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### **From conflict to cooperation a new relationship between journalists and experts**

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From conflict to cooperation – a new relationship between journalists and experts  
- An indebt study of front-page stories during 40 years in Danish newspapers

Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> General ECPR conference, Reykjavik, 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> August 2011

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### **Abstract**

Commonly it's stated that many journalists find experts, including social scientists, difficult "to use", and consequently such experts are underrepresented in daily news media. However, in countries where fields of media and journalism have changed dramatically, introducing a struggle between user paid and user gratis news and between journalists positioned in PR and news, this assumption may prove wrong. Due to such changes, the main relationship between social scientists and journalists seems to have shifted from competition regarding legitimate positions in society (e.g. Bourdieu, 1998/1996) to a common position as representatives of institutions, which in political sense are neutral, in opposition to politicians and lobbyists in the struggle over the discursive construction of society in newspaper journalism.

This paper explores such changes theoretically and empirically in a discourse analysis of front-page news stories in Danish newspapers from four decades. The analysis shows that these news stories are most explanatory in the latest decade and that Members of Parliament and representatives of powerful organizations have been replaced by experts and journalists as the exponents of explanations at front pages and hence as main "discursive constructors of reality".

### **Keywords**

**Experts, democracy, news, explanatory journalism, fields**

## Introduction

In early summer 2011 a conflict between powerful politicians and a social science expert dominated the news agenda in Denmark. The background of the conflict was a political initiative from the liberal and conservative government together with the supporting right wing party to intensify the border control in order to avoid eastern European criminals' entering the country. The proposal was according to a professor, who is an expert in European integration, at social science at the University of Copenhagen, against the Schengen agreement, because custom officials are not allowed to do police work. She stated that the border control as well would harm the cooperation in EU.

The professor was widely quoted in the Danish press, and after a couple of weeks she was accused among others by the leader of the right wing party and a minister from the Liberal Party for not being competent and not able to explain or judge the proposal of boarder control. A few weeks later, the head of the political science department announced that the professor would pause her appearance in the media and public. In two months, 2000 stories with the name of the professor were published in the Danish press.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict is remarkable because for the first time top politicians in public with reference to freedom of speech deemed a name given expert as unqualified, normally a judgment emitted by the expert community. The conflict can turn out to be a one-time occasion or a new form of interaction between the political elite and experts caused by the salience of the political experts in Danish news.

According to Michael Schudson experts such as social scientist have three democratic functions: First, *"Experts can speak truth to power. When expertise is doing its appointed task in democracy, it is providing to decision-makers, publicly or privately, a record of truth as an alternative source of information and authority to the established view of the leader. When their counsel is made public, they model a form of authority to which, to a degree, a general public can aspire, and which a general public can use for its own decision-making purposes"*. Second, *"Experts can clarify the grounds of public debate and so improve the capacity of both legislators and the general public to engage effectively in democratic decision-making. They can clarify policy alternatives. They can clarify the cost and benefits of different proposed plans of action"*. And third, *"Experts can diagnose opportunity and diagnose injustice. So can non-experts. But experts have the resources, especially in the*

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a search for "Marlene Wind" for the period of 26.04.2011-26.06.2011 at [www.infomedia.dk](http://www.infomedia.dk).

*legalistic culture, to do so effectively in ways that pose a policy-related question.*" (Schudson, 2008: 118-120).

The Danish professor in social science seems exactly to serve democracy as Schudson recommends due to her position in the general public given her by the journalists as an authoritative voice in the news. In short, the democratic task of experts to inform, inspire, clarify or improve rest upon their access to the general public, which still mainly takes place in the news, and in this regard it depends on the relationship between social scientists and journalists. However, is this example an exception, do the presence vary and what determines the appearance of experts in the news? Of course there is a push and a pull side. In this paper I only explore the pull side of media and journalists in the relationship between experts and journalists in order to understand the presence of experts in contemporary journalism.

Taking the presence of experts as exponents of explanations in news as an example, I analyze whether historical changes in the structures of media and journalism affects the relation between journalists and social scientists. More specific, I focus on how these structures dispose journalists to include or exclude political experts from the news and to which degree experts actually are present in the news. As case, eight Danish newspapers in the latest four decades are chosen.

This paper aims to investigate theoretical considerations regarding the pulling factors at a sociological mezzo level. I propose a theory, which explain the appearance of experts in news by three general conditions related to journalism and media. First, the strength of social tension in the fields of media and journalism affects the explanatory character of news journalism. According to research in framing, explanations have stronger impact on power, legitimizing and the perceiving of reality than event descriptions (Entman, 1993, 2004, 2007). Hence, high-tension fields favor news centralized on explanation, while low-tension fields favor news centralized on event description.

Second, the explanatory character of news affects the presence of social science experts, because experts are more useful in answering the explanatory questions of "why", "how" and "what then" than in answering the descriptive questions of "what", "who", "where" and "when".

Third, the type of explaining exponent in news is as well conditioned by the relations between media, journalist and the centers of power in society. A close relationship

between media, journalists and powerful elite agents (ex ownership of media) favor explanations from these agents (i.e. politicians, leaders of organizations), while distant relations or relations conceived to be strategic favor explanations from other agents (e.g. experts, journalists). Hence, the argument is that in liberal democracies experts is expected to be more common in the news, when the relationship between media and journalists and the political centers of power are distant and when the news is explanatory rather than event describing.

This paper continues therefore in the following way: the next paragraph outlines an explanatory genre as an analytic tool to categorize news according to their explanatory character.<sup>2</sup> Then a paragraph outlines the structure of media and journalism in the latest 40 years as fields of journalism and media. Then the design to investigate the expectations is outlined, before presenting the empirical results of an analysis of newspaper articles. The paper concludes with a discussion of what the results mean for the understanding of the relationship between newspapers journalists and social scientists.

