44%) of the respondents were unsure of whether the guidelines for journalists, a central element of journalism's boundaries, need updating. This may indicate the experience of a growing mismatch between the guidelines and practical work but unawareness of how the guidelines should be changed.

Nonetheless, most respondents perceived it as easy for journalists to follow instructions. Less than one fifth (16%) found it at least somewhat challenging. Respondents perceived following these guidelines to be slightly more challenging at community and district newspapers than at other publications.

Same field and similar content but different rules

The majority (87%) of respondents felt that journalism and other communications work in the same field but with different rules. This presents a clear sign of the blurring of boundaries between journalism and communications as well as an ethical challenge. Respondents described that the content produced by non-journalistic actors and communities can be similar to journalistic products without being journalism. Respondents also indicated that the motives of the background community are not clearly stated when these communities produce news-like content. A major ethical consequence of the ongoing process is the perceived confusion in society about what is and is not journalism. According to respondents, the boundary between journalism and other communications is far from clear for audiences, officials, policymakers or business representatives. Of note, 'the demarcation between journalism and other material is seen as unclear in general in society and media but not in their own media'. According to the majority of respondents (95%), the demarcation between journalistic and other material is unclear in local news media in general:

> Many media outlets have started to blur the distinction between journalism and marketing. This puts pressure on us too. (R#32)

'There are ethical problems but not in our media'

Besides seeing a problematic blurring of the boundaries of journalism outside their own media, respondents recognised ethical challenges. They positioned them outside their own media and expressed confidence about their own professionalism, expertise and adherence to ethical principles. The majority (91%) saw no ethical conflicts between the editorial and other material in their own publication. Some did not even see 'any kind of relationship' between journalistic and non-journalistic content. They referred to different but undefined 'goals' and 'points of view' which steer the making of journalism and communication:

> Journalism is made from its own point of view, communication from its own. (R#59)

> Journalism has its own goals and communication has its own goals. There will be no contradictions when this is acknowledged and the editorial staff follow their journalistic goals. (R#7)

New forms of municipal communication are enhancing the blurring of boundaries

Regarding the blurring of boundaries, new forms of local media and communications that employ journalistic genres and styles are perceived to play a central role (see Figure 2). Our data indicate that genres and styles of professional journalism work as essential 'things' of journalistic boundaries. According to four out of five (81%) respondents, new forms of local communication, often similar to journalism, challenge traditional journalism and cause an ethical dilemma. Only one in seven (15%) respondents disagreed with this. As the quotations below illustrate, municipalities that communicate via their own website or social media sites are seen to enhance the blurring of the boundary between journalism and strategic communications:

> Social media, where municipalities are also making an effort, is blurring the line between journalism and marketing communications. (R#30)

> Municipalities have taken a more prominent role in communication and produce similar content with the media. (R#103)

More than half (59%) of the respondents also stated that content produced by communications and marketing agencies as well as citizen journalists and activists weakens the position of professional journalism. Therefore, they perceived the transformation within local media both as a question of the boundaries of journalism and of the future position of local media in society.

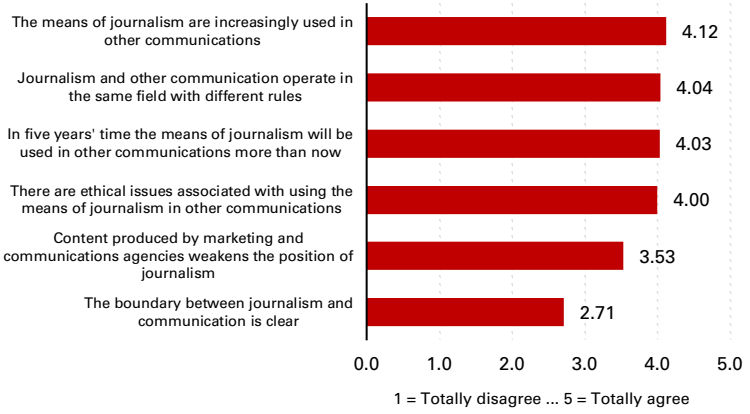

Figure 2: Respondents' views on the boundary between journalism and communications, average (n = 103).

Pressure from outside the newsroom is felt within the newsroom as an ethical concern

Our results further suggest that the ideal of autonomy is being challenged in a profound way by forces outside the newsroom and media. Two thirds (63%) of respondents viewed external pressure or temptation as influencing the content of the publication they represent. Significantly fewer (26%) respondents stated that there is no such effect. The open answers indicate that externally, politicians, companies, organisations and opinion leaders try to influence content on a daily basis.

Business motives from inside are also felt as an ethical concern

Almost half (42%) of the respondents perceived that the business objectives of their background company threaten the journalistic independence of their publication. Within local media, there seems to be more pressure than in newspapers in general. In 2020, an NMF survey mapped attempts to exert an influence perceived as pressure or bribery. In the present study, one fifth (17%) of the editors-in-chief of newspapers and city newspapers had experienced their company's management seeking to influence the newspaper's content (Kivioja, 2020).

Problems with the business model enhance the blurring of boundaries

The results further indicate that changes in the business environment challenge the news media's traditional two-revenue stream business model. The long-lasting decline of print media in the market seems to continue increasing the financial pressure on local news media as well.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic caused an additional significant decrease in advertising revenue, posing severe challenges for local news media. The drop in advertising was especially challenging for free-sheets and city newspapers that are completely dependent on advertising revenue. The quotations below illustrate that the problems related to both Covid-19 and the traditional business model were thought to enhance the blurring of boundaries between journalism, commercialism and marketing. The ethical problem which arises is that content, such as marketing material, is presented as journalism although it does not follow the ethical guidelines of news making:

> The borderline between journalism and commercialism is blurring even more. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased pressure from the publisher. (R#46)

> The decline in advertising has weakened the funding base of journalism. The risk is that more pre-produced information and marketing material will be published in the name of journalism. (R#61)

A contradiction between the ethical principles of journalists and communications professionals

More than half (58%) of the respondents conveyed that the ethical principles of journalists and communications professionals are contradictory. Thus, our study indicates that ethical principles function as central 'things' of boundaries of journalism and other forms of communications. One third (31%) of respondents did not want to comment on this issue. Perhaps these respondents did not have a clear idea of the differences and possible contradictions between the ethical principles of the groups. Non-response may also indicate a transition between journalism and communication; that is, ethical principles and practices are taking shape and respondents were unable or unwilling to take a stance. Less than half (42%) of respondents could not say whether there is a conflict between journalists and communications professionals, while more than one third (39%) perceived a conflict between the ethical principles of these occupational groups.

Analysis of the open-ended questions: a conflicted future for journalism and communication?

The first open-ended question enquired about ethical conflicts the respondents saw emerging between journalism and communications (RQ2). According to the responses, the most ethically worrying trend is 'the use of journalistic practices and styles in PR and other forms of commercial or strategic communications' (21 responses). Such

content resembles journalism but does not follow basic journalistic norms, such as critical reflection and reliance on facts. This type of media content was viewed as ethically questionable for concealing the commercial and strategic interests it advances while appearing to serve the public good. Such content can also create pressure for journalists to cover issues in a positive light and emphasise emotions rather than facts in their news delivery. One respondent even likened communications to 'fake news' that uses information delivery as a smokescreen to pursue a hidden agenda:

> Communications is a 'fake news medium'. They appear impartial but pursue the background organisation's own cause, e.g. companies, communities and municipalities. (R#83)

Respondents also highlighted the increased quality and professionalisation of communications as a source of ethical conflicts. The more professional and trustworthy commercial and strategic content appears, the easier it becomes to promote private interests. The professionalisation of communications has created incentives for local newsrooms to publish PR content as news, often without any or only slight editing by journalists (see also Barnoy, 2021):

> Communications have clearly become more professional, and press releases increasingly remind one of finished newspaper articles. Our own publication does not publish press releases without editing, but many other media do. (R#77)

> The reductions in editorial staff create an incentive to use so-called ready-made PR materials that come from both the private and public sectors. (R#91)

The second response category shows an ethically worrying trend of citizens', firms' and public officials' difficulties in deciphering between journalism and communications (14 responses). According to respondents, this is particularly due to increases in professionally produced PR content, such as blogs. Part of the professionalisation is the production of news-like content by various actors who do not adhere to journalistic norms:

> It is infuriating when I ask for an interview with local officials, [...] concerning a property sale, for instance, and they respond that their marketing department will send a ready-made article on the topic. It is frustrating to explain time and again why we won't publish the offered article as such. People have become astonishingly ignorant in this respect [telling the difference between journalism and other content]. (R#30)

Respondents divulged that they foresee a risk of journalism becoming content just like any other in the eyes of the public. Consequently, journalistic criticality may appear as an annoyance rather than an important ethical principle. This can further undermine journalism's legitimacy and authority:

> Municipalities have their own communication strategies and they seek to get that through in the media. Local officials and politicians have an attitude that the local or regional newspapers should support the municipality's communication strategy. (R#36)

The above three categories describe trends that will continue and potentially strengthen in the future. They shed light on the 'futures knowledge' upon which local news media actors make sense of their potential futures and which influences their decision-making and strategic planning (Pouru et al., 2019). The emerging dynamics seem rather grim: while the economic sustainability of local news media deteriorates, communications become professionalised and of increasingly high quality. Consequently, three patterns emerge: (i) news media are inclined to publish PR materials without or with only slight editing, (ii) content producers are able to produce material that resembles professional journalism and (iii) the public finds it increasingly difficult to differentiate the two. These patterns create an ethical dilemma, as communications thrive by exploiting professional journalism while the democratic function of news media deteriorates as a consequence. These dynamics, and their alternatives, are elaborated and explored further in the following scenario sketches.

Future of local news media and journalism: three scenario sketches

To answer RQ3 on possible futures, the responses to the second open-ended question were grouped thematically, resulting in three categories and corresponding scenario sketches written by the authors. The scenario sketches outline possible directions in which the relationship between professional journalism and communications could evolve by 2025 and illuminate how news media actors make sense of the possible futures and act accordingly in the present.

Scenario sketch 1: Journalism on the sidelines

By 2025, well-resourced PR and communications firms have become central in local media ecosystems. Yet the local news media have been unable to find a sustainable business model. With diminished resources,

local journalism continues to lose its relevance. The news media are still tethered to print, whereas communications businesses operate mostly online. This gives non-journalistic content producers an upper hand, as online media are often more attractive to advertisers and audiences. The ageing population adds to news media's financial conundrums, as new generations rarely pay for local news. Many of the surviving local news organisations supplement the deteriorated news production with native advertising. Consequently, the news media organisations end up supporting their non-journalistic competitors.

It is common for municipalities, associations, schools, healthcare providers and other local institutions to buy services from PR and communications firms or have their own highly professional communications departments. The content they produce often mimics journalism but lacks its criticality of those in power. Public actors increasingly communicate directly to their audiences on social media. Consequently, communications have become communal and intimate. Detached and critical journalism often seems out of place in this kind of media landscape.

The scenario also highlights the importance of news' financial sustainability for journalistic ethics. The more dire a news outlet's financial situation, the more tempted it will be to compromise journalistic ethics by, for instance, publishing native advertising without sufficient measures to keep the editorial and business desks separate. However, the scenario also underlines the role of audience-centric approaches for the news media. Competition for audiences' interest and attention will likely continue to increase, thus making the need for ethical considerations ever more urgent.

Scenario sketch 2: Different fields, different rules

In 2025, both local journalism and local communications are thriving, since they both have found their own niche in the local media ecology. Communications produce cheerful and entertaining content, while local news media have doubled down on their core functions, such as investigative reporting. The news media's sharpened focus has contributed to a significant growth in news subscriptions, which has enabled editorial independence.

Local citizens have realised that professional news media often give them a fuller, wider and more measured picture than other local information providers do. It is widely acknowledged that someone has to tell the local public about unpleasant issues, such as child custody issues or the closing down of nursing homes. The news media also excel at following long-term trends and providing background information on local issues. Besides the back-to-basics approach of local news media, their newfound success owes to their new, audience-centric practices. The local news media are constantly developing new ways to appear

interesting to audiences. Central to these practices is an emphasis on local and hyperlocal issues and cooperation with local communities.

The futures of journalism are often described as journalism's expansion beyond 'mere' reporting and news analysis (Nielsen, 2017). From an ethical viewpoint, the scenario maintains an opposite strategy of narrowing down to journalism's core functions. Focusing on 'hard news', according to the respondents, would make it easier to guard the ethical boundaries of journalism. The scenario also suggests focusing on hyperlocality and local communities as an ethically sustainable strategy to cater to audience needs.

Scenario sketch 3: Everything is just content

By 2025, the content economy has soared due to strong demand from businesses and consumers alike. These new revenue streams have proved irresistible to news media. Local journalism has found financial sustainability by embracing the styles and practices of commercial communications. The boundary between professional journalism and communications has all but disappeared, and local news media are disincentivised to adhere to journalistic norms and practices. Nonetheless, journalism still has authority and trustworthiness. Local news media offer a premium channel for organisations and other actors seeking to stand out in the masses of content. Collaborations with news media often result in high-quality content that addresses serious issues that are significant to the local public.

This scenario raises the ethically worrisome but very real possibility that financial pressures, competition for attention on social media platforms and audience demand will erase the boundary between journalism and communications altogether. However, the scenario maintains that in this context, an ethically sound approach for news media is to focus on top-tier content that addresses issues of public importance.

Discussion

This article has examined the blurring of boundaries between local journalism and communications. We have conceptualised ethics as a central element of boundary work (Singer, 2015) and approached the unbounding of journalism as an ethical concern. The article sought to answer the research questions on how and why the boundary between local journalism and communications is perceived to be blurring, what ethical challenges emerge from this and how the blurring of boundaries can change local journalism and its ethical-normative stances by 2025. The questions have been answered by using survey data gathered from Finnish news media professionals.

The study reveals that within professional journalism, the boundaries between journalism and communications are allegedly eroded by a growing neglect of critical reporting. This is connected to problems with business models and a strengthened desire to serve advertisers. Extrinsic forces, in turn, produce new actors who produce content similar to journalism but do not adhere to its rules and pressures from other actors, such as advertisers or politicians, about what should be reported and how. Compared to previous research on journalists' self-perceptions, the role of advertisers seems to have become increasingly important (Hujanen, 2009, 2016; Pöyhtäri et al., 2016).

