So much more than news

Revisiting press epochs from an explorative study of non-news genres in Danish newspapers, 1918–2018

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ABSTRACT

Newspapers are so much more than news content. However, the history of journalism is typically told through studies of news genres or news epochs. In this article, we test the theory of three epochs of Danish press history in an explorative study of non-news genres, as exemplified by letters to the editor, editorials, and "celebratory items" on birthdays and deaths. Through an investigation of newspapers from 1918 to 2018, we demonstrate how these non-news forms were established in the first half of the twentieth century, were institutionalised during the period after World War II, and have been transitioning over the past two decades. This confirms the theory of the partisan press epoch, the omnibus press epoch, and the segment press epoch in Danish press history. At the same time, this study expands our understanding of these three press epochs by showing how the non-news genres provided in printed newspapers are important in the construction of readers as a class in the partisan press period; as a population in the omnibus press period; and, most recently, as elites in the segment press period.

KEYWORDS: press history, newspapers, audiences, journalism, partisan press

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Introduction

What would the history of newspapers look like if we put aside the news genre for a moment to examine the other genres that are part of the modern newspaper? The history of newspapers is most often told from the perspective of news content. As a prominent example of American newspaper history, Michael Schudson's *Discovering the News* (1978) tells the story of news journalism and how this specific idea developed alongside and was the product of social history. Likewise, news and news journalism's organisation and role are particularly important in James Curran and Jean Seaton's history of the British press, *Power Without Responsibility* (1981). In these and other studies of news journalism, Anglo-American press history is characterised by a shift from a party or partisan press to a commercial press by the turn of the twentieth century (see also Shepard, 1972, for American history; and Koss, 1981, 1984, for British history). News content is also the cornerstone of Jean Chalaby's historical study (1996), which suggested that journalism is an Anglo-American invention that gradually took hold in France and other European countries.

In Scandinavia, press history is also most often told from the perspective of the news genre (e.g., Bastiansen, 2009; Høyer, 2005; Hadenius & Weibull, 1999; Søllinge, 1999; Thomsen, 1972). In this optic, there is a general consensus that the shift from a party press system closely tied to the political system to a more commercialised, professionalised, and news-based press system happened later than it did in the US and UK. In Norway, Svennik Høyer (2005) has argued that the partisan press expanded from 1880 to 1920 and declined in the 1980s, while Henrik G. Bastiansen (2009) has asserted that the shift did not occur until the turn of the twenty-first century. Regarding Sweden, Lennart Weibull (2013) has suggested that the widespread death of newspapers in 1950s Sweden, which was particularly common among small social democratic newspapers, indicated a dismantling of the nation's party press.

In Denmark, the party press period began with the Danish Constitution of 1849 and reached its quantitative heyday in the 1930s, when most cities had four newspapers – one for each of the largest political parties – a system known as the four-paper press. After World War II, the newspaper market changed. Political parties began closing or selling off most of their newspapers around the country, and the journalistic profession came into being with the introduction of journalism education, inspired by Anglo-American ideals of "objective" and "balanced" news. Newspapers became broader in both size and scope, a period referred to as the "omnibus press" period (Søllinge, 1999), from the Latin term omnibus, meaning "for all". For Jette Søllinge (1999), the dismantling of the partisan press began with the 1905 press reform, when Henrik Cavling, editor of the newspaper *Politiken*, began transforming the paper from a political-party daily to an omnibus paper. Stig Hjarvard (2007) also argued that the partisan press, which was primarily outside the capital, and the popular press, which consisted of entertainment newspapers primarily serving Copenhagen, were replaced by the omnibus press, but he dates the transition to after World War

II, when the social democratic newspaper market was also dismantled and local monopolies replaced the four-paper press (see also Schultz, 2007).

As these examples show, most studies of press epochs in the Anglo-American and Scandinavian research tradition focus on news genres or prioritise the development of news genres as compared to other genres. When historical studies *do* consider non-news genres, these are most often deep and qualitative case studies that contribute to our understanding of a specific genre, rather than contributing to press epoch theory (e.g., Belmont, 2009; Le, 2010; Nielsen, 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). Drawing on Peter Dahlgren, McGuigan argued that media research has had a division of labour in which cognitive communication has been associated with the public sphere and affective communication has been associated with popular culture. In contrast to this, McGuigan has suggested that we speak of a "cultural public sphere" that includes both culture and politics: "The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective (aesthetic and emotional) modes of communication" (McGuigan, 2005: 435). In line with this, we argue that a study of the non-news genres is important to include the affective modes of communication used in newspapers and, thus, increase our understanding of the role of newspapers as forums for not only politics but also culture.

With the intention of contributing to a firmer empirical grounding for Danish press history, the research question guiding the article is as follows:

> RQ. Do press epochs look the same from the perspective of non-news as they do from studies of the news?