### ***Conceptual aspects of the explanatory character of news***

This section proposes the concept of an explanatory genre to identify the specific explanatory in the news discourse. Following Fairclough, I distinguish between genre and frame as two different dimensions of discourse. Genres are specific discursive ways to act and interact in social events (Fairclough, 2008/2003: 65), which in this context specifically refers to journalists' actions in news discourse, while frame refers to the way reality is represented in the news. In short, the dimension of genre is about how the journalist appears in relation to the text's explanations, while the frame dimension is about how reality is represented in the explanations of the text (cf. Fairclough, 2008/2003: 50-53; van Dijk, 1988: 41-48, 65).

According to a current definition consist explanations of two elements: the explanans and explanandum. It comes from the scientific 'Covering law model' of causality, but it recalls everyday notions of explanation (Woodward, 2003). Explanans is what explains and explanandum is what will be explained.

To categorize a news article as explanatory two conditions must be met. Firstly, both explanans and explanandum must be present in the journalistic product as paragraphs,

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<sup>2</sup> A review of literature on explanatory journalism is in Svith (2011: Section 2.1 and 3.1).

sentences or words that refer to external factors taken into account in a inclusive perception of relations / causality. Sentences may be linked in the text as explanans and explanandum with causal conjunctions like "therefore" or "because", or they may be separated, whereby a reader may connect them.

Secondly, the explanation must be the core issue of the article or explaining the core issue, which are apparent in the macro text (summary) of the news article (see van Dijk, 1988: 27). The macro text may in itself be an explanation, or it may be explanans or explanandum in an explanation placed in the micro text (body). News articles not fulfilling these two criteria are not regarded as explanatory. Explanations placed in the macro text are of greater importance to the angle of the story than explanations placed in micro text.

This definition implies that articles with explanations in macro text are more explanatory than articles with explanations in micro text. I denotes this the explanatory degree of a news article, taking the value of high, medium and low depending on the presence and location of explanans and explanandum in the article.

The explanatory degree is not the only relevant dimension of the explanatory character of news articles. The presence of other voices in news discourse means that statements in news can have different originators, so other agents than the journalist himself can appear as explanatory exponents through quotation or summary. Whoever emerges, the explanatory exponent in the news can on one side be seen as an expression of power and social relations. A term like 'truthiness', which refers to the discursive construction of reality by powerful elite agents as they wish without regard to logic or contradictory facts (Ettema, 2009; Jones, 2009; Schudson, 2009), makes it relevant to distinguish between different types of exponents of explanation in news journalism such as politicians, experts or journalists. On the other side can the exponent of explanation be seen as distance or support to the explanation from the journalist. Quoted explanations appear with subjective modality and can be assigned skepticism, while explanations without reference to a source appear with objective modality without specific sender, because "I" or "we" often are omitted in news discourse. (Philo, 2007: 179; Philo & Berry, 2004: 97). This I denotes the explanatory autonomy of journalist, which as well have three categories.

Explanations in news may appear referred with external agents as exponents, as inferred by the journalist, when there is no other indication of authorship to the explanation, or as adopted when the journalist in the macro text appear as the exponent of an

explanation, and a source appear as the author in the micro text. The explanatory autonomy of journalists varies from high at inferred, medium at adopted and low at referred.

I combine the explanatory degree of the article and the explanatory autonomy of the journalist in the concept of explanatory genre, which can be used to measure the differences in the explanatory character of news.<sup>3</sup> The explanatory genre contains of six categories of which the first three are event-oriented (without explanation in the macro text) and the last three are explanation-oriented (explanation in macro text). The first (1) of the event-oriented categories contains articles without explanations related to the macro text; the next (2) category contains articles with referred explanations, while the last (3) category contains articles with inferred explanations. The first (4) of the three explanation-oriented categories contains articles with referred explanations, the next (5) category contains articles with adopted explanations and the last (6) category contains articles with inferred explanations. The six categories are scaled in ascending order by the explanatory degree of the article and the explanatory autonomy of the journalist.

In summary, the explanatory genre is a discourse analytical tool for categorizing the explanatory practice of journalists, as it appears in news articles, and to what extent it articulates agents, including experts as authors of explanations.

### ***The variation in fields of journalism and media***

The structures of media and journalism, which are expected to affect the presence of experts in news stories, is conceptualized as fields, inspired by the French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu. His analytical concepts and theories have led to several studies of media and journalism (e.g. Benson & Neveu, 2005; Couldry, 2004; Schultz, 2007) and the so-called field approach is considered to be useful and fruitful (Couldry, 2004: 170) and as a one of the dominant directions in media research (Anderson, 2008; Zelizer, 2004).

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<sup>3</sup> I have elsewhere described in detail the reduction of the typology of the articles explanatory degree and the explanatory autonomy of the journalist to an ordinal scaled variable (Svith, 2011: section 2.7, 7.4.2).

Bourdieu uses fields to conceptualize the structural factors on a sociological mezzo level that explains the practices of an agent. A field characterizes the structural conditions for a period in a social domain, which historically varies with different consecutive fields. Bourdieu's approach combines the historic with the social in a theory of practice, not primarily to be seen as interactions between agent or inter-subjective ties between individuals, but as objective relations that exist "*independently of the individual consciousness and will*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 97). These objective relations exist between positions that are organized in a network or a configuration of a field within two poles.