According to the study, the blurring of boundaries between journalism and communications has at least three fundamental implications. First, the public cannot differentiate between journalism and other forms of media content as well as their ethical underpinnings. Second, the blurring of boundaries may indicate that providing readers with market- and community-oriented services is growing in importance compared to the more traditional civic duty of news media. Third, the existing ethical guidelines for journalism or communications cannot fully address or solve ethical dilemmas that emerge in this context. Most respondents felt that journalism and other communications work in the same field but with different rules, and more than half perceived a contradiction between the ethical principles of journalists and communications professionals. From this perspective, establishing shared ethical guidelines for marketing and journalism would be important (see Ikonen et al., 2017; Macnamara, 2014). When the ethical code of practice is understood as one of the most fundamental 'things' and a cornerstone of the boundaries of journalism (see Abbott, 2001), it is noteworthy that almost half the respondents were unsure about whether the guidelines for professional journalists should be updated. This implies that it is unclear for many within the journalism profession how the code of ethics should be approached – and what the boundaries of journalism are.

Our study supports many of the observations regarding the concerns around journalism ethics (see Beckert, 2022; Poutanen et al., 2016). Respondents saw a dual 'crisis' that threatens to undermine the ethical integrity of local journalism. First, the dire economic prospects of many local media outlets create pressures to adopt practices that are ethically ambiguous, such as publishing PR materials without editing them. Second, increasingly professionalised and well-resourced communications were seen to produce high-quality content that competes with journalistic content and problematically borrows from journalistic styles without the critical mindset of professional journalists. Consequently, the boundary between journalism and other communications has become far from clear for audiences, officials, policymakers or business representatives. Companies and

municipalities communicate to the public and disseminate their messages through different media according to their communication strategies. Likewise, for instance, in Sweden (Grafström & Rehnberg, 2019), confusion is seen as becoming more severe as local communications, particularly those of municipalities, become more professional and increasingly borrow from journalism.

The survey respondents anticipated the relationship between local journalism and communications evolving along three alternative scenario outlines. In the first scenario outline, 'Journalism on the sidelines', local journalism continues to wither due to the eroding business models and intense competition from other local media producers. In the second scenario outline, 'Different fields, different rules', local journalism and communications diverge and find their own niches in the local news ecology. In the third scenario outline, 'Everything is just content', local journalism finds financial sustainability by embracing the practices of commercial communications. These scenarios do not necessarily predict the future but, rather, shed light on *expectations* (Brown et al., 2000) that local news media have of their futures. Such expectations influence strategic decision-making and resource allocation, and thus influence how the future eventually unfolds.

The scenarios remind us that the economic and cultural collapse of professional local news media, and their consequent replacement by other quasi-journalistic local media producers, is serious and plausible. The scenarios highlight three trends contributing to the erosion of journalistic ethics and boundaries: news outlets' financial challenges, competition for attention on social and other digital media and audiences' indifference to professional journalism. The scenarios suggest two strategies to avert an ethical crisis in journalism. The first is to double down on the core functions of news journalism to make it more distinct from other local news content. The renewed focus on 'hard news' can be paired with making journalism attractive for audiences by focusing on (hyper)local issues and cooperating with local communities. Moving in the opposite direction, the second strategy is that the news media abandon journalistic norms and opportunistically produce content that attracts audiences while employing their prestige and authority to charge premium prices. In this future, journalism can rebuild its ethics by focusing on 'serious' issues that serve the public despite being paid for by third parties.

The results indicate that providing local news users with market-oriented services is gaining importance among local news media. New forms of local news content seem to strive for a more positive and cheerful approach to cities and communities. How this re-engagement with local audiences is carried out is among the fundamental questions

and uncertainties of the local news media. One possibility is that the critical civic duty of news media is left to 'others', but it remains unclear who these critical media actors are.

The study shows overall trends in news practitioners' views regarding ethical challenges and future perspectives, but it has its limitations. More nuanced insight into the blurring boundaries between professional journalism and communications calls for a qualitative research design. Thematic interviews with media professionals would deepen our understanding of practitioners' views and sense-making on the issue. Qualitative text analysis could shed more light on how the ethical contradictions are visible in the media content. It is also evident that operating in the same field with different rules has caused ethical dilemmas that would require critical discussion about ethical guidelines for journalism and communications.

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JAANA HUJANEN
Professor
Swedish School of Social Science
Univeristy of Helsinki
jaana.hujanen@helsinki.fi

MIKKO GRÖNLUND
Research Manager
Brahea Centre
University of Turku
mikko.s.gronlund@utu.fi

JUHO RUOTSALAINEN
PhD fellow
Finland Futures Research Centre
University of Turku
juho.ruotsalainen@utu.fi

KATJA LEHTISAARI
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences
Tampere University
katja.lehtisaari@tuni.fi

VILJAMI VAARALA
PhD fellow
Swedish School of Social Science
University of Helsinki
viljami.vaarala@helsinki.fi

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Podcast – Commentary journalism in a digital public

LISBETH MORLANDSTØ
Nord University

BIRGIT RØE MATHISEN
Nord University

Abstract

The internet and digital platforms provide commentary- and opinion-based journalism with new opportunities to develop into new digital formats, such as podcasts. This article is based on the case studies of four Norwegian podcasts in 2020 and 2021. The findings show that commentary journalism in the form of podcasts has an obvious dual purpose: as publicity and as a commercial. The podcast facilitates a societal mission for the public while creating branded goods for the companies involved. Based on the material and the categories we had constructed, we developed a set of binaries that, understood as typologies, capture important dimensions of the differences between the podcasts. These binaries are monologue vs. dialogue, factual vs. personal, reflexive vs. assertive, and intellectual discussants vs. experts. In the article, we discuss how podcasts draw commentary journalism in a dialogical direction. We also discuss what impact this has on public reasoning and the democratic role of commentary journalism.

KEYWORDS
podcast, commentary journalism, columnist, digital public, dialogue

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Introduction

Commentary- and opinion-based journalism is growing worldwide (Knapskog et al., 2018; Esser & Umbricht, 2014; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012) and is often characterised as an interpretative moment in the news cycle (McNair, 2000). This growth is explained, among other reasons, by a growing need to make the complex and rapid information flow in society understandable (Neveu, 2016; Le Masurier, 2015). Furthermore, profiled columnists are valued as branded goods for media companies, drawing digital readers (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2016).

This commentary- or opinion-based journalism constitutes a traditional genre. However, the internet and digital platforms provide new opportunities, and the genre is developing into innovative new formats, such as dialogue-based debate arenas and podcasts (Thyrum, 2018; Berry, 2016; Lindgren, 2016; Menduni, 2007). Journalists and editors in Norway argue that the dialogical part of commentary journalism makes it more suitable for development online than news journalism. There is also an editorial willingness to experiment online, even if some experiments end in failure (Morlandstø & Mathisen, 2016). Such experience corresponds with findings in the Spanish media: "The adage 'fail early, fail often' is a principle that some media outlets have adopted in their innovation strategies with some success" (García-Avilés et al., 2019, p. 13).

A range of studies focuses on the commentary genre and its development. Scholars also examine the podcast format. However, few studies elaborate on the commentary genre in the podcast format. We aim to fill this research gap, discussing the evolution of commentary journalism by focusing on podcasts and using genre theory as the starting point. The research question in this paper is: What characterises the podcast as a format of commentary journalism, and where do podcasts take the commentary genre? Later in the text, we discuss the theoretical foundations before a literature review that sheds light on both the commentary genre and podcasts. Then we elaborate on the data and methods used before discussing the findings. Finally, we collect the threads into a concluding discussion.

Theory

Genres are based on interactions between conventions and expectations and are understood as a relationship between media and the audience (Lüders et al., 2010; Lindgren, 2016). Style, functions, and rhetoric vary from genre to genre. The commentary genre is described as the interpretative moment of news production (McNair, 2000, p. 61) and serves a societal mission of enlightening, opinion-making, and

critique (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2016). Opinion-based journalism seeks to go beyond the mere reporting of news in the interest of context, explanation, analysis, and interpretation (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2018).

Esser and Umbricht (2014) describe growth in commentary and a change in the news and in columns from observation to interpretation. The shift from "news" to "views" is explained by the level of education and the status of the profession of journalists (p. 245). Furthermore, the societal need for explanation and background analysis of an ever-increasing information flow in society is put forward (Neveu, 2016). The news media fulfil distinct needs in society: circulating information, enabling public debate, and organising the public sphere (McNair, 2008). As Salgado and Strömbäck (2012) state, there is a rather wide consensus that an important democratic function of journalism is to provide people with the kind of information they need to be free and self-governing, and that interpretative journalism makes it easier for people to make sense of facts and understand what is happening (p. 156).

However, the genre is not a static form but develops and innovates. Rapid changes in infrastructure and material platforms fostered by digitisation are constantly exposing and challenging the concepts of genres (Liestøl & Morrison, 2016). Digital platforms convey new possibilities for developing the old genres of journalism. Print-based commentary journalism constitutes a traditional genre, and over the last few years, it has moved online. Social media increasingly impacts the distribution of columns and newsrooms attempting new commentary formats and new ways of communicating with audiences (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2020).

Genre development and newsroom innovation also imply autonomy and creativity for the professionals involved. In a previous study, we elaborated on how regional newsrooms in Norway use genre innovation in opinion-based journalism. We found an adaptive attitude in the newsrooms, where innovating contextual genres was perceived to strengthen the institutional values of journalism. We also found that marketing goals and societal purpose were closely intertwined. Consequently, the columnist becomes increasingly important as a brand (Morlandstø & Mathisen, 2016). Deuze (2010) also talks about these integrated and convergent "multimedia journalism units, where competitor-colleagues are now expected to collaborate in order to produce news across different media channels (print, broadcast, online), formats (information, opinion), and genres (breaking news, feature reporting, blogging, podcasting, and so on)" (p. 268).

Literature review

Commentary journalism

Studies of commentary journalism address and discuss its societal role and democratic function. Both in scholarly and political debate, there is increasing critique of the rising commentariat, both in relation to how it affects the societal role of journalism and whether it displaces fact-based, investigative journalism and reporting from the field. The critique has been concerned with a lack of relevance and analytical depth and suggestions that columnists assume a self-proclaimed and cynical expert role in the public sphere (Allern, 2010; McNair, 2008). An essential discussion is whether the commentators are becoming too powerful and are just reproducing the elites' perspectives (Raabe, 2018, p. 9). Meltzer (2019) talks about the increase in *talk* in news, "also known as opinion and commentary in news" (p. 29). In addition, journalists have to be present on multiple platforms, expand their brand and be part of the financial incentives of the media business. In the Scandinavian political debate, young politicians in both Norway and Denmark have fronted some of the critiques through essays entitled "The dictatorship of the punditocracy" (Lysbakken & Isaksen, 2008) and "Mute the pundits" (Bengtsson, 2015).

However, the argumentative role of journalists in commenting on or analysing political developments has been widely acknowledged as a basic professional function and a necessary complement to objective reporting (Nord, Enli & Stur, 2015, p. 88). Ward (2009) claims that the liberal idea that a free press should inform citizens is tied to the tradition of interpretive journalism, which seeks to explain the significance of events (p. 299). In times of fragmentation, the commentary genre might be one of the keys for professional journalism to a renewed contract with the increasingly demanding and fragmented audience and to defend its autonomy (Knapskog, 2016).

Usher (2020) argues that the digital sphere has transformed "political and social commentary into a performance of self-as-brand and as journalist" (p. 2; see also Olausson, 2018). She talks about columnists as "celebrified" journalists, a combination of social media influencer, columnist, celebrity and political activist roles. Social media, where the commentaries are constantly negotiated by the audiences (comments, likes and shares), strengthens columnists as influencers and even contributes to their becoming famous. Such personalised social media performance and self-branding strengthen the columnists' political authority and authenticity. Usher (2020) reflects on how celebritisation among columnists has transformed journalistic and political spheres "from representation to self-presentation" (p. 15) and whether such journalistic practice is good or bad for deliberative democracies. Steensen (2015) uses the concept *den profesjonlige journalisten* (*the perfessional journalist*) to describe a double journalistic identity on

social media: the personal but still professional journalist, which is also a valuable concept for the personalised behaviour of columnists in podcasts.

Podcasts

This article analyses commentary journalism in a specific format, the podcast. Boczkowski and Ferris (2005) argue that digitalisation eliminates the boundaries between press, television, radio and online technologies (p. 3). Podcasts developed by traditional newspaper companies might stand as an example. The podcast as a digital medium was first introduced in 2004 and was "considered as converged media that bring together audio, web-based infrastructure and portable media devices" (Bonini, 2014, p. 21; Deuze, 2010). Bonini (2014) argues that ten years later, in 2014, a "second age" of podcasting occurred, not least because of the enormous success of the American public radio program "Serial" – 12 episodes were distributed as podcasts in 2014 with well over 20 million downloads in just a few months (p. 26). Over these ten years, the podcast has become increasingly professionalised and commercialised, a "transformation from a do-it-yourself, amateur niche medium to a commercial mass medium: from narrowcasting to broadcasting" (p. 27). The podcast goes beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries that affect radio (Menduni, 2007, p. 8). Today, podcast is produced not only by media companies but also by artists and public and private institutions. Sterne et al. (2008) argue that podcasting has opened "cultural production to a whole group of people who might otherwise have great difficulty being heard" (p. 12). In other words, podcasting has a democratic function. Bonini (2014), on the other hand, disagrees that podcasting is broadcasting in a broader democratic sense, but states that "podcasting is becoming (commercial) broadcasting" (p. 28).

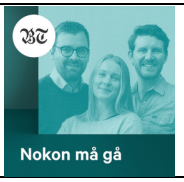
Podcasts also constitute a new format for the commentary genre, paving the way for a more dialogical communication between columnists and their audiences (see also Singer et al., 2011; Barnes, 2011). Oral podcasts have even facilitated a more personalised and intimate type of journalism, not least because the personalised listening space created by smartphones and headphones accommodates a bond created between voices and listeners (Coward, 2013; Lindgren 2016; Lüders, 2008). Menduni (2007) suggests a role for podcasting as a niche prosumer activity, not as random listening or passive feed. He also states that the audience does not see podcasters as institutions but as peers.

Podcasts are also suitable for media criticism and contribute to transparency into how columnists and editors think, strengthening their accountability and authority (Von Krogh & Svensson, 2015). Some

scholars argue that analysis of a Swedish podcast showed that "adding transparency to their news organizations and to themselves is stated as one of the main motives for the podcast" (p. 62).

