Citizen-consumers’ constellations of news media:
Towards a typology of what people put into their shopping carts in the news supermarket

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Abstract

The paper presents the first report from a methodologically innovative study of people’s use and experience of news media, across the different public-service and commercial media platforms which offer the Danish public information about what goes on in society around them.

The study relies fundamentally on the conceptualization of deliberative democracy that originates in Jürgen Habermas’s theory of the public sphere (Habermas 1962), but it follows recent theoretical work in cultural studies and political science, according to which citizenship should be redefined as a wider cultural practice that includes sense-making, emotional and aesthetic communicative practices in the realm of the everyday, based on people's cultural identities, commitments and competences.

The study observes the citizen-consumers’ selection of news media and genres through the theoretical lens of ‘perceived worthwhileness’, because people’s choice of news media is determined by what news media they perceive to be ‘worthwhile’. This concept aggregates seven dimensions of media use: temporality, spatiality, materiality, textuality, economics, normativity, and participation.

The empirical investigation uses an integrated qualitative-quantitative method with 35 informants’ perceptions of 25 key news media and genres, based on a synthesis of individual interviews, think-aloud reflection and Q-factor analysis. This approach results in a typology of cross-media news consumption with seven user types.

The study compares this typology of Danish news consumption landscape to a recent Pew study of cross-media use in the US. The paper thus compares typologies of cross-media news consumption in a predominantly public service media culture and a commercial media culture, and argues that extensive use of public service television produces a citizenry with a high level of democratically relevant knowledge.
In this paper we present the first version of an innovative map of people’s use and experience of news, across different the media public and private platforms. The analysis is based on the premise that most adult individuals in the Danish society have a permanent and general, but also strongly differentiated need to keep informed about what is happening locally, nationally and internationally. This general need for information manifests itself in the form of a long range of more specific needs for information, which individuals have as a consequence of ‘who they are’. The different news media can be seen as a range of opportunities for satisfying these differentiated needs – they are informative resources on which individuals may draw in order to realize the conscious and unconscious, short and long term ‘projects’, which are constitutive of our lives.

Through our life trajectories we have all built a portfolio of the news media which habitually or erratically serve our informative needs, and these media have become an integrated, often unplanned, part of our everyday lives - where they ‘fit in’. To tune in to the narratives of these news media about what is going on in the world has become an often deep-rooted part of our daily routines (Berelson 1949). But the routines are not unchangeable. When our life circumstances change, when a new news medium appears with a new way of producing a portrait of social reality, or when new technologies offer new platforms of news delivery – then changes may occur in the way we assemble our cross-media news portfolio.

It is a premise of this analysis that people’s choice of news media, i.e. the particular ‘constellation’ of news media (Couldry et al. 2007) that, with a certain stability, makes up their diet of news experiences, is constituted by what news media they perceive to be worthwhile. People only use the news media which they experience as delivering some kind of pay-off. There must be some kind of metaphorical ‘interest’ coming from the ‘investment’ they make in their portfolio of news media.¹

The typological imperative

Towards the end of their impressive study Media consumption and public engagement, Couldry, Livingstone and Markham (2007:190-191) suggest, as one of their recommendations for future research, that one focus of future attention should be on people’s “habits of media consumption (...
across particular media, (because) the particular constellation of media on which one individual draws may be quite different than another's.” (emphasis added).

This formulation succinctly expresses what had already been formulated as the aim of the present project, which is precisely to explore those ‘constellations of media on which one individual draws’, and to explore at the level of the social formation of Danish society whether these constellations can be said to be somehow patterned. This search for patterns means that we shall attempt to isolate a finite and small number of types, which together constitute a typology.

We are driven by this typological imperative, because we believe that fundamentally social life is patterned - it is human nature to feel and seek allegiance to some 'others', and to differentiate themselves from other 'others'. Humans, in all their dynamic heterogeneity, are driven towards the salient cultural commonalities that they share with those fellow humans whose material, social and symbolic conditions they also share (Bourdieu 1979/1984).