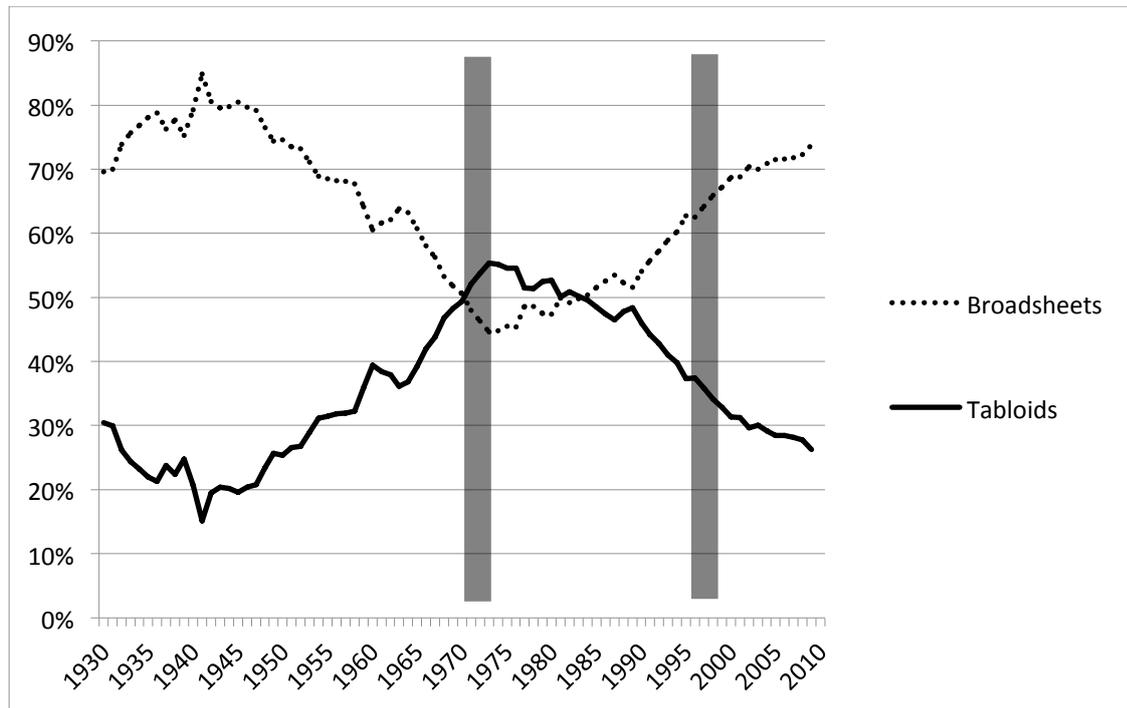
A field is a researcher's analytical construction, which is based on identification of opposed positions in a social domain, where the right behavior is subject to fight between the agents of the field. Positions can form a pole in a field, if the agents are disposed to a practice in opposition to other agents, while their own positions are of such strength that they dispose other agents to an opposite practice too. A pole entails certain logic and principles of practice, which in this specific case favor or disfavor experts in the news.

As I stress the importance of the relative independence both of media and journalism, separate fields are created in media and journalism. I begin with the construction of specific fields of media, and then follow the fields of journalism.<sup>4</sup> I propose three diachronic fields in both media and journalism during 40 years in Denmark. The three fields in media are in sequence the Partisan media field, the Press media field and the Distributed media field. The construction of these fields is based on the existing media literature, statistics, and the positioning of media and journalists in the public.

The Danish newspapers had still up in the sixties reminiscences of a partisan press (Søllinge, 1992; 1999; Thomsen, 1965: 62-63), based on ownership or affiliation of papers with political parties. The Partisan media field was replaced by the Press media fields as newspapers became commercialized and a new tension occurred as circulation can indicate. During the 1970s tabloids as *B.T.* and *Ekstra Bladet* achieved a position at the newspaper market (see figure 1), which made the tension between tabloids and other newspapers to the prominent conflict.

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<sup>4</sup> The details of the construction of fields in journalism and media can be found in Svith (2011: 99-157).

Figure 1. Circulation of Danish newspapers (1930-2010)<sup>5</sup>

The Press media field lasted from the 1970s to late 1990s with newspapers competing 25-30 years on a battlefield of a well-defined daily press. The field was dominated by a struggle between two different commercial forms, subjects and perspectives, i.e. two competing ways of being a newspaper. One pole of the field was the broadsheet role based on subscribers and the other pole was the tabloid role based on a daily sale.

The broadsheet role makes visible issues and perspective considered as the most important for citizens (politics, international affairs and a general or institutional perspective) and the tabloid role makes visible issues and perspectives deemed most audience catchy (criminal matter, human interest, famous people and a perspective on individuals as cases). The distinction between the two roles are well described in the literature and conceptualized as hard versus soft news (Gans, 2003: 28), as interesting and appealing content written in short, strong sentences in a narrative form, versus longer, more complex, analytical articles in an argumentative form (Bird, 2009: 41), as Americanization, 'dumping' or 'infotainment' versus general enlightenment and informed citizenship (McNair, 1999: 2).

<sup>5</sup> Based on eight newspapers, which since the 1930s had at least 75 percent and typically about 90 percent of the newspaper market in Denmark (Own calculations on weekday and Sunday newspapers, second half year based on the Danish Audit Bureau of Circulations, <http://www.do.dk/>)

In late 1990s and early 2000s the Distributed media field can be constructed due to a rapid penetration of Internet, thereby creating new positions for news distribution (Minke, 2008: 301; Willig & Lund, 2009: 167). New tensions came to dominate as new media like online newspapers, bloggers, social media, websites but also free newspapers and TV grew<sup>6</sup> in importance while traditional Danish newspapers dropped in circulation<sup>7</sup>. A prominent conflict appeared between old and new types of news media or between paid or gratis news media. The Distributed media field of the 2000s is organized around two poles, which I denote the media-agent role and the media-fountain role.

