

Where does the news come from?

**News flow between print newspapers, broadcasting and the web in
Norway**

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Introduction

No single person is able to read all Norwegian newspapers or follow all broadcasters every day, or one single day for that matter. Systematic analyses is needed if we wish to say something about the relationship between these different media organizations and platforms and the news content that they publish and broadcast.

This paper examines the news output in Norwegian media during one particular week in November 2009. The concept of *news flow* is used to analyze how news content travel across boundaries of both separate media organizations, and also across different media platforms like newspapers, radio, television and online news sites. Which media organizations set the agenda for national news, and which ones builds upon news already made by others – in the form of citations, repurposing or mere plagiarism?

The daily flow of news is interesting to analyze, not least because it plays an important role in setting the public agenda (McCombs, 2004). Editorial news criteria and frames of interpretation helps us to create order and coherence in the multitude of events on a local, national and international level (Allern and Roppen, 2010). Analyzing the entire body of news items in nearly all Norwegian news outlets during a set time frame, this paper seeks an answer to the questions raised above:

- Which media organizations and platforms set the agenda for national news?
- Which media organizations and platforms build upon news already made by others trough various forms of repurposing?

Existing research

Not much research have been done on this particular field. In a Nordic context, one contribution stands out. Lund et al. (2000; Lund, 2009) carried out a similar analysis in Denmark, first in 1999 and then again in 2008, called “En nyhedsuge i Danmark”. The 2008 project included free newspapers and online news, which had not been part of the empirical study in 1999.

The 2008 version relied on four data sets: The news content of one week in 2008, newsroom observation (done by students), extra-media data (press releases and reports) and an audience survey mapping the news consumption by 1010 Danish citizens during the week in question. Week 46 was chosen as a sample week both in 1999 and in 2008, and is also used by this project for comparative purposes.

Lund et al. (2009) found that the amount of “news flow” between different organizations increased from 1999 to 2008. While the daily print newspapers are the main contributors of original news to this flow, the news agencies plays an important role in this process. A significant part of the repurposing of content between media organizations happens without proper citation or reference to original source.

Methodology

This paper is written based on a preliminary analysis of parts of the data gathered for the project “A news week in Norway” at Volda University College. The project uses quantitative content analysis as the main methodological approach. This method can briefly be defined as “the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (Riffe et al., 2005).

The analysis will, in the full project, include news articles and broadcasts from the majority of Norwegian news outlets during week 46, 2009. The data set includes print newspapers, radio and television news, and online news. The reason for choosing to include so many media outlets into one analysis is to be able to grasp the complexity of

the interplay between different media organizations and platforms. The project also aims at creating a database that can be used by other researchers, and that can be used as a base of comparison in longitudinal studies.

The news items have been manually coded into a data matrix, and will during later stages of the project be analyzed in SPSS. This paper is based on a preliminary analysis of parts of the data set, as described in Appendix 1.

Findings

This section will present and discuss findings from a preliminary analysis of parts of the data material¹. Being the first instant of this type of analysis in a Norwegian context, this paper cannot say anything about developments over time. What the paper will do, is point to some tendencies that stand out in the relationship between original news, agenda setting, repurposing of content and quotation practice in Norwegian media.

The paper is as said, based on a partial data set, and any attempts of quantification will have to be regarded as preliminary. However, to be able to present the analysis in a coherent manner, I have made attempts to quantify the relationships between different types of content. On the micro level, that is for each single medium, the numbers are complete. On the macro level, relative distributions of news formats and content types will presumably change as the analysis develops to include more of the data material.

Analyzing one coherent week (week 46, 2009), as opposed to a constructed week where the weekdays are gathered from different weeks of the year, also opens up for potential problems where for instance a certain large news event during that particular week could give unintentional bias to the data material.

¹ See Appendix 1 for a complete list of media included in this stage of the project.

Daily print newspapers

The preliminary analysis indicates that the daily print newspapers are the main contributor to the national news agenda. During the week analyzed, the largest national dailies (Aftenposten, Dagbladet and VG) have a total amount of news articles, editorials and notices in the range of 181 to 408. The relative amount of original news is between 30 and 50 percent, while the amount of “common news” is between 50 and 70 percent.

