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RegPress project final report

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RegPress project final report

Executive Summary

Aim
The RegPress project aimed to ascertain the role and value of the regional press and media in South East and South West Sweden. The specific areas the project focused on were:

- The county of Småland (Kalmar and Växjö)
- The county of Blekinge (Karlskrona, Karlshamn and Sölvesborg)
- The county of Västra Götaland (Borås, Svenljunga and surrounding area)

Research questions
The central question the project sought to address was:
- What is the role and value of regional press in a global media age?

The secondary questions were:
- How do regional press organisations connect at the regional level?
- How do printed press and digital press connect at the regional level?
- What is the importance and relevance of the connection fostered between regional press and local communities in the civic sphere?
- What is the influence of regional press on local democratic processes and citizen participation in the public sphere?

Research method
The project used a mixed method design, conducted in the areas noted above. The methods used were:
- Desk research: demographics, literature review, scoping study of newspapers in the regions
- 65 semi-structured interviews with local people
- Survey of local people (9,413 responses)
- Interviews with regional journalists and editors (9 in total)
- Focus groups to discuss the press with local people (8 in total)
Findings

The way that the press connects with its readers affects people’s sense of community. The key points for newspapers are knowing who the local collectives are and understanding their issues and interests. This includes:

1. Connecting with the ‘local collective’ in terms of their interests and local relevance  
   *(Finding 4.2.1)*
2. Senses of a neighbourhood and local knowledge in the value of news and press  
   *(Finding 4.2.2)*
3. The proximity factor in the relevance of news and press *(Finding 4.2.3)*
4. Aspects of local reporting and regional press that connect readers and yield value for them *(Finding 4.2.4)*
5. Feeling of closeness *(Finding 4.2.5)*
6. Important issues in the local collective *(Finding 4.2.6)*
7. The relevance of the ‘Igenkänningsfaktorn’ (recognition factor) in local reporting  
   *(Finding 4.2.7)*
8. Perceptions and expectations about the role and position of journalists *(Finding 4.2.8)*

A further set of findings refer to the way in which the regional press fosters participation and an engaged culture, and establishes trust with its readers:

9. Newspapers support the way people talk about the news and how citizens engage in their local community *(Finding 5.1.1)*
10. Readers discuss the news in various networks and communities *(Finding 5.1.2)*
11. People are interested in a range of things which they want to be reported impartially *(Finding 5.1.3)*
12. People use social media to follow their interests but worry that the information is not impartial *(Finding 5.1.4)*
13. People value trustworthy journalism comprising impartial reporting, verifiable sources, and good quality writing *(Finding 5.1.5)*
14. Reporting scandals in local and regional contexts *(Finding 5.1.6)*
15. People construct local knowledge through their connections with regional journalism, but also in relation to the national and international media *(Finding 5.1.7)*
The project identified a new type of individual who navigates between diverse media channels across regional, national and international levels:

16. The media navigator (Finding 6.1)
17. The media navigator in the context of sports journalism (Finding 6.2)
18. The practices of readers as media navigators (Finding 6.3)

The project identified the fact that media production is an important aspect of engaging with readers:

19. People are satisfied with regional sports reporting (Finding 7.1)
20. People are not impressed by the quality of local webcasts and their images (Finding 7.2)
21. Audiences expect to see the global norm in media production (Finding 7.3)
22. Readers and viewers notice poor media production (Finding 7.4)

Cost of newspapers
23. Most respondents thought regional newspapers were affordable, although a significant number considered them too expensive (Finding 8)

Overall framework
The project found that audiences engage in hybrid ways, drawing on a number of media sources. However, the regional press is seen as a trust anchor which people read and engage with, in print and online. They develop media practices and reading rituals around this, and they want to find out about important issues, culture and things that are happening in the local civic and political sphere.

The press is located dynamically in relation to local people, issues and interests. The RegPress research framework was comprised of the following nodes of activity: issue based; regional paper as social actor; mixed use of internet; representation; engagement; creating and reading issues; crafting communication.
Conclusion

This conclusion provides a brief summary answer to the main research question, followed by the secondary research questions explored in this study.

- **What is the role and value of regional press in a global media age?**
  This study found that the regional press plays a very important role in a global media age. Its role is to inform, support and facilitate an open and vibrant local and regional society. Furthermore, it ensures that people have a sense of their local community and region in terms of their local and regional values. It goes beyond this though, because the regional press also provides important information about the economy, politics and cultural life. The regional press has significant value because it supports an active and informed civic society at the regional level. This, in turn, impacts on the quality of local democratic debate and politics. The regional press has to balance a focus on the local and regional with reporting wider national and global issues. In comprising a central actor in civic, cultural and political life, it is responsible for ensuring that it meets the very highest standards of journalistic ethics. RegPress found that the regional media provide value by connecting with their readers and viewers through quality reporting, informed insights into their communities, generating relevant news stories, and by the way they enable their consumers to engage with, and talk about, what is in their local newspaper.

- **How do regional press organisations connect at the regional level?**
  The regional press connects with its readers through quality reporting, knowing the communities it serves, generating news stories which are relevant to their readers, and by the way its readers engage with, and talk about, what is in the regional paper.

- **How do printed press and digital press connect at the regional level?**
  The printed and digital regional newspapers work on the basis of what is seen as good journalism by both journalists and local and regional readers.

- **What is the importance and relevance of the connection fostered between regional press and local communities in the civic sphere?**
  The regional press plays a key role in local community life. It is extremely important for people to know what is going on in their locality and region and it
Final report

provides a transparent and impartial view of local and regional events, issues and general news.

- **What is the influence of regional press on local democratic processes and citizen participation in the public sphere?**

  The regional press has significant influence on local democratic processes through its role within civic and community life. The way it works and is organised in local life, the way it connects with readers and citizens, and its relevance and trustworthiness all support a strong and vibrant civic sphere.

**High-level recommendations**

RegPress offers ten recommendations for the regional press, based on the findings of this study:

1. Continue focusing on, and supporting, the highest-quality journalism to maintain its reputation as a trust anchor.
2. Develop its profile in line with the ways that contemporary readers draw on a range of media to obtain news.
3. Support local strategies to ensure that readers maintain and develop their media literacy skills.
4. Improve the quality of webcast production of local football – and other sporting – events.
5. Ensure that local reporting covers news stories in the community which support community identity and enhance people’s enjoyment of reading the paper.
6. Develop journalism skills that can evaluate the ‘information’ circulating on social media. Journalists need the relevant skills – or access to those skills – to reverse-engineer the algorithms that shape the way that information is selected and spread across social media.
7. Manage the balance between print and online papers, by monitoring people’s reading practices and habits.
8. Reflect on balancing the coverage of localities within a regional context to ensure that no localities are neglected.
9. Consider how it can maintain its local knowledge and retain local journalists within resource constraints.
10. Consider how to support those who cannot afford to buy a paper to get access to regional newspapers. This could be achieved through maintaining special subscription rates for libraries, community centres, job centres and so on.
1. Introduction

This is the RegPress project’s final report. RegPress was a two-year project that began in October 2015 and concluded in September 2017. The Barometern Foundation funded the project, which was supported by match funding from the Media and Journalism Department at Linnaeus University.

The project was conducted using a highly collaborative team approach. This meant we could draw on diverse appropriate knowledge bases to design the research methodology and analyse the data. The research team comprised:

Front row, left to right: Britt-Marie Ringfjord, Bridgette Wessels, Mikael Rinaldo*
Back row, l to r: Mats Wahlberg, Emelie Kempe, Anette Forsberg, Annelie Ekelin

* Mikael was a trainee researcher and observer in the first year of the project.

This report provides some background information about the study and its conceptual and methodological aspects, before presenting the main findings. We then discuss these findings, providing conclusions and recommendations, as well as suggesting areas for further research. The report is based on the research team’s notes and draft papers –with each team member leading on a specific area. Annelie Ekelin focused on participation and the media, Emelie Kempe focused on community and the media, Anette Forsberg focused on scandals and local journalism, Britt-Marie Ringfjord focused on the concept of a skilled media navigator, Mats Wahlberg focused on media production, and Mikael
Rinaldo undertook a pilot study of the content analysis. Bridgette Wessels provided overall leadership of the project’s intellectual and research design.