The media-fountain role based on distribution of gratis news has a rationality of labor-extensive production: *"The typical online news is shorter; less researched and makes use of fewer sources than the traditional news, which also in 2008 primarily exist in print media. Roughly speaking one can say that online news is rawer and less elaborated. Speed is more important as criterion than thoroughness, so web news has rarely been subject to long journalistic production time, if it's not simply the case of versions, loans and copying"* (Willig & Lund, 2009: 164; my translation). The fountain role entails a principle of dissemination of easily accessible information, which can be viewed as a condition for the explosion in editorial news in Denmark from near 32,000 in 1999 to near 75,000 in 2008 (Lund & Willig, 2009: 9).

The media-agent role is based on distribution of news the audience pays for. The agent role entails a principle of "exclusivity", which is labor-intensive by idea generation, angling, additional information or sources (Holm et al, 2008: 228; Lund & Willig, 2009: 9). Interpretation, explanation and perspectivation are used in order to increase the value of news compared to news from the fountain role: *"print journalists are no longer 'breaking' the news so much as discussing existing news, thereby encouraging the further 'featurisation' of news journalism"* (Franklin, 2008: 635) or to quote a Danish newspaper editor: *"The most interesting journalistic question is not where or when, but 'why'"* (Haagerup, in Dubgaard, 2007; my translation).<sup>8</sup>

This reflects a shift towards the explanatory questions away from the descriptive questions, which were more important in the mid-1990s according to the order of

<sup>6</sup> Free newspapers: *Urban* (2001 -), *Metro* (2002 -), *Nyhedsavisen* (2006-2008), *24 hours* (2006 -). Free TV: *TV2* (2004-).

<sup>7</sup> 15 percent decline from 1989-2000. Own calculations of weekday and Sunday newspapers, second half year based on the Danish Audit Bureau of Circulations (<http://www.do.dk/>).

<sup>8</sup> Other newspaper editors positioned themselves equally (Svith, 2011: 155-156).

questions in Danish handbooks of journalism: “who”, “what”, “where”, “when” and then “how”, “why” and “so what” (e.g. Olsson & Poulsen, 1995; Meilby, 2006/1996: 263).

The impact of the three media fields on the explanatory character of news differs. Relative many explanation-oriented articles are expected in the Partisan media field due to more tense social conflicts between partisan ideologies than in the two later media fields. However, even if the social tensions are weaker in the Distributed media field in the 2000s, explanation-oriented news should likewise be expected in media in positions close to the agent-role due to the struggle with media in positions close to the fountain-role. The impact of the three media fields on the presence of experts in news also differ, with less expected appearance in the Partisan media field due to the close relationship between centers of power and media and preference for explanations from affiliates in parties and organizations.

Besides and intertwined with media, journalism as a profession has its own impact on the news. The three fields in journalism I propose is in sequence the Partisan journalism field, the Classic journalism field and the Interventionistic journalism field. The Partisan journalism field shall only be mentioned as a period up until the 1970s. It was succeeded by the Classic journalism field, which was based on positions in commercial media or public service television and radio.

In the Classic journalism field, journalists struggle about ways to represent reality entailed in the roles of a referring journalist and a watchdog journalist. The distinction is well described in the media literature (see e.g. Ettema & Glasser, 2006/1985; Ekström, 2002) and this Classic journalism field dominated journalism in Denmark from 1970s to 2000s.

The role of a referring journalist entails the objectivity norm (see e.g. Høyer & Pöttker, 2005; Schudson, 2001; In Denmark: Jørgensen, 2007: 11, 24) taking empirical statements at face value, hence legitimizing consists of precision and accuracy, so statements is referred 'fair' and 'accurate' without the referenced being judged or certified at the veracity (Ettema & Glasser, 2006/1985: 128-129; see also Katz, 1989: 245; van Dijk, 1988: 87). The role of the watchdog entails a critical and in-depth investigative principle (van Eijk, 2005) including exposing e.g. legal offenses as corruption, illegal marketing or breaches of morality. *“Investigative reporting is, in short, unabashedly moralistic”* (Ettema & Glasser, 2006/1985: 138).

The third field is the Interventionistic journalism field, which is constructed to characterize the prominent tensions in the 2000s based on journalistic positions in news and in public relations. The development of PR-bureaus and press agents came later and less pronounced in Europa than in US (Schudson, 2001), where the massive appearance as early as the 1920s made journalism more interpretative due to the desire of news journalists to be distinct from PR agents. *"What had really happened is that journalists had become [...] determined to distinguish their work from that of press agents, eager to pass on to younger journalists and to celebrate in themselves an ethic and an integrity in keeping with the broader culture's acclaim for science and non-partisanship"* (Schudson, 2001: 32).

It was not until 2000s that a comparable situation occurred in Denmark, when positions were established in elite bastions other than media as communications managers, information managers, PR people, spin doctors, etc. and strategic information journalism received the strength to be considered a counter pole to news journalism. The precise growth of strategic information journalism is not available, but it can be indicated by a doubling of internships in strategic communication by students in journalism from 1960s-1990s to the 2000s<sup>9</sup>, and it is assessed that one third of Danish journalists has positions outside the press in strategic communication compared to two thirds in the news media (Willig & Lund, 2009: 166).