The public sphere and civic agency: Habermas and beyond

In its understanding of democratic citizenship, the project relies fundamentally on the conceptualization of deliberative democracy that originates in Jürgen Habermas’s theory of the public sphere (Habermas 1962). But we follow recent theoretical work in cultural studies and political science, according to which citizenship should be redefined as not just designating rational political behaviour in the political public sphere (a position recently upheld by Habermas (2006), although he also acknowledges the value of alternative forms of political practice), but also as a wider cultural practice that includes sense-making, emotional and aesthetic communicative practices in the realm of the everyday, based on people's cultural identities, commitments and competences.

Following these reorientations, there is no necessary opposition between civic agency as a traditionally conceived activity in relation to the public sphere and the culture of the everyday, because people in daily life may ‘self-create themselves into citizens’ (Dahlgren 2006:272). And there is no opposition between, on the one hand, the genuine, elevated political practices, spatially located in the public sphere of Habermas’s schematic model of bourgeois society, characterized by being public, rational, and based on mediated information, and on the other hand, the formerly denigrated practices of the everyday designated as private and emotional, and often associated with mediated entertainment (Bennett & Entman 2001; Delli Carpini & Williams 2001; Livingstone
The end result of these retheorizations is a growing awareness of the need to relocate the focus of political communication research towards ‘the microdynamics of democracy’ (Dahlgren 2006:282), a need which is met by the present project in its theoretical agnosticism about what is democratically valuable, and its methodological reliance on people’s everyday discourses about media uses and experiences. The empirical work of Irene Costera Meijer on the news consumption of young people in the Netherlands can be seen as congenial to this rejuvenated version of public sphere theory (Meijer 2007).

‘Is this news medium worth my while?’

We see people’s individual selection from the cross-media universe of news as being constituted by their answer to this question. At any given moment of everyday life the answer to this question is far from conscious and deliberate, since the constellation, or portfolio, of news media used by an individual will have taken the form of a highly routinized practice. However, prior to becoming wholly or largely habitual, the regular use of a news medium must logically have undergone a process of relatively rational calculation from becoming aware, through trial consumption, and intermittent use, before ending up on the list of routines.

The heuristic concept of ‘perceived worthwhileness’ thus denotes the basis on which any kind of news media use takes place. Today people can meaningfully be seen as actively composing their news diet from multiple available news sources. Metaphorically speaking, news consumers can be seen as shoppers in a news supermarket, from whose shelves they can fill their shopping carts with news products coming in various colourful or drab packings, with varying nutritional values (however elusive the definition of this notion may be), and at different prices. In principle, if not in daily practice, citizen-consumers must be seen as effectively browsing the entire news universe, or matrix of media (Finnemann 2008:7).

In such a news landscape, the perceived worthwhileness of any single news medium must be understood in relational terms and must be studied through the lens of a relational methodology, which is what we shall demonstrate below.

We see the concept of perceived worthwhileness of news media as constituted by seven dimensions related to an individual’s subjectively experienced situational and material circumstances and functional needs. The extent to which these dimensions exert a differential
influence on different people’s constellations of cross-media news consumption is the object of the
next stage of empirical analysis not yet ready for presentation. In this paper, therefore, we can only
assume that the seven dimensions are operative in producing the typology of news consumption
presented below. Here follows, with extreme brevity, a list of the seven interrelated dimensions that
cumulatively constitute the framework within which the worthwhileness of the available news
media materializes (for further discussion, see Schrøder & Kobbernagel, in press):

*Temporality*: Worthwhileness crucially (and banally) depends on an individual’s available time for
news consumption during the day.

*Spatiality*: The location in which people find themselves – such as a commuter train or a car driving
to work - may render certain news media uses possible or likely.

*Materiality*: - has to do with the technological dimension of worthwhileness. For instance,
technological ease may induce people to use a news medium, as is the case with the technological
affordances offered by the TV remote control to switch between audiovisual TV news and Text-TV.

*Textuality*: This is the verbal and visual ‘content’ dimension of perceived worthwhileness, which
has to do with people’s experience of the relevance of the news media’s news and views, comments
and columns, cartoons and comics, etc.

The crucial constituent of experienced content relevance is the news media’s enabling
of ‘public connection’. A heuristic concept invented by Couldry et al. (2007), public connection is
defined as a shared

orientation to a public world where matters of shared concern are, or at least should be,
addressed: (...) public connection is principally sustained by a convergence in the media
people consume. (...) ‘public connection’ represents our attempt to capture one key empirical
precondition of democratic engagement in a way that does not privilege in advance any
particular definition of politics. (Couldry et al. 2007:3-5).