2. Background, research questions and conceptual framework

The RegPress project aimed to ascertain the role and value of regional press and media in South East and South West Sweden. The specific areas focused on were:

- The county of Småland (Kalmar and Växjö)
- The county of Blekinge (Karlskrona, Karlshamn and Sölvesborg)
- The county of Västra Götaland (Borås, Svenljunga and surrounding area)

In general terms, the regional press and media are facing both challenges and opportunities in every country across the world: investment in regional press is declining, as are sales, and the regional press are not well placed to take up some of the opportunities offered by digital media. In many countries the ritual of reading/viewing quality regional press/media is weakening, however, the regional press still retains a strong presence in South East and South West Sweden, where there are consistently high and stable levels of sales, and press offices are still present in the regions. The traditional role of regional press is to provide a critical space for holding government and industry to account, as well as informing, educating and entertaining citizens in a specific locality. The value of this role is that it fosters a vibrant public sphere, which acts as the basis for a functioning democracy. Nonetheless, in the global digital age, it is important to understand how – and if – the traditional roles and values of the regional press are changing, and if they are still important and relevant to people.

The central question of the project was, therefore:

- What is the role and value of regional press in a global media age?

The secondary questions were:

- How do regional press organisations connect at the regional level? This question sought to ascertain how the press, as an organisation, connects with people living in particular regions and locales. It also addressed the means by which the regional press connects with local people through its media products and reporting. This is
through the two-way relationship that it has with its readers, so examining this means understanding how readers connect with regional press.

- How do printed press and digital press connect at the regional level? This question focused on the ways in which readers and journalists interpret and assess media content, reporting and formats in ways that relate to their own lives and their community or collective life. This means exploring how people make use of their local press to enable them to participate and engage in the political, social and cultural life of their region.

- What is the importance and relevance of the connection fostered between regional press and local communities in the civic sphere? This enquiry drew on the findings of the previous two questions to assess how the character of the connection and its quality featured in the civic sphere. Here we considered if – and to what extent – the press support a vibrant, informed and open civic sphere that acts as a basis for individuals and groups to address areas of concern; and if it supports and sustains a sense of identity and values that express the ethos of a region.

- What is the influence of regional press on local democratic processes and citizen participation in the public sphere? This question is much more specific, as it centres on the way in which – and the degree to which – regional press works within the processes of regional and local discussion and deliberation.

These questions addressed the different dimensions of the way that the media – and local media in particular – are part of regional life.

3. Methodology

The RegPress project used a mixed methods approach, whereby the overall project design employed various appropriate methods to inform our data collection and analysis. This mixed methods approach is underpinned by an interpretivist philosophy, which prioritises the agency of individuals and reveals how individuals interpret social life and make aspects of that life meaningful to them. Individuals connect with each other in this sense-making and meaning-making process through developing an intersubjective understanding that is shaped by the culture of their local, regional and national social life. This focus on meaning meant that our desk analysis entailed examining secondary data to review the literature, carry out a content analysis and a
scoping analysis of demographics and newspaper consumption. This section of methodology used a thematic framework approach to search for and scope the data required, which was then analysed through the framework that was informed by our research questions.

The project then took a qualitative turn and used semi-structured interviews and focus groups in order to gain an understanding of the meanings people gained from local and regional press, as well as their practices of consuming the press and wider media. Our findings from the interviews with local people informed the design of our survey type, format and content. We carried out an attitudinal survey, which garnered descriptive statistics of people’s attitudes, thoughts and practices regarding local and regional press. The project team also conducted interviews with journalists and editors in order to understand the values and practices that inform the production of local and regional press. Although the methods used were different, the underlying philosophy created consistency across them all. The coherence of the underpinning approach also provided a valid basis for our subsequent analysis. The project used ‘facet methodology’ to analyse the data, because this is specifically designed for use in mixed methods projects. This involved analysing each type of data once, then analysing it further across the whole data set in order to gain insights from each type of data collected via each particular method. This analysis involved coding the data, which enabled the development of categories, followed by the identification of relationships between categories. This yielded several key themes and formed the basis for a high-level analysis of the role and value of regional media in a global media age.

The project gained ethical approval from, and was categorised as ‘low risk’ by, the Etikkommittén Sydost (Ref no: dnr. EPK 317-2016). Each of the participants was given an information sheet and signed a consent form. The project anonymised each participant’s personal details and stored the data in a secure, password-protected LNU data storage facility.
Methods:

- Desk research: demographics, literature review, scoping study of newspapers in the regions
- 65 semi-structured interviews with local people
- Survey of local people (9,413 responses)
- Interviews with regional journalists and editors (9 in total)
- Focus groups to discuss the press with local people (8 in total)

Diagram 1. Overview of mixed methods research design

_work from baseline 1 to 4, 1 to 2, and 1 to 3_

4. Survey – 9,413 responses - survey designed on an early analysis of key issues from interviews

3. Nine interviews with professionals – journalists and editors – to ascertain their view of readers, communities and stories, and how that links with the baseline data and focus group findings.

2. Themes – mixed methods used to focus on particular aspects of regional and local press across the three areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 focus groups</th>
<th>3 focus groups</th>
<th>Focus groups</th>
<th>3 focus groups</th>
<th>Embedded in all focus groups: discussion of media content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political and cultural participation</td>
<td>Media production</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Print and digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics/symbolic participation</td>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Content analysis</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics/local elections</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Scandal</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local and global production</td>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public/private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Baseline data – 65 semi-structured interviews in 3 areas provided the key themes that stages 2, 3 and 4 relate to
4. Findings

4.1. Literature review, population review, distribution of regional press, and content analysis

In Småland, Blekinge and the west coast (the area around Borås), there are about 84 newspapers, including the daily press, free newspapers and newspapers which only exist online. In all of the areas – Småland (Växjö, Kalmar), Blekinge (Karlskrona) and the west coast (Borås) – one daily newspaper had a predominant share of total household coverage, even though there were almost always more than one daily newspaper covering the same area. The newspapers with the highest household coverage are:

- **Kalmar**: Barometern Oskarshamns-Tidningen (read by 49.9% of the local population, total circulation: 39,500, subscription level: 92%).
- **Växjö**: Smålandsposten (read by 50.7% of the local population, total circulation: 34,200, subscription level: 93%).
- **Blekinge/Karlskona**: Blekinge Läns Tidning (read by 48.5% of the local population, total circulation: 31,800, subscription level: 89%).
- **West side of Blekinge**: Sydöstran Sydöstra Sveriges Dagblad (read by 17.5% of the local population, total circulation: 10,300, subscription level: 78%).
- **Borås**: Borås Tidning (43.9%, total circulation: 40,000, subscription level: 92%).

The daily newspapers Barometern Oskarshamns-Tidningen, Smålandsposten, Blekinge Läns Tidning, Sölvesborgs Tidningen, Karlshamns Allehanda and Borås Tidning all show a similar trend in that, between 2013 and 2014, each of their circulation numbers declined by between 2% and 3.1%.

These dominant daily newspapers are all owned by the Gota Media Group, and are strongly centred around their local and regional setting. Their focus is on the cities, towns and counties nearby, and most of the papers’ news pages cover a broad range of topics including municipal policy, urban development, school activities, events and healthcare – all from a local perspective. All of the daily newspapers also contain a few pages of country-wide domestic news and international news, as well as sport and culture.

Our content analysis of four papers – Barometern, Borås Tidning, Blekinge Läns Tidning and Smålandsposten – found that they are all quite similar in terms of structure.
and content. The most predominant editorial material, which fills most of the newspapers’ pages, is content about the main local city and region. This was the same for all four papers examined. Sports takes up the next amount of pages. Other topics, which have a significant presence in the newspapers, are (in order of prevalence):

- advertisements
- culture/entertainment
- personal/family announcements
- miscellaneous content/themes
- TV and radio listings
- news about Sweden
- world news
- leader/opinion/debate columns
- weather

All the papers’ separate sections are introduced with a new header, together with editorial staff credits and contact information for that specific section. In many cases, there is also a specific e-mail address and phone number for readers’ to contact the paper with their own news tips. Table 1 outlines the key areas of content and the number of pages devoted to the main topics.

4.2. Connecting with local press in regional contexts: the role and value of regional press from local perspectives

Finding 4.2.1. Connecting with the ‘local collective’ in terms of interests and local relevance

An individual reader defines a group of readers as a collective, that is, a group with certain common features in which an individual is part of a wider community. The common features are: firstly, the local area, secondly, shared interests within that area and, thirdly, shared interests in a wider context. In alignment with the paper, a reader is part of a bigger whole, a community (both in aspects of the area and interests), which forms a constructed entity of ‘us’, based on these shared features.
Table 1. Content analysis findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>BAR</th>
<th>BT</th>
<th>BLT</th>
<th>SMP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main City</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>8.25</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion/Debate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy (Stock M)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture/Entert.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classif.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun &amp; Games</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV &amp; Radio</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads (Assorted)</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>8.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages (Total)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows the number of pages devoted to different sections in Barometern, Borås Tidning, Blekinge Läns Tidning and Småländsposten on 7th, 10th and 12th December 2015.