The news journalistic role of the Interventionistic journalism field entails principles for representing reality as second- or third-order observations rather than first-order observations, because the representation of reality by powerful elite-agents emerge as representations of special interest.<sup>10</sup> This can be illustrated by the positioning of a news journalist in the journalist magazine: *"As a critical investigative journalist you are up against an entire department of spin doctors, journalists and highly professional communications consultants [...] They all think tactical in how the story can be steered, spinned or even completely avoided. Hence we must also think self"* (Albrecht, 2010; my translation). Elite-sources are converted from informants to representatives, whose strategic statements and behavior require interpretation and the construction of a

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<sup>9</sup> Own calculations based on 21,831 internship semesters of 6 months from the three schools of journalism in Denmark.

<sup>10</sup> What I am proposing here is a parallel (see also Jensen, 2008: 45) to Giddens' description of the double hermeneutic in social sciences (Giddens, 1984: 284).

(opposed) reality by the news journalist. In 2009, the Danish news reporters positioned themselves primarily in a "*critical-Active Role*", which is a public representative who is skeptical and critical of people with political or economic power and who critically analyze and interpret complex issues (Skovsgaard et al, forthcoming: 14).

The other role, the strategic information journalism entails principles for intervention in media and news journalism as public relation, aims to influence politicians (Hansen, 2004: 204). As articulated in the journalist magazine "*Communication director at DSB and former journalist at TV news, Anna Vinding, who has had a foot in both camps, articulates very clearly the premise of the war: "It's pretty simple: a journalist must defend the general public interests. I must defend the DSB interests," she says.*" (Hesselager, 2009; my translation). According to the mediatization thesis strategic information journalism is as a professional response to the logic of journalism in news media (Hjarvard, 2008).

To summarize the impact of the journalism fields at the explanatory character of news and the appearance of experts in the news, it is most important to note, that explanation-oriented news are expected to be more common in the Interventionistic journalism field than the Classis journalism field, because the struggles over definition of reality in the symbolic constructions in news discourse between elites are more intense, than between the journalistic roles as referring and watchdog. Likewise, experts are expected to be more common in the Interventionistic journalism field than in the two former fields, due to the perception of elite-agents as representatives of special interest instead of informants of reality.

The fields of journalism and media show nearly the same periodicity, even if the structural breaks have different causal drivers. This allows splitting the last 40 years in Denmark in three periods based on the constructed fields. The periods are the Partisan period before the 1970s, the Homogeneously period in 1970s-1990s and the Hybrid period in the 2000s. The two latest periods are illustration in figure 1.

Figure 1: The Fields of journalism and media in Denmark from 1970-2000

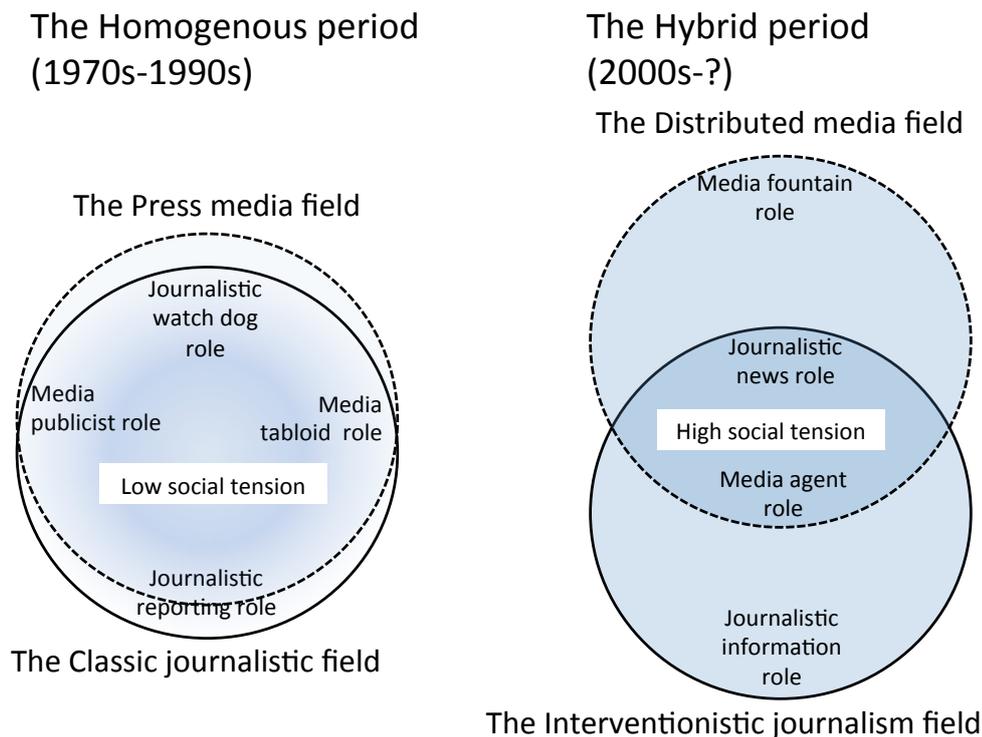


Figure 1 summarizes the field constructions leaving out the partisan period. It shows the four fields of media and journalism and their poles, which characterize the Danish media and journalism since the 1970s. To summarize (all other things being equal in academics and society in general), relatively many explanations-oriented news articles and relatively few experts are expected in the Partisan Period up until 1970s; relatively few explanations-oriented news articles and relatively few experts are expected in the Homogenous Period in 1970s-1990s; finally, relatively many explanations-oriented news articles and relatively many experts are expected in the news in the paid newspapers in the Hybrid period in the 2000s.