Method

This article is based on case studies of four podcasts in Norway in 2020 and 2021, operating on three levels of the public sphere. Two of them belong to regional media companies, are published once a week, and operate in the regional public sphere: *Omadressert*, produced by Adresseavisen in Trondheim, and *Nokon må gå*, produced by Bergens Tidende in Bergen. The third, *Giæver og gjengen*, is a daily published podcast in the national tabloid *Verdens Gang* published in Oslo, the capital of Norway and operates in the national public sphere. The fourth podcast, *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, is produced for a Scandinavian public body and is broadcast once a week by the national broadcasting companies in Norway (NRK), Sweden (SR) and Denmark (DR). This latter podcast is different from the others, as it is innovative and produced by an independent, self-employed journalist/columnist. The specific podcasts were chosen in order to embrace both the regional and national public spheres.

Podcast				
Public sphere	Regional	Regional	National	Scandinavian
Frequency	Every Friday	Every Thursday	Daily	Every Sunday
Length	About 40 minutes	About 40 minutes	About 20 minutes	About 60 minutes
Participants	Three (two columnists and the political editor) and occasionally a guest	Three political columnists	One permanent columnist and one columnist from another editorial area in the newsroom	Three: two columnists/ journalists and one author/artist/radio host
Topic	Three political and/or cultural topics; cultural recommendations for the weekend	Three political topics: at least one local and one national	Two political topics: international and national	Three political topics
Number of listeners (week 1, 2021)	54 unique devices, 38 downloaded/ streamed	3,310 unique devices, 4,498 downloaded/ streamed	31,317 unique devices, 115,306 downloaded/ streamed	5,058 unique devices, 6,323 downloaded/ streamed
Number of listeners (week 20, 2021)	814 unique devices, 1,681 downloaded/ streamed	3,354 unique devices, 4,785 downloaded/ streamed	24,800 unique devices, 75,086 downloaded/ streamed	12,611 unique devices, 17,229 downloaded/ streamed
Analysed episodes (2020)	30.4. Drømmen om kohort, 1. Mai og helten som ble svindler	1.5. Høiehyllest, Høgre og høgtid	30.4. Tangens talenter og hemmelighets-kremmeri.	3.5. Om sex-symbolet Anders Tegnell, den drapssiktede norske milliardæren og shariasjeiken som lurte den danske stat
	12.6. Podkast-stjerna Tete Lidbom om forskjells-behandling, rasisme og fotball	11.06. Rasismedebatt, nedlegging av bokbåt og Stad skipstunnel	11.6. Norges Bank, Norges Helter.	14.6. Korona og identitetspolitikk
	28.8. Giske-krise	27.8. Sian-bråket, Frp-krisa og Giske	27.8. Jonas uten kontroll i Ap.	30.8. Skandaler

Analysed episodes (2021)	28.1. Om gretne gubber, Vita og Wanda og AUFs vervemetoder	28.1. Grensa stenger, kaos i FNB og alle skal til Vestland	28.1. Portforbud i Norge, steile fronter før riksrett i USA	31.1. Lars Norèn, polkøer og vaksine
	18.2. Om raseri på tynt grunnlag, velferdsstatens fremtid, Clubhouse og Woody Allen	18.2. Ferjekrig, klimakamp i Sp og kven skal du stemme på i grand prix-finalen?	18.2. Jensens exit	7.2. Make bygda great again
	26.2. Anmelderslakt, gondolentusiasme og medlemsras fra Ap	25.2. Erna Solberg jubilerer, fødeopprør og NMG hjelper deg	25.2. Likvidering i konsulatet, gubbene på balkongen	28.2. Melodifestival-mobbing, nekrofili og Sylvi Listhaug

Table 1: The podcasts.

According to the number of listeners, we can see that, for *Omadressert* and *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, the numbers increased in the first half of 2021. *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, the most recent podcast, has more than doubled its number of listeners in the first half of 2021. *Omadressert* started in 2016 and hit the market in 2021. *Nokon må gå* seems to have stabilised its position among listeners, and *Giæver og gjengen* is the only podcast whose position has decreased[1].

The article relies on text analyses of three podcast episodes from 2020 and three from 2021 (see Table 1). In addition, we have been listening to these podcasts more or less systematically for the past two years, and thus we will refer to more than these six episodes during the analysis. The selected podcasts have been transcribed and coded in relation to the way the columnists appear in the programs, what topics they introduce, how they present and discuss the different topics, how discussions between the columnists are practised, and the tone in the dialogue.

The analysis also benefits from semi-structured interviews with six columnists related to these four podcasts[2]. They have backgrounds as political journalists, cultural journalists or foreign correspondents and were, for the most part, experienced journalists before entering the commentary genre. Our initial plan was to interview two columnists from each podcast; however, due to the columnists' availability, we managed to recruit only one interviewee each for two of the podcasts. Three interviews were conducted face to face, one by the first author and two by the second author. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the two authors conducted the remaining three interviews using Teams. Even if

the interviewees are identified, we do not use their names in relation to the quotations. The interviews were transcribed and coded in relation to the questions in the interview guide, which focus mainly on four topics: 1) the (changed) role of the columnists, 2) the (changed) role of commentary journalism, 3) the podcasts (implementation, research, genre, etc.) and 4) the target group(s) of audiences/listeners.

In this article, the podcasts themselves and the (changed) role of the commentary genre are of greatest interest. The analysis is supplied by additional "in vivo" codes (Manning, 2017). Based on the material and the categories constructed, we developed a set of binaries that, understood as typologies, capture important dimensions of the differences between the podcasts. Each binary should be understood as extremes in a continuum, with no absolute distinctions between them. These binaries are monologue vs. dialogue, factual vs. personal, reflexive vs. assertive, and intellectual discussants vs. experts. In the following, we explain the contextual background and aim of the podcasts based on the columnists' perceptions. Then we discuss our further findings in relation to the binary categories we have developed, and, finally, we summarise with a concluding discussion.

Contextual background and aim of the podcasts

The podcasts are all solidly anchored in a publicist tradition. In accordance with Newman and Gallo (2019), all can be characterised as the talk/debate/conversation type of podcasts (p. 13). The podcasts we have studied mainly analyse, comment on, and discuss political news in the public sphere, characterising Newman and Gallo's daily news type of podcasts, even if only one has daily episodes.

Both *Omadressert* and *Nokon må gå* have a regional public as their main catchment area. The columnists express the importance of being active commentators in their local and regional public, and it is vital to "influence what happens". One of the columnists in *Omadressert* argues: "It is our mission to be fact-oriented because it is a lot of people just expressing themselves at all possible platforms... […] It abounds of all sorts of weirdness". The role of being a serious and fact-oriented regional debate arena among media outlets is vital. "It is important to interpret and explain the meaning of the news and guide our readers", another columnist at *Omadressert* asserted. The most important topics to comment on in *Omadressert* are the political and cultural fields.

Simultaneously, it is also important for the regional columnists to be visible voices in the national public sphere by delivering regional and alternative perspectives on national issues. One of the columnists for *Nokon må gå* argues: "If something happens in Bergen that attracts attention from people elsewhere in the country – then we are at our

best". As for *Omadressert*, they mostly discuss political issues and, to a large extent, the same political events, understandably because both podcasts are published at the end of the week.

The national podcast *Giæver og gjengen* emphasises commentary on international and national issues. This is especially true with Donald Trump and his political activity being a recurring theme in their podcasts over the last two years. The head of the podcast was previously a foreign correspondent in the United States. During the presidential election in the autumn of 2020, several columnists travelled to the United States to cover the political process. Simultaneously, the columnists underlined the importance of discussing "a national issue in every program". In addition, their daily podcasts always have one participant from another part of the editorial staff who takes on the role of discussion partner in relation to issues close to the person's own work or competence. It is "often a topic from the cultural section", stated the leading columnist of the podcast. For instance, in one episode, they discussed the practice of tearing down statues and destroying pictures of national and international heroes. The host turned their attention to a news story close to the current participants' fields of work (namely culture, 11 June 2020). This linkage to actual news is important for all podcasts. The columnists expressed in the interviews that the criterion of actuality is a guideline when setting the agenda for the episodes. This corresponds with the practice of columnists who write (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2016).

Norsken, svensken og dansken aims to reach the Scandinavian public and put national political issues from the three countries on their agenda. A typical statement and a question from the Norwegian participant in this podcast, when discussing "the controversial hiring of the head of the oil fund in Norway", was: "Why does this [news] not cross the borders?" The Swedish participant replied: "We hate your oil in Sweden. We hate it. We do not want to talk about it, so we don't care" (30 August 2020). Even if this specific issue does not resonate with the Swedish public, the host of the podcast emphasises in the interviews that "the 'art' is to make the unknown interesting in a way that the audiences experience it as relevant". This podcast also seeks "to create their own news". "Good commentary journalism simply puts things into play", the host of the podcast argues. A fixture of their program is to pick up reactions and comments on their discussions since last week – a way to focus on the news they have created.

These podcasts are all important for the columnists, not least to advance their oral skills as well as live performances and arrangements. Except for *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, which actually started as an offline live arrangement, all informants communicate the ambition to have live arrangements. The political editor of *Omadressert* states: "An important role is to create debate arenas and meeting places for people

in the community, facilitate relevant and good debates, and bring the debates out where the people are". The practice of oral conversation and debate in the podcast is, as we can see, preparation for dialogue in an offline arena.

These live arrangements have a clear publicist purpose – to create meeting places, facilitate public debate, and help the audience make sense of facts (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). Simultaneously, we can also observe a commercial purpose connected to the live arrangements. The columnist in *Giæver og gjengen* put it this way: "[Live arrangements] are both promo for the actual podcast and for other income opportunities". We can argue that this dual purpose might blur the borders between journalism's editorial and commercial parts. In the interviews, the columnists talk about this dual mission in the same breath, which we have experienced in former studies as well (Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2016). The columnists still do not see this as a challenge, but rather an advantage, and underline that this duality has always been present in the press. The columnist in *Giæver og gjengen* argues: "They [the management of the newspaper] will make this podcast work, which has always been a claim in the press" and adds that this kind of dual work practice "has been my life for 35 years". From this perspective, this dual mission has perhaps always been part of the consciousness of a columnist.

Prominent columnists are important for the branding of the podcast and the newspaper. One example is how informants describe the work with podcasts as a preparation for participation in Dagsnytt 18[3], where they are visible in the national public sphere. For the media companies, it becomes vital that their columnists are invited to participate in prestigious debate programs, contributing to both branding and authority. As one of the participants in *Omadressert* puts it: "We, the columnists, should preferably be heard and shown in other media, so that Adresseavisen can be relevant in a national context". Several scholars have discussed this type of journalistic self-promotion and branding (Raabe, 2018; Rogstad, 2016). Some call the columnists "celebrified journalists" (Usher, 2020; Olausson, 2018), which indicates that the columnists become influencers, and even celebrities, with the power to impact commercial and political processes.

Variety of dimensions

In the next part of the article, we will use the introduced categories/typologies to illuminate differences between the podcasts and will discuss these differences in relation to the changing role of the commentary journalism genre.

Monologue vs. dialogue

We can argue that the podcast format is more dialogical than monological, not least because there is always more than one person present in a podcast program, communicating and discussing the topic(s). All interviewees agree on the concept of dialogue rather than monologue as the first and foremost characteristic of a podcast (in comparison to written commentary). The host of *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, who came from a position as a writing columnist, phrases it this way: "I got tired of the monologue-based comment that tells the world what I think […] I need the conversation more than the monologue".

A discussion on *Omadressert* (30 April 2020) can be used to illustrate the dialogical climate of conversation typical of the podcast when the participants discussed the cancellation of the national in-person May 1st celebration due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the participants argues "May 1st is more actual than ever, related to class, unemployment and so on". Another agrees, adding, "We have more than 400,000 unemployed now (…) highest unemployment rates since the 1930s". The third participant brings in the concept of "elites" and argues that "the workers on the front line have a salary level far below [that of] more privileged working groups". The first participant followed up by commenting that the tribute to the health workers (applauding from balconies) "is not what they want, but higher wages".

In addition, the columnists on the podcasts generally use social media to actively promote and distribute their columns and to communicate both with sources and with audiences. In our study, all participants are more or less active users of Facebook. Some participants use Twitter to introduce and advertise their specific podcasts and often preview some of the upcoming discussions. The podcast *Nokon må gå* undoubtedly has the most active community on Facebook. Still, all the columnists from these four podcasts communicate with listeners, though admit that such communication is not as active as it could be. To conclude, we can argue that the dialogical aspect is a feature characteristic of the podcasts' content as well as of the participants' communication with audiences. Despite this, the dialogue is quite different in the different podcasts being studied, a topic we will return to.

The dialogue structure permits less authoritative rhetoric than the style of written commentaries does and might illustrate how the genre's development makes columnists climb down from their ivory towers. The tone is casual, free, and playful. One of the columnists of *Nokon må gå* terms their podcast a "Fredagspils" (Friday afternoon beer), which indicates that the dialogue will take place in a relaxed, comfortable, and calm environment. *Nokon må gå* is the most "relaxed" podcast of the four, with the most frequent use of humour, laughter and teasing

amongst the participants, and we can ask whether the dialogue is real in all of the discussions. *Omadressert* and *Giæver og gjengen* are the most "serious" podcasts, which focus on the discussed issues without the columnists teasing each other, and *Norsken, svensken og dansken* is somewhere in between. We will examine this further below.

Factual vs. personal

In relation to this more casual, free, and humorous style, the podcasts are more personalised than written commentaries are. Several scholars focus on the fact that podcasts invite a much more personalised style of journalism because podcast is a radio-like medium in which the human voice always has intimated the intended messages to a greater extent than printed media can (Lindgren, 2016; Berry, 2016; Thyrum, 2018), not least because the audiences also use their private smartphones, often with headphones, to listen. At the same time, we find a wide range of personalisation, from podcasts that are highly person-oriented to podcasts that are more topic-oriented, even if they are rare. To distinguish the podcasts, we describe them as *confessional and personal* (Coward, 2013, p. 12) on one side, where columnists offer their opinions in more personalised and intimate ways, and *factual and analytical* on the other, where columnists more seriously focus on the facts and the background information concerning the issues under discussion. These two aspects can also be seen as the duality of the journalist's role, expressed by Steensen (2015) as "the perfessional journalist": personal, but still professional.