Two important factors that work together to form this local collective are the local issues that people feel are and close to them, and the interests that are geographically shared in the local area. For example, the data from the survey shows that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Partly agree</th>
<th>Sometimes agree</th>
<th>Almost never agree</th>
<th>Never agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They cover news in a way which is consistent with my interests</td>
<td>46.58%</td>
<td>38.66%</td>
<td>12.74%</td>
<td>1.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,360</td>
<td>3,619</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They cover local issues in a</td>
<td>47.80%</td>
<td>35.32%</td>
<td>12.68%</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There is strong agreement that the local and regional press connect with their readers by covering news in a way that aligns with reader interests and makes it interesting for them. People perceive news as relevant both to them as an individual within that group, and for the group itself.

Finding 4.2.2. Senses of a neighbourhood and local knowledge in the value of news and press

The value of news and what connects readers to the paper is that it aligns with readers’ local area in geographic terms. The stories which are most relevant for readers are those based in close proximity to them. However, there is a subjective aspect of what they define as ‘close proximity’. For some readers, it means the hyper local area of where they live whereas, for others, it goes beyond where they live to include where they work or places and people that they have other connections with, such as family and hobbies. For other readers, it refers to a city/town, municipality or county.

In the interviews, the Swedish word ‘närområde’ was used to denote a specific understanding of what the local means for people. The interview participants said ‘närområde’ to mean being aware of what was going on and identifying themselves with a locality, which was strongly relevant to them, both as part of a local collective and as an individual:

Yes, I tend to find out what’s happening in my area from BT [Borås Tidning]... at least, I think so. I can never be 100 percent sure, because I don’t usually question what the newspapers report and if they miss anything out. But I’ll find out what’s going on by reading the newspaper. Because it’s interesting to know what’s happening in the vicinity, so I definitely think it’s important to me, both for local knowledge and for world events and so on, absolutely.

The participants also referred to ‘lokalkännedom’, which emphasizes how important they considered it to be informed about their local area:
Yes, of course. I don’t really know how. But you become more aware of the local environment and the local community as well. And you might also become more involved in the issues.

The significance of feelings of ‘närområde’ and ‘lokalkännedom’ is that they frame the things readers consider important to them and how they link with wider society – at the local level and beyond into wider social issues. As one interview participant said:

It’s important for me to keep up with what’s happening in society and how it works. It’s good that someone is covering it, it’s important.

The local and regional press plays a role in supporting these feelings, to enable people to connect locally and engage in local issues.

Finding 4.2.3. The proximity factor in the relevance of news and press

The feelings of ‘närområde’ and ‘lokalkännedom’ combine to form part of the proximity factor, or ‘närhetsfaktorn’. How proximate a report feels depends on how important it is, personally, for a reader. The data from our interviews found that readers were selective in what they read, since they did not think everything was of interest or importance to them. However, the proximity factor guided their selection of what they read, as the following two quotes illustrate:

From what I read in BT I think they report news in a way which is interesting for me as a reader, mainly through the proximity factor I mentioned earlier. But the newspaper as a whole has not attracted my interest yet, maybe because I haven’t lived here very long yet and don’t have a grasp of the area. It might be good to start reading the newspaper to get into society, I hadn’t really thought about that before...

The region that interests me is Blekinge, very close to Ronneby. Otherwise, I’m not so curious about what’s happening outside. If so, I’m just curious about what’s going on in Piteå!

The senses of neighbourhood, local knowledge and proximity are all important elements of the ways that readers connect through, and with, the local and regional press within
their social, local and regional lives. In order to foster these senses of connection, local and regional reporting needs to respond to the senses of neighbourhood, local knowledge and proximity, since its value lies in representing those stories in the paper, whether in print or online.

Finding 4.2.4. Aspects of local reporting and regional press that connect readers and yield value for them

‘Lokalanknytning’, which refers to local connection or attachment, is something that helps to guide the local collective. In order for the news to be meaningful, the regional papers need to draw out a story’s relevance at the local level, to depict it from a local perspective and confer local meaning on it.

BT is good at picking up what’s happening locally, I really get the feeling that I’m aware of what’s happening in Borås by reading the newspaper. What they write about is usually relevant to those living in the city and not just meaningless verbiage to fill the newspaper, I think that’s good. Sometimes I see that the news I read about in DN [Dagens Nyheter] or SvD [Svenska dagbladet] has been covered at the local level in BT and I think that’s good, because it gives a perspective on what meaning it has locally.

I really think they are good at putting a local angle on the news, and I think that it feels more like the news affects me, making the news more interesting to me as a reader.

With BT, I really think I’ll find out what’s happening nearby where I live and in the nearest region.

This local attachment to a news report creates relevance in an area and makes the article seem interesting and applicable for the individual reader:

Local press is absolutely vital. Because you need a local angle that makes it interesting for the individual. There are lots of big newspapers that write about the national and international, but I think it’s important to have the local perspective too, not to let it go. Not everyone is a big city citizen and everyone
must agree that it’s an important democratic thing to have local newspapers. It must be.

This local attachment also forms a bond of closeness between the news and the reader, as well as creating a link with the community and wider society.

Although I don’t have access to all the articles in the magazine, I think it is important to know what’s happening in Borås, the most important things are not locked.

The content of the articles is usually presented with a local angle and I think that gives me a sense of closeness to what is said in the newspaper. I think it’s important to keep up with it, and I think you get a pretty good look at what’s happening in the city.

This local attachment and connection to the news helps to guide the individual readers to become active participants in their local society and community:

For me, local journalism is important. It is important to be up to date about events both in the world, in Sweden, but also in my city, Borås. I believe that, as a citizen, I am obliged to keep myself informed about what’s happening in my community – both locally, nationally and globally. Also, as a teacher, I need to be updated on what’s happening so that I can participate in discussions about what’s happening, both with the kids and my colleagues.

The local attachment was also evident in the survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Partly agree</th>
<th>Sometimes agree</th>
<th>Almost never agree</th>
<th>Never agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The local paper helps me to feel part of local society</td>
<td>44.94%</td>
<td>33.57%</td>
<td>13.25%</td>
<td>4.74%</td>
<td>3.50%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4,177</td>
<td>3,120</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large number of participants – almost 80% – either agreed or partly agreed that the local paper helped them to feel part of their local society.
I think the local newspapers follow what’s happening and I think it’s interesting to know what others are reading in my city and thus take part in the local community.

The formation of a local collective occurs where individuals live and work together, generating feelings of local attachment, senses of closeness and identification with the immediate area. These combine to create a set of common features. Local and regional reporting interacts with readers within a local collective. Their news stories and reports comprise part of the local collective’s culture and, in that way, the regional and local press becomes part of the wider society and context that, together, creates a common sense of ‘us’.

What is quite typical of the local newspapers is that you follow local policy and decision-making in the town, mixed with family news, club news and small things that happen. And all that constitutes putty between people as a collective, ‘yes, that was just in the newspaper’. So I think local newspapers provide a social function, only local news media can do that.

I think local journalism is important, and it is important for democratic involvement in my neighbourhood. But also as a social excitement, an enhanced ‘feeling of “us”’, especially where I live among the people in my neighbourhood, but also where I work.

Local news creates a link with local society:

With local news, I feel like I’m part of the local community, it asks relevant questions for me.

In terms of shaping the level of interest in local and regional reporting, regional media need to balance reporting about their immediate area with more widespread areas of interest. These extended areas of reporting may be relevant at the local level even though they are not within the closest proximity. The regional media play a significant role in helping individuals to feel included in society and in developing feelings of community.
Finding 4.2.5. Feelings of closeness

It is important to note that senses of locality are not reducible to geographical ideas of place. The research respondents defined what was closest to them in different ways. It is important to recognise that their understanding of what was close to them was defined by feelings of closeness.

Which am I most interested in? I am most interested in what’s happening in my area. That’s what I’m looking for online anyway.

And when you think about the county...

Yes, quite. And the municipality I live in and also... yes... Blekinge.

The landscape...

Yes, quite... the neighbourhood as well. Whatever feels closest.