Here, in accordance with what we said above about the need to modernize the Habermassian notion
of civic agency, we shall use public connection in an even broader sense: We see the overriding
criterion of any news medium’s worthwhileness for potential users to be its ability to satisfy their need for mediatized public connection, i.e. people’s need to both equip themselves for the role of citizen-member of the democratic order, through mediated information about public affairs, and for the role of belonging as a community member in the broadest possible sense. Public connection, in our use of the term, thus includes both what we might call ‘civic public connection’ and ‘everyday public connection’.

Economics: The use of a news medium depends on whether it is affordable or not.

Normativity: Normativity comprises encouraging as well as discouraging inputs from one’s surroundings.

Participation: Long before the advent of interactive digital media it was possible to participate in the news media universe, in the form of letters to the editor. Nowadays, thanks to the rich participatory affordances offered by online news media, participation in digital news production is open to everyone, and may be one of the factors causing people to prefer net-based news media.

Before moving on to the empirical analyses of people’s navigation in the Danish news landscape, it should perhaps be emphasized that the news media that people find ‘worthwhile’ are not necessarily perceived as ‘important’. Worthwhileness is compatible with low-engagement use of news media, and in some cases even with using a news medium because one has nothing better to do – behaviour we may call worthwhileness by default.

Complementarities of fieldwork

The project relies on two types of fieldwork: The first (reported elsewhere (Schrøder & Larsen 2010)) consists of a large-scale online survey mapping the relative worthwhileness of 16 Danish news media and genres. The second, on which the present paper concentrates, explores an innovative methodological design that synthesizes qualitative and quantitative methods in one hybrid research design, for the generation of a typology of news consumption.
Towards a typology of cross-media news consumption

In the survey study we ascertained statistically, in a macro perspective, the relative importance for citizen-consumers of the different news media in society’s overall news landscape. In the second type of fieldwork we have adopted a qualitative approach intended to discover, at ground level, the cross-media news packages, or constellations, appropriated by citizen-consumers from the news market supply. We have asked three dozen informants individually to report about their news media use in everyday life in personal narratives, and their personal worthwhileness-generated preferences for certain news media rather than others. Metaphorically, we have asked them to tell us what they take from the shelves of the news supermarket and put into their shopping carts, and why.

The methodological challenge consists in devising a method that enables us to discern the similarities and differences between the contents of the 35 shopping carts, and to possibly discover reliable and valid patterns, or types, of news media use. For us the methodological response to this challenge has consisted in developing a qualitative fieldwork design that allows us to generalize with confidence about the overwhelmingly complex qualitative data-set produced. We have thus been looking for a methodological path that would make it ‘possible to incorporate and preserve qualitative data through a process of quantification, enabling the researcher to discern the (…) patterning” of media use behaviour’ (Schrøder 1987). We have therefore incorporated into our fieldwork a translation device that converts qualitative data into quantifiable units.

The Achilles’ heel of qualitative research is the opacity of its interpretive procedures of analytical generalization. This is a problem that is often aggravated by the ambition of the qualitative researcher, haunted by an inferiority complex towards the quantitative researcher’s hundreds of respondents, to maximize the number of informants and the types of qualitative data collection.

Due to what – provocatively - we shall call the limited computational capacity of the human brain, this is a problem that can only partially be offset by eminent qualitative craftsmanship. Faced with, say, more than a couple of dozen informants, the qualitative researcher may not be able to reliably and validly generalize analytically from the large amounts of data.

Conversely, the Achilles heel of quantitative, questionnaire-based approaches will always be the atomized manner in which respondents answer the list of unrelated questions, thereby violating the coherences, interconnections, ambivalences and contradictions that are an inherent part of everyday life. This reductionism at the data collection stage can only partly be remedied by the
sophisticated techniques whereby afterwards statistical wizards may succeed in relating some of the atomized responses to each other through cross-tabulations and multiple regression analysis.

However, we believe that it is possible with some research objects - the perceived worthwhileness of news media being one of them - to build a methodological design which avoids both the opacity of qualitative generalization and the atomization of questionnaire-based research, and which therefore achieves greater explanatory power (Schrøder 2004).