We seek to answer this question by presenting an explorative study of three non-news genres: letters to the editor, celebratory items, and editorials. Letters to the editor are letters that readers send to a newspaper about issues of concern. A vital function of these letters is to contribute to a professionally edited and cultivated public debate (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004, 2008. Celebratory items (adapted from Byrman, 2004) may be considered a meta-genre, as they involve various textual formats with the same theme: celebrations of distinct occasions, such as birthdays, deaths, or anniversaries. In this article, we focus on birthdays and deaths. The editorial, leader, or editorial column is a commentary article expressing the newspaper's views on a specific matter (Firmstone, 2019) Traditionally, it is an unsigned, institutional opinion on an issue or event, appearing in approximately the same place on the editorial page daily (Hynds, 1990: 303). We have chosen to analyse these three non-news genres but not to consider, for example, personal ads or advertisements, which could also be called non-news, as the three chosen genres represent content that is produced by journalists (editorials), the public (letters to the editor), and both (celebratory items). Newspaper historians and experienced journalists alike know that letters to the editor written under pseudonyms may not always be produced by the public. Rather, journalists, professional communicators, and politicians have been known to hijack these letters to stage a debate. We return to more detailed methodological reflections on non-news in a later section. First, we discuss theories of press epochs.

Press epochs

How are press epochs delineated and analysed, and what empirical material goes into their construction? In "Constructing Epochs in the History of the Press", Svennik Høyer (1998) identified three parameters for defining press epochs based on a critical reading of the epochs constructed in Jürgen Habermas's seminal *Strukturwandel der Öffentlighkeit* [*The structural transformation of the public sphere*] (1991/1962):

> a) the cultural base of journalism – its types, forms, and content and presentation; b) the material base of technology and economy of production, from which develops the changing structure of markets and competition; and c) the institutional base of power, as demonstrated by the organization and professionalization of journalism, as well as by the negotiations and interactions performed between the press and other political and social institutions. (Høyer, 1998: 4)

A similarly broad, nonlinear way of understanding press epochs is that of Ida Schultz (later Willig, 2007; see also Willig, 2010). Willig has suggested seven empirical indicators for understanding press history based on a sociological analysis of policy documents from Danish news media organisations and interviews with the largest Danish newspapers' editors-in-chief: platforms (possible outlets); ownership logic (why owners own newspapers); news selection, or editorial logic as to what is viewed as "good" content; the advertising market and business models of newspapers; technology, as infrastructure both for producing and consuming journalism; audience construction (how newspapers understand their audiences); and journalism itself, or the professional journalistic ethos.

Analysing the empirical indicators, Willig suggested the existence of a new and recent press epoch – the segment press epoch – which follows the partisan press and omnibus press epochs observed by other media historians (Hjarvard, 1995; Søllinge, 1999; Thomsen, 1972; Thomsen & Søllinge, 1991). The partisan press period is typically dated as the period after the Danish constitution and before World War II; the omnibus press period is typically dated as the period after World War II. In the original study proposing the theory (Schultz, later Willig, 2007) and the expanding analysis of one of its indicators, audience construction (Willig, 2010), the question of genres was not addressed. On the one hand, it is possible that the theory of the three press epochs is also a valid framework for understanding non-news genres or, more generally, all journalistic genres: As the theory is based on an empirical analysis of general policy documents taken from newspapers, such as mission statements and yearbooks, together with open-ended interviews with editors-in-chiefs, and as four of the indicators are structural and refer to material or economic conditions (i.e., platforms, advertising market, ownership logic, and technology), it can be expected that the analysis of these indicators is also valid as a framework for describing non-news. On the other hand, it is a more open question whether an analysis of the three indicators that are closer to journalism practice (i.e., news selection,

journalism, and audience construction) would lead to the same conclusions using a new empirical, material sampling non-news genres in all three press epochs. Therefore, it is a critical research task to investigate whether an additional in-depth analysis of non-news genres will confirm the Danish theory of three press epochs. More specifically, we ask whether the selection of non-news is as "partisan", "broad", and "segmented" as the selection of news during the three press epochs, as well as whether the audience is constructed as "voters" in the partisan press epoch, as "citizens" in the omnibus epoch, and as "consumers" in the segment press epoch.