If we take a closer look at the original news content, we find that the relative amount of original news that are repurposed by other media is in the range of 7 to 10 percent. The remainder of the original news is not picked up by other media, and is found only in the medium in which it originated.

The “common news” material consists of articles and notices from news agencies, and content from other media. The latter is between 15 and 25 percent of the total news output, while agency material is between 25 and 55 percent. See tables 1.1 and 1.2 for an overview.

The analysis so far shows that the categories used by Lund et al. (2009) have to be modified slightly to fit the Norwegian media landscape. An important difference is that the categories need to be more nuanced. While Lund et al. (Ibid.) analyzes local and regional newspapers together, this paper separates them in order to point at the differences between the two.

The regional print newspapers analyzed published between 243 and 326 news items during the week of analysis. The relative amount of original news content is between 50 and 80 percent, while the amount of “common news” is between 20 and 50 percent. The relative amount of original news that are picked up by other media, lies between 2 and 8 percent, while between 42 and 78 percent of the news output is only found in the originating medium. Of the common news content, between 11 and 47 percent is agency material, while the rest, from 3 to 9 percent, is taken from other media. See tables 2.1 and 2.2 for an overview.

Local print newspapers published from 53 to 266 news articles each during the sample week. The relative amount of original news is here as high as between 70 and 100 percent, while the amount of common news thus lies in the range of 0 to 30 percent. A

typical distribution is approximately 80 percent original versus 20 percent common news material. Interestingly, only between 0 and 3 percent of the original news is picked up by other media, leaving almost the entire bulk of original news exclusive for one medium. See tables 3.1 and 3.2 for an overview.

The preliminary analysis therefore indicates that the daily national print newspapers are the major contributors of original news that are picked up and repurposed or cited by other media. Thus contributing to the national news agenda. The dailies also publish a relatively large amount of common news, both from news agencies and other media, while the regional and local print newspapers do not carry as much common news. They do on the other hand have more original news that are not picked up by other media.

However, while the analysis is not able to quantify it at this stage of the project, the relative amounts of original and common news in each of the print newspaper categories (national, regional and local) may be misleading when it comes to the volume of news, or the space given to each category. The analysis as of yet only counts the number of articles. The analysis does however indicate that the main volume of agency material is found in the notices and smaller articles, while the original news is more commonly presented in longer articles. As the project nears completion, and this variable is quantified, the relative amounts of original and common news may change.

Radio and television

The analysis so far, indicates that the bulk of the news found in the main news broadcasts on television, is developments of news stories already circulating in other media, what this paper calls “common news”.

The NRK has in the sample week a total of 83 news items in the main evening news on television, while the competitor TV 2 has 87. All of these are further developments and new angles of news stories that have been on the agenda during the same day, especially in the online news sites of the print dailies. That indicates that in the selected period, the most viewed national newscasts present the “biggest” news stories on

the national agenda, typically with a new angle and additional information. That puts the television news in a special position relative to the national print newspapers, when seen in the framework of this paper. On the one hand, they have a large amount of original news (the category includes news items with a different angle on already circulating stories). On the other hand, they have a smaller amount of repurposed or cited news, and of original news that are not picked up by other media. This paper therefore finds it problematic to compare the output of print newspapers and television news directly.

This is also the case for radio news. The analysis so far indicates that the amount of original news that is a development of common news is large, while they also have a relatively large amount of original news that is not picked up by other media, approximately 20 percent. The analysis has so far not found examples of radio news being cited by other media.

A potential source of bias in the material is the fact that the analysis only includes the radio and television broadcasts defined as “news”, excluding programs such as “Dagsnytt 18” on radio and “Brennpunkt” on television. As for example “Brennpunkt” has been a program where the NRK has used a lot of resources on investigative journalism, this may result in an incomplete picture.

Online news

The numbers for online news is not yet included in the quantitative analysis. The tendency seen so far is however that the online news sites associated with either a print newspaper or a broadcaster, have more news items per day than the parent medium. A significant amount of this is repurposing of content and short notices of agency material and other online news sites.