### ***Design and analyze***

To investigate the development of the explanatory character of news journalism and the presence of experts is used a comparative most similar design with three cases. A case consists of news articles in Danish newspapers in 1968, 1988 and 2008 chosen as representative for the three periods constructed above. Based on the principle of keeping constant as many factors as possible, week 46 was selected. This week have been used as a yearly representative in Danish media research (e.g. Lund, 2000; Lund et al., 2009).

The three weeks were controlled to avoid bias for a single dominating issue.<sup>11</sup> Eight newspapers were chosen, which were published throughout the period. It is the tabloids *B.T.* and *Ekstra Bladet*, the broadsheets *Berlingske Tidende*, *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* og *Politiken* and the specialty newspapers *Børsen*, *Dagbladet Information* and *Kristeligt Dagblad*. Together, the eight newspapers hold nine tenths of the market for sold newspapers in the period. To establish an affordable and comparable basis, the front lead articles of the newspapers in the selected week were then chosen, giving just over 50 articles in each case, or 154 articles. Included were also articles on the same topic referenced to from the newspaper's front page, which adds 195 articles, given a total of 349 articles. The rationale for including these articles is on one hand that the front lead story may be a short text (<100 words) referring to the main article (> 100 words) inside the newspaper and on the other hand to control for dependency between main articles and minor articles.<sup>12</sup>

The explanatory character of the 349 articles was first determined through an in-depth qualitative text analysis (Jakobsen & Harrit, 2010: 189) with discourse analytical techniques (Fairclough, 1992; 2008/2003; van Dijk, 1988) and data displays (Dahler-Larsen, 2010). Then the articles was quantified attributing each a value at the explanatory genre, thereby transforming data from a nominal variable to a ordinal scaled variable (see Miles & Huberman, 1994: 213-214) to allow cross case analysis of 1968, 1988 and 2008. The coding of the articles at the genre was repeated after six months, and blind coding showed an acceptable coding reliability.<sup>13</sup>

To investigate the presence of social scientist and other exponents of explanations in the news as well, four categories were made: 1) the journalist as author of the article, 2) experts, 3) politicians and representatives for organizations, 4) ordinary people and officials in authorities as policemen etc.

The aim of this design was to create data, which allows fairly general results concerning the relationship between journalists and social scientist in Denmark.

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<sup>11</sup> In 1968 the last week of October was chosen instead of week 46 because nearly 40 percent of the articles in that week dealt with the murder of a former resistance man from World War 2. In the selected week, the most mentioned case constitutes 16 percent in 1968, eight percent in 1988 and six percent in 2008.

<sup>12</sup> The control shows that in general resembles the explanatory character of main articles the explanatory character of the minor articles without a significant relation between the single main article and its minor articles (see Svith, 2011).

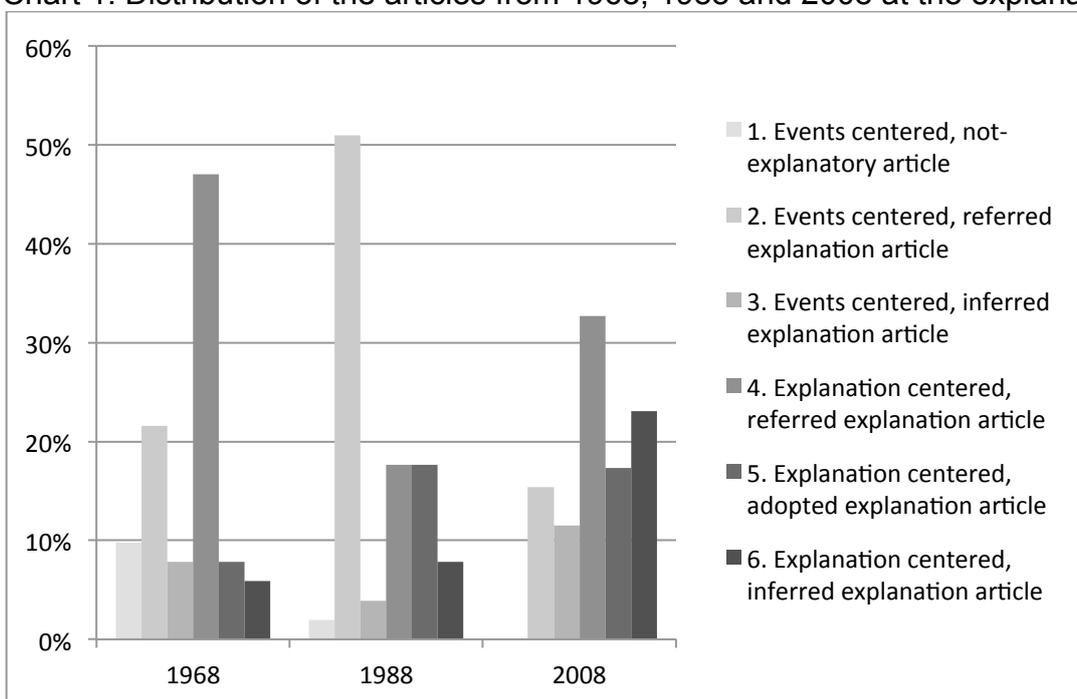
<sup>13</sup> Intra test reliability was 85 percent and should by repeated coding of the same person be between 80-90 percent (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 64). Cronbach's Alpha was 0,91 by repeated coding.

### ***The explanatory character of news***

Most of the news articles in 1968, 1988 and 2008 are according to the proposed definition explanatory. However, the variation in both the explanatory genre and the exponents of explanations in the news articles support the proposed theory. The analysis shows significant and not linear results across the three cases for the main articles, which are reported here.

