"The consumption of news media as democratic resources"

A cross-cultural research project

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**Cross Media**

The term "Cross-Media" is often explained as something that includes the distribution of content (e.g. music, text, pictures, video etc.) amongst different media.

**User created content**
- Refers to a wide variety of content created by the users of services or software that specifically solicit this kind of user participation.
"A day with the news media, 2014"
(Kirsten Hansen: early retired nursery school teacher)

• **Morning**
  – Browse email, then *Facebook* (no read, no reply)
  – *dr.dk*: read key news stories
  – Email + *Facebook*: serious read-reply
  – *Facebook*: shared links to news sites: *denkorteavis.dk, avisen.dk, ekstrabladet.dk, information.dk*, *YouTube*.
    • gets agitated: responds
    • "led astray": reads other news stories

• **Daytime**: (iterative) email, Facebook, *dr.dk*

• **Evening**:
  – Primetime TV news (DR or TV2)
  – TV Current affairs/debate

• "Google is my friend!" – leads to Wikipedia, news sites
Kirsten Jensen is....

• Not representative, not atypical
• Her Top-5 of news media:
  – Public service online news
  – Facebook
  – Public service TV
  – Public service TV current affairs/debate
  – Google
• Highest-ranked print newspaper: No. 16
• Social media sites have a dual function:
  – News media in their own right
  – Links to other online news media
Project frame: How do people use the news media - as a democratic and everyday resource?

- **Cross-media research focus** - beyond ‘silo’ research:
  - How do people navigate in today’s mediatized news landscape?
  - How do people make sense of ”the supermarket of news”?

- **Descriptive research purpose**: 
  - building an empirical **fact base** that **maps** news media as everyday and democratic resources

**Related international news research**

- Survey cross-national: The media landscapes of European audiences (Jensen et al. 2015)
- ‘Fortified’ qualitative cross-national 2014-2015:
  - What do the news media mean to people?
  - How do people build news repertoires from the ‘media manifold’(Couldry, Hepp)
Why do we use news?  
What does news do for us?

Audience ‘logics’ as ‘worthwhileness’: News media must be perceived by audience members as worthwhile!

7 worthwhileness factors: A news medium must:

• be worth the time spent
• maintain public connection to networks, through relevant content
  – democratic worthwhileness
  – everyday worthwhileness
• undergo normative negotiation with significant others
• have participatory potential (cf. ‘user-created content’)
• be affordable (price)
• have technological appeal (mobil/smart phone, text-TV/remote control)
• have situational fit (living-room, train/car commuter)

The worthwhile ‘equation’: - an aggregate ‘score’ determining what news media become part of our news diet
Beyond surveys? Adding a qualitative perspective

Research landscape dominated by “hard evidence”:

“The audience formations (...) are all based on measures of behavior. (...) people’s self-reports are especially prone to error. (This book is) based on meters or server-generated data.” (Webster 2014)

This project’s research interest:
• How do people make sense of their news media preferences?
• How are people’s choices from the ‘media manifold’ interrelated?
• How can cross-media news repertoires be discovered with a qualitative approach?
• How is news use a contextualized part of daily life?
• How do news repertoires interrelate with forms of democratic engagement and participation?
• How can such national profiles of news use be compared across cultures?
"The consumption of news media as democratic resources"
A cross-cultural research project

- Our solution: A qualitative methodology integrated with a reliable quantitative generalization capability (Q methodology)
- A spin-off from the COST Action Transforming Audiences, Transforming Societies (2010-2014), initiative of Hillel Nossek & Hanna Adoni
- 12 participating countries
  - Germany, Belgium (Flanders), Belgium (French), Netherlands, Poland, Denmark, Croatia, Portugal, Spain, Israel, New Zealand, Canada
- Replicates Schrøder’s original research design (Denmark 2009) and cross-national study with Flanders (2011)
  - Courtois, Schrøder & Kobbernagel 2014
- Fieldwork with 36 informants, 36 news media types
How to integrate the qualitative and the quantitative?

• **Qualitative inspiration:**
  – Depth-interview: A day in the life with the news media
  – Think-aloud when doing card puzzle game

• **Quantitative inspiration:**
  – Q sorts (factor analysis) finds typologies in small samples
  – Short questionnaire: political engagement/participation

• **Motivation for integrating:**
  – the interpretive procedures of qualitative analytical generalization are opaque (Schrøder 2012)
The qualitative-to-quantitative translation device
Kirsten’s puzzle game
36 news media categories on Q cards

- **TV news or current affairs** (on a TV set or any other device)
  - 8 news formats/types)
- **Radio news or current affairs** (on a radio set or any other device)
  - 3 news formats/types
- **Newspapers print**
  - 6 types
- **Newspapers and broadcasters’ online text multimodal news** (on a computer or any mobile device)
  - 9 types
- **News on social media** (on a computer or any mobile device)
  - 5 types
- **Other news media**
  - 5 types
Challenges of the 2014 cross-cultural fieldwork

• 2014 news media landscape differs substantially from 2009: different focus for the cards’ news media types:
  – from technology/device orientation to media institutions/formats orientation, irrespective of device
  – ‘social media’ must be differentiated

• The media systems are moderately different: countries struggle for maximum ‘fit’ with their national media system:
  – how fine-grained should social media be differentiated?
  – regional TV and newspapers in Germany?
  – text-TV in Denmark?
  – how to handle ‘non-existent’ media?