This feeling of closeness is related to what people believe affects them the most, such as healthcare, schools and other key services:

It’s the way it feels that makes it seem to concern me – school, childcare, work... things happening where you live... I don’t know what to say.

[laughing] I cannot do anything else. I am interested in what’s going on at school, how it is here in the municipality and around Blekinge, what is happening in healthcare... yes, just like most people. That feels important as well.

The local collective feels a sense of closeness in much the same way as individuals. People who live close together share certain common interests, and frequently confront issues that are important to them as a group. The closer something happens to them, the more important it feels to readers. This includes news that would not be considered interesting if it referred to anywhere outside the readers’ immediate vicinity.
That’s to keep me updated on what’s happening right here. I am less interested if the library in Torsås is going to close. Though it’s still pretty close. But I’m really interested if it’s a debate about the library in Nybro.

Everything that happens locally is interesting, of course. Everything that happens in Nybro is really great for me because I live here. Even minor news. If a garden shed burns down. You’d want to know that. I wouldn’t care if it happened in Halland though! [laughs].

Readers are extremely keen to know what is happening in their local area. The local papers address this desire by helping to spread local information. Readers felt that, if they did not have a local paper, they would miss out on knowing about things in the close locality, which they thought was important:

Well, I would miss various things I should know about in my job. For example, if there was a launch for an artistic artefact that my friend had made. what if didn’t know and I missed it? I should want to write and congratulate him. These kinds of simple little things. Or something for the kids to do. Well, there was an article about it. I missed that. Then we were last in the queue. Yes, you know that. Trivial things like that. Or if it relates to changes in any structure that’s been around since ancient times when suddenly, it’s not like that any more. And then you don’t feel great when you’ve missed it. Or you cannot pay in cash on the bus any more, but you have to use a credit card. Those simple things.

The newspaper works as a guide to link this sense of closeness and the local collective together, providing discussion topics and their context in the immediate area, which produces a shared ongoing conversation for the collective ‘us’.

SMP [Smålandsposten] is important for joining us together in this region and giving us some conversational topics. I think it’s important that they help keep the conversation flowing about what’s going on in society, and influence it, to some extent.
Finding 4.2.6. Important issues in the local collective

Local issues are a key factor of engaging with readers. Readers in a local collective have a common interest base – for example, changes in the local area that affect them, and important issues that matter to most people in the locality. These are issues that people care about – as individuals, as members of a group, and as a collective group.

They [BT] discuss issues that are interesting to us readers. They [BT] delve deeper into local issues and I think that is interesting because we cannot get it from any other newspaper. For example, when it comes to political decisions, they dig deep and find out about sources, etc. So I think I get a lot of information from the newspaper that I want every day. And they highlight issues that we who live in the area think are important to us. The latest thing that has been going on is the closure of the health centre in Viskafors, where BT has really been up there covering it. For example, when there was a meeting outside the health centre, the newspapers were here and watched it all. They relate to what’s happening and I think that’s good. Likewise, they are good at following up on what’s happening and what people care about.

These issues focus on what is important for the readers, such as any new political decisions that will affect them, like the healthcare centre closure mentioned in the previous quote. In terms of reporting, what people care about is essential in relation to which issues they perceive as important.

The paper provides information that is relevant for the readers to know about and gives an overview of both the closest locality, but also the wider area:

You find out many interesting things, like what’s happening at school, preschool – they have focused on that quite a lot. Then I can look to see if anything is going on at the kindergarten my children go to. In the past, there has also been a lot about the fact that healthcare centres have got worse, so there has been a lot about staff shortages and closures lately. And I see what’s going on at the weekend, and get an overview of what’s happening in the municipality. Yes, I really like to keep up with the news, so it’s interesting to me as a reader. They take up points of interest in my vicinity, which is very interesting because it is
very close. It’s very close as it happens – in Dagens Nyheter it’s often only Stockholm and in GP [Göteborgs Posten] it’s almost only Gothenburg, and it’s not that interesting to me, Borås is what’s close to me.

Thus, readers obtain information about the things they perceive as being relevant for them from the paper, helping them to be well-informed members of the local society and the local collective.

I think most of the newspapers are good and I get all the information I want from them. They write about things that are relevant to me as a ‘Boråsare’ [citizen of Borås], such as the new railway that has become a major issue in the village, which I think is interesting to read about. I think the newspapers rely on what’s happening, they actually do. And by reading it, I’m also involved in it.

The respondents gave several examples of keeping up with local issues as part of a local agenda, describing how the local newspapers write about local events so that the residents’ interests are covered:

Local and regional press is important for writing about the local area and monitoring what is happening to residents. That’s why we have them, to monitor our interests, review and highlight.

Yes I think so. I would have difficulty keeping track of what’s happening in society without being signed up for news feeds. You cannot find everything yourself, so I use some news feeds. In the long run, we would be more restricted if we could not read news or get information from news feeds, even though I think they are a bit biased sometimes and not always as nuanced as I would like.

Local issues, and who is affected by them, provides conversation topics to share with others in the same local collective:

Yes, in SMP [Smålandsposten], I can read about what’s happening and what it relates to, such as healthcare fees and how the politicians in the county council think about us older people. It is something we often talk about I think, or other things they mention in the newspaper that we discuss when we meet.
Through the local paper, people also found out about events and issues in the surrounding area, which they also thought was important to know.

*Is the local press important and, if so, why?*

*Yes, they have put together what happened here in the neighbourhood. It is important to know. If you do not go to political meetings, you can find out through the newspaper. And what’s happening in the streets and squares.*

*What is interesting to me is to get an overview of society around me. What happens and how it works for different companies or different projects or different people in my area – I use it as some kind of a world-wide analysis.*

*Yes, it keeps it on the agenda so that you do not stand there saying, ‘no, I haven’t got a clue what we are talking about here’ or ‘this is happening’ or ‘we are going to build a new swimming pool’ or whatever it might be about anything. Yes, so it’s important to stay informed about the place where you live.*

The local newspaper helps readers to select which are the most relevant issues and which will affect them. It also helps readers to decide what to take a stand on, what to discuss with others, and what they want to know more about:

*Yes, I think it’s... you want to know what’s happening around you, it’s important to know what’s going on in the municipality so that you can know and take a stand on things... partly politically and to be able to discuss things that are happening more. What’s going on... now we are going to build a new pharmacy or whatever it’s about, where should it be, somewhere, it feels right to know... you should not be without local pressure, I don’t think.*

In overall terms, if something is reported in the regional paper, readers perceived it as important to know about, in relation to what is happening in their local area:

*Yes, very important. Printed newspapers are good because not everyone likes to read online and, if you want to know what’s happening locally, it’s important to read newspapers.*
Finding 4.2.7. The relevance of the ‘Igenkänningsfaktorn’ (recognition factor) in local reporting

The recognition factor – ‘igenkänningsfaktorn’ in Swedish – is relevant for the local collective. Because of the link between local society and the local paper, people recognise things and people they know in their newspaper. As part of the collective, they know, or find out, who has been affected by certain things, and who is involved with certain projects:

**What makes it interesting for you?**

It’s what’s happening where you live. That’s the most exciting thing. You live in this society and you know lots of people in it. Frequently, it may be something that you are involved in yourself, or you know someone who is involved with a project. Or you even know the person and so on. Yes, just to get the hang of the local community.

People recognise other individuals from their local collective in the paper – they could be family, friends, or people they know or have heard about, which bonds the collective together.

*SMP is good at local news and what I read most is the bits about Växjö and our neighbourhood in the first place. Occasionally we read DN and Expressen, since they include more national news that can also be interesting to read. We read those newspapers when we stay at a hotel in Stockholm. Otherwise, I think local news is more interesting. It’s about the people you know or what’s happening here.*

However, it is still true that people think it’s fun to recognise people or when they can come and see themselves, it is. And what you notice is that... everyone knows that when I read the newspaper in the morning, if I see someone there, I will take a picture of it and put it on social media, then I tag that person, and then it is spread to different... and that’s a way to... that’s why that recognition factor is quite important. It might be recognition in a crowd of people, or it might be that there is something close – a building or a festival or yes, anything
[laughing]… so. Then I think they really should be catching up with those things and trying – that’s the way I am, I don’t mean you should be... that everything should be easy and happy and never mind any problems – I definitely think that they should... they should be neutral, but I think you can still try to get as much positively as possible of what’s happening, because the more you show good things happening, the more growth you get. So it will be a lot of influence, the political game in it too...

As well as recognising people in the paper, readers also have some kind of relation to other entities in the news – such as buildings and schools:

We can see if they write about our area or whether it’s about people we know. One time it was about my grandchild’s school, that was a nice piece.