Methodology

In *The Form of the News,* Kevin Barnhurst and John Nerone (2001) adopted a broad and holistic perspective on newspapers by examining the newspaper in toto. They considered many different forms of content, including pictures, typography, and the organisation of content in their historical analysis of American newspapers. They approached the topic from the observation that the public uses and understands the newspaper not as singular, detached pieces of information, as it is treated in most content studies, but as an entity or whole: "Readers don't read news; they swim in it" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001: 7). Newspapers – and probably also their ancestors, such as journals and political pamphlets – were never intended to be received by "all" or by "the public" at large; rather, they were always intended to communicate with a specific audience. As Barnhust and Nerone (2021: 2) wrote, "the public has always been segmented by age, gender, race, class, income, religion, and the like (although newspapers only recently have become more inclined toward thinking of their audiences as a group of disparate markets)". For Barnhust and Nerone, this imagined relationship is the key to understanding various newspaper types and how they have developed over time. For them, these *represented relationships* should be viewed as "the way that the newspaper imagines and proposes that it mediates the world" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001: 3). Another way of zeroing in on represented relationships is to draw on genre theory. As Carolyn Miller (1984) notes, we view genres as social actions in which people collectively establish and develop ways of acting together. In this way, "genres can serve […] as an index to cultural patterns" but also be "key to understanding how to participate in the actions of the community" (Miller, 1984: 165). Put more simply, communication never takes place in a vacuum; rather, it is always enabled and constrained by former expressions of similar kinds (Jamieson, 1975; see also Miller, 2015). In this way, genres can be viewed as a unique way of examining cultural patterns, negotiations, and developments: "[Genres] are pregnant with possible conflict, not just about theory, but about practices affecting real interests, such as the flow of power, status, and resources" (Freedman & Medway, 1994: 11). In relation to the concept of epochs, genres are concrete ways of investigating recurrent situations with typified actions (i.e., who gets to speak, about what, and with what publics in mind). Thus, we argue that non-news genres are important objects of study when one intends to understand the various epochs of press history.

What do we mean when we refer to "non-news genres"? On the one hand, the term can simply be viewed as newspaper content that is labelled or sectioned differently than news or content that is not reporting on a current event. On the other hand, we acknowledge that this formal understanding of non-news (i.e., "not" news) relies on a precise definition of news, which may be difficult to determine based on the empirical material. In the early days of modern newspapers, for example, it was not always easy to identify "news" and, thus, just at difficult to identify "non-news". Nevertheless, this study is the first explorative attempt to do so. For definitional purposes of conducting a historical, empirical study, we view non-news as all the journalistic genres that are not news or ads (e.g., editorial columns, reviews, and portraits), as well as content that journalists edit, although it may be produced by others (e.g., letters to the editor from the public; drawings, cartoons, and caricatures produced by artists; op-eds submitted by pundits; and ads placed by companies). As part of a maximum-variety strategy, in this study we investigate three of these genres: letters to the editor, which readers submit; editorial columns, which leading editors or journalists write; and celebratory items, for example, portraits and small notices, which can be produced by both the public and by journalists.

To find comparable and generalisable material, we examined the six largest Danish newspapers (based on circulation) that could be traced throughout the sampling period: two tabloids, *Ekstra Bladet* and *BT*, and four classic broadsheets, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, and *Social-Demokraten* (later *Aktuelt*). The six newspapers all existed during the party press period as either centre-left newspapers (*Ekstra Bladet*, *Politiken*, and *Social-Demokraten*) or centre-right newspapers (*BT*, *Berlingske Tidende*, and *Jyllands-Posten*). The tabloids cut their formal ties with the political party system earlier than the broadsheets, and even though no direct or formal ties remain between Danish newspapers and political parties today (e.g., in the form of financial support or board members from political parties), it is still common knowledge – and detectable in the opinions expressed in editorial columns (Hjarvard et al., 2004; Pedersen & Skov, 2006) – that all six newspapers in the sample still hold centre-right or centre-left positions but are not formally "married" to particular political parties.

The empirical material has been sampled to cover the period from the modern Danish newspaper's birth, which has been dated to 1905 by Søllinge (1999), to the present. In a pilot study, we skimmed all newspapers in the sample, beginning with issues from the late 1890s and then considering every five years forward in time. This led us to three strategic decisions: first, the sampling period begins after World War I, a time when the modern Danish newspaper was beginning to find its form and several newspapers still published today were established. Second, the pilot study indicated that sampling newspapers every 20 years would allow us to see historical developments. Third, the pilot study resulted in choosing 1918 as the first sampling year, as it was one of the first years in which we could begin to see changes in the newspapers' forms. Accordingly, further empirical material was collected in 1938, 1958, 1978, 1998, and 2018. One reason for beginning in 1918 and not, for example, 1916 or 1919, which would likely have

yielded similar results, was because another Danish content study of political journalism used 1958, 1978, and 1998 as sampling years (Pedersen et al., 2001); this allows future research projects to perform comparisons.