With regard to the articles explanatory degree, high degree is most common in 2008 (73 percent), followed by 1968 (61 percent) and with the less in 1988 (44 percent). With regard to the journalist's explanatory autonomy, high degree is stable in 1968 (14 percent) and 1988 (12 percent), with nearly a three doubling in 2008 (35 percent). Hence, in 1968 and 1988 three out of four articles have other exponents of explanation than the journalist, while in 2008 it is half of the articles.<sup>14</sup> This asymmetric development of the three cases is mirrored by the explanatory genre (chart 1).

Chart 1: Distribution of the articles from 1968, 1988 and 2008 at the explanatory genre<sup>15</sup>



<sup>14</sup> The remaining articles have both journalists and sources as explanatory exponents (Category five at the genre: the adopted explanatory category).

<sup>15</sup> N = 154 main articles (51 in 1968, 51 in 1988 and 52 in 2008); Difference in year:  $p < 0.05$  (Fischer exact test). Variation is tested with Fisher's exact test, suitable for measuring dependency between variables by small N.

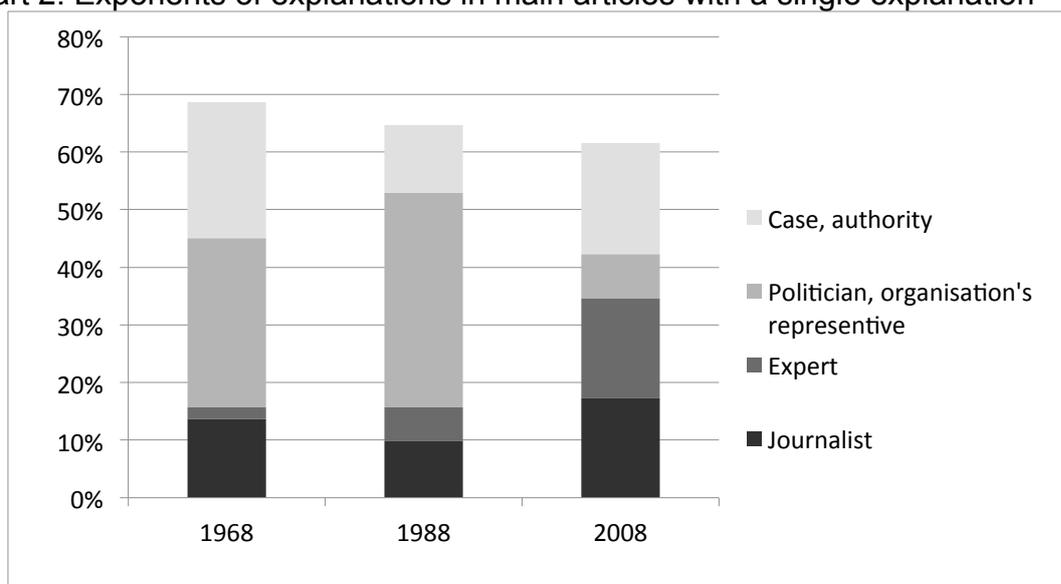
Chart 1 shows a significant difference in the explanatory character of main articles in 1968, 1988 and 2008. In 1968, the explanations from sources had a central role in the articles with a quoted explanation placed in the macro text in nearly half of the articles (category 4). In 1988, the sources remained exponents of explanation but the explanations were less important as half of the articles have the quoted explanation in micro-text (category 2). In 2008, the proportion of articles focused on explanation was bigger than in 1968 and 1988 and with significantly less sources as exponents of explanations (category 2 and 4). Hence, most common are main articles angled on explanations with a journalist as exponents in 2008.

In summary, the news in the three periods reflects the positioning of newspapers and journalists. Today's newspaper journalism is more focused on explanations and on the journalist as an exponent of the explanations than in the preceding periods.

### The exponents of explanations in news

A closer look at exponents of explanations in articles, which contains only one explanation, is shown in chart 2. These articles frame reality through a single explanation. This is about two-thirds of main articles, with a slight increasing proportion of articles with several explanations from 1968 to 2008.

Chart 2: Exponents of explanations in main articles with a single explanation<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Note: N = 154 main articles. Difference in years: 1968-1988:  $p > 0,1$ ; 1968 and 1988-2008:  $p < 0,01$ ; (Fischer exact test)

In 1968 and 1988, causality are represented in around one third of the main articles through en single explanation delivered by a politician or a representative of an organization. These articles portray causality in not contradicted frames by representatives of special political interests. In 1988 compared to 1968, powerful political agents replace ordinary people and police officers as exponents of explanations; thereby the explanations were assigned with higher performative value. Far fewer articles in 1968 and 1988 are based on explanations from representatives of in a political sense, neutral knowledge institutions. This applies not only for experts but journalists as well; given that they are politically neutral in explaining cases they themselves not are part of.

In 2008, the political representatives of special interests are almost disappeared as exponents of explanations, while explanations from experts and control authorities such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman, which are assumed not to favor special interests, appears in the articles with a single explanation.<sup>17</sup>

The growth of articles with explanations from representatives in a political sense neutral institutions are so pronounced that there are four times as many articles with solo explanations from experts and journalists as from politicians and organizational representatives in 2008, compared to half as many articles in 1968 and 1988 with solo explanations from experts and journalists as from politicians and organization representatives.

The remarkable increased interaction between experts and journalism found in this study between 1988 and 2008 is supported by another study covering 60 years of Danish news, which showed that especially social scientist increased in the 1990s and that they were quoted in the news not for comments on their own research but on statements from media, ministries, international organizations or EU and for comments on political events (Albæk et al., 2002: 45). Another study showed that half of the interactions in 2003 between an expert and a journalist were negotiations about how reality should be represented in the news and the other half were journalists trying to confirm the angle of a story (Albæk, 2004: 69).