There are many aspects that help to form, guide and create the sense of a local collective. The main ones are presented above, all of which join together and link with each other to create the sense of a local collective and a recognisable ‘us’ for the newspapers’ readers.

Finding 4.2.8. Perceptions and expectations about the role and position of journalists

Both the journalists and their readers live in the area where the news comes from, so they are all members of the same constructed local collective. They live inside the society that the paper reports on, which makes it important for the readers.

One of the respondents commented about journalists themselves being part of the local collective: ‘they are what they produce’. This means that they cannot be considered as something separate, because they exist within the same local context, live and work in the same region, attend the same health clinics, shops, schools, etc:

I think that local reporting is fair. Mostly. It is run by people from the region who have local knowledge. They are what they produce. You can also see similarities in all news reporting, it doesn’t matter if it’s local, national or international, they are all different versions of the same thing.
The same goes for readers. The local press is important for them because they live within it:

*Is this local and regional press important to you?*
*Yes*

*Why?*
*Because I live it.*

The paper helps to form the local collective by bringing its readers together over common issues that are relevant for a bigger group. In this way, they overcome their separate diversity to form part of a greater collective together.

*Local newspapers are very important to me. I want to keep an eye on what’s happening in my area, both in politics and culture, and everything else that’s important to a society. With the help of newspapers, we bind together more as a whole and are not as divided. All of us who live in Borås are affected by what is happening here and, with the help of newspapers, we are woven together into a larger collective that is bigger than just those you are close to, like your neighbours and your colleagues. With the newspapers we become part of a larger whole.*

*Local journalism is very important! It is very important on many levels. The content is incredibly important, finding out what is happening – locally, regionally and in the outside world. Without that knowledge how would you relate to the world? We are part of the world and it is important to keep up with what’s happening.*

The newspaper also provides an opportunity for people new to a locality to bond with local society, by discussing issues of importance and linking people and areas together.

*I have never thought that local journalism is really important. I’ve always thought it’s good that it’s there, but I’ve never been one of those people who slavishly read the newspapers. Following them on Facebook has been a good*
compromise; I’ve been able to keep up with what’s happening, without having to spend time reading the newspaper. But I realised during the focus group that the local newspaper could help me to socialise more in my new local area, Borås. I actually think it’s important to keep up with what’s happening and that makes the local press important, maybe it’s even more important than I had thought. It’s good both to know what’s happening, but also to associate with society.

On the internet, I read news from my home country. I have to listen to radio here in Sweden and talk a lot with people to learn the language. I want to know what’s happening in Sweden. I listen to the news. I want to learn Swedish and get to know my neighbours....

The issues raised by journalists and editors in the interviews about local society match the idea of a local collective.

Hmm, local community, that’s not something I’ve thought about. But I would say that a local community for me in my working life is the area I have to cover in my news reporting. Thus, I would say that a newspaper’s local community is the entire area it covers, while the specific place I work in and report from is the local community for me. But I would also say that the area which I live in is another local community.

They recognise the notion of a ‘closeness’ factor in relation to what people care about, whereby they are interested in more trivial issues as well as school, healthcare, etc.

Things that concern lots of people are usually of interest to the readers, such as schools and day care, which is often relevant for many. I am thinking not so much about different reader groups, but all the content needs to be able to appeal to those who are interested in what happens locally.

Local community? Eh, the local society. Eh, yes, maybe it is as small as it is... Off the top of my head, I think that a local society, the entire city of Borås, the whole municipality, that is a community. But perhaps it is too large a demarcation, so it’s rather a smaller part, like the neighbourhood you live in,
that’s still what we are most interested in, that is the area where you are most interested in the smaller issues, so perhaps it is as small as a neighbourhood.

I think that our readers are very interested and at quite a basic level, if I can put it that way. I think if you read the local paper you expect us to write for the readers at an intimate level, we are out where they are and we write about their schools, homes for the elderly, in a very close manner, we don’t only describe it in general but we are actually out there where they are. I definitely think that the reader wants us to be as close as possible. If there is something on a single school we will write about it, and it may just be the people who live there, in that particular area, who are really interested in it, but then we are writing for them and the next time we will be in another area.

The following quotation from one of our research participants summarises the role of journalism perfectly:

Like the village square. The aim is to pick up the things that people are talking about and take up what they’re talking about, but in an impartial way. A collection point in a way. And also make sure that it is ethically correct; remove bias and rumours, and provide relevant and accurate information.

5. Participation, politics, culture and trust

5.1. The way in which the regional press fosters participation and an engaged culture, and establishes trust with its readers

Finding 5.1.1. Newspapers support the way people talk about the news and how citizens engage in their local community

Local newspapers function in particular ways in people’s everyday lives. Our research identified one of its key roles as fostering engagement in a locality, which may trigger participation in various ways. At this point, it is important to note the distinction between engagement and participation. Engagement refers to the ways in which people are interested in an issue and register its significance, while participation refers to the ways that they actively participate in civic, cultural and political processes. RegPress found that people read the local paper in an engaged way that comprised a number of
practices. In some cases these practices then fostered the desire to participate in local society. Thus, one of the themes that emerged from our data was that newspapers foster discussions about news, and this is an important aspect of creating citizen involvement in the local community. The data suggests that talking about news, collectively interpreting and discussing news stories with peers or in groups (e.g. among family, friends or colleagues), leading to the circulation of stories in a locally-extended network, seems to play a vital role in influencing citizens’ choice around whether or not to engage in local society activities and politics.

The practices that people use to read the local paper in an engaged way include:

- Sharing the news by highlighting particular aspects of it. Since not everyone has time to read the whole newspaper, and individuals read different sections of the paper from each other, they will only choose to read the items that are interesting to them and then share those in their general everyday conversation. For instance, one respondent explained that their partner reads the paper and shares the information:

  I have a partner who does [that] [laughs]. She usually tells you what it [the local newspaper] says.

- The value of sharing news. Our participants recognised how important it is to share news:

  But, at the same time, people do need to know what’s happening. It is also to spread the word. Even if I haven’t read the newspaper, someone else will read it and tell me and so on. So it is necessary after all in that way.

  You start talking, ‘did you see what’s happened in the newspaper today?’ or you know someone who lives in Färjestaden, so you ask, ‘has anyone read the news from Färjestaden?’

  Then they can sometimes tell us something, but we have already read it in the newspaper... It is always a topic of conversation: ‘have you read about this in the newspaper?’
If you want to know what’s happening locally, it is important to read newspapers.

I don’t go to political meetings, I get to know things through the newspapers. And what happens on the streets.

The local press is my only chance to get to know what’s happening first in the municipality, and their [refers to local paper] reports are really important.

- Social media and sharing news. The paper also works in relation to social media, since news is sometimes flagged up on social media to encourage people to read about it in the local newspaper, especially if it is related to local politics:

Yes, but then there is probably a bit more of this sharing happening on Facebook. But also [if] you want to read about some party leader’s debate on television you’ve missed. Then I will go and see what they have written about it.

Finding 5.1.2. Readers discuss the news in various networks and communities

The project found that local newspapers foster discussion. The various aspects of this include where the discussions happen, the daily rituals of discussion, and what is discussed, for instance:

If someone mentions something during a coffee break it’s easier to participate in the discussion because you have read the newspaper.

We discuss the news all the time, me and my husband. We discuss it while reading the newspaper. We often read the newspaper together, simultaneously. Share parts back and forth like that.

You react to the words, as a language person you do. Or... you read a sentence with a double negative, what does this person mean, anyway? So it’s perhaps more... but then it’s more by coincidence... but it may be true that you can entertain yourself by sitting and talking with your husband about... ‘what do you think they mean here?’
There is always a debate... and so on in the coffee room... so that could be an incentive for me to find out more.