Our innovative fieldwork format borrows from the methodological portfolios of two existing fieldwork approaches, one quantitative, the other qualitative. The quantitative source of inspiration is the method sometimes called Q-sorts, in which respondents sort a number of elicitation cards on a relational scalar grid, which allows for subsequent statistical factor analysis and the generation of a typology of the discursive or behavioural practice investigated.

The qualitative source of inspiration is a combination of two verbalizing research encounters: the qualitative depth-interview, which conducts a dialogical speech event with informants about a social phenomenon, and the think-aloud technique, where informants are asked to accompany a practical task with a verbalized version of their problem-solving inner speech. When these three methods are co-applied, the resulting synthesized method can be said to transcend the division between quantitative and qualitative methods, or, oxymoron-wise, to be a quantitative approach to the qualitative study of the social world, or vice versa (Stephenson 1953 and 1978, Brown 1993, Rogers1995).

Q methodology was chosen as our translation device because it provides a lens through which the researcher may see the structures in the news users’ calculation of the worthwhileness of their chosen news media. The analysis produces a view into what significant patterns of media use exist, based on a factor model that reveals groups of participants who performed similar so-called Q-sortings of the specified range of news media (Brown 1980; 1993:101).

We recruited a sample of 35 informants from three different locations in Denmark, from an online panel representing education levels, age and gender. The Q-sort-inspired stage of each fieldwork encounter was preceded by a 10-15 minute qualitative interview, in which we asked the informant to report from “a typical day in the life” with the news media. This stage served to tune an informant’s mind towards the unique architecture of his or her daily news universe.

The Q-study itself was conducted in four phases. Prior to the interview, we had selected 25 named news media and genres so as to represent the news universe available to the
Danish public. Each news medium selected was labeled and exemplified, for example ‘Primetime public service TV news, e.g. DR1 or TV2’, ‘Free dailies, e.g. MetroXpress, Urban or 24timer’, or ‘News on mobile phones or other handheld devices’. The 25 news media with the examples were printed on cards for participants to read before Q-sorting them (see Appendix).

In the first phase (after the “Day in the Life” stage), participants were asked to sort the 25 numbered cards using a Q grid according to the role these media play in their daily consumption of news (see Figure 1). During Q-sorting the participants were asked to comment – think aloud-wise - on why they ranked the media as they did, and the interviewer would ask probing questions, so as to ensure the occurrence of a dialogue that gave the participant the opportunity to reflect and elaborate on the specific role played by the different news media in their lives. Thus the interview event integratively constructed both qualitative and quantitative data (for further methodological details, see Schröder & Kobbernagel, in press).

In the second phase, the data was handled by Q factor analysis, which calculates the correlations between the participants’ Q sorts and extracts a number of factors explaining the variance in each Q sort. Thereby a map of the participants grouped by the factors is produced, and the analysis of these common patterns shows what configurations of media use exists. The process resulted in the choice of a model with seven factors, which explained 79% of the variance and had 25 participants loading significantly on the factors. The model of seven factors was arrived at by principle component analysis (PCA) and varimax rotation. This model overruled the models with four, five and six factors, because of its high degree of explained variance and the better explanation of the content of each factor array. The seven factor-model also turned out to be better at explaining variance than the models produced by the more traditional factor extraction technique; the centroid (Brown 1980:208). These models did not cover more than 60% of the variance.

Since we are essentially using factor analysis as a generalization device, we decided that it was analytically meaningful to include six additional participants, whose amounts of variance shared with the factors in their respective Q sorts are very close to the level of significance, and some of them have high negative correlations with one other factor. The remaining four participants cannot be placed meaningfully within any of the seven groups, because they are correlating relatively highly with more than three factors. The analysis is thus very much conducted by
following both objective and subjective strategies of analysis in seeking the greatest explanatory power (Brown 1980:236).

Each of the seven factors comprises a grouping, or type, of participants whose card sorts were relatively similar, compared with the sorts of other participants. The factor scores of each type are arranged as a Top-25 list of news media, which therefore expresses the ‘news media worthwhileness profile’ of the participants who belong to each grouping. In the third stage of analysis, these seven profiles are subjected to perceptive interpretive work in order to arrive at a verbal characterization of each type. Naturally, a purely qualitative analysis of the interviews could also have been generalized into a typology of media users. However, the advantage of generalizing the types through computerized factor analysis of the ‘grids of informant self-analysis’ is that the computer is able to handle the enormous amount of data similarities and differences much more reliably than the brain of the human scholar. The validity cost lies in the data reduction required of the participant in order to distil the complex discursive negotiation of each news medium down to one square on the grid.