We observe this personalised style in the podcasts under study. In *Nokon må gå* and *Norsken, svensken og dansken* the participants reveal personal information during the programs. One example is when the host of one of these podcasts asks her Swedish colleague, "Åsa, what kind of 'cemetery-belonging' do you have?" The colleague answers that she does not know where she wants to be buried because her roots are not in the capital where she lives: "I feel completely lost in my present time, and even lost when thinking of my cemetery" (3 May 2021). During several episodes, we learn that the Swedish participant belongs to the political left and had a father who was an alcoholic. The Norwegian participant grew up on a farm and suffered from an eating disorder as a young woman. The Dane is about to become a father and is nervous and constantly irritated by his prime minister, Mette Frederiksen. Moreover, the participants from *Nokon må gå* get personal. One example is when one of the male participants says about a female participant: "and you are soon giving birth to a little child". In the same episode, the political affiliation of one of the participants is discussed: "You have converted from FrP (The Progress Party) to Høyre (the Conservative Party)" (27 August 2020). During one program, the audience is also informed that

one of the participants is homosexual. In the discussions and dialogue, the participants actively refer to these political and personal positions. The participants for *Omadressert* and *Giæver og gjengen* reveal less personal information. Their discussions and reflections do not address personal aspects in the same way, and we can argue that they are more distant than personally oriented in their discussions when compared to the others.

Reflexive vs. assertive

We find that all four podcasts studied here reflect both personal and professional features, albeit to varying degrees. All discuss current political issues and events, often related to the news. Everyone is open-minded and sharing; they laugh and try to create a relaxed atmosphere. However, we did find some differences between the programs. As already highlighted, *Norsken, svensken og dansken* and *Nokon må gå* have a more personal style. For *Norsken, svensken og dansken* the conversation is more reflexive and open. To a greater extent, participants can change their minds than on *Nokon må gå*, where the arguments are more established. *Norsken, svensken og dansken* is also more exploratory; for example, someone might ask, "what do you think the answer to this question would be in Denmark, Hassan?" (30 August 2020) or "what do you think, Hilde… when you read this, what are your thoughts?" (03 May 2020), the latter relating to Covid-19 prevention practices in Sweden. In addition, we find examples where the participants of *Norsken, svensken og dansken* even allow themselves to change their opinions during the program or between two programs or to distinguish between their public and personal opinions. For instance, in relation to a discussion of the #MeToo movement focused on the fact that Cecilia Wallin had publicly accused a named Swedish person of rape, Åsa Linderborg thinks this is wrong, but still, she argues:

> I just have to admit, though, that I constantly alternate between thinking that if something like this happened to me and I got the feeling that nobody believed me, then I may at some point think: I'll tell it anyway (30 August 2020).

The participants in *Nokon må gå* can also be generous to each other—in one episode on 11 June 2021, one participant says to another, "Gerd, what do you think?"—but we also noticed that they are confrontational. For instance, this conversation on 18 February 2021 between the two of them:

> A: Imagine life with free ferries!
> B: No, it [free ferries] is too much…

A: Why is it too much?
B: Because the roads are not free of charge…
A: Some of the roads are free of charge…
B: No, they're not…

It is not easy to represent the impression that the podcast creates in written form, but in *Nokon må gå*, participants often interrupt each other, generally with a humorous touch, and protest each other's utterances. These interruptions and harsh tones seem intentional, and we feel as though the participants enjoy provoking and confronting each other during the podcasts. This makes sense when we recall they nicknamed their podcast "Fredagspils" (Friday afternoon beer). Such interruption and provocation are not characteristic of *Norsken, svensken og dansken*, where participants have a more polite tone. They invite each other to reflect, as we can see when one of them says, "Åsa, you have also read the article in *Politiken*, what do you think?" (03 May 2020).

In contrast, we have *Giæver og gjengen* and *Omadressert*, which are closer to a factual and distant genre of commentary. Participants discuss various topics with a more serious tone, and each person speaks one at a time. Commentators stick to these cases under discussion in a more "serious" manner by presenting facts and arguments covering the topics. One of the participants in *Omadressert* is a cultural columnist who ends each program by presenting a cultural recommendation for the weekend, such as a film, a book, or a computer game. For instance, in the episode aired 30 April 2020 the columnist recommended the film *Bad Education*.

These different features of the podcasts allow for a model consisting of two intersecting dimensions (as shown in Figure 1): a vertical axis that spans the personal and the factual, and a horizontal axis spanning reflexiveness on one end and assertiveness on the other. This provides a range of possible podcast profiles. Podcasts with a personal style can be more reflexive or more assertive, and the same goes for podcasts with a more factual style.

Podcasts located in the upper left side, with a personal and reflexive style, can be characterised by a relaxed and homely atmosphere where participants can draw on personal experiences while reflecting openly about the topic(s) at hand. Participants trust each other, and the aim is to collaboratively explore the topics being discussed, not to win the discussion. In the podcasts belonging to the upper right side, the atmosphere is tenser, the voices are louder, and the utterances are in danger of being cut off by other participants. Also, participants know each other well, so they interrupt each other and engage personally in the discussion. We will place *Norsken, svensken og dansken* and *Nokon*

må gå in the upper part of the model—*Norsken, svensken og dansken* more to the left, and *Nokon må gå* more to the right.

Podcasts in the lower part of the model have a more serious style, with participants being stricter about sticking to the topic and not interrupting each other. Here, the atmosphere is more like a disciplined discussion in which individuals are given the floor to present their arguments one by one. However, while the podcasts on the lower left side have a more reflective tone, allowing more open-ended reasoning, podcasts on the lower right side are characterised by participants defending their own opinions. We will argue that *Giæver og gjengen* and *Omadressert* can be placed in the lower part of the model.

Intellectual discussants vs. experts

To separate *Giæver og gjengen* and *Omadressert,* we turn to another dimension, namely the contrast between intellectual discussants and experts, which can also be placed on the horizontal axis in the Figure. This dimension is more related to the observed roles participants are given or those they assume in the podcasts. One distinction is between the podcasts containing participants communicating equally and podcasts with a host who leads the discussion. In *Giæver og gjengen*, it is indisputable who is leading and in charge of the plan of each program. Anders Giæver is the host; he asks questions in every program and is the one who changes the topic of discussion. In that regard, we might argue that the placement of *Giæver og gjengen* should be more to the lower right than to the left. In *Giæver og gjengen*, other participants also often appear to be experts. For instance, when the host of the program asks a political columnist, "How close is it to the barrier limit now for [the political party] Venstre [to become represented in parliament]?" (25 March 2021), the columnist is given an *expert* role. Also, *Omadressert* has a host, but it is not easy to identify the hierarchy during the discussion and the turn-taking is less monitored. All participants appear as intellectual discussants reflecting on the actual problem under discussion. This would place *Omadressert* more to the lower left in the figure. Then, the model would be like this:

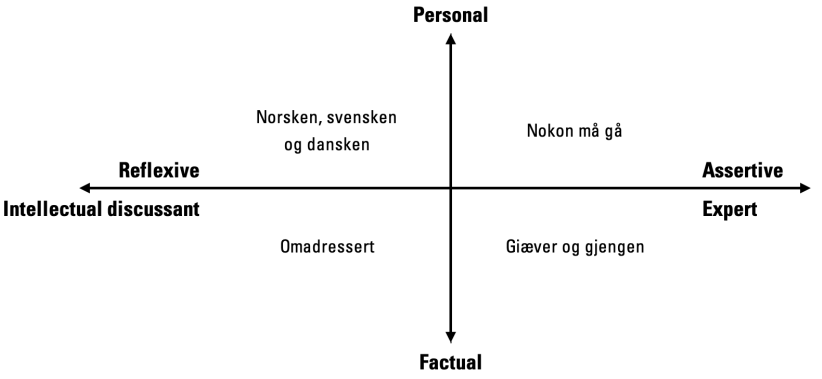


Figure 1: Dimensions of podcasts

Scholars have also identified commentary journalists' frequent practice of *meta-communication* in podcasts (Lindgren, 2016; Knapskog, 2016; Thyrum, 2018). Knapskog (2016) argues: "The commentary genre is a vehicle for self-reflexivity and examination with a critical lens" [on behalf of the journalistic profession] (p. 175). Some columnists critique the media as their main activity on a regular basis. However, it seems easier to discuss their own journalistic practice more freely (see also von Krogh & Svensson, 2017). We find such self-critique or media critique in some of the podcasts along both the upper and lower axis of the model.

Norsken, svensken og dansken often discusses media practice. For instance, in an episode aired on 14 June 2020, the commentators discuss mass media's coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. The Norwegian participant argues:

> I think it is exciting to see how Western liberal media so actively support Black Lives Matter, at the same time as they had such a problem with the Yellow Vests in France – it was just scum, they were primitive, they were violent. It was no problem to put in the National Guard and shot at their eyes [the protesters] with rubber bullets, made people blind, it was no problem. But this [Black Lives Matter], this is the big hallelujah.

We find something similar in the *Giæver og gjengen* episode from 30 April 2020, in which commentators discuss whether news coverage contributed to public prejudice against a man whose wife had disappeared. The columnist present, who commented on this case in the newspaper, says: "It is strange how many people went from being epidemiologists [Covid-19] to becoming experts in investigation [...] I understand that this criticism affects myself as well". The host of this

podcast even informs us in the interview that: "One goal [of the podcast] was exactly that we should give an insight into the journalistic processes – show the cards [...] it could be a way to greater transparency". Such transparency could even strengthen media accountability (von Krogh & Svensson, 2017).

Concluding discussion

This article aimed to discuss the characteristics of podcasts as a commentary activity and to reflect on where the podcast has taken the genre. Commentary journalism is part of a critical tradition, given its societal mission to facilitate public debate and reasoning. As we have discussed, it has also drawn criticism. A vital question is whether commentary in the podcast format improves the public's reasoning skills and makes it easier for citizens to make sense of what happens in society (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012; Neveu, 2016). Or, is the podcast a place where columnists can finally gain exposure and become "celebrified" journalists and branded goods for their companies (Usher, 2020; Steensen, 2015), and thus support the critique that their commentary is superficial? Are podcasts a sort of democratic broadcasting tool, as Sterne et al. (2008) claim, or are they, as Bonini (2014) contends, merely a commercial activity?

On the one hand, we can argue that oral podcasts, a more intimate and personalised media format (Lüders, 2008; Lindgren, 2016), bring audiences closer to the discussions presented and may perhaps make reflections and explanations in the episodes more understandable, and thus serve a democratic function. Arguably, the dialogical form of podcasts could also contribute to listeners' reflections and thus create greater audience engagement. The general rise in podcasts' popularity (Newman & Gallo, 2019) could also be said to add to democratisation. The dialogical form is also less authoritative, where columnists step down from their ivory towers through the invitation to dialogue, resulting in more genuine participation (Barnes, 2011; Singer et al., 2011; Mathisen & Morlandstø, 2020). Listening to the columnists' own reflections and opinions may inspire other citizens to become interested in politics, beyond those who already are. The reflexive and dialogical style of the podcast might better stimulate the reflections and opinion-making of the audience than one-way bombastic utterances do. In that way, we can claim that podcasts produced by columnists on one side strengthen the public debate and, thus, the democratic process in society.

On the other hand, we can argue that the columnists in the podcasts have increased their power by personalising communication and combining podcasts and social media to become visible, famous, and

celebrified, rather than facilitating public debate. Such cross-platform persona construction (Usher, 2020, p. 14) transforms opinion-based journalism from an analytical, reflective act to a channel for an authoritative political influencer's focus on their own opinions. Thus, it might confirm the critique of the columnist as an analytically shallow self-proclaimed cynical expert. This can be further reinforced by an increased focus on the commercial side of columnists' work, exposing the blurred line between the societal missions of journalism and columnists as branded goods for the media companies. We may also use Meltzer's (2019) "From news to talk" to illustrate how the relationship between journalists and technology has transformed journalistic practice. She argues that the expansion of opinion and commentary in television has engendered a new discursive practice in the media, one more related to talk: both a movement towards entertainment (as in talk *shows*) and towards leading people/citizens to talk "in all sorts of ways" (p. 209), made possible by emphasising the dynamic of social media.

To conclude, we can argue that the dual mission (of church and state) always has been present in media companies and still is. Columnists have always been important as brands for media companies, even in the pre-digital print era. However, we argue that columnists as branded goods on a podcast may have strengthened market orientation towards commentary journalism, not least because of their personalised and celebrified position on podcasts as opposed to the profiles they maintain through writing.

Our contribution sheds light on how the podcast format innovates the genre by moving it in a dialogical direction and, further, how this development is grounded in both commercial and societal considerations. However, our study analyses only four podcasts. The genre of commentary podcasts thus requires further research that will scrutinise the podcast format and employ methods that include audiences. If we understand the societal mission of podcasts to be part of the commentary genre and its use and perception by citizens, we must also give voice to the listeners.

NOTES

[1] http://www.podrapporten.no/

[2] *Omadressert*: Kari Hovde and Kato Nykvist; *Nokon må gå*: Gerd Tjeldflåt and Jens Kihl, *Giæver og Gjengen*: Anders Giæver; *Norsken, Svensken og Dansken*: Hilde Sandvik.

[3] Daily debate program on weekdays on the national broadcast company NRK's radio (P2) and television (NRK2) stations in collaboration.

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LISBETH MORLANDSTØ
Professor
Faculty of Social Sciences
Nord University
lisbeth.morlandsto@nord.no

BIRGIT RØE MATHISEN
Professor
Faculty of Social Sciences
Nord University
birgit.r.mathisen@nord.no

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Power, Communication and Politics in the Nordic Countries

Af Eli Skogerbø, Øyvind Ihlen, Nete Nørgaard Kristensen og Lars Nord (red.) Nordicom, 2021, 396 pp.

JAKOB LINAA JENSEN
Aarhus Universitet

"Findes der en nordisk model for politisk kommunikation"? Sådan indledes denne bog, der såvel bredt som dybt forsøger at indfange fænomenet politisk kommunikation med et særligt fokus på de nordiske lande. Der ligger altså her, som i anden forskning i medier og politik, en implicit oplevelse af, at de nordiske lande er noget særligt og har noget særligt at tilbyde. Bogen er ifølge redaktørerne selv en opdatering af Jesper Strömback, Mark Blach-Ørsten og Toril Aalbergs *Communicating Politics: Political Communication in the Nordic Countries* fra 2008. Med et sådant værk ligger man naturligvis inden for et komparativt mediesystemisk perspektiv, men det er redaktørernes ambition også at bevæge sig hinsides dette og bidrage med dybdegående analyser af konkrete forhold.