**Finding 5.1.3. People are interested in a range of things which they want to be reported impartially**

The RegPress study found that people really valued good reporting and an impartial approach in journalism:

*Good journalism, for which they should also have credit... they’ve been talking to those responsible... to the F17 [Blekinge military air base] and they’ve talked with ordinary people... and the association.*

*It’s important to hear different sides... of course. I think that it balances it out.*

There was also an evident interest in reading about, and understanding, other people’s situations and points of view:

*I like to read people’s stories. You get to know how other people live, like how they cope when they have to live on disability benefits and things like that, comparing yourself and your own situation to other people’s...*

Our participants did, however, note some areas of under-reporting. This was often expressed as wanting to read more positive news in reports about good things people were doing. This was often expressed in the context of young people, with our participants observing that news about young people should include the good things they do and achieve. There was also a desire to have more news stories about the voluntary and community work being carried out, because they thought that local actions and contributions should be recognised and celebrated. In a similar vein, respondents wanted more reporting on issues such as:

*I want to see the residents’ interest and willingness to change and improve expressed and described better in the local news.*
The research participants also recognised the importance of good journalism and editorial practices, mentioning points such as:

*News reporting has to be factual and objective. You should be able to take part in it, without a filter... otherwise it should be apparent that it is an opinion.*

Finding 5.1.4. People use social media to follow their interests but worry that the information is not impartial

Given the popularity of social media, it is no surprise that our respondents use it to obtain news. However, people still need to have a trust anchor in order to assess the validity and reliability of the news on social media:

*Most of the time you get news through Facebook, the largest social media [platform], I would say, in order to gather all the things from all other pages and, even if I follow some newspapers myself, I follow others through my friends... and their stuff [shared and liked posts] will come up in my feed, so I google it to see how likely it is. I have been scammed several times... I remember I was reading something about it being illegal to smoke in public places, which made me happy because I come from a family with asthma... I had listened to several of my family who shared the news with me, so I thought it must surely be true because so many people had told me the story... but it wasn’t. You really have to wonder... what training do they have, what experience do they have about being critical about credible sources and so on... there is so much to think about with social media.*

*Yes, but if I read it in Aftonbladet, I think I will follow it on Facebook, and there’s something about Turkey and I check if there is anything on DN also, in order to get different perspectives...*
The survey ascertained the numbers of people who use social media to obtain news, through the following questions:

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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you use blogs to find information and news?</td>
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<td>How often do you use Twitter to find information and news?</td>
<td>2.58%</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
<td>3.67%</td>
<td>11.64%</td>
<td>80.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>239</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>1,077</td>
<td>7,429</td>
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<tr>
<td>How often do you use Facebook to find information and news?</td>
<td>21.46%</td>
<td>9.21%</td>
<td>14.06%</td>
<td>13.07%</td>
<td>42.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,989</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>1,303</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>3,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you use Apps on your mobile phone to find information and news?</td>
<td>19.63%</td>
<td>11.83%</td>
<td>15.15%</td>
<td>13.63%</td>
<td>39.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>3,673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the context of social media, the regional press acts as a trust anchor and a source of reliable information. In the interviews and focus group discussions, our research participants clearly identified the role and value of the press in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of social media. They were also aware of the issue of filter bubbles, in how social media news could limit both their knowledge of the news and the ways they might discuss and deliberate issues and news:

*I have both Twitter and Facebook but I never share, I never write anything about my political views or different things on what is trending or taking sides publicly... I talk much more in our... we have a chat where we vent and discuss everything. But I wouldn’t link to anything in public...*

*It varies. It depends on what it is. For example, if it’s a criminal or a politician saying or doing something, then I will know through my followers.*

*There is this classic discussion about filter bubbles... where we see that people... more often than before express what they think about different things and that can be about what is said in the newspaper or about our journalism. Where you previously got in touch with the newspaper with your reactions, now it is visible*
in their own Facebook feed and groups... what we see in these groups often makes it... to write for people who look a lot like yourself, where it is all about having to conform... to have their own opinions confirmed, and to develop a tone and a jargon knowing that you are among friends, even though there will be other types of discourse.

All our participants were aware of social media, most used it to communicate in personal relations and, in some instances, they used it to engage with civic issues. There was a general consensus that social media was an appropriate communication tool for sharing information and rising issues which the mainstream media and regional press were not covering. It was also sometimes used to first alert people about an issue or something that had happened. However, our respondents expressed some concern about racism, hate crime and general prejudice on social media:

Other examples are local Facebook groups that make me shy away. It is really sad to see what is being discussed and at what level. In [name of a local discussion forum on Facebook], for example, they conducted a debate about a rape. They said: ‘we should put a goat in every corner’. This is because they were seriously arguing that there is a certain type of people who are rapists, and they might as well rape a goat instead of a woman. Pure fucking racism, the worst kind of debate.

There was also an awareness that social media is often biased:

I follow a comedian in Sweden. He wasn’t born in Sweden and he follows developments in Turkey closely and he is very much on one side, he only links to what is written on that website and does not report much from other sites, while news reports give a more objective view of the matter. But I can see that it is quite biased, there are lots of hashtags of words that are meaningful for his side, so to speak, and it’s pretty easy to see how he has written about the link himself.

The participants were aware that the information shared on social media was often based on personal opinions and unverifiable sources. Therefore, they often used the regional press and mainstream media to check what they had seen on social media and
they would then assess the significance of what was published on social media. They were also aware that the way social media works (via computer algorithms) produces filter bubbles, which means that the information they received was skewed towards their shared views and interests. Our participants were concerned about the possibility that this would narrow their views and restrict the range of news they were aware of. Another weakness of social media which the participants identified was in comparison to regional press, which retained authority in the public sphere. The type of example that was often cited was when an individual wanted to raise an issue. If they did this on social media, it would circulate to varying degrees, however, this did not necessarily mean that any action would result to address the issue. Instead the participants thought that if they contacted the regional press and it reported the concern under question, it was more likely that some sort of official action might result to address the issue.

Finding 5.1.5. People value trustworthy journalism comprising impartial reporting, verifiable sources, and good quality writing

These concerns about social media highlighted some of the values that respondents perceived in regional press, such as impartial reporting, source recognition and access to stories about people that helped them to identify with others. Although social media has the capacity to give readers access to different viewpoints on stories, readers nonetheless trusted good quality, traditional journalism to provide a more balanced and well-researched account. However, the RegPress respondents had clear ideas about the need to keep reporting balanced and were quick to point out when any reporting lost this characteristic. They were also aware of the political standpoint each paper had, as evidenced through its editorial function and opinion page. What the participants particularly valued in relation to this point was that the editorial stance and political standpoint taken was transparent in each newspaper. They believed this helped them to interpret the story or issue under review:

*It has, of course, sometimes happened that they’ve picked up that someone had different opinions on Twitter... they can sometimes bring in different things that you have seen on social media... as a basis for an article. But otherwise it’s – well... Otherwise, it’s the editorial pages.*
It’s something you’ve attributed to the media... you usually have to talk about the fourth estate, ascribe that purpose to media... to be a help, to bring order, to create meaning and so on... for people.

Our participants also valued good quality writing, with many commenting on specific journalists who wrote well. One interesting observation is that readers said they could enjoy a report if the journalist wrote well, even if the content differed from their own point of view. For instance, one participant cited a journalist who had a particularly good writing style, saying that he always read his articles, even though the journalist had a different political standpoint to his own. This suggests that – providing it is embedded within a framework of quality journalism – good writing can encourage people to read beyond their own views and engage with other ideas, situations and people. This is important because it fosters deliberation and openness in society and, thus, supports democracy. Another outcome is that, since people value good writing, they are more likely to buy the papers that support good journalism and print well-written reports.

Our respondents placed a strong emphasis on the transparency and trustworthiness of the sources used by journalists. Comments ranged across several topics, but one point they made was that readers value the sources being identified in stories which cover sensitive or controversial topics or situations. One example given was news reporting about refugees:

*If we just take this issue about refugees, you see lots of articles where it does not hold. Because it comes from the wrong source.*

These types of issues bring the hybrid character of newsmaking to the fore, because readers will refer to the regional press in relation to something they have read on social media:

*Take now for example, when we’ve had this great wave of refugees. Lots of people got involved, started networks [on Facebook]. A group was talked about in BT, which lots of people joined, and they got involved in a Facebook group, so there you can see a clear link... [talking about how the newspaper could*
contribute to public engagement]. You can get involved in many ways, you might get the urge to go to an event where someone is speaking, a demonstration, something you want to listen to – but it doesn’t always mean that you sign up... it happens all the time. Sometimes you get involved and participate in a discussion, if you have read or seen something, perhaps something resonates with you... but it can come later, so it becomes a commitment.

Here, the process of newsmaking also supports community engagement and participation, as one journalist explained:

I think it’s important that we, as journalists, try to cover as much as possible of what is relevant for those living in the area to know. It’s easy to choose to focus on things that are more important to you yourself, I think such news can even be better because it’s something you’re interested. But it is also important to keep in mind when focusing on such subjects that you still need to take a critical approach and not... what’s the word... glorify?.. your own areas of interest.