The factor analysis shows which participants in each factor grouping are particularly typical. The researcher can therefore, in a fourth stage, draw on the interview transcripts of such typical specimens, if not all members, of a grouping, in order to put some discursive meat on the analytical skeleton supplied by the factor analysis, thereby regaining some of the thick description that was lost during the statistical operations. This analytical stage has not yet been completed.

**Typology of cross-media news worthwhileness**

Our integrated qualitative/quantitative study of the cross-media news consumption of 35 Danish consumer-citizens, who are a typical selection across relevant demographic groups, produces seven user types with clearly different profiles of news media worthwhileness (see Appendix 2). Here we present a descriptive account, and a tentative labelling, of the seven types, in which we account for the news media which they perceive as worthwhile, and the news media to which they attribute less importance to their lives. At the end we shall reflect briefly on the implications of the typology of seven for the quality of public information in Danish society, although real in-depth insights about this aspect must await the analysis of qualitative interview transcripts.
1. The traditional, versatile news consumer

The members of this type, which comprises 9 participants, rely on a number of fairly heavy news media, including national newspapers and serious current affairs TV programs. Among the Top-5 we also find prime time TV news, radio morning news, and net-based news services, which confirms that these people seek both overview and background news oriented towards democratic citizen roles. They are fond of radio, with three types of radio news in the Top-7. Radio current affairs programmes, specialized newspapers and cultural news on the net also figure prominently in their news diet, which more cursorily includes lighter news media such as more entertaining current affairs programs on TV and lifestyle magazines, as well as the consultation of international news sources. Of low importance are mobile phone news, blogs with news, and tabloid newspapers. In our sample these people tend to be college-educated and older than 35-40 years.

2. The popular culture-oriented digital news consumer

The primary news sources for these participants (4 individuals) are net-based media, with social net media in first place closely followed by the net sites of news institutions. Their chief kind of public connection thus appears to be that generated by their digital networks. This does not mean that they are not also attuned to mainstream traditional news media, such as prime time TV news and radio morning news. Overview they get from free newspapers and text-TV. When they seek background, it takes the form of more entertaining, chat-based TV current affairs programs and weekly magazines. Net-based cultural news is also high on their agenda. Their more cursory news media include news blogs, national newspapers, and lifestyle magazines. Of low importance are serious current affairs TV programs, international TV news and current affairs, and international net news. In our sample these people tend to be in their twenties, not (yet?) with long college degrees.

3. The background-oriented digital news consumer

The Top-5 profile of this group (3 individuals) is almost identical with that of Group 2, which means that their worthwhileness profiles do not differ a lot. However, entertaining TV current affairs programs are ranked considerable lower, and weekly magazines are below place 15. Conversely, serious current affairs programs and international TV news are fairly high on the list.
News updates they do not get from text TV, but perhaps from net news, and to a limited degree from mobile news. Of low importance are local daily newspapers, morning radio news, and tabloid newspapers. In our sample these people tend to be in their twenties and live in Copenhagen.

4. The light newspaper reader

While these participants (5 individuals), like everyone else, look to primetime TV news and net news for substantial parts of their news diet, they are clearly distinguished by their allegiance to tabloid newspapers and free newspapers. They seek a mixture of entertaining and serious current affairs programs, and are not averse to international news sources. The overview function is served by net news and text-TV. Social net media are used moderately, as are morning and daytime radio, and weekly magazines. Of low importance are professional magazines, international non-media news sites, and national niche newspapers. In our sample these people tend to be male, without college and live in the greater Copenhagen area.

5. The heavy newspaper reader

The news diet of these participants (3 individuals) relies heavily on newspapers, with the serious specimens (national newspapers, specialized newspapers) in the Top-5, and local weeklies and free newspapers in the Top-10. But these print media are strongly supplemented with prime time TV news and net-based news, and cultural interests and background needs are also catered to. Overview comes from net news, text TV and 24-hour TV news. Compared to Group 4, these participants are also distinguished by not having entertaining current affairs TV and weekly magazines in Top-15. Of low importance are news blogs, morning radio news, and mobile phone news. In our sample these people tend to be college educated, over sixty.