To avoid sampling in which one specific event (e.g., a change in government) influences the form of the news (e.g., carrying more portraits, editorials, or letters to the editor than usual), a "constructed week" (see Luke et al., 2011) was sampled each year (e.g., a Monday in March, a Tuesday in April, and a Wednesday in May; the weekdays were changed for each sampling). Luke and colleagues (2011) argued that a sample of six constructive weeks "is enough" (to paraphrase the title of the study) to generalise when using this methodology. Nevertheless, we prefer to label our study as explorative, as we have not been able to find studies that match our historical span, number of newspaper titles, and sampling years, not to mention the idea of investigating selected non-news genres. This sampling led to a large corpus of newspapers (some on microfilm and others in other material and digital formats) that were all transformed into PDF format, which could be easily read, shared, and coded. From this large empirical corpus, we created three datasets. The first dataset consists of letters to the editor in 1918, 1938, 1958, 1978, 1998, and 2018 (N = 1,693). The second dataset consists of editorials during the same period (N = 235). The third dataset consists of celebratory items (adapted from Byrman, 2004, in describing Swedish "hyldningstekster" [celebratory texts] and from the Danish term "mærkedagsomtaler" [mentions of important occasions]). Celebratory items are mentions of occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, and funerals. The first two datasets each cover one newspaper genre, whereas the third dataset covers various newspapers genres, such as portraits and obituaries (N = 854) and small notices (N = 2,782). The reason for not analysing one of the genres, for example, portraits, but, rather, creating a larger dataset of celebratory items including many genres is twofold: First, we understand celebratory items as venues in the newspaper in which the public communicates to the public regarding issues that are not political but, rather, closer to the private and cultural sphere. Thus, they may represent a different understanding of "publics" and the "audience" than the letters to the editor. A second argument for considering celebratory items in toto is that what we recognise as genres today, for example, the portrait, are not as distinct and recognisable in the first years of our sampling.

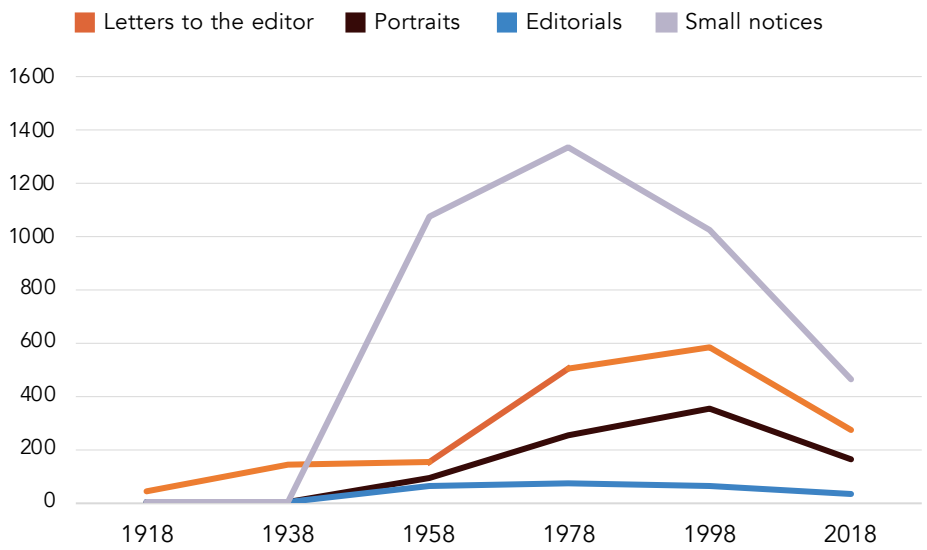
The next section presents a descriptive genre analysis of non-news in Danish newspapers from 1918 to 2018. The descriptive analysis is the result of repeated iterations of alternating qualitative readings guided by questions related to the form of non-news (What non-news items can we find in the newspapers, what form do they have, and where are they placed?) and questions related to theory of the segment press (Who appears in the non-news genres and what construction of the reader might this point to?). The method for analysing the material can be called thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009; Fürsich, 2009). Although this is a qualitative methodology, our first explorative readings of the corpus led to the formulation of coding categories (length, topic, gender, byline, writer's occupation, civil status, and pseudonym), which the material was then coded for

and which helped our thematic reading. The descriptive analysis will be followed by an interpretive analysis of "represented relationships" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001) in non-news genres. Then, we discuss our findings and conclude the study.

Non-news genres in Danish newspapers, 1918–2018

Figure 1 depicts the empirical corpus and numerical development of letters to the editor, editorials, portraits, and small notices (celebratory items less than five lines long) from 1918 to 2018.

FIGURE 1 Selected non-news in Danish newspapers, 1918–2018



Portraits and small notices are not counted in 1918 or 1938, as the celebratory items in the newspapers were either scattered, difficult to recognise, or non-existent. In fact, reading through the selected newspapers from 1918 to 2018 was a much more intense and messier affair than we expected. Merely assessing what was news and what was non-news was an analytical task in the 1918 sample and, to some degree, in the 1938 sample, and the same could be said about distinguishing various non-news genres from one another. From 1958 to 1978, the number of selected non-news items increases in total, and letters to the editor and portraits continue to increase until 1998. From 1998 to 2018 – in the period when digital newspapers and social media are born – all non-news genres included in this sample decrease.