If a newspaper is known and trusted for using credible sources, then people will refer to it as part of the way they evaluate certain issues. However, this trust needs to be constantly earned, because people will keep checking stories and issues:

...maybe the manager might tell us... I didn’t say that, or that wasn’t what I meant. Or something like that. Which makes you... look more critically at their sources to get the whole picture. So I wouldn’t say that I believe everything I read in the newspaper.

The importance of good writing and impartial reporting is linked to how well the journalists know and understand their local community and locality. There was a general appreciation that this improves when journalists are based locally, however the readers noted that this might require a particular skill to ensure balanced reporting. They felt that the local editorial team and policy was important to achieve that:

I know a number of journalists. If reporting was moved further away from me then I would not have that connection, presumably. It must be difficult to be a
local journalist, because you become too familiar. And it is always difficult to stand outside and be completely neutral in your accounts when you have a relationship with what you are writing about. It would be interesting to know how they work this out on a local paper.

Local journalists were aware and mindful of the delicacy of undertaking local reporting, as one journalist explained:

*The only thing I can see in that case... is that you should not be too packed full of knowledge so you are too firmly rooted there, so that you become single-minded for that reason... but I don’t think it is such a great risk that it becomes a smaller place... this neighbourhood or... it might be too close. You have to be fair... then you have to be independent as a journalist when you get there... so that you can see over... so you don’t have too much self-interest in... [the cases].*

This can be interpreted as negotiations around journalism’s trust capital. The journalists argued that good investigative reporting helps too:

*The advantage is that it raises our trust capital, and brings us attention. We don’t just sell single copies. But the feeling that: ‘It’s good that I subscribe to this newspaper that exposes things’ validates us and legitimises our existence. We don’t only write about cats stuck in trees. We have never written a story about that, by the way, but people think we do. We get credibility for surprising our readers, shaking up their world. Things are not always so safe and comfortable. This increases our trust capital and makes readers feel that we are working hard for their money.*

*I hope that it increases their trust in us, and I hope the readers think it justifies that we write. But it is a tightrope balancing act. Before you know, it can be turned against you.*

Journalists perceived that there was a trust capital link to their relation to the readers, but also power capital. When reflecting on their position and their perceived role in the local community, the journalists acknowledged the power they held:
Pretty significant power. We are the agenda-setters for a lot of things that get talked about. It is not just setting the agenda and choosing what to write about, but also choosing how ‘big’ we should make the story.

Today it has become the journalist’s role to select, to decide what’s relevant. There is a huge range of prospective media content, and it is precisely this selection that gives journalists a position of power.

The journalists and readers were both aware of the potential risk of misusing this power, so both act as watchdogs and agree about what ‘true journalism is’, which is clearly seen in the way in which scandals are reported and handled.

Finding 5.1.6. Reporting ‘edgey’, sensitive or conflictual topic in local and regional contexts
The journalists we interviewed felt that news reports about edgey topics that have a sensitive or conflictual aspect, including what some people term ‘scandals’ legitimised their professional role in a local community. Reporting events in the community where a newspaper is published provides a way for the press to function as a moral arbiter, which helps local residents to orientate themselves in society. News about edgey topics and scandals puts this moral authority to the test.

This, I think, is one of our most important tasks. To report it when something goes wrong.

This can be interpreted in light of journalism’s role in a democracy. The editors and journalists we interviewed perceived demands on them as professionals to make society a better place by reporting about misconduct. This self-conception legitimised news reports about edgey topics and scandals.

The advantage with reporting scandals is that you can put a tick in the box marked ‘social/public mission’. Here we have something not good, we are reporting it. So they can correct it and start all over. Make democracy work as it should.
Readers also thought that journalists should investigate and write about issues of importance, things that readers were not aware of before being exposed and scrutinised by local journalists. This perceived role of journalists can be seen as more or less a demand, something readers expect from the relation between local journalists and their local communities.

*I expect them to write about things that are important to know, things you find out through the newspaper.*

*They report conflicts and scandals, it’s a kind of news journalism where they look for something to investigate. Local papers sometimes do this and I think it is reasonable. Journalists weigh up and decide which scandals to scrutinise.*

This can be seen as a notion of local journalism as a protector, and practicing conductor, of local social ordering. Reports about edgey topics or scandals can also be helpful in people’s everyday lives as members of the local community:

*I find this interesting and some things are important to know, for example, if there are rats in a local restaurant.*

Local readers can appreciate, defend and back up local journalists if they believe the reporting is credible, especially if the scandal revealed unearths something that the readers can identify with themselves:

*They have reported a lot on elderly care. On how some poor retired person has been mistreated. And since I myself am retired, I think this is good reporting. In these cases I join in. And I think it is a really bad way to treat those poor retired people.*

This legitimisation of news articles about edgey topics or scandals also affects the relation between journalists and audiences in the local community, since it entails the validation of journalists in a more personal way. Some respondents stated that they trusted and had confidence in the way that local journalists carried out their job.
reporting edgey topics. Again, this points to a social relation, a bond between audience and journalists, with a mutual interest in local concerns.

Reporting local edgey, sensitive or ‘scandal’ type news also can include an element of excitement and entertainment – for both the journalists who construct news about scandals, and the audiences who consume this news. Some respondents admitted that reading about edgey topics or scandals has certain pleasurable aspects. This is to do with feelings of curiosity that are fulfilled through reading news items about such topics. Edgey topics especially those framed as scandals can also be described as something that constitutes a taste of forbidden fruit.

*It is no scandal if it does not include something that makes people curious.*

*Conflicts and scandals are a big part of the news. I guess that’s the interesting part, and some of them are hilarious to read about.*

*Local celebrity scandals are always nice. Political scandals when someone has abused trust amuse me.*

This can be interpreted as ‘pleasure before business’, i.e. the entertainment aspect of a news exposé about an individual may be more important than its relevance for democracy. Our findings show that respondents recognise that edgey topics are exciting for them as readers, as well as for the journalists who produce them. The journalists interviewed also acknowledged this point:

*I do think the readers are interested in scandals. It’s human nature to be curious, and it is exciting to read about conflict.*

*You know it will be the talk of the town. It is something public, someone with power, and something piquant and personal.*

*I don’t think journalism intends to get anyone sacked. That would be an odd aim. But you should tell the audience about unpleasantness, maybe something*
political someone wants to conceal. Is this a bit diverting? It is, of course, more interesting to read about.

The journalists stated that reporting edgy topics and scandals was motivated by classical news value factors, such as reporting the sensational and the unexpected. They also defined the characteristics of a scandal as something concealed that presupposes public disapproval. Revealing such incidents is a way to satisfy readers, but it is also advantageous for journalists’ own professional status and the newspaper itself, as it strengthens a paper’s relation with its audience.

On the [web]site you need certain materials which drive traffic, energy and interaction – things that function as click bait.

It makes your pulse race in the newsroom.

Analysing our data, we found that the pleasurable aspect of edgy and scandalous news can be seen as a win-win-situation, since it is appreciated by both journalists and audiences. However, it is difficult to select which topics to cover, and how to report them. If a news article is framed in what readers consider an excessive way – i.e. not in the public interest – then they can find it upsetting or unnecessary. Entertainment can backfire if readers feel as if they are being taken for fools.

It is ridiculous and bad. In my opinion they are diminishing the reader. They think the reader is too stupid and uneducated to see through their biased angles.

I think they are trying to make a hen out of a feather. They want to create a scandal out of nothing, at least what I think is nothing.

Excitement is thus linked to moral values and an implicit possibility that news about edgy topics can guide readers about who is behaving correctly or not, as well as making them reflect on their own behaviour. If readers believe that journalists have done a good job, they find it acceptable to read the story. But this excitement can be double-edged. Some respondents rejected this amusement aspect, explaining that they not are interested in reading about edgy topics and scandals. Some said they did not
They do not write about scandals, and I think that is good. They do not write about scandals, and I think that is good. I think they are pretty aware of arguments and scandals. Yes, I think they write a lot about that, but I do not usually read it.

Some respondents thus implicitly expressed the belief that edgey topics especially those seen as scandals were beneath their dignity. Nonetheless, this kind of publicity opens up a space for readers to measure and reflect upon their own moral capital against the journalists’ moral expectations. Thus, news about scandals offers an opportunity for readers to perceive elites and journalists as living up to their own negative expectations, endorse their dislike of journalism and journalists, and ascribe newspapers a lower moral position than that they give themselves:

Sometimes I think it is too low, when they bring up trivialities or when there’s no news that day, so they just pick on something. Sometimes it is important or sensible, but it depends on the scandal, or rather what they call a scandal.