Disse ambitioner ses også i bogens opbygning, hvor der først følger introducerende kapitler om forholdet mellem medier og politik i henholdsvis Danmark, Island, Finland, Norge og Sverige. Kapitlerne er ret ens i opbygningen og bidrager dermed til det komparative perspektiv. Med en dansk medieforskers gennemsnitlige kendskab til de øvrige landes mediesystemer og politiske landskaber er der måske ikke så meget nyt at hente, men for forskere og andre uden for Norden (ikke mindst i den angelsaksiske verden, hvor der jo er en stor og stigende interesse for nordiske velfærdsstater og politiske systemer) formår kapitlerne at give en nyttig og oplysende introduktion.

I bogens anden del følger en række mere konkrete casestudier, gående fra det mere overordnede til det endog meget detaljerede. Der er Sigurd Allerns og andres meget overordnede artikel om udviklingstendenser og udfordringer i nordisk politisk journalistik tillige med overblik over valg og politisk kommunikation skrevet af David Hopmann og Rune Karlsen. I den anden ende af skalaen er der

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artikler, der fokuserer på lobbyisme, minoritetsgrupper og alternative højrefløjsmedier.

Selv om artiklerne på hver deres måde kaster lys over aspekter af det nordiske politiske kommunikative landskab, kan det for en udenforstående virke lidt tilfældigt, hvad der er blevet plads til, og hvad der er udeladt. Derfor kan bogen ikke anbefales som en tilbundsgående systematisk gennemgang af dens emnefelt, men mere som en "reader", en appetitvækker der giver mod på at læse mere om det, der måtte interessere. Redaktørerne har ret i, at bogen er en tiltrængt opdatering af værket fra 2008. Denne anmelder synes generelt, at der er tale om et værk af udmærket faglig og akademisk kvalitet, men målgruppen er måske i allerhøjest grad læsere uden for Norden. Man må derfor håbe, at bogen formår at nå uden for en nordisk kontekst, for det fortjener den.

JAKOB LINAA JENSEN
Lektor
Institut for Kommunikation og Kultur
Aarhus Universitet
linaa@cc.au.dk

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Ekspertkilder i landsdækkende danske dagblade

Hvem er de, og hvilke roller og funktioner optræder de i?

KRESTEN ROLAND JOHANSEN
Danmarks Medie- og Journalisthøjskole

JAKOB DYBRO JOHANSEN
Danmarks Medie- og Journalisthøjskole

Abstract

Ekspertkilder optræder overalt i mediebilledet og bidrager til at give journalistikken autoritet og troværdighed. Men eksperterne udgør en broget forsamling og bruges i vidt forskellige roller og funktioner. Der mangler aktuel forskningsbaseret viden om, hvem de er, og hvad de bruges til. I denne artikel undersøges begge dele.

Vi laver en indholdsanalyse af fire ugers dækning i 2021 i de tre største landsdækkende dagblade i Danmark (Jyllands-Posten, Politiken og Berlingske Tidende) og sammenligner resultaterne med eksisterende forskning.

Knap halvdelen af dagbladenes ekspertkilder er privatansatte ikke-forskere. Økonomer og andre samfundsfagligt uddannede udgør 79 procent af disse. Blandt forskerkilderne udgør kvinder 22 procent. De er særligt underrepræsenterede inden for naturvidenskab. 86 procent af forskerkilderne udtaler sig om aktuelle begivenheder og andres forskning, mens 14 procent udtaler sig om egen forskning. I 98 procent af artiklerne med ekspertkilder castes en eller flere ekspertkilder til at levere vurderinger.

Resultaterne rejser spørgsmål om journalisters kriterier for at udvælge ekspertkilder, og om journalister tildeler ekspertkilder deres autoritetsfunktion på et tilstrækkeligt kildekritisk grundlag.

NØGLEORD
eksperter, kilder, roller, troværdighed, kildekritik

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Introduktion

Man møder ekspertkilder overalt i mediebilledet. En simpel infomediasøgning på ordet "ekspert" giver 124.532 hits for kalenderåret 2021. Ekspertkilderne udgør imidlertid en broget forsamling. Mediebrugere møder dagligt klimaforskere, finansanalytikere, overlæger, jurister, fremtidsforskere, militære analytikere, økonomer osv. Rollen som ekspertkilde i medierne tildeles således mange andre end universitetsansatte forskere (Albæk et al., 2009). Der er sket en pluralisering af relevante ekspertkilder, og medierne er selv blevet vigtige aktører i spillet om, hvem der er ekspert. Med Arnoldis ord eksisterer der en konkurrencetilstand om, hvad der udgør ekspertise, og konkurrencen foregår i og gennem medierne (Arnoldi, 2005).

Ekspertkilder optræder som autoritative stemmer. Albæk konstaterer, at journalister har brug for *compensatory legitimation* og derfor trækker på ekspertens autoritet og (forventede) upartiskhed (Albæk, 2011). Boyce demonstrerer en lignende forståelse, når hun konstaterer, at journalister primært bruger ekspertkilder til at levere facts, skabe troværdighed og fremstå objektive (Boyce, 2007). Og Wien viser empirisk, at ekspertkilder overvejende bliver brugt til at bekræfte journalistens vinkel, og at professorer foretrækkes frem for lektorer som ekspertkilder (Wien, 2001). Med andre ord: Ekspertkilder giver i kraft af deres symbolske kapital (Gravengaard & Rendtorff, 2020) journalisten autoritet, legitimitet og troværdighed.

På trods af ekspertkildernes centrale betydning for journalistikken og betydelige omfang ved vi ganske lidt om sammensætningen af denne brogede forsamling. Albæk et al. (2009) demonstrerer, at ikke-forskere som fx kommentatorer, bankansatte og repræsentanter fra tænketanke bruges som ekspertkilder i forbindelse med valgkampe. Og Laursen & Trapp (2021) demonstrerer, hvordan repræsentanter fra tænketanke og interesseorganisationer også i dag bruges som ekspertkilder. Men det meste af den øvrige forskning på området fokuserer snævert på offentligt ansatte forskerkilder. Undersøgelsens første spor søger derfor at kaste lys over, *hvem ekspertkilderne er* gennem en analyse af landsdækkende dagblades brug af *ekspertkilder i bred forstand*.

Undersøgelsens andet spor zoomer ind på *offentligt ansatte forskere som ekspertkilder*. Fra eksisterende forskning ved vi, at der siden 1960'erne er sket flere markante forandringer i danske nyhedsmediers brug af *offentligt ansatte forskere som ekspertkilder*. Særligt brugen af samfundsvidenskabelige forskere steg eksplosivt i takt med en generel ekspertliggørelse af nyhedsdækningen (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004). I perioden fra 1961 til 2001 voksede andelen af samfundsvidenskabelige forskere således fra 13 procent til 45 procent

af alle forskerkilder i de tre største landsdækkende dagblade (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004). I samme periode steg andelen af kvindelige forskerkilder fra i 1961 at være stort set fraværende til i 2001 at udgøre 14 procent af forskerkilderne. Endelig skete der i perioden fra 1961 til 2001 en forandring i forskerkildernes rolle i journalistikken. Hvor forskere tidligere typisk blev brugt til at udtale sig om egen forskning – det som Peters kalder "forskere i lærerrollen" (Peters, 2014, s. 70) – blev forskerne nu i stigende grad brugt til at udtale sig om hændelser, politiske beslutninger og andres forskning, altså i rollen som "offentlig ekspert" (Peters, 2014, s. 70). Det fulgte en udvikling, hvor især de trykte medier gik fra at være overvejende beskrivende til også at analysere, udlægge og forklare hændelser og trends (Albæk, 2011).

Hvordan ser billedet ud i dag – 20 år efter, at Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen gennemførte deres undersøgelse? Hvem er de offentligt ansatte forskerkilder? Hvor meget fylder de i mediebilledet – og hvad udtaler de sig om? Undersøgelsens andet spor søger at besvare disse komparative spørgsmål ved at analysere mediers brug af *offentligt ansatte forskerkilder* og sammenholde resultaterne med den 20 år gamle kortlægning.

Undersøgelsens tredje spor handler om de forskellige funktioner, ekspertkilder castes af journalister til at udfylde. Med Broersmas ord optræder ekspertkilder som "puppets in journalism's theater" (Broersma et al., 2013, s. 393). Ekspertkilder castes til at udfylde en række væsensforskellige funktioner: I nogle tilfælde bruges eksperten i en *konstaterende* funktion til at levere faktuel, nøgtern viden; i andre tilfælde i en *vurderende og spekulerende* funktion, hvor eksperten bevæger sig ud på tyndere is (Peters, 2014; Kruvand, 2018; Blom et al., 2021). En tredje funktion, som journalister bruger eksperter i, er som *agerende*, hvor eksperten kommer med handlingsanvisninger, fx i form af opfordringer og efterlysninger til politikere, virksomheder, myndigheder eller borgere. De tre ekspertfunktioner rummer forskellige grader af usikkerhed og "aktivisme". I alle tre funktioner optræder eksperten imidlertid som autoritet – som en troværdig, saglig og uafhængig stemme. Vi ved ganske lidt fra den eksisterende forskning om, hvordan og hvor meget ekspertkilder bruges i de forskellige funktioner. Undersøgelsens tredje spor er derfor en kortlægning og analyse af udbredelsen af de forskellige typer af *funktioner, som ekspertkilder udfylder*.

Denne artikels ambition er – via de tre centrale spor – at kortlægge, hvem ekspertkilderne er; hvor de kommer fra; hvad de bruges til; og hvilke forandringer vi ser, når vi sammenligner med tidligere forskning på området. Først defineres ekspertbegrebet. Herefter præciseres undersøgelsens tre overordnede forskningsspørgsmål, og valg af

forskningsdesign og metode forklares. Dernæst præsenteres undersøgelsens resultater, og en afsluttende konklusion diskuterer, hvordan brugen af offentlig ansatte forskerkilder har ændret sig i de sidste 20 år, og hvor det stiller os i dag.

Ekspertbegrebet

I den eksisterende forskning er ekspertbegrebet ofte snævert defineret som uafhængige forskere, altså universitetsansatte, sundhedsfagligt ansatte (fx hospitalsansatte læger) og sektorforskningsansatte (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004; Wien, 2001). Peters (1995) bruger termen *scientific expert* for at slå fast, at hans studie handler om forskere, som optræder i rollen som "offentlige eksperter" – altså en snæver ekspertdefinition. Arnoldi (2005) argumenterer dog for, at ekspertbegrebet ikke kun kan defineres gennem profession, men også kan defineres gennem den rolle, som kilden spiller i nyhedshistorien. Boyce (2007) taler mere generelt om en forandring i forståelsen af ekspertise, væk fra en rigoristisk skelnen mellem videnskabelig funderet viden og al anden viden og hen imod en bredere forståelse af, hvad ekspertise er. Hos Albæk et al. (2009, s. 90) anvendes et bredt ekspertbegreb, som omfatter alle, "der tillægges en ekspertrolle i en nyhedsartikel, dvs. optræder som en person med særlig viden på et givet felt". Laursen & Trapp (2021, s. 2) argumenterer for, at den klassiske forståelse af eksperter som uafhængige og videnskabeligt funderede er under forandring i medierne: "Boundaries between experts and advocates are evidently becoming increasingly blurred in the news media". Og nævner mediers brug af eksperter fra tænketanke og interesseorganisationer som konkrete eksempler.

Med udgangspunkt i Arnoldis (2005) og Laursen & Trapps (2021) forståelse og i forlængelse af Albæk et al. (2009) defineres ekspertkilde i denne undersøgelse helt bredt som en kilde, der faktisk tildeles en ekspertrolle i artiklerne. I definitionen af ekspertbegrebet er der derfor ikke et krav om teoretisk, forskningsbaseret viden eller om uafhængighed:

> Ekspertkilder er kilder, som kan siges at være udvalgt i kraft af profession og professionel (teoretisk og/eller erfaringsbaseret) viden, og som optræder i rollen som ekspert.

Om kilden optræder i rollen som ekspert, ses bl.a. ud fra de sproglige styrkemarkører, som journalisten og/eller kilden anvender, fx *konstaterer, vurderer, slår fast, skønner*. Det ses også ud fra, hvordan kilden præsenteres for læseren, fx som *ekspert, forsker, professor, økonom, analytiker, specialist* etc. Endelig ses det ud fra, om kilden kan

siges at være udvalgt i kraft af profession og professionel viden – og altså ikke i kraft af fx at være part, erfaringskilde eller case. Med dette udgangspunkt bliver det muligt i første omgang at kortlægge mediernes brug af ekspertkilder i bred forstand og dermed blive klogere på den betydelige gruppe af ekspertkilder, som ikke er universitetsansatte forskere. Netop denne gruppe er underbelyst i den eksisterende forskning på området.

I kortlægningen operationaliseres ekspertbegrebet i fire eksperttyper, hvoraf den ene, *offentlig ansat forsker*, flugter med Albæk, Togeby & Christensens og Wiens tidligere definitioner. Ved at zoome ind på *offentligt ansatte forskere* som ekspertkilder bliver det muligt at lave sammenlignende analyser med Albæk, Togeby & Christensens undersøgelse af situationen i 2001, hvor der anvendes en tilsvarende ekspert-definition.

Forskningsspørgsmål og teoretisk grundlag

Artiklen ønsker at besvare tre overordnede spørgsmål:

Spørgsmål 1: Hvem optræder som ekspertkilder i de toneangivende landsdækkende dagblade?

Spørgsmålet om, hvem eksperterne er, rummer en række dimensioner, som vi ønsker at kaste lys over: Er eksperten offentligt eller privat ansat? Er eksperten forsker? Hvad er ekspertens køn? Og hvilket vidensområde repræsenterer eksperten?

Eksperternes faglighed operationaliseres i seks vidensområder: sundhedsvidenskab, naturvidenskab, humaniora, samfundsvidenskab, teknologi og landbrugsvidenskab. Det følger klassificeringerne i OECD's Frascati-manual (OECD, 2007). Ved at bruge OECD's internationale standard bliver det muligt at lave fremtidige sammenlignende studier i andre lande.

I Albæk, Togeby & Christiansens tidligere forskning operationaliseres vidensområderne i sundhedsvidenskab, natur/teknik/jordbrug, humaniora og samfundsvidenskab. Vores operationalisering giver mulighed for at lave sammenlignende delanalyser på de samme fire områder. Samtidig giver det mulighed for at se isoleret på områderne landbrugsvidenskab og teknologi.