A somewhat surprising finding regarding the simple counting of different items is the relatively low numbers of editorials in 1918 ($N = 4$) and 1938 ($N = 5$). At these points in time, the lead article was a well-established genre in the UK (Liddle, 2016, but in Denmark, it appears that editorials and leader articles were still under development in the years before World War II, at least in the largest newspapers included in our sample. One potential explanation for this could be the Nordic tradition of partisan newspapers, in which the opinion of the newspaper was "built-in" or implicit in the contract with the reader. In this way, the social democratic newspaper had no "need" for an editorial or leading article to express a certain opinion on a current event, as "all" content was selected and angled from a social democratic angle. And, of course, the same can be said for the conservative, centre-left liberal, and centre-right liberal newspapers of the four-paper press or partisan press period.

The next section presents a qualitative description of the empirical sample. We argue that in 1918 and 1938, editorials, celebratory items, and letters to the editor found their form and became *established* as genres. In 1958 and 1978, the three genres obtained designated pages and were, as such, *institutionalised* parts of the newspaper. The samples from 1998 and 2018 demonstrate that editorials, portraits, and letters to the editor have been in *transition* as genres. This argument is explored below using qualitative examples and illustrations from the vast empirical material.

The establishment of non-news genres (pre–World War II)

Before World War II, sectioning, as we know it in today's papers, had not been developed. Instead, content was placed in the order that it was received, and non-news genres were not labelled clearly (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 *Berlingske politiske og Avertissements Tidende*, 1918



Berlingske politiske og Avertissements Tidende

LØRDAG MORGEN DEN 28 DECEMBER 1918.

Endnu ingen Afgørelse i Berlin.

„Vorwärts" forudser et nyt Kup fra Spartacus-Folkene og opfordrer til straks igen at smide dem ud af Regeringsbygningerne.

Comments: The front page indicates that the content appeared in each issue in the order it was received and was not yet labelled or sectioned clearly. Therefore, non-news genres appeared randomly in the newspaper.

Before World War II, letters to the editor appeared infrequently and were placed in newspapers randomly. The letters were short, often only a few lines, and they addressed primarily national issues. Frequent subjects concerned the scarcity of food and various other materials; how to solve this with a fair coupon system; and other suggestions for practical, everyday solutions. The party press was evident at this point (e.g., in the social democratic newspaper, workers discussed working conditions and, frequently, the police and their behaviour in the streets). In Denmark, the welfare state and its institutions were being developed at the time, a topic that was the centre of the discussions in this newspaper. At this early stage, the letters were often signed using pseudonyms, typically emphasising the author's profession (e.g., "the doctor", "the police chief", "the tailor", "the professor", "the writer", "the lawyer", and, in our sample, "the window cleaner"), indicating that professions were an essential way to establish oneself as an author. Establishing a loyal relationship with the newspaper also seemed to be a vital function of some pseudonyms (e.g., "a daily reader", "an old subscriber", and "an admirer of *Ekstra Bladet*"). From time to time, wittier pseudonyms were used (e.g., "the hops-smoker" [humlerygeren], and "Miss Sunshine" [Frk. Solskin]. Because of the use of pseudonyms, we could not be sure whether the authors were men or women, but because of general societal development in the nation at the time, we must assume that most writers were men, and based on the letters that indicated gender, this turned out to be accurate.

During the same period, small notices of celebratory items were found daily in most papers, but these were primarily in the form of scattered notices and lists. The newspapers based in Copenhagen printed death lists from the local parish, including the names and occupations of those in the parish who died. Next to these lists were funeral lists with the names of the deceased, along with the times and places of funeral services. The lists were official announcements from the parish administration and did not seem to differentiate one paper from another. Every death in Copenhagen received at least one line in the newspaper. From 1918 onward, we also find that death ads placed by relatives of the deceased were very similar to modern-day death ads, both in form and content (e.g., "My beloved husband, blacksmith Jørgen Hansen, has left us", followed by the date of his death and, sometimes, information on funeral services). Spouses or other family members signed the ads. Both death lists and death ads were placed near each newspaper's ad section (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 *Politiken*, 1918



Comments: These death [*døde*] ads were placed near lists of religious services in synagogues and churches, as well as official death and funeral lists from the cities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg. Next to the lists are various ads mixed with other official announcements.

In the 1938 newspapers, we find a significant partisan affiliation in the death ads in the socialist paper *Social-Demokraten*. The union, not the family, often placed death ads, and the union's logo is printed on top of each ad. These ads paid homage to loyal union members, often including their union membership

numbers, and notably, these unions' banners were displayed at funerals, with many union members in attendance (see Figure 4). We found very few portraits at the beginning of the twentieth century. Some birthday notices appeared as a few lines, and even fewer included lengthy portraits. The longer portraits only appeared in tribute to well-known public figures, either public servants (e.g., teachers) or actors. Obituaries were exceedingly rare during this period, but we sometimes found reportage on funerals of public figures that focused on who attended the funeral, rather than the life and merits of the deceased. Birthday portraits and funeral reports were mostly about men, while death lists and death ads gave more equal treatment to men and women.