We also see a tendency where media organizations publish news articles first online, where they are picked up by other media and news agencies and turned into “common news”. This is most common in the national dailies like Aftenposten and VG. The national dailies also distinguish themselves by publishing a large amount of their

print content online. Regional and especially local newspapers publish very little of their print content online.

So far the analysis indicates that the national dailies and to some extent the regional newspapers have a fair amount of news content that are only published online and not in the print version. This is mainly news that are picked up from other media, typically in the form of common news distributed by agencies. This is seldom found in the local newspapers.

Common news, repurposing and citation practices

In their 2008 study, Lund et al. (2009) concluded that as much as 2/3 of the entire news output consisted of “repurposing, borrowing and robbery”². They also found that the amount of news repurposed or borrowed without proper citation or reference to original source was large.

Our study indicates that repurposing is a fairly large part of the Norwegian news output as well, if we include syndication of news agency material under this umbrella. The national daily print newspapers analyzed so far, have a relative amount of common news between 50 and 70 percent (table 1.2). The regional and local print newspapers have a significantly lower amount, of between 20 and 50 percent and 0 and 30 percent, respectively (tables 2.2 and 3.2).

The preliminary analysis indicates that the bulk of news articles in regional and local print newspapers are original news that only figure in one particular medium, and are not picked up by other media. This may be news items of local character that as such do not enter the “news flow” or set the agenda, but which contributes to a pluralistic national news output.

The analysis so far shows no tendencies towards “robbery”, as found in the Danish study (Lund et al., 2009). The news items based on repurposing or common news

² In Danish: Genbrug, lån og ran

have a high degree of correct citation or other reference to the original source. This may of course change when the entire data set is analyzed.

News agencies

It may be noted that the very notion of “repurposing” deserves a more thorough discussion than it is given here. When a significant amount of the common news passes through the news agencies via each newspaper’s (or parent organization’s) syndication agreement, this concept will have to be examined more closely.

The analysis shows that particularly the two largest agencies, NTB and ANB, play a key role in transforming original news to common news. Lund et al. (2009) concluded that the safest way to be cited by other media was through the Danish agency Ritzau, and that is indeed the case in Norway as well.

As shown, the national daily print newspapers have a relative amount of common news between 50 and 70 percent. Of this, between 25 and 55 percent is agency material. Corresponding figures for the regional print newspapers are between 20 and 50 percent common news (11 to 47 percent agency material). The local newspapers have between 0 and 30 percent common news, of which between 0 and 25 percent come from a news agency. See tables 1.1 – 3.2 for an overview.

Conclusions

The analysis of parts of the data material gathered for the project “A news week in Norway” is not yet complete, but already points to some tendencies. First of all, the national print newspapers is the main contributor to the news agenda, by means of their large production of both original news, and especially original news that are cited or repurposed by other media. The national daily print newspapers also carry a large portion of common news, citing or referring to other media or news agencies.

The regional and local print newspapers are not as often cited or referred to as the national papers, nor do they publish as much common news. However, they have significantly more original news that are not cited or referred to by other media. Thus do the national dailies set the agenda, while the regional and local papers broaden the specter of the total news output, to make an oversimplified claim.

The analysis so far indicates that the television news to a large extent builds on news stories that are already in circulation (common news), but that are developed journalistically. Television news is not as frequently cited or referred to by other media, but present the biggest news items on the agenda with new information and new angles. As the definition of original news used by this project as well as by Lund et al. (2009) includes news that require any amount of journalistic work, such as providing a new source, additional information or a fresh angle on a common news story) the televised news thus consist of a large amount of original news. This is the case also for radio news, but here the amount of original news that are exclusive to only one medium is higher, comparable to that which is found in the national print dailies.

The analysis indicates that a large amount of the total news output consists of so-called “common news” (repurposing of news from other media or news agencies). This number is much lower for regional and local print newspapers. The main volume of news in these papers are original news exclusive for one particular newspaper, often of a very local character.

We see that the news agencies, especially the two largest, NTB and ANB, act as a mediator between different media, playing a key role in transforming original news into common news.

The online news sites of established media (print or broadcasting) have more news items per day than their mother medium. A lot of this can be explained by repurposing of content both from their own organization (from the print newspaper to the online version) and from news agencies. When one of the larger news agencies publish a news story based in one of the print newspapers, it is quickly picked up by a broad range of online news sites. We also see that news stories are published first online, and not held until the next day’s print edition, and quickly spread to other online news sites via the

agencies. Further research is needed, for example on the role of syndication and automatic publication in this context.