6. The news update addict

The labelling of this group (4 individuals) springs from their having 24-hour TV news in first place, while other groups rank this news medium 10-14 or lower. The craving for news updates is supported by text TV, also in the Top-5, and the highest place of mobile phone news of any group. But the mainstream source of prime time TV news is also salient, while morning and daytime radio
news are cursorily salient. Current affairs programs on TV are secondary, with the more entertaining ones ranked higher. Of low importance are news blogs, radio current affairs, and international non-media news sites. In our sample these people tend to be male, under 40 and with no or short college.

7. The regional omnivorous news consumer

The distinguishing feature of this group (3 individuals) is the prominent worthwhileness of regional dailies. Another feature is this group’s high and close ranking of news media that are either ranked lower or with greater rank differences by other groups: serious and entertaining TV current affairs programs, weekly magazines, and professional magazines (e.g. trade union members’ magazines). But the similarity with other groups in terms of the high worthwhileness of prime time TV news and net-based news is evident. Compared with Group 1, the regional daily has taken over the role of the national daily, and Group 7 are more open to social net media and 24-hour TV news. Of low importance are international non-media news sites, news blogs, and international news media websites. In our sample these people tend to live in a provincial town and educationally to have less than long college.

Cross-media use in a changing news environment: Comparative perspectives

The best way to put these preliminary findings of the Danish news consumption landscape into perspective is perhaps to compare them to a 2008 study of cross-media use in the US, the Pew Research Center’s News consumption and believability study 2008 (Pew 2008).

As the 2008 version of a biennial series, the Pew study is a large-scale, demographically sensitive study of news consumption and news perceptions among the US public 2008. It traces the development of the usage of different news sources since the 1990s, making the fluctuations between traditional media and internet news media visible over time, finding that trends from previous biennial studies are continuing: The consumption of traditional news media is declining, while the use of online news is growing, but not quite proportionally so as to make up for the losses. Therefore, overall news consumption is declining.
The most interesting part of the Pew study in our connection is its typology of four news audience segments, defined in terms of people’s 1) interest in and time spent on news, 2) primary news source, 3) how often they use the internet to get news (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 about here: The Pew study typology of news consumption in the US (minutes per day)

*Traditionalists,* 46% of the population, ‘use traditional media sources (TV, newspapers, radio) almost exclusively’ (p.45), ‘rarely go online for news (less than 3 days a week)’ (p.47).

*Integrators,* 23% of the population, ‘name a traditional source as their main source, but are also frequent consumers of online news (3+ days a week)’ (p.47)

*Net-Newsers,* with a 13% share of the population, ‘point to the internet as their main news source and consume online news frequently (3+ days/week)’ (p.47).

*Disengaged,* 14%, ‘do not closely follow any of the following: local, national, international, or business and finance news’ (p.47).

There are certain resemblances between the Pew news consumption landscape and that found in our study, but also some significant differences. The Pew study segments the respondents on the basis of a few key usage criteria (time spent, frequency of use), which basically amounts to a 4-by-2 matrix based on time spent on different news media (TV, radio, newspapers, and net news):

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional news media</th>
<th>Net news media</th>
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<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrators</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net-Newsers</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>Disengaged</td>
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Our study establishes its typology on the basis of the participants’ detailed relational evaluations of the perceived worthwhileness of 25 different news media and genres. Consequently the Pew typology is simple and close to common-sensical (but illuminating nonetheless, thanks to its representativeness and demographic detail), while our typology is more inductive, complex and subtle.
Heuristically, one could pose the following resemblances between the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pew typology</th>
<th>Danish typology</th>
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<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>Group 5 and Group 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrators</td>
<td>Group 1, Group 4 and Group 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net-Newsers</td>
<td>Group 2 and Group 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On closer inspection, however, there is a lack of fit between the types, due mainly to the fact that even for the Danish ‘traditionalists’ Group 5 and Group 7, internet news is among the top-five news media. This is also the case for the Danish ‘integrators’ Group 1 and Group 4, while for Group 6 also social net media squeeze themselves into the top-five news media. Conversely, the Danish ‘net-newsers’ groups both rank TV news in third place, while for their American not-exact-counterparts ‘fewer than half (47%) watch television on a typical day’ (p.2). Some differences between the American and the Danish study (for instance the absence of the Disengaged category from the Danish study) may be due to the fact that the former is based on time use, while the latter is based on the participants’ perceived worthwhileness, irrespective of time spent.