FIGURE 4 Death ad section from the socialist newspaper *Social-Demokraten*, 1938


Social-Demokraten for alle Hjem.

Avertér i Social-Demokraten.

DØDSFALD

Skræddernes Fagforening af 1873.

Vigge Streyer

Karen Marie Andersen

Laurits H. P. Jensen,

Dagmar Lethsborg

Niels Martin Kristensen,

Karen Jørgensen

Christian Peter Jensen

DET HVIDE KORS

Br. Niels Pedersen

Hjalmar Olsen,

Karen Olsen

Johannes Madsen

F. Herodes

Per Nilsson

ANTON HESTBÆK

Billige Priser paa

DØDSANNONCER

Comments: Both the Metal Workers Union and Tailors Union of 1873 placed death ads urging union members to attend the funeral of a former colleague.

While looking for editorials, we find content before our first sample in 1918 that might be identified as the newspaper's "views", but the items are not what we would view as editorials today. Rather, they are critical or satirical comments about a prominent politician signed with what looks like a pseudonym. A bit surprisingly, we see the first example of the editorial genre – in forms that resemble those of today – in tabloid newspapers, and it is also in the tabloid newspapers that editorials first become a recurring genre. From 1918 onward, editorials began to appear in more recognisable forms and on a more regular basis in the morning papers, but just as in the case of letters to the editor and celebratory items, they were not printed in the same section or on the same page from edition to edition but, rather, constantly moved around. Generally, we find that newspapers' "views" are not yet as separate from the "news" or as clearly sectioned in 1918 and 1938 as they will be in later years.

The institutionalisation of non-news genres (post–World War II)

Our sample of newspapers from 1958 and 1978 shows that the three genres seem to have found a stable form and place in the Danish newspapers examined.

FIGURE 5 *Politiken*, 1978


POLITIKEN

Til Marienborg

Smiths frækhed

LÆSERNE MENER

Med skreven hånd

Byggemoms-spiralen

DAG TIL DAG

Comments: Letters to the editor appeared regularly on designated pages in *Politiken* on 2 December 1978. On the same page, in the lefthand column, are the two editorials of the day. On top is an editorial on national politics, and below that, there is an editorial on foreign policy.

During the period after World War II, letters to the editor began to appear in all types of newspapers, they more often appeared on designated pages daily, as with today's newspapers. In these letters, ordinary people wrote about their worries and solutions to current societal issues. In an op-ed in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*, historian Asbjørn Christensen (2017) pointed to the autumn of 1958 as a key moment in which sectioning and designated pages for the genre took off in most Danish newspapers, describing it as "a democratization of the public debate". Editorials are now also a common feature in the Danish newspapers, and some newspapers even have two separate editorials, one for national political issues and one for international affairs (see Figure 5).

From 1958 to 1998, the various celebratory items found a more consistent form and place in these newspapers, and over the years, the elements have been placed on designated pages under template headlines "Names (of the day)" or something similar in broadsheet papers, while they more or less disappear from tabloid newspapers. The parish death lists slowly disappeared, but death ads were consistently present on these pages. From 1978 onward, it was common to include the birth dates of the deceased alongside the dates of death. Unions were no longer present in *Social-Demokraten*'s death ads. Portraits honouring individuals on their birthdays became a more frequent feature of these pages, but the difference between birthday lists and birthday portraits is sometimes murky (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 The "Names" page in *Jyllands-Posten*, 1978



Comments: Several notices on birthdays and deaths are listed alongside wedding anniversaries and the audience list from the Queen's court.

The shortest notices were only a few lines long and did not state much more than the name, occupation, and hometown of the celebrated person, while others were a bit longer and may have included some of the merits of and highlights from the person's life. Very few birthday portraits were lengthy, and the ones that were exclusively featured prominent, well-known public figures. These portraits' origins, regardless of their length, are equally inscrutable. The public seems to use the pages to celebrate family members or friends, for example, parents or grandparents congratulating children (see Figure 7), alongside celebrations of honorary individuals written by journalists.

Now, the obituary is a distinct genre, but during the entire period, it was less frequent than the birthday portrait and not a daily feature of newspapers. Small notices about individuals upon their deaths resembled a mixture of lists and notices on birthdays. Only prominent members of society were honoured with obituaries that included their merits and other details about the lives of the deceased to highlight their influence on society. During this period, the newspapers predominately paid tribute to men with birthday portraits or obituaries. This finding corresponded with Fowler and Bielsa's (2007) study of obituaries, in which the share of women was consistently low during the twentieth century.