The project this paper stems from, is still not finalized, and the analysis is not completed. Therefore, the quantitative analysis lacks both scientific rigor and a full data set. Changes and adjustments to the findings is expected. However, this paper has aimed at pointing out some tendencies that stand out at this early stage.

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Tables

Table 1.1: National daily newspapers week 46, 2009:

	Original, not cited by other media	Original, cited by other media	Repurposed from other media	Agency material	News items
Aftenposten	134	27	71	176	408
Dagbladet	37	15	52	77	181
DN	72	44	15	29	160
VG	92	17	51	64	224
Dagsavisen	84	21	13	105	223
Klassekampen	117	18	5	56	196
Nationen	92	8	5	65	170
Vårt Land	94	9	8	99	210
I alt	722	159	220	671	1 772
Prosent	41	9	12	38	100

Table 1.2: National daily newspapers week 46, 2009: original and common news (percent):

	Original news	Common news	Total	News items
Aftenposten	40	60	100	408
Dagbladet	30	70	100	181
DN	70	30	100	160
Dagsavisen	45	55	100	223
Klassekampen	70	30	100	196
Nationen	60	40	100	170
VG	50	50	100	224
Vårt Land	50	50	100	210
Gjennomsnitt	52	48	100	1 772

Table 2.1: Regional newspapers week 46, 2009:

	Original, not cited by other media	Original, cited by other media	Repurposed from other media	Agency material	News items
Adresseavisen	149	9	18	71	247
Bergens Tidende	136	20	22	102	280
Stav. Aftenblad	192	7	11	115	325
Sunnmørsposten	200	8	10	44	262
I alt	677	44	61	332	1 114
Prosent	61	4	5	30	100

Tabell 2.2: Regional newspapers week 46, 2009: original and common news (percent)

	Original news	Common news	Total	News items
Adresseavisen	65	35	100	247
Bergens Tidende	55	45	100	280
Stavanger Aftenblad	60	40	100	325
Sunnmørsposten	80	20	100	262
Gjennomsnitt	65	35	100	1 114

Table 3.1: Local newspapers week 46, 2009:

	Original, not cited by other media	Original, cited by other media	Repurposed from other media	Agency material	News items
Aura	70	0	3	17	90
Bergensavisen	181	8	8	69	266
Budstikka	94	0	5	18	117
Hordaland	71	0	0	0	71
Firda	90	0	9	8	107
Møre	92	0	4	15	111
Vikebladet	49	0	2	2	53
Romerikes blad	174	5	6	40	225
Romsdals Budstikke	69	1	6	18	94
Sogn Avis	110	1	7	6	124
Østlandsposten	168	4	7	42	221
I alt	1 168	19	57	235	1 479
Prosent	79	1	4	16	100

Table 3.2: Local newspapers week 46, 2009: original and common news (percent)

	Original news	Common news	Total	News items
Aura	75	25	100	75
Bergensavisen	70	30	100	70
Budstikka	80	20	100	80
Hordaland	100	0	100	100
Firda	85	15	100	85
Møre	85	15	100	85
Vikebladet Vestposten	90	10	100	90
Romerikes blad	80	20	100	80
Romsdals Budstikke	75	25	100	75
Sogn Avis	90	10	100	90
Østlandsposten	80	20	100	80
Gjennomsnitt	83	17	100	1 479

Appendix 1: Media included in the analysis

National daily newspapers:

Aftenposten
Dagbladet
Dagens Næringsliv
VG

Regional newspapers:

Adresseavisen
Bergens Tidende
Stavanger Aftenblad
Sunnmørsposten

Opinionated newspapers:

Dagsavisen
Nationen
Klassekampen
Vårt Land

Broadcasting:

NRK1
TV 2
NRK P1
Radio Norge

Local newspapers:

Aura Avis
Bergensavisen
Budstikka
Firda
Hordaland
Møre

Romerikes Blad
Romsdals budstikke
Sogn Avis
Vikebladet Vestposten
Østlands-Posten