The conclusion of the Pew study - that for ‘audience segments in a changing news environment’ in the U.S. it can be said that ‘key news audiences now blend online and traditional sources’ - requires a different formulation in the case of the Danish study: It is not just the case that certain ‘key’ segments are blending online and traditional sources: the blending phenomenon is so widespread in Danish society, due in large part to the continued salience of public service TV news, that blending is characteristic of all news users, although the rank-order of traditional (esp. TV) news sources and online news sources among the top-five news media is different between the Danish newser ‘traditionalists’ and newser ‘innovators’.

So far we can conclude that for those who believe that it is necessary to define an enlightened citizen as someone who reads a serious daily newspaper, there are many contemporary Danes who do not qualify: Only in three of the seven groups do we find serious newspapers (national or regional) in the Top-5; in three it is placed lower than Top-10.

If, however, one disagrees with Neil Postman’s claim that ‘serious television is a contradiction in terms’ (Postman 1985) at least in a country with a still strong public service tradition, then one does not have to worry too much about the state of democracy, since prime time
public service TV news is in the Top-3 of all seven groups (and number 1 in three). The news consumption study of Curran et al. (2009) confirms that extensive use of public service television news produces a citizenry with a high level of democratically relevant knowledge.

If, moreover, one believes that net-based news media are capable of delivering balanced quality information for both overview and background functionalities, one may take courage from the fact that the net news media run by the major publishing houses and the public service broadcasting companies in Denmark are placed in the Top-5 of all seven newser groups, who are thus to some extent all ‘Net-Newser’, although to varying degrees. Also, even though obviously the social net media are used for very heterogeneous purposes, many of which can only remotely be defined as political or civic, the fact that the participatory affordances of social net media and/or news blogs are now deemed worthwhile to varying but fairly high degrees by the members of Groups 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 could be regarded democratically with cautious optimism, because these individuals possess digital literacies that are becoming admission requirements for entry into democratic as well as commercial universes (see also Jenkins 2006; Torpe 2006).

It is now up to the next stage of the Danish analysis to provide qualitative thick description of the participants’ worthwhileness reflections underlying the Danish typology.
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Figure 1: Q grid of one informant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does not play a role in my life</th>
<th>Plays a role in my life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1     2     3     4     5     6</td>
<td>7     8     9     10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11    12    13    14    15</td>
<td>16    17    18    19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20    21    22    23    24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers refer to the 25 elicitation cards which informants sorted on the grid (see Appendix 1)
Figure 2  The Pew study typology of news consumption in the US 2008 (minutes per day).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TV news</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrators</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net-Newsers</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: The news media universe of the Q study.

1. Prime time Danish TV news
2. 24-hour TV news
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs programs on Danish TV
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs programs on Danish TV
5. News and current affairs on international TV channels
6. Radio news (mornings before 9 am)
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
8. Radio current affairs
9. National mainstream newspapers
10. National specialized newspapers
11. Free daily newspapers
12. Tabloid newspapers
13. Local/regional dailies
14. Local free weeklies
15. Professional magazines
16. Family and women’s magazines
17. Magazines about lifestyle, health, culture
18. News on Danish newspapers’ and TV-channels’ websites
19. News on other Danish websites
20. Blogs with news on the internet
21. Social net media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.)
22. News on international news media websites
23. International news sites not produced by media
24. Text-TV news
25. News on mobile phones and other handheld media
APPENDIX 2

Factor 1 9 participants
1. Prime time Danish TV news
9. National mainstream newspapers
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
18. News on Danish internet news sites
8. Radio current affairs
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
19. Internet: culture sites
10. National niche newspapers
15. Professional magazines
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
11. Free daily newspapers
22. International news media websites
5. International TV news/current affairs
21. Social net media
14. Local free weeklies
23. International non-media news sites
24. Text-TV
2. 24-hour TV news
13. Local/regional dailies
16. Family and women’s magazines
25. Mobile phone news
20. Blogs with news
12. Tabloid newspapers