In summary, a de-politicization of the exponents of explanations in newspaper news has occurred over the past 40 years. The analysis shows a replacement of Members of Parliament and representatives of powerful organizations with experts and journalist, as

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<sup>17</sup> In 1968 and 1988, the exponent of sole explanation in the main article is with one exception one single agent. In 2008 there are several agents as exponents of the single explanation.

the major discursive constructors of reality through their explanations. Newspapers journalists are more frequently positioning themselves as experts instead of presenters in the contemporary period than in previous periods, thereby changing their position and relationship to traditional experts.

### Discussion

The relationship between scientists and journalists has in general been marked by mutual distrust or criticism. Especially researchers in social science have been critical to journalism (Zelizer, 2004) and journalists have criticized social sciences explicitly<sup>18</sup> and implicitly by not applying the scientists in the news.

This criticism may as well be seen as struggles regarding positions between different professions in society, as best illustrated by Bourdieu in his two television transmitted lectures, which he described as an intervention to reduce the power of journalism and restore the power of philosophy and sociology (Bourdieu 1998/1996). The lessons was according to Benson (Benson, 1998: 492) caused by a previously television interview, where Bourdieu have experienced a journalist, who not acted like a respectful student in the meeting with an intellectual, but as a like-minded, if not direct the superior to the intellectual as *"the television journalist 'presenter' has nearly complete control of the content of the discussion, the time allotted for responses"* (Benson, 1998: 474).

The relationship between social scientists and journalists is in the field perspective a competition regarding power, hierarchy, authority and social relations in society. Both social science and journalism seek to establish a societal position, which allows the production of legitimate representations of reality.

*"Those who deal professionally in making things explicit and producing discourses – sociologists, historians, politicians, journalists, etc. – have two things in common. On the one hand, they strive to set out explicitly practical principles of vision and division. On the other hand, they struggle, each in their own universe, to impose these principles of vision and division, and to have them recognized as legitimate categories of construction of the world"* (Bourdieu, 2005/1995: 37).

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. *Ekstra Bladet* making fun of elections researchers (Albæk et al., 2009: 93) or the 'alternative study of power in Denmark' made by journalists as a critical response to the social sciences research project on Democracy and Power in Denmark (<http://www.mit.ps.au.dk/magtudredningen/Engelsk/frame.htm>) journalists publish *The book of power* (Valeur et al., 2002) and 12 documentaries as *Power images* (<http://www.dfi.dk/FilmUndervisning/Film-i-gymnasiet/Filmvejledninger-og-undervisningsmaterialer/Andre-materialer/Magtens-billeder.aspx>).

In the view of Bourdieu, the behavior of the specific journalist contradicted the structural dispositions from the objective relations between the fields of social science and journalism. According to the hierarchic perception of society held by Bourdieu, the journalist should have perceived the scientist as an elevated judge above the strictly political debate, i.e. an authority to have the last word (Bourdieu, 2005/1995: 31). However, according to Bourdieu the interaction was affected by the power of the journalist through his exclusive access in news media to the public (Bourdieu 1998/1996).

Since this occurrence in the mid 1990s, the structures of media and journalism have changed at least in Denmark as suggested above affecting journalists as straight presenters and gatekeepers to the public. Journalism has, at least in the contemporary Danish society, become generalized as capital with symbolic value in different fields as weapon in the struggle for legitimacy and power. Journalism's communicative capacities are used as definitional power, i.e. power to intervene in the event flow; to influence actions and create events by producing and transforming symbolic forms (Thompson, 1995: 17).

Traditionally, journalists have used their communicative capital to generate, handle and transmit information as “presenters”, but with explanatory journalism they climbed the stairs of Blooms taxonomy to analysis and conclusion regarded as epistemological capital. Obviously this may effect the relation between social scientist and journalist as well as their interaction, which best can be described as ambivalent, both competing and cooperating.

The explanatory character of news may affect the societal position of the journalist profession. On one hand it intensifies the competition between the traditional epistemological fields in social and human sciences and journalism. Journalists explaining the actions of elite agents with process-related factors are criticized by social scientists first in US (e.g. Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Carey, 1986: 186-187; Parisi, 1999) and later in the Nordic countries (e.g. Kock, 2009; Loftager, 2007; Strömback, 2005), which can be related to the emergence of second or third order explanations by news journalist in the struggle between journalists positioned in public relation and news journalism.

On the other hand, if the explanatory practice of newspaper journalists is a struggle with other journalists engaged in the centers of power, then this journalism can be conceptualized as an intervention in the general power struggles of society, thereby

positioning itself by the side of social science: “*the stake of the internal struggle for scientific authority in the field of the social sciences, that is for the power to produce, to impose and to inculcate the legitimate representation of the social world, is one of the stakes of the struggle between classes in the political field.*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 51).

This incorporation of journalism in the dominating power struggles of society may have changed the relation to social sciences, as both journalists and social scientists seem to be positioned at the same side in opposition to a perception of the world based on strategic communication in public relation and favoring special interest. The tension between social scientists and journalists as represented by Bourdieu may be subordinated this other struggle regarding the discursive construction of society. Instead of a theory of universal hierarchy, the specific interrelations of social science and journalism as fields are suggested to be specific historic. The main relationship between experts and journalists may have shifted from competition regarding legitimate positions in society to a common position as representatives of in political sense neutral institutions in opposition to politicians and lobbyists in the struggle over the discursive construction of society.

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