FIGURE 7 *Politiken*, 1978



Comments: In 1978, *Politiken* offered the opportunity for readers to send in personal birthday greetings to family members, who were often children.

In 1978 and 1998, the editorial became distinctly institutionalised across all the sampled Danish newspapers. In 1958, editorials were recognisable as a genre and published more often, though not daily. Some newspapers published one editorial per issue, while others may have published up to three editorials on the same day. In 1958, we also find that editorials were increasingly published on the same page of each newspaper. In tabloids, editorials were relatively short (35–80 lines on average), while they were relatively longer in broadsheets (100–160 lines on average). Examining the editorials across all the sampled newspapers more closely during 1958–1998, we find that most editorials focused on domestic issues, which was also the case in Sweden (Hadenius et al., 1970: 144). Foreign affairs was also a regular topic, while the subjects often present in today's Danish newspapers (e.g., "culture" and "business") were less often addressed from an editorial perspective (Willig et al., 2015). We also find, as have studies on editorials in the Swedish press (Nord, 2001), that most editorials expressed opinions *against* politicians, parties, and contested issues, and only rarely expressed support for politicians or their positions and issues in general. Nord (2001) has argued that the reason for this is that the editors, and thus the newspaper, wanted to distance themselves from the party press and strive for a more professionalised and neutral ideal that avoided showing preference for specific candidates. During the omnibus press period, we do not find one editorial in our sample that is signed.

The transition of non-news genres (end of the twentieth century)

In 1998 and 2018, the relatively stable form and placement of letters to the editor, celebratory items, and editorials that was characteristic of earlier years seem to be in transition.

FIGURE 8 *BT*, 2018



Comments: This tabloid still prints letters to the editor, but professional columnists take up more and more space. In this issue, a journalist and a politician provide their perspectives on current issues.

In 1998 and 2018, co-edited letters to the editor began to appear, more professional columnists participated in the debate (see Figure 8), and letters also became longer over time. In our sample, the number of letters to the editor increased in 1999 but dropped dramatically in 2018. Activity peaked in 1998, and when we compare 1998 to 2018, letter volume fell by half in 2018. One potential explanation is that opinion genres moved from print to digital platforms. Unsurprisingly, men are predominantly represented in the letters to the editor (see Bro, 2000), as in the news genres (see Willig et al., 2015; Jørndrup & Bentsen, 2015). In our sample, this is evident in both the early and later years, with men being represented twice as commonly as women in the letters-to-the-editor section.

In the 2018 newspapers, the "Names" pages remained a designated section in morning papers (see Figure 9). The parish death lists were replaced by the newspaper's own birthday lists of prominent members of the public. Death ads remained, but birthday ads were no longer present. Quantitatively, there were fewer portraits than in 1998 and 1978, but there seems to be a renewed editorial interest in this genre. The celebratory items, whether they are birthdays or obituaries, were longer and often written under journalists' bylines, which was rare during the omnibus period. While the content on the "Names" pages during earlier periods had originated from the public and the newspaper's editorial staff, editorial decisions increasingly determined who was worthy of mentioning. The only remaining visible input from the public comprises death ads and commemorative messages from colleagues honouring a deceased public figure. Children disappeared from the pages, except in a few examples of death ads. In present-day papers, both the birthday portrait and obituary have become recognisable journalistic genres, developing out of a mixture of lists, ads, and notices about members of the public co-produced by both the editorial staff and the public.

FIGURE 9 *Berlingske*, 2018


20 NAVNE

Den respektable ulv

Comments: In 2018, *Berlingske* featured three pages with celebratory items. The first was dedicated to a portrait of a well-known singer on his 75th birthday and included a byline. On the following pages were several shorter birthday portraits written without bylines, as well as the death ad section.

In examining the editorials, in 2018, the total number dropped as compared to 1998, and no newspapers had more than one editorial on any given day. Editorials' lengths were also shortened, and most are now the length of a tabloid editorial. Also, some editorials are now signed with initials. Most editorials in 2018 still focused on domestic and foreign issues, as was also the case during the previous period. While there are now fewer editorials in each issue, our reading of the newspapers also found that editorial comments, or signatures, as they are called, began to appear in newspapers in 2018. Thus, the editorial, as a genre, may be less prioritised in 2018 based on decreases in the number of editorials and their length, but the space for editorial opinions seems to be increasing, as editors begin to contribute more often as commentators in newspaper opinion sections.

Conclusions

How can we understand press epochs if we examine "views" rather than "news"? This study is a rare historical study of three prominent non-news genres in Danish newspapers: letters to the editor, celebratory items, and editorials. In the study, we have examined these genres' forms (inspired by Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001) by testing state-of-the-art theories on press history in Denmark (Søllinge, 1999; Hjarvard, 2007; Willig, 2010).