Spørgsmål 2: Hvordan har dagbladenes brug af offentligt ansatte forskerkilder udviklet sig fra 2001 til 2021?

Udviklingen fra 2001 til 2021 undersøges på dimensionerne vidensområde, køn og forskerens rolle i artiklen. Køn og vidensområde operationaliseres på samme måde som under spørgsmål 1. Med

spørgsmålet om roller tages der analytisk udgangspunkt i Peters' definition af ekspertroller (Peters, 2014). Ifølge Peters er der tre idealtypiske roller, som eksperter optræder i:

1) Offentlig ekspert, som udtaler sig om hændelser (ikke-videnskabelige problemer, fx klimaforandringer, økonomi, pandemier). Generel ekspertise.

2) Lærerrollen, hvor forskeren populariserer sin egen forskning (forskningsformidling af resultater, opdagelser, teorier). Dyb ekspertise, egen forskning.

3) Rollen som interessent/stakeholder, hvor man indgår i metadiskurser om videnskab, fx diskussioner om etik, bevillinger, videnskabspolitik, konflikter, forskningsfrihed etc.

I dette studie udvides Peters' definition af den offentlige ekspertrolle til også at omfatte, når man udtaler sig om andres forskning. Denne udvidelse flugter med operationaliseringen hos Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004) og muliggør dermed en sammenlignende analyse.

Da projektet handler om kilder i ekspertroller, kodes der ikke for Peters' tredje rolle som interessent/stakeholder - da kilden i denne tredje rolle netop ikke udtaler sig som ekspert, men snarere som parts- eller erfaringskilde.

Der kodes kun for lærerrolle, hvis artiklen er vinklet på egen ny forskning, som formidles til læserne.

Spørgsmål 3: Hvilke funktioner castes ekspertkilderne til at udfylde?

Hvad er det for autoritetsfunktioner, ekspertkilder castes til at udfylde? Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004) taler om den klassiske ekspertrolle, hvor man leverer faktuel viden, fagligt baserede vurderinger og korrektioner til påstande. Kruvand (2018) konstaterer, at journalister har brug for eksperter til at levere information, forklaringer, kontekst, konsekvensvurderinger og holdninger.

Der kan imidlertid være stor forskel på at levere faktuel viden/information og vurderinger. Faktuel viden kan efterprøves. Vurderinger kan være mere eller mindre fagligt baserede og mere eller mindre spekulative. Og der kan herske stor uenighed om vurderinger blandt fagpersoner.

Blom et al. (2021) taler i den forbindelse om to idealtypiske ekspertfunktioner: den faktuelle ekspert og den spekulative ekspert. Indimellem går ekspertkilder dog skridtet videre og kommer med anbefalinger, efterlysninger, opfordringer og løsningsforslag. Bloms operationalisering suppleres derfor med en tredje idealtype: den

handlingsanvisende ekspert. Der opereres derfor i kortlægningen med tre autoritetsfunktioner, som ekspertkilden kan optræde i:

1) Levere faktuel viden (konstaterende)

2) Levere vurderinger, spekulationer, udlægninger, fortolkninger (vurderende)

3) Levere handlingsanvisninger i form af anbefalinger, efterlysninger, opfordringer, løsninger (agerende)

Eksperten kan fint optræde i flere af disse funktioner på en gang, hvilket der tages højde for i kodningen.

Design og metode

Undersøgelsen er gennemført som en kvantitativ indholdsanalyse af trykte artikler i de tre største landsdækkende danske dagblade: Jyllands-Posten, Politiken og Berlingske Tidende. Det er udelukkende journalistiske artikler, som er kodet. Altså er debatindlæg, analyser fra fagfolk, klummer, ledere og lignende sorteret fra. Artikler, hvor der indgår mindst én ekspertkilde, er blevet kodet.

At valget er faldet på de tre nævnte dagblade, skyldes først og fremmest komparative hensyn, da en stor del af den eksisterende danske forskning på området har analyseret netop disse trykte aviser (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004; Arnoldi, 2005; Albæk, 2011; Laursen & Trapp, 2021). Derudover er der tale om de største landsdækkende dagblade, som hver især dækker et bredt stofområde og derfor må forventes at anvende et bredt spektrum af ekspertkilder. Konsekvensen er dog, at vi ikke kan generalisere undersøgelsens resultater til danske printmedier generelt, da lokalmedier, nichemedier, tabloidmedier m.fl. er fravalgt. Af samme grund kan der heller ikke generaliseres til brugen af eksperter på tv og i radioindslag.

Artiklerne er søgt frem via Infomedias database. Hensigten har været at indfange de artikler, hvor kilder anvendes i en ekspertrolle. Søgeordene er udvalgt på baggrund af en empirisk kortlægning af samtlige ekspertkilder i uge 43's dækning i de tre dagblade. I et pilotprojekt har artiklens forfattere gennemlæst alle aviser fra de tre dagblade i uge 43, noteret samtlige ekspertkilder ned og på det grundlag udvalgt relevante søgeord. Følgende søgeord er udvalgt: *Professor, Forsker, Ekspert, Chef, Økonom, Lektor, Analytiker, Direktør, Læge, Rådgiver, Formand, Chefkonsulent, Seniorkonsulent, Ph.d., Specialist, Adjunkt, Docent.* Ved at sammenligne infomediasøgningen med

gennemlæsningen af medierne kan det konstateres, at med de valgte søgeord indfanges 92 procent af alle kilder, som i uge 43 tildeles en ekspertrolle.

Med søgeord som fx direktør og formand optræder der naturligvis mange falsk positive resultater, altså artikler hvor en direktør omtales eller citeres, uden at vedkommende optræder som ekspertkilde. Det kan fx være en direktør, som optræder som partskilde, eller en fødselsdagsomtale af en direktør. Disse er løbende sorteret fra i forbindelse med kodningen af artiklerne.

Vi forventer med de valgte søgeord at indfange cirka 92 procent af alle kilder brugt i en ekspertrolle. Men hvem er så de 8 procent eksperter, som *ikke* indfanges? Ét tema går igen, nemlig mediernes egne eksperter. Indimellem bruges journalister, skribenter, redaktører, og kommentatorer som ekspertkilder. Denne gruppe udgør i uge 43 en tredjedel af de eksperter, som ikke indfanges, altså anslået 2-3 procent af alle ekspertkilder. Det er et bevidst (fra)valg ikke at søge efter journalist, redaktør og kommentator, da det ville føre til uoverskueligt mange falsk positive resultater. Konsekvensen af ikke at medtage disse søgeord er, at der ikke er grundlag for at konkludere på, i hvilken udstrækning og på hvilken måde journalister og redaktører mv. bruges som ekspertkilder. Andre grupper, som ikke indfanges af de valgte søgeord, er professionsuddannede som fx sygeplejersker, jordemødre og socialrådgivere. Når vi ikke søger på disse (og mange andre) professioner, skyldes det alene, at de enten slet ikke eller kun yderst sjældent optræder som ekspertkilder i vores komplette empiriske kortlægning af syv dages dækning. Der er således ikke tale om et normativt fravalg fra vores side. Konsekvensen af de valgte søgeord er, at denne type sjældent forekommende ekspertkilder er underrepræsenterede i kortlægningen.

Artiklen analyserer dækningen i fire uger i 2021: 7. til 13. juni, 16. til 22. august, 4. til 10. oktober og 29. november til 5. december. Metodisk kan man argumentere for, at tilfældig randomiseret udvælgelse af enkeltdage er stærkere i forhold til generaliserbarhed af resultaterne end tilfældig eller strategisk udvælgelse af sammenhængende uger (Andersen & Larsen, 2016). Den tidligere forskning, som inddrages komparativt, har dog konsekvent analyseret sammenhængende uger eller måneder.

Denne undersøgelse anvender strategisk udvælgelse på ugeniveau. Formålet har været at nedtone kommunalvalgsbias og COVID-19-bias ud fra en betragtning om, at 2021 netop på grund af COVID-19 og kommunalvalg er en særlig case og derfor kan være problematisk at anvende i et komparativt øjemed. Formålet er således ikke at kunne generalisere til "gennemsnitlige" nyhedsuger i 2021, men derimod at kortlægge nyhedsuger, som i højere grad er sammenlignelige med

tidligere forsknings nyhedsuger. Når vi har valgt at kortlægge fire ikke-sammenhængende uger, skyldes det, at vi anerkender Andersen & Larsens pointe om, at én lang sammenhængende periode ikke er optimal i forhold til generaliserbarheden af resultaterne.

November og sidste halvdel af oktober måned er fravalgt, da kommunalvalget fyldte meget i mediebilledet i denne periode. På samme måde er første halvdel af 2021, hvor COVID-19 fyldte særligt meget, også fravalgt. Noget tyder på, at det er lykkedes at undgå en markant COVID-19-bias. En undersøgelse af landets mest citerede eksperter i det danske mediebillede 2021 foretaget af Infomedia viser, at de 16 øverste pladser besættes af sundhedsfaglige (COVID-19-relaterede) eksperter – altså en meget iøjnefaldende skævhed (Siegumfeldt, 2022). I vores undersøgelse er der imidlertid blot to sundhedsfaglige eksperter i top 15. COVID-19-ekspertise er med andre ord langt fra dominerende i de analyserede uger.

Kodning og reliabilitet

Artiklerne er kodet for en række baggrundsoplysninger, som kan identificere den enkelte artikel, herunder dato, medie, rubrik og journalist.

Med henblik på at besvare forskningsspørgsmålene er der kodet for ekspertens navn, køn, ekspertens rolle, eksperttype, vidensområde, uddannelse og funktion.

Artiklens forfattere har hver især kodet cirka halvdelen af artiklerne. For at undersøge reliabiliteten har forfatterne tidligt i forløbet kodet 40 tilfældigt udvalgte artikler (dog alle indeholdende ekspertkilder) simultant. For alle centrale variable er Krippendorffs alpha efter pilottest og revision af kodebogen i intervallet 0,73-1 (funktion = 0,73; køn = 1; alle øvrige alpha-værdier ligger i intervallet 0,80-0,87). Det er acceptable værdier, som viser, at der ikke er betydelige reliabilitetsproblemer i kodningen (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007).

Dataindsamling

Infomediasøgningerne på de fire udvalgte uger resulterede i 2133 artikler. De udvalgte søgeord gav en stor mængde falsk positive hits, som efterfølgende er sorteret fra i kodningsprocessen. Samlet set er der kodet 517 artikler, som alle gør brug af mindst én ekspertkilde. De kodede artikler fordeler sig sådan her på de tre medier:

Medie	Alle ekspertartikler (2021)	Artikler forskerkilder (2021)	Artikler forskerkilder (2001)
Jyllands-Posten	200	108	147

Berlingske Tidende	186	116	136
Politiken	131	108	158
	517	**332**	**441**

Tabel 1: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). I begge undersøgelser er fire ugers dækning kodet.

At Politiken i 2021 har færre artikler med ekspertkilder end de to øvrige aviser, skyldes først og fremmest, at Berlingske og Jyllands-Posten er noget tungere end Politiken på business- og erhvervsstof. Netop disse stofområder gør ofte brug af ekspertkilder i form af privatansatte økonomer og analytikere. Hvis man i stedet ser på delmængden af artikler, som gør brug af forskerkilder (kolonne 2), forsvinder denne forskel. Kolonne 3 med forskerkildeartikler fra 2001 er medtaget som reference (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004) og er sammenlignelig med kolonne 2 (Artikler forskerartikler 2021). Det ses, at der i 2001 var lidt flere artikler med forskerkilder end i 2021, og at Berlingske Tidende i 2001 havde lidt færre artikler med forskerkilder end Politiken og Jyllands-Posten. At der i absolutte tal var flere artikler med forskerkilder i 2001 end i 2021, skal dog ses i lyset af, at de fysiske aviser i denne periode bliver mindre (og bringer færre artikler), i takt med at flere nyheder kun bringes digitalt.

Resultater

Spørgsmål 1: Hvem optræder som ekspertkilder i de toneangivende landsdækkende dagblade?

For at svare på spørgsmålet undersøges kategorierne eksperttype, vidensområde og køn.

Eksperttype

Eksperttype operationaliseres på to dimensioner: forsker/ikke-forsker og offentligt ansat/privatansat. Kortlægningen viser, at *offentligt ansatte forskere* udgør halvdelen af alle ekspertkilder (51%). Den anden store klump af eksperter finder vi hos *privatansatte ikke-forskere* (42%). Det drejer sig først og fremmest om økonomer og analytikere ansat i finanssektoren.

Figur 1: 2021-tal fra denne undersøgelse.

Samlet set udgør ikke-forskere 44 procent af eksperterne. Dertil skal formentlig lægges 2-3 procent journalister, kommentatorer og redaktører, samt nogle få procent øvrige professionsuddannede, som de facto optræder i ekspertroller, men ikke registreres i kortlægningen. Der er altså en meget stor gruppe af ekspertkilder, som åbenlyst ikke er valgt på baggrund af forskningsmeritter eller status i et forskningsmiljø. Det bekræfter Arnoldis pointe om, at medierne i høj grad er med til at definere, hvem der er ekspert. I næste afsnit kigger vi nærmere på, hvem de er.

Vidensområder

Lad os først kaste et blik på fordelingen af samtlige ekspertkilder opdelt efter videnskabeligt hovedområde:

Vidensområde, eksperter	%	n
Samfundsvidenskab	64	543
Sundhedsvidenskab	12	103
Naturvidenskab	9	73
Humaniora	8	66
Teknologi	3	26
Landbrugsvidenskab	1	10
Andet/ukendt	5	44
	102	**865**

Tabel 2: Bemærk, at andelene summerer til 102 procent. Det skyldes, at enkelte eksperter har en hybrid-faglighed, som omfatter to eller flere vidensområder.

Samfundsvidenskabelige eksperter udgør næsten to tredjedele af alle ekspertkilder. Her er det dog vigtigt at holde sig for øje, at andelen trækkes op af gruppen med ikke-forskende eksperter. Lad os kaste et nærmere blik på den betydelige gruppe ikke-forskende ekspertkilder.

Vidensområde, ikke-forskere	%	n
Samfundsvidenskab	79	294
Sundhedsvidenskab	2	7
Naturvidenskab	4	15
Humaniora	5	20
Teknologi	2	9
Landbrugsvidenskab	1	2
Andet/ukendt	10	39
	103	**386**

Tabel 3: Bemærk, at andelene summerer til 103 procent. Det skyldes, at enkelte ikke-forskere har en hybrid-faglighed, som omfatter to eller flere vidensområder.