• Informants are differentially familiar with different media technologies and softwares within and across countries: How to handle ‘unknown’ media types?
The Danish factor solution: 6 factors
The F3 scores as example (Top 10 media)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>F3 Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tabloid online</td>
<td>2.59994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour TV news</td>
<td>1.87336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National PSB TV</td>
<td>1.67307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1.33503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-TV</td>
<td>1.30634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV current affairs light</td>
<td>0.98101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabloid print</td>
<td>0.88672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National quality, online</td>
<td>0.69325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV current aff. Serious</td>
<td>0.64234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free daily online</td>
<td>0.58804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F3 informants:
- No.26
- No.22
- No.5
- No.7
- No.14
- No.31
- No.13
Interpreting the pattern of a factor score: distribution of **prominent news media types**

Things we look for:

- News media in the Top 5
- **Highest-ranked print newspaper**
- National public service TV, or 24-hour news
- Text-TV
- **Highest-ranked radio news**
- Highest-ranked newspaper online
- Highest-ranked PSB national broadcaster online
- Highest-ranked social media (Facebook or Twitter)
- News aggregators
- Highest-ranked international news provider
The nexus of news repertoires and political engagement

Short questionnaire

Do those constituting a news repertoire also substantially share digital and deliberative practices:

– mediating news to and discussing news with others

– engagement in cultural practices

– political deliberation and participation online and offline
The nexus of news repertoires and political engagement

Short questionnaire: questions

5 questions:

1. How do you share or participate in news coverage?
   • 12 options: yes/no

2. Importance to you of media-related activities
   • 7 options, scale from 1 to 5

3. Role played by social and cultural activities in your life
   • 9 options, scale from 1 to 5

4. Role played by political activities last month
   • 4 options, scale from 1 to 5

5. Relevance of news as sources for conversation
   • 5 options, scale 1 to 5
Now a world premiere!

The 6 country repertoires 2014!
Denmark: Preliminary inventory of repertoires
Labels encapsulate the groups’ news use

- F1: Online quality omnivore
- F2: Hybrid PSM lover
- F3: ‘(Light) News Snacker’
- F4: Mainstream Networker
- F5: The intellectual/professional networker
- F6: Print addict
F1 Online quality omnivore

- Top 2: Online news media
  - National quality newspaper online; Born-online news sites
- Top3-5: Online news media
  - PSB online; YouTube; International news provider online

Profile: Prefers online news from both legacy and born-online news providers. Except for free print newspaper, the Top-10 is online only and includes legacy online, social media, aggregators, email alerts and blogs. TV and radio news are given low priority, approaching non-use. International outlook. Tend towards quality-conscious: National quality newspaper online no.1); PBS online no.3; International online no.5.

Political engagement/participation:
- Online/social media participation: High
- Political deliberation/engagement: High, NGO-oriented
- Everyday conversational resources: Online/social media
F2 Hybrid PSB lover

- Top 2: Radio PSB; Online PSB news
- Top 3-5: National quality online; National PSB TV; PSB Text-TV

Profile: 7 news media in the Top-10 are PSB institutional origin, 6 of them broadcast, 1 online, penchant for radio (no. 1). All of Top-10 are legacy news media. Social media are outside the staple news diet. Not at all averse to ‘familiar’ online news sources. Tend towards quality-conscious – PSB online+broadcast; national quality newspaper online; Current affairs TV + Radio.

Political engagement/participation:
- Online/social media participation: Non-existent
- Political delib./engage.: Low deliberation, some NGO engagement
- Conversational resources: Legacy news media off- and online (incl. radio)
F3 (Light) News Snacker

- Top 2: Tabloid online; 24-hour TV news
- Top 3-5: National PSB TV; Facebook; Text-TV

**Profile:** Goes for frequent news updates in the brief and light genres, on a versatile range of technological platforms. TV formats dominate. Print platforms play a minor role, print media are at the bottom of the ranks. But newspapers online play an important role (no.1). A fairly salient taste for depth of information (TV current affairs as no. 6 and 9). PSB TV formats are nos. 3, 5, 6, 8. Newspapers across platforms are nos. 1, 7, 8

**Political engagement/participation:**
- Online/social media participation: *High lean-back and lean-forward*
- Political delib./engag.: *Online delib. high; pol. engagements low*
- Everyday conversational resources: *Online news, TV news, and social media are near-equal, print sources dispreferred*
F4 Mainstream Networker

- Top 2: National quality daily print; Other social media
- Top 3-5: International TV news; National PSB TV; Facebook

Profile: Another versatile repertoire (cf. F1), with several news consumption strategies: One finding news through one’s networks; another searching for news through mainstream national and international news providers, incl. lean-forward news aggregators (no.10) that supplement a variety of lean-back quality suppliers (national print daily quality (no.1), national PSB TV news (no.4). Conspicuous absence of legacy media online.