Factor 2 4 participants
21. Social net media
18. News on Danish internet news sites
1. Prime time Danish TV news
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
11. Free daily newspapers
19. Internet: culture sites
24. Text-TV
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
16. Family and women’s magazines
15. Professional magazines
20. News blogs on the internet
10. National niche newspapers
9. National mainstream newspapers
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
23. International non-media news sites
2. 24-hour TV news
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
12. Tabloid newspapers
25. Mobile phone news
14. Local free weeklies
8. Radio current affairs
13. Local/regional dailies
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
5. International TV news/current affairs
22. International news media websites
Factor 3  3 participants

18. News on Danish internet news sites
21. Social net media
1. Prime time Danish TV news
19. Internet: culture sites
11. Free daily newspapers
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
5. TV news/current affairs, international
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
9. National mainstream newspapers
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
20. News blogs on the internet
2. 24-hour TV news
22. International news media websites
15. Professional magazines
8. Radio current affairs
24. Text-TV
10. National niche newspapers
23. International non-media news sites
14. Local free weeklies
16. Family and women’s magazines
13. Local/regional dailies
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
12. Tabloid newspapers

Factor 4  4 participants

1. Prime time Danish TV news
12. Tabloid newspapers
11. Free daily newspapers
18. News on Danish internet news sites
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
24. Text-TV
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
5. TV news/current affairs, international
21. Social net media
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
16. Family and women’s magazines
2. 24-hour TV news
22. International news media websites
14. Local free weeklies
20. News blogs on the internet
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
19. Internet: culture sites
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
8. Radio current affairs
9. National mainstream newspapers
25. Mobile phone news
13. Local/regional dailies
15. Professional magazines
23. International non-media news sites
10. National niche newspapers
Factor 5 3 participants

9. National mainstream newspapers
1. Prime time Danish TV news
24. Text-TV
18. News on Danish internet news sites
10. National niche newspapers
19. Internet: culture sites
14. Local free weeklies
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
11. Free daily newspapers
2. 24-hour TV news
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
13. Local/regional dailies
21. Social net media
5. TV news/current affairs, international
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
15. Professional magazines
16. Family and women’s magazines
8. Radio current affairs
22. International news media websites
12. Tabloid newspapers
23. International non-media news sites
20. News blogs on the internet
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
25. Mobile phone news

Factor 6 4 participants

2. 24-hour TV news
1. Prime time Danish TV news
24. Text-TV
18. News on Danish internet news sites
21. Social net media
19. Internet: culture sites
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
11. Free daily newspapers
25. Mobile news
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
22. International news media websites
14. Local free weeklies
15. Professional magazines
5. TV news/current affairs, international
10. National niche newspapers
16. Family and women’s magazines
13. Local/regional dailies
12. Tabloid newspapers
9. National mainstream newspapers
20. News blogs on the internet
8. Radio current affairs
23. International non-media news sites
Factor 7: 3 participants

1. Prime time Danish TV news
13. Local/regional dailies
3. ‘Serious’ current affairs TV
16. Family and women’s magazines
18. News on Danish internet news sites
15. Professional magazines
4. ‘Entertaining’ current affairs TV
7. Radio news (after 9 am)
17. Magazines: lifestyle, health, culture
14. Local free weeklies
21. Social net media
2. 24-hour TV news
19. Internet: culture sites
11. Free daily newspapers
9. National mainstream newspapers
24. Text-TV
6. Radio news (before 9 am)
12. Tabloid newspapers
10. National niche newspapers
8. Radio current affairs
25. Mobile phone news
5. TV news/current affairs, international
23. International non-media news sites
20. News blogs on the internet
22. International news media websites
Acknowledgements

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Notes

1 The use of terms like 'need', 'use', 'satisfy' and 'pay-off' for describing the project’s premise of worthwhileness as the key determinant of news consumption may evoke in some readers associations of the uses-and-gratifications (U+G) paradigm of communication research (Blumler & Katz 1974). Especially research such as that of Katz et al. (1973), which ranks the mass media with respect to “their perceived helpfulness in satisfying clusters of needs arising from social roles and individual dispositions” (164) pursues similar aims to ours. There are also affinities between the dimensions of worthwhileness and James Lull’s (1980) U+G-inspired investigation of the ‘uses of television’.