79 procent af ikke-forskerne viser sig at have en samfundsvidenskabelig baggrund. Omvendt er blot 2 procent fra sundhedsvidenskab. Der tegner sig altså et billede af, at journalister stort set altid vælger en forskerkilde, hvis emnet er sundhedsvidenskab, mens samfundsvidenskabelige kilder i flere end halvdelen af tilfældene ikke er en forsker. Dette gælder i særlig grad, hvis kilden er økonom. Kortlægningen af ekspertkilder finder i alt 248 økonomer, hvoraf blot

37 er offentligt ansatte forskere. Når en journalist på et af de tre medier skal bruge en økonom i en ekspertrolle, hører det således til sjældenhederne, at man retter blikket mod universiteterne.

Køn

Ser man på kønsfordelingen blandt samtlige ekspertkilder, er der meget stor overvægt af mandlige eksperter:

Eksperter opdelt efter køn	%	n
Mænd	80	678
Kvinder	20	167
	100	**845**

Tabel 4: 2021-tal fra denne undersøgelse.

Når man kigger på top 15-listen med de hyppigst benyttede eksperter (tabel 5), er der kun en enkelt kvindelig ekspert, chefanalytiker og boligøkonom, Lise Nytoft Bergmann.

Ekspertkilder	Vidensområde	n
Jørn Vestergaard	Samfundsvidenskab	10
Jeppe Juul Borre	Samfundsvidenskab	9
Frederik Waage	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Lise Nytoft Bergmann	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Michael Bang Petersen	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Sten Schaumburg-Müller	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Søren Løntoft Hansen	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Tore Stramer	Samfundsvidenskab	6
Allan Randrup Thomsen	Sundhedsvidenskab	5
Allan Sørensen	Samfundsvidenskab	5
Flemming Ibsen	Samfundsvidenskab	5
Hans Jørn Kolmos	Sundhedsvidenskab	5
Laust Høgedahl	Samfundsvidenskab	5
Niklas Praefke	Samfundsvidenskab	5
Per Hansen	Samfundsvidenskab	5

Tabel 5: 2021-tal fra denne undersøgelse.

Det skal understreges, at top 15-listen afspejler den strategiske udvælgelse af uger, som indgår i analysen. Det er ikke repræsentativt for

dækningen i 2021 samlet set, hvor særligt sundhedsvidenskabelige kilder grundet COVID-19 fylder meget mere. På trods af det flugter resultatet dog fint med Infomedias samlede kortlægning af eksperter i 2021, som viser, at der blot optræder syv kvindelige eksperter i top 50 (Siegumfeldt, 2022).

Spørgsmål 2: Hvordan har dagbladenes brug af offentligt ansatte forskerkilder udviklet sig fra 2001 til 2021?

Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004) dokumenterer en voldsom vækst i brugen af især samfundsvidenskabelige forskerkilder i perioden 1961 (13%) til 2001 (45%). Hvordan ser billedet ud i dag?

Vidensområde, offentligt ansatte forskere	2021 (%)	2001 (%)	2021 (n)
Samfundsvidenskab	52*	45	220
Sundhedsvidenskab	22	21	94
Naturvidenskab, teknologi og jordbrug	17	17	74
Humaniora	10	13	41
Andet/ukendt	1*	4	5
	102	**100**	**434**

Tabel 6: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Bemærk, at andelene (2021) summerer til 102 procent. Det skyldes, at enkelte forskere har en hybrid-faglighed, som omfatter to eller flere vidensområder. Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Resultatet ligner til forveksling billedet i 2001. I 2001 stod samfundsvidenskab for 45 procent, sundhedsvidenskab for 21 procent, natur, teknik og jordbrug for 17 procent og humaniora for 13 procent. Forskellene på resultaterne fra 2001 og 2021 er små og for de flestes vedkommende ikke statistisk signifikante. Den voldsomme forskydning mod at anvende samfundsvidenskabelige forskere på bekostning af naturvidenskab og humaniora, som vi så i sidste halvdel af det 20. århundrede, er fastholdt, og samfundsvidenskabelige forskere fylder endda en smule mere i 2021 (52%) end i 2001 (45%).

Hvem er de samfundsvidenskabelige forskere, når vi graver et spadestik dybere ned?

Samfundsforskere, fagområde	2021 (%)	2001 (%)	2021 (n)
Jurist	26	25	57
Økonom	17*	27	37
Politolog	25	24	56
Andre samfundsforskere	32*	23	70
	100	**99**	**220**

Tabel 7: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Også blandt samfundsvidenskabelige forskerkilder ligner fordelingen i store træk fordelingen i 2001. Dog med den forskel, at økonomer fylder relativt mindre i dag (17%) end i 2001 (27%). Betyder det, at økonomer ikke optræder hyppigt som ekspertkilder? Tværtimod. Økonomer er den faggruppe af alle, som optræder hyppigst i en ekspertrolle (n=248), når vi ser på samtlige ekspertkilder. Forklaringen er, at langt de fleste økonomer i de udvalgte dagblade er privatansatte ikke-forskere.

Køn

I et komparativt perspektiv er det interessant at se på kønsfordelingen blandt de offentligt ansatte forskerkilder (se tabel 8):

Forskere opdelt efter køn	2021 (%)	2001 (%)	2021 (n)
Mænd	78*	86	333
Kvinder	22*	14	94
	100	**100**	**427**

Tabel 8: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Andelen af kvindelige forskerkilder er vokset siden 2001 (14%), men udgør med sine 22 procent fortsat et klart mindretal. I samme periode er andelen af kvinder blandt landets professorer vokset fra at udgøre 7 procent i 2001 til 23 procent i 2018. I alt udgjorde kvinder 34 procent af det videnskabelige personale på universiteterne i 2018 (Danmarks Talentbarometer, 2020). En del af forklaringen på skævheden kan derfor være, at der fortsat er flest mandlige forskere at vælge mellem. En anden forklaring kan være, at universiteternes ekspertlister underrepræsenterer kvinder (Hansen, 2021).

Greve-Poulsen et al. (2021) har for nylig demonstreret eksperimentelt, at danske mediebrugere finder mandlige og kvindelige ekspertkilder lige troværdige og kompetente, når de optræder i artikler.

Så den form for ligestilling eksisterer faktisk i en dansk kontekst. Til gengæld er der ikke så meget ligestilling i mediernes kildevalg.

Når man ser på fordelingen af forskerkilder på de tre aviser, er der imidlertid nogle iøjnefaldende forskelle og udviklinger over tid, som ikke lader sig forklare med ulige adgang til kvinder, som forsker (se tabel 9).

Forskere opdelt efter køn og medie	**2021 (%)**		**2001 (%)**		**2021 (n)**
	Mænd	Kvinder	Mænd	Kvinder	
Jyllands-Posten	85	15	81	19	131
Politiken	74	26*	91	9	149
Berlingske Tidende	76	24*	85	15	147
					427

Tabel 9: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Andelen af kvindelige forskerkilder hos Jyllands-Posten ser i dag ud til at være mindre end eller højst på niveau med 2001 (Faldet fra 19% til 15% er ikke statistisk signifikant). Den modsatte udvikling gør sig gældende hos både Berlingske Tidende (2001: 15%) og ikke mindst Politiken (2001: 9%), hvor kvindelige forskerkilder i dag udgør en signifikant og betydelig større andel af det samlede antal forskerkilder. Forskellen kan ikke forklares med, at Politikens erhvervsstof fylder meget mindre end hos de øvrige medier, da erhvervsdækningen netop er kendetegnet ved, at man benytter ikke-forskere som ekspertkilder.

Tabel 10 viser, hvordan forskerkilderne fordeler sig kønsmæssigt på de forskellige vidensområder:

Vidensområde, forskere efter køn	2021 (%)		2001 (%)		2021 (n)
	Mænd	Kvinder	Mænd	Kvinder	
Samfundsvidenskab	81	19	86	14	220
Sundhedsvidenskab	67	33*	82	18	94
Naturvidenskab	88	12	87	13	52
Humaniora	73	27	84	16	41
Teknologi	86	14	NA	NA	14
Landbrugsvidenskab	75	25	NA	NA	8
Andet/ukendt	80	20	NA	NA	5
					434

Tabel 10: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Det fremgår af tabel 10, at kvindelige forskerkilder i forhold til deres mandlige kolleger er bedst repræsenteret indenfor sundhedsvidenskab og humaniora. Det samme var tilfældet i 2001 – dog på et noget lavere niveau. Naturvidenskab er fortsat det område, hvor brugen af kvindelige forskerkilder halter længst efter. Andelen er på dette vidensområde på samme niveau i 2021 som i 2001 (faldet fra 13% til 12% er ikke statistisk signifikant).

At andelen af kvindelige forskerkilder fra naturvidenskab er mindre end de øvrige vidensområder, er i sig selv ikke overraskende, eftersom naturvidenskab er det vidensområde, som har færrest kvindelige forskere ansat på danske universiteter. Men niveauet for mediernes brug af kvinder som eksperter er overraskende lavt. Andelen af kvindelige forskere på naturvidenskabelige uddannelser i Danmark udgjorde 31 procent i 2017 (Danmarks Talentbarometer, 2020). Det er lavt, både i forhold til øvrige vidensområder og i forhold til andre lande, vi normalt sammenligner os med. Men det begrunder ikke, at andelen af kvindelige forskerkilder i medierne er på beskedne 12 procent, når det drejer sig om naturvidenskab.

Forskerens rolle

Hvilke roller optræder forskerkilderne i?

Forskerens rolle	2021 (%)	2001 (%)	2021 (n)
Offentlig ekspert	86*	68	366
Lærerrollen	14*	32	61
	100	**100**	**427**

Tabel 11: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Seks ud af syv offentligt ansatte forskerkilder (tabel 11) optræder i dag i rollen som *offentlig ekspert*, altså i en rolle, hvor man fx kommenterer en hændelse, en tendens, et politisk udspil eller andres forskning. Blot 14 procent optræder i lærerrollen, hvor man udtaler sig om egen forskning. I 2001 udgjorde lærerrollen 32 procent, og tidligere var andelen endnu højere (Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen, 2004). Da der samtidig er tale om et fald i mediernes brug af forskerkilder i absolutte tal fra 2001 (n=562) til 2021 (n=427), kan vi konstatere, at forskere, der bruges til at udtale sig om egen forskning, er faldet markant – både i absolutte tal og relativt i forhold til rollen som *offentlig ekspert*. I dag er det undtagelsen, når en forsker faktisk udtaler sig om egen forskning i dagbladene.

Hvem er de så, forskerne der udtaler sig om egen forskning?

Hvad udtaler forskerne sig om? (egen forskning)	2021 (%)	2001 (%)
Samfundsvidenskab	9*	18
Sundhedsvidenskab	21*	49
Naturvidenskab, teknologi og jordbrug	20*	58
Humaniora	17	17

Tabel 12: 2021-tal er fra denne undersøgelse. 2001-tal er fra Albæk, Togeby & Christiansen (2004). Signifikante forskelle ($p < 0,05$) er markeret med *.

Det ses, at forskere fra sundhedsvidenskab og naturvidenskab relativt oftere end samfundsvidenskab bruges til at udtale sig om egen forskning. Dermed understreges pointen om, at samfundsvidenskabelige forskere i meget vid udstrækning bruges til at analysere, udlægge og vurdere aktuelle hændelser, øvrig forskning og politiske spørgsmål. Samtidig ser vi, at det – sammenlignet med 2001 – er blevet meget mere almindeligt, at også forskere med sundheds- og naturvidenskabelig baggrund bruges til at udtale sig om andet end deres egen forskning.

Spørgsmål 3: Hvilke funktioner castes ekspertkilderne til at udfylde?

Tre væsensforskellige funktioner kortlægges: Den faktuelle ekspert; den vurderende ekspert; den handlingsanvisende ekspert. Det er oplagt, at funktionerne ofte er kædet sammen og supplerer eller understøtter hinanden. Ofte vil en vurdering trække på relevant faktuel viden. Og ofte vil en anbefaling eller efterlysning bygge på faglige vurderinger, som igen involverer faktuel viden.

Funktionerne er i tabel 13 opgjort på artikelniveau (ikke på kildeniveau), da fokus her er på journalistens anvendelse af ekspertkilder til at udfylde bestemte funktioner i den konkrete artikel.

Ekspertkildens funktion	%	n
Faktuel viden	79	409
Vurderinger	97	502
Handlingsanvisninger	21	106
		517

Tabel 13: Bemærk, at andelene summerer til 197 procent. Det skyldes, at mange af artiklerne omfatter to eller tre ekspertfunktioner. I disse tilfælde har vi kodet alle relevante ekspertfunktioner for den enkelte artikel og herefter beregnet andelene i forhold til antallet af artikler (517).

I så godt som alle artikler (97%) castes eksperter til at bidrage med vurderinger. I fire ud af fem artikler leverer ekspertkilder faktuel viden. Mens vi får bud på handlingsanvisninger i cirka hver femte artikel.

I langt de fleste tilfælde fremgår det tydeligt, at der er tale om en vurdering fra ekspertens side. Enten fremgår det direkte af ekspertens citat, eller også udtrykkes det sprogligt fra journalistens side med styrkemarkører som fx *tvivler på, gætter på, vurderer, skønner, forventer, formoder, antager, tror, frygter, mener, det tyder på*. Hvad der til gengæld ofte henstår i det uvisse, er, hvad disse forventninger, vurderinger og spekulationer bygger på.

Handlingsanvisninger defineres bredt som opfordringer, efterlysninger og anbefalinger, der kan optræde såvel implicit som eksplicit. Det kodes som en handlingsanvisning, når juraprofessoren om investeringsprojekter udtaler, at det burde være en sag for finanstilsynet; når eksperter inden for psykiatrien udtaler, at borgerne ikke skal tvinges i job; når lægen slår fast, at vi skal holde fast i håndspritten og hyppig håndvask; når økonomen om de afghanske flygtninge siger: "Lad os hjælpe disse mennesker godt i gang (…) så husk at få dem med til næste børnefødselsdag og inviter dem med i fodboldklubben"; når kommunalforskeren udtaler, at borgmesteren bør reagere.

Er der emner, hvor ekspertkilder særligt ofte castes til at levere handlingsanvisninger?

Handlingsanvisninger, emne	%	n
Politik i bred forstand	26	28
Sundhed og liv/kost/motion/velvære	17	18
Finans og privatøkonomi	12	13
Business	10	11
Klima/miljø, natur, forurening	9	10
Øvrige	25	26
	99	**106**

Tabel 14: 2021-tal fra denne undersøgelse.