Political engagement/participation:
- Online/social media participation: Moderate Lean-back
- Political delib./engagement: Delib. low; pol. engagement very low
- Everyday conversational resources: TV news and online news media near-equal, print sources playing a modest role
F5 The intellectual/professional networker

- Top 2: Facebook; Radio current affairs
- Top 3-5: Professional magazines; TV current affairs serious; News on Twitter

Profile: Shares with F4 key strategy to find news through social media networks. Unusual in a Danish context is the prominence of Twitter. The difference from F4 lies mainly in the prominence of two kinds of current affairs programs (radio, TV serious) - radio current affairs signals ‘niche intellectual community’. High ranking of professional/party-political magazines is unusual. Mainstream news media come in a second tier of importance.

Political engagement/participation:
- Online/social media participation: Lean-back dominates
- Political delib./engage.: online pol. delib. Moderate LOW???.; pol. engagem. strong
- Conversational resources: Online news, TV news, print news near-equal
F6 Print addict

• Top 2: *Free daily print; National quality newspaper print*
• Top 3-5: *Local weekly print; Local daily print; National PSB TV*

**Profile:** Dominated by printed national + local newspapers, incl. paid + free newspapers. Supplemented with PSB TV news, followed by diverse supplementary sources incl. 2 sources of TV news (Regional, TV current aff.) and two online-based services (Email alerts; Agreg.). Apart from these two differently personalized online news providers, online news media are conspicuous by their ‘absence’, both legacy media online news and social media.

**Political engagement/participation:**
• Online/social media participation: *None*
• Political delib./engagem.: Low social media delib.; moderate pol.engagem.
• Convers.res.: TV news + print news, online+social news all but absent.
News repertoires and political engagement: 
General insight

• Cultural activities: no differences
  – seeing family and friends is given maximum priority by all repertoires;
  – groups differ in terms of which particular cultural activity is most valued (cinema, exhibitions, concerts, etc.)

• Political engagement: membership of a political party is rated low or non-existent.

• There is no direct relationship between high levels of communicative deliberation (Q2) and political engagement (Q4):
  – F3 showing high Q2 (online delib.) and low Q4 (pol. engagem.)
  – F5 showing low Q2 (online delib.) and high Q4 (pol. engagem.)
  – F6 showing low Q2 (online delib.) and considerable Q4 (pol.engagem).
What next: deeper interpretation of national repertoire

The news media mixes of the six repertoires:

Orientation towards traditional and new platforms:

Uniformity vs. versatility:

- R1: uniform online (almost)
- R2: very hybrid re media platforms; uniform re PSM
- R3: versatile platforms
- R4: strongly versatile platforms
- R5: versatile niche orientation
- R6: uniform print orientation
**What next: interpreting the national repertoires?**

Coupling the repertoires with

- ‘Thick’ informant discourses – back to the qualitative:
  - interview transcripts for fine-tuning of the repertoires’ news consumption profiles
  - Depth understanding of political engagement-and-participation profiles

- Demographic profiles: age, gender, education, geography

- Further generalization of the repertoires: indexing the ranks of media categories?
‘Index’ of news sources in Denmark?

Creating index table 1) for each repertoire, 2) for the country
- calculated as an average rank for selected categories of news media

**Suggested media category indexes:**
- Newspaper print index: ranks of 2 top print newspapers
- Newspaper online index: ranks of 2 top online newspapers
- TV index: ranks of 2 top TV news sources
- Radio index: ranks of 2 radio news sources
- TV online index: rank of 1 media (DK)
- Social media index: ranks of 2 media (Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, whichever is highest)

- **Index - a heuristic lens for cross-national comparison?**
# Danish news index
(the lower average, the better)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newsp. Print</th>
<th>Newsp. online</th>
<th>TV news</th>
<th>Radio news</th>
<th>Broadc. online</th>
<th>Social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark Profile:</strong> role of the media types (average ranking across reps.)</td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>3,3</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>4,7</td>
<td>4,2</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Denmark profile:</strong> No. of times ranked 1 or 2 in the 6 reps.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Television news dominates
- Three runners-up: printed newspapers, Online newspapers, Social media
- Broadcasters online and Radio trailing considerably

- F2, F3 F4, F5 are hybrid across traditional and new media
- F1 and F6 have an either-or pattern
What next: cross-national comparison of repertoires?

- The full picture: nation-by-nation ensembles – similarities and differences of the national repertoire systems

- Cross-national spotlight on selected news media categories:
  - Role of public service media across nations
  - Role of social media across nations

- Cross-national spotlight on urgent issues:
  - ‘Common ground’ versus ”Echo chambers”?
  - Nexus of news media/political engagement

- Cross-national spotlight on different media systems
  (Perusko et al. 2014; Brüggemann et al. 2014)
Going translocal with Q? Beyond territorial comparison?

- Transnational Q analysis of total data set: towards transnational news repertoires

- “Without the data first being aggregated on a national-territorial basis (...), one can obtain a system of categories that describes not simply national differences, but more general common factors and differences in cultural patterns.” (Hepp 2013: 140f.)

- Building a new typology with transcultural membership: Multinational news consumption repertoires?
Thank you!