At the beginning of this article, we posed the following general research question: Do press epochs look the same from the perspective of non-news as they do from studies of the news? As shown above, during the partisan press epoch, the party newspaper was transformed into the "modern" newspaper, with a clearer separation between news and views, in which non-news genres were being *established*. The omnibus press epoch was a time in the history of Danish

newspapers when the non-news genres of letters to the editor, celebratory items, and editorials were *institutionalised* (i.e., they achieved a recognisable form, place, and frequency in both tabloids and broadsheet newspapers). The most recent epoch, the segment press epoch, shows signs of *transition*, particularly the form and prevalence of the two most opinionated genres: the editorial and letters to the editor. Taken together, this confirms the theory of three press epochs in the Danish press from the perspective of non-news genres.

For Barnhust and Nerone, newspapers have an imagined relationship with their audiences, which is key to understanding various newspaper types and how they have developed over time. These *represented relationships* are "the way that the newspaper imagines and proposes that it mediates the world" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001: 3). In this section, we present an interpretive analysis of the relationships represented in non-news genres by discussing the empirical findings of the descriptive analysis of non-news in Danish newspapers in comparison with the earlier findings for news genres (Schultz, later Willig, 2007; Willig, 2010).

Considering the theory of three Danish press epochs, we find that it is a matter of interpretation whether the selection of non-news is best described as "partisan", "broad", and "narrow", respectively, as the news selection in the three press epochs (Schultz, later Willig, 2007), or whether the audience construction is best described as "voters" in the partisan press epoch, as "citizens" in the omnibus epoch, and as "consumers" in the segment press epoch (Willig, 2010). On the one hand, we find that the concepts derived from the initial development of the theory describing the partisan press epoch are also useful when describing the non-news genres. For example, the prominence of employment or work status in the signatures of the authors of letters to the editor, the fact that it was often unions placing death ads in the social democratic newspaper, and the sometimes blurred line between "news" and "views" in the partisan press area supports the notion that non-news content may be labelled "partisan", like news selection in the original theory, and that the audience construction is that of the "voter". On the other hand, we find evidence that there is a specific audience construction or cultivation of publics present in the non-news-genre, which is best described by referring to the concept of *class*. Belonging to a class and reading a newspaper because one identifies with a class or in order to confirm a relationship to a particular class and more than a partisan or political-party relationship to a newspaper, and they entail more than merely being a voter.

Regarding the omnibus press period, the initial theory termed the news selection to be "broad" and the audience construction to be that of a "citizen." Both terms are descriptive of an era when the non-news genres expanded in volume and became institutionalised in designated sections of the printed newspaper. At the same time, we suggest that "popular" is a better term for describing the audience construction or cultivation of publics that we see at play in the omnibus press area, for example, in the expansion of letters to the editor written by ordinary people, the many celebratory items, and the inclusion of women and children on the designated pages.

In the most recent period, the segment press epoch, the theory of the segment press describes the news selection as "segmented" and the audience construction as primarily that of a "consumer". From the vantage point of non-news, we suggest that a better term for the cultivation of publics could be *elitist*, as one overall observation is that there are distinctly fewer letters to the editor and celebratory items written by ordinary citizens. We also see a tendency toward a debate that is divided by platform in the segment press epoch, in which less-elitist voices, which were prominent in the letters to the editor during the omnibus press period, now seem to share their thoughts and opinions online (e.g., in comments to news articles published in online versions of legacy newspapers). Simultaneously, newspapers' editorial views seem to have expanded and moved beyond editorial columns and into commentaries on current debates or events. As for birthday portraits, which both the public and journalists wrote during the omnibus press period, these are now a strictly journalistic genre in which the newspaper grants prominent members of society the glory of a birthday celebration.

Taken together, we find that the study not only confirms the theory of the segment press but also adds a new layer to the theory by showing how the non-news items of the printed newspapers contribute to the represented relationship between the newspaper and its audience as a *class* in the partisan press period, as a *population* in the omnibus press period, and as *elites* in the segment press period.

A relatively large corpus of newspaper content over a period of 100 years provides firmer empirical grounding for Danish press history. Also, we hope to have shown how the study of the forms of non-news genres can broaden our understanding of the "modern" newspaper as a "cultural public sphere" (McGuigan, 2005). At the same time, there are many questions left for future research. One of the surprising findings is how relatively "late" the editorial seemed to find its form in Denmark as compared to the UK (Liddle, 2016, and it would be interesting to investigate what the role of the editorial has been in Danish newspapers further and how the genre has developed, perhaps as compared to other countries. It is also an important task for future research to dig more deeply into the actual content – and not only the form – of the non-news genres. The important questions are not only what topics and themes are handled in the non-news sections over time, but also the representation of genders, occupations, geographies, and demographies, which will provide a deeper understanding of newspapers as so much more than news.

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