Når det drejer sig om råd og handlingsanvisninger rettet mod læseren, er det typisk inden for enten sundhed (17%) eller finans og privatøkonomi (12%). En væsentlig del af handlingsanvisningerne er dog entydigt målrettet politikere og det politiske niveau (26%). Det viser sig især på områderne økonomisk politik, sundhedspolitik og international politik, men også på en række andre politiske områder. Tallene er dog små og skal derfor blot opfattes som pejlemærker og indikatorer.

Derudover er der emner, hvor råd og anvisninger retter sig mod både læsere, virksomheder og det politiske niveau – fx klima/miljø, bæredygtighed og forurening.

Konklusion

Der er flere begrænsninger i nærværende studie. For det første har vi valgt at se bort fra nichemedier, lokalmedier, tabloidmedier, online medier og TV/radio. Det har den åbenlyse konsekvens, at man ikke kan bruge resultaterne til at konkludere på det danske mediebillede generelt.

For det andet indfanges cirka 90 procent af ekspertkilderne med de valgte søgeord. Det betyder, at en lille gruppe eksperter går under radaren. Det drejer sig især om journalistikkens "egne" eksperter (journalister, kommentatorer, redaktører og lignende). De udgør skønsmæssigt 2-3 procent af ekspertkilderne i de valgte medier.

For det tredje kan man diskutere valget af perioden, som analyseres. Dels kunne man have randomiseret på dagsniveau i stedet for på ugeniveau. Og dels kan man diskutere, om COVID-19 gør vores analyseobjekt til en outlier. Analysen af de indsamlede data tyder dog ikke på, at der er en markant COVID-19-bias.

Med disse forbehold in mente finder vi dog en række interessante resultater.

Ekspertkilder i mediebilledet

Kortlægningen viser, at kun halvdelen af mediernes ekspertkilder er offentligt ansatte forskere. Privatansatte ikke-forskere udgør en meget betydelig andel af ekspertkilderne. Blandt disse udgør privatansatte økonomer, politologer, jurister og andre med en samfundsfaglig baggrund 79 procent. Når man møder en samfundsvidenskabelig ekspert i dagbladene, er det således mest sandsynligt, at vedkommende ikke er forsker, og at vedkommende er privatansat. Det gælder i helt særlig grad for økonomer. Det tyder på, at private organisationer, interesseorganisationer mv. har held med at få deres eksperter på banen og dermed sætte dagsordenen. Det kan være problematisk, da disse kilder repræsenterer særinteresser. En mulig forklaring kan også være, at journalisterne oplever, at økonomer fra det private erhvervsliv er mere tilgængelige og "leverer bedre". Det rejser spørgsmålet om, hvad der i praksis er journalisters kriterier for at vælge en samfundsvidenskabelig ekspertkilde. Og hvorfor universitetsøkonomer bruges så sjældent, når man har brug for en økonomisk ekspert.

Samtidig understreger det, at uafhængighed og forskningskompetence ikke er nagelfaste principper for journalisters udvælgelse af ekspertkilder – i hvert fald på det samfundsvidenskabelige område. Det flugter fint med Laursen & Trapp (2021), som konkluderer, at tidligere antagelser om, hvordan journalister definerer og skelner mellem henholdsvis parts- og ekspertkilder, udfordres – netop gennem en omfattende brug af privatansatte ekspertkilder. I deres analyse eksemplificeret ved journalisters brug af eksperter fra tænketanke og interesseorganisationer. Denne praksis skærper kravene til borgernes evne til selv at forholde sig kildekritisk til de ekspertkilder, som man løbende præsenteres for, og rejser det grundlæggende spørgsmål, *om* og i givet fald *hvordan* journalister udøver kildekritik, når man har brug for en ekspertkilde.

Offentligt ansatte forskerkilder

Når vi retter blikket mod de ekspertkilder, som er *offentligt ansatte forskere*, finder vi i lighed med tidligere forskning, at samfundsfaglige eksperter dominerer (52%), efterfulgt af sundhedsvidenskabelige eksperter (22%). Man kunne måske forvente, at sundhedsvidenskab ville fylde mere i lyset af COVID-19. Resultatet er dog ikke signifikant forskelligt fra billedet i 2001. Økonomer, som forsker, fylder relativt mindre sammenlignet med 2001.

22 procent af forskerkilderne er kvinder. Det er flere end i 2001 (14%), men fortsat et klart mindretal. Og uforholdsmæssigt få, når man holder det op imod andelen af kvinder, som er ansat som videnskabeligt

personale på landets universiteter (34 procent i 2018). De kvindelige forskerkilder kommer især fra sundhedsvidenskab og humaniora. Mens kvindelige forskerkilder fra naturvidenskab og de tekniske videnskaber forekommer sjældent. På disse vidensområder er der tilsyneladende ikke sket nogen udvikling i brugen af kvindelige kilder siden 2001.

Hvad kan forklare kønsubalancen? En del af forklaringen på skævheden kan være, at der fortsat er flest mandlige forskere at vælge mellem (Danmarks Talentbarometer, 2020). En anden forklaring kan være, at universiteternes ekspertlister underrepræsenterer kvinder (Hansen, 2021). En tredje mulig forklaring kan ligge i en forskel i mandlige og kvindelige forskeres opfattelse af, hvorvidt de er kompetente til at udtale sig, og i kvindelige kilders (manglende) lyst til at stille op (Nielsen, 2010). De danske undersøgelser af ekspertkilder og køn understøtter dog ikke denne forklaring. Der er i nyere tid udkommet to rapporter, som fokuserer netop på dette emne, den seneste med titlen: *Kønsfordelingen i Deadline II*. Analyserne peger på, at mandlige og kvindelige ekspertkilder siger nej tak til at deltage lige ofte. Disse to kildeundersøgelser beviser naturligvis ikke, at forklaringen er forkert, men de stiller spørgsmålstegn ved generaliserbarheden af de anekdotiske beretninger om tilbageholdne/forsigtige kvindelige forskere.

Dermed nærmer vi os en fjerde mulig delforklaring, som peger på medierne selv. Det er bemærkelsesværdigt, at Politiken i dag bruger betydeligt flere kvindelige forskerkilder end i 2001, mens Jyllands-Posten i dag ser ud til at ligge på samme – lave – niveau som i 2001. Det rejser spørgsmålet, om medierne prioriterer forskelligt med hensyn til køn og valg af forskerkilder. Er køn et fokusområde hos Politiken men ikke hos Jyllands-Posten? Og hvordan ser det ud på de øvrige danske medier?

Vendes blikket mod forskerens rolle, er det bemærkelsesværdigt, at blot 14 procent af forskerkilderne udtaler sig om egen forskning, altså i en *lærerrolle*. I 2001 var den tilsvarende andel 32 procent. Der er tale om et signifikant og bemærkelsesværdigt fald – både i absolutte tal og relativt i forhold til rollen som *offentlig ekspert*. Forskerkilder fra sundhedsvidenskab og naturvidenskab udtaler sig relativt oftere om egen forskning end forskerkilder fra samfundsvidenskab. Det understreger pointen om, at samfundsvidenskabelige forskere i meget vid udstrækning bruges til at analysere, udlægge og vurdere aktuelle hændelser, undersøgelser og politiske spørgsmål. Men samtidig ser vi, at det er blevet meget mere almindeligt end tidligere, at også forskerkilder fra sundhedsvidenskab og naturvidenskab udtaler sig om andet end egen forskning. Det rejser spørgsmålene, om disse områder er mere politiserede, end de var tilbage i 2001, og om medierne i dag i

højere grad end tidligere er optaget af selv at sætte dagsordenen med brug af forskerkilder i rollen som *offentlig ekspert*.

Ekspertkildens funktion

I stort set alle artikler castes en eller flere eksperter til at levere vurderinger. At der er tale om en vurdering, et skøn, en formodning eller forventning, fremgår i de fleste tilfælde eksplicit og transparent for læseren. Til gengæld står det ofte hen i det uvisse, hvad disse forventninger, vurderinger og spekulationer bygger på. Har journalisten spurgt kritisk ind til belægget og undersøgt, om der er konsensus blandt eksperter på området? Eller tager journalisten per automatik ekspertens vurderinger og spekulationer for pålydende?

I cirka hver femte artikel castes en eller flere eksperter til at levere handlingsanvisninger, forstået bredt som opfordringer, efterlysninger og anbefalinger. I nogle tilfælde er anvisninger målrettet læseren. Det gælder i særlig grad inden for sundhed (17%) og finans og privatøkonomi (12%). Men i mange andre tilfælde er anvisningerne målrettet politikere og det politiske niveau. I det øjeblik en ekspert leverer anbefalinger, kommer med opfordringer eller efterlyser handling fra politisk hold, er der tale om en form for magtudøvelse og påvirkning af den politiske dagsorden – både fra journalistens og ekspertens side. Er det et bevidst valg fra journalistens side at caste ekspertkilden til denne "aktivistiske" funktion? Og forholder journalisten sig til, i hvilken udstrækning der er tale om fagligt begrundede og/eller personligt motiverede handlingsanvisninger fra kildens side?

Analysen af ekspertkilder i danske medier peger tilbage på, at der i processen skal træffes en række journalistiske valg: Hvem er en relevant ekspertkilde? Hvilken rolle skal kilden optræde i? Og hvilke funktioner castes kilden til at udfylde? Analysen har påpeget en række dilemmaer forbundet med disse valg. I et opfølgende forskningsprojekt vil vi kvalitativt undersøge en række af disse valg og dilemmaer nærmere.

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KRESTEN ROLAND JOHANSEN
Lektor
Journalistuddannelsen
Danmarks Medie- og Journalisthøjskole
krj@dmjx.dk

JAKOB DYBRO JOHANSEN
Adjunkt
Journalistuddannelsen
Danmarks Medie- og Journalisthøjskole
jdj@dmjx.dk

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The Online Video Research Interview (OVRI)

Journalistica: The Methods Section

In this section, Journalistica puts a spotlight on research methods used in journalism studies and/or journalism practice.

LENE HEISELBERG
University of Southern Denmark

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1. Description of the method

Online Video Research Interviewing (OVRI) (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022) is a method that can be applied in scientific projects, e.g. within the field of journalism studies. Using established video conferencing platforms, such as Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet for data collection is highly relevant for journalism scholars and journalism practitioners since many people have grown accustomed to handling these. Yet, when conducting OVRIs, it is obvious that traditional ways of conducting a qualitative interview must be reconsidered to fit video conferencing platforms.

By employing online video conferencing platforms, it is possible to design a qualitative study that allows for a collection of rich and thick data, access to all shared data, ease of sharing stimulus material, and access to hard-to-reach demographics. According to the literature and experiences from conducting qualitative interviews on a video conferencing platform, the most prominent challenge regarding the quality of the interview is building rapport and restricted visual cues. Apart from that, my colleague and I found that turn-taking, participant activation through exercises, and participant validation are important to transform to conduct a high-quality interview on a video conferencing platform (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022).

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2. Example of use

Lobe, Morgan & Hoffmann (2022) give a nice overview of how and in which areas online qualitative interviewing has been applied. They provide a systematically organized evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of online qualitative interviewing methods in comparison to traditional in-person interviews. This produces five different areas for comparison: logistics and budget, ethics, recruitment, research design, and interviewing and moderating.

Furthermore, Keen, Lomeli-Rodriquez & Joffe (2022) confer unique advantages of online qualitative interviewing, such as: supporting researcher and participant populations with mobility challenges; enhancing international research where researcher presence or travel may be problematic.

I used the OVRI method in three empirical studies, both individual and group interviews. I had to conduct these studies during the corona lock-down, and therefore, I had to change my interview strategy to online. One of the studies was conducted for The Danish Broadcasting Corporation, and thus it was beneficial that stakeholders from the media company did not have to show up physically.

3. Main advantages and challenges of using the method

The main advantage of the OVRI approach is the convenience of the data collection process for both researcher and participants. Advantages for researchers include a time-saving and easy audio and visual data collection process.

Challenges for researchers include a lower number of participants in focus group discussions, potential participants' reluctance to share their personal space, and shorter time for data collection compared to in-person interviewing since online interviews tend to be shorter than in-person interviews (Epinion, 2021).

While conducting OVRIs, I learned that there are aspects of interviewing which must be altered to fit the platform, for instance turn-taking, participant activation through exercises and participant validation are important to transform to conduct a high-quality interview on a video conferencing platform (Heiselberg & Stepinska, 2022). Here, I want to elaborate on nonverbal communication cues and participant validation techniques:

Considering nonverbal communication: In most cases, a camera running while on Teams or Zoom will only be able to capture the head and some of the upper body of the persons interacting. This means that visual cues in the form of body language can be missed. Generally, when talking on online video conferencing platforms, it is recommended to look into the camera because then participants on the other side of the

screen will experience direct eye contact. Unfortunately, the downside is that when looking into the camera, you cannot see the participants, and consequently you can miss participant feedback: Is the participant listening? Does she understand the question? Is she agreeing/disagreeing? etc. I recommend from time to time to look into the camera to create the illusion of eye contact, i.e. when asking questions or rounding up, but the most important thing is to sense participants on the other side of the screen, and it can only be done by looking at the participants. An important piece of advice is to always avoid looking at yourself on the screen while talking, it will seem like your attention is elsewhere.

Participant validation techniques: In OVRIs participant validation (Creswell, 2013; Kvale, 1989), also known as member checking, is of increased importance to secure trust between interviewer and participant during the interview. In OVRIs, it is vital to check whether the interviewer has correctly understood the responses of the participants, especially when it comes to picking up subtleties such as irony, emotions, silences, or gestures (McGrath, Palmgren, & Liljedahl, 2019). During OVRIs, it can be helpful to ask frank questions. For instance, I had to ask: 'Why are you smiling?' because I could not determine if a participant smiled at something being said in the interview, or at something happening in her home that I was not aware of caused her to smile.

As a final point, it is important to stress the need to develop knowledge about which situations are uniquely well-suited to online interviewing (Keen, Lomeli-Rodriquez & Joffe, 2022). At present, we do not know in which situations to apply in-person interviewing and the OVRI method.

4. Ethical considerations

Established video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Teams are part of privately-owned companies, generating questions about data security.

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LENE HEISELBERG

Assistant professor
Centre for Journalism
University of Southern Denmark
lhei@journalism.sdu.dk