I find it very unpleasant when newspapers barge in and try to make a scandal out of something.

This can be interpreted as a relation-oriented expectation that readers, as members of the local community, have a right to feel towards their newspaper. This concerns the newspaper’s standing in the local community, and how local journalism handles edgey topics. Some respondents felt ‘their’ local journalist handled conflicts and scandals in a fair and balanced way, which they thought made it morally acceptable to read a story. This discussion has illustrated the delicate balance between raising an issue as a scandal that serves the public interest and one that is seen as sensationalist reporting which merely aims to attract readers and sell copies. However, our study shows that people have clear expectations of what they want from their regional press, which is high quality, trustworthy and informative journalism.
Finding 5.1.7. People construct local knowledge through their connections with regional journalism, but also in relation to the national and international media

Readers mentioned several aspects when discussing the relationship between regional press and local life. They noted the relationship that regional press has with local communities and said that this was valuable. They spoke about the importance of local press and journalists in regional life, since they connect people with each other in local social, political and cultural life:

But you become more aware of your local environment and the local community as well and you will, perhaps, also become more involved in the issues.

...the local press have a huge, a very big impact. It’s quite interesting, and sometimes I just consume it myself. When I just want that bit of surface information. When I want to get a quick overview. Then I can get it through this purely local news.

...interested in how things work at the school, how it is here in the community and around Blekinge, what’s happening in healthcare... well, things that concern people in general. That’s important as well.

They keep me updated about when things are going on, and you feel a sort of participation from the newspaper and journalism there.

In terms of cultural life, the local was felt keenly – often in relation to national and international recognition:

I will, of course, be more delighted when a journalist from the cultural field wants to write about me, then I can have a completely different kind of conversation. But... when I meet people on the street, it’s usually the very local articles which have had the biggest impact... lots of people just skip the cultural pages and think, ‘gee, I don’t understand that stuff. I read that you’re world famous. How wonderful for you!’ That’s quite interesting.
It is always a bit more interesting when it’s someone from where you live. When you know who someone is.

We saw this with the Choir Contest last year. I was involved in the choir and Lisa Blixt was the choir master. She got lots of attention then, but also for the whole year afterwards. As soon as she was at an event where the media were there and watched it as well. Wrote about it and so on. I think it’s fun, when that stuff is taken up.

The connection was felt to be particularly important in relation to news about local politics:

I read about local politics, I think it is covered well. It’s interesting to know who has criticised someone...

The regional press was also seen as a good source of information to help readers keep updated about politicians’ and civic and community representatives’ actions:

I want to know about people who are involved in different things.

There was some concern expressed about the ways that politics was covered, with some readers considering that journalists reported more about individuals’ personalities and strategies rather than actual policies and policy implementation:

I think that today’s reporting and news is more about political manoeuvring than policy measures and actions.

Social media and online sources featured in how people keep up with political issues and events:

Yes, but I don’t know if that’s through the local newspaper... but I follow several politicians online.
The local context was seen not just in relation to reporting, but also in the ways the local press were open about their own concerns:

*People from Gota Media from Sydöstran and BLT came [to a local ice hockey club] and explained why they had split up, merged, and then split up again, and it was also... they also tried to sell themselves, like ‘come to us and we will help your business through advertising, as they can target groups and help the business when it... and I think this was a positive move... to open up more about who they are and what they do, how they can help, and their role.*

Readers valued the local, feeling that local reporting has integrity:

*I wonder why the local press bothers covering a musical that’s on in London – they are reviews that seem to be mass produced for lots of different newspapers across the country and it seems so... it loses this, you’re talking about – if it doesn’t taste like our carrots here at home, then why should I read it in the local paper? But then I think then that often you would miss what is happening.*

However, this does not mean that local readers are inward-looking, but rather that readers today want to understand the local, the national and the international news:

*The content is important, you get to know what’s happening in the local, regional and surrounding world. How would we react to the world if we did not have this knowledge? We are part of the world and it is important to keep up with what’s happening.*

Here readers combined their use of regional press with social media:

*If you live in Blekinge, but want to be on the national arena, Twitter is a way to become visible... I can be very strategic sometimes, I share certain things that I know will provoke some people and I get more followers because of that... so it is one marketing method.*
Often, it’s in my newsfeed... the people I follow have linked to different things... and then maybe you click onto the magazine and read the local or 24News [city name] or 24.se or whatever it’s called... so what comes up in my feed depends on who I’m following and sometimes their friends and stuff... but on Twitter I follow lots celebrities, both Swedish and foreign. When it comes to news, both what’s happening in Sweden and what’s happening in the world... not as local as it gets on Facebook, I have more friends and family on Facebook, so that is very local... what’s happening with them... Twitter news especially is rather biased from various perspectives.

Readers recognised that the role of regional press is to provide information to people in the public sphere, understanding that – although the newspapers can engage people in a range of issues – it is not necessarily a trigger for activism, as one research participant noted:

No, but journalism is not such that it... it’s so shallow and so fragmentary that I would like to see anyone who gets interested in being politically active because of the two local newspapers. I can’t imagine it. No, you get inspired from other things.

In summary, the role and value of local newspapers is seen in terms of helping people to understand the world around them:

You may need to engage in, or... speak up about, or in any way, it could be anything – that the station might be shut down or, I mean, it could be lots of things that are generally important to people. I think the local newspaper is very important indeed. An important channel, whether it’s online or... because it’s still in your neighbourhood you want to know what it is that is going on... that’s important as well, it could affect your everyday life.

The overall sentiment of how the local paper connects is reflected in the survey responses to the statements:

The local newspaper helps me feel involved in my local community

38.27%
6. The contemporary reader

Finding 6.1. The media navigator

The RegPress research identified a new type of reader, which we have called a ‘media navigator’. This term describes aspects of media participation in specific social settings. A skilled media navigator compares and uses different levels of media content to reflect upon, and participate in, society. Regardless of individuals’ differing sports interests, the processes of lived culture are shared in the ways that people read, talk and reflect about identity/citizenship, sports practice and sports journalism. Media integration in people’s everyday lives is also commonly shared at the different spatial levels offered by media, where a citizen positions themself according to given structures of sport in local, regional, national and global spaces. The subject is situated in a local setting, from where a skilled media navigator connects to the spatial levels that are of interest for media and communication research.

Finding 6.2. The media navigator in the context of sports journalism

The concept ‘media navigator’ describes how individuals and groups perceive the role of local media and how they use and combine spatial levels of sports journalism in practice, to express their views and feelings and form opinions about sports in relation to meanings for identity and community in society. The spaces and places of media in everyday life relate to the processes whereby media becomes a mobile element of daily life, using integrated mixed media.
Diagram 2. The skilled media navigator – sport journalism

One way of illustrating how sport is included in people’s perceptions about society is through our survey’s response about sports journalism as part of the media flow. 70% of the survey respondents (6,587 out of a total 9,413) claimed to have an interest in sports journalism in one form or another. In the left pie chart in Diagram 2, those respondents who declared an interest in sports journalism in our survey are accounted for as 100%, which consists of 54% who enjoy reading about regional and local sport journalism (turquoise slice of the pie chart), followed by global sport journalism (29%, blue), with national sports journalism liked the least (17%, red). These interesting figures also enable us to gain an understanding of the spatial relationship between the local/regional and the global. This diagram depicts the process of navigating and participating in the activity of meaning making as a complement to informants’ interviews and focus groups discussions (represented by the dashed lines), showing the relationships between sports journalism and audience preferences. The pie chart on the right shows the RegPress respondents’ interest in the content of sports stories – divided into regional sports (24%, green) and local sports (30%, purple). One finding is that sports journalism actually has a bridging function in social settings between these levels, acting as a glue for identity formation and participation.

The dynamics of this can be illustrated by a focus group discussion that showed how people draw on a range of media to follow their sports interests:
Yes, televised sport is the best when it comes to covering swimming contests. I have not seen this about Sarah in the local newspaper but, of course, they must have written an article about this too. It is so big and important.

Oh yes, you just have to watch swimming from the European and World Championships and the Olympics and stuff. And when she won the medal at the Swedish Sports Gala and The Jerring Prize.

No, frankly, aquatics is not important in this city and there’s a difference when you have trained and competed yourself. But I think when it really comes to the European Championships and the World Cup then everyone watches, whether they are a swimmer or not. It’s the same with football, hockey and more. If Sweden is participating then you want to watch TV and maybe read about it in the newspaper as well. But then, of course, I believe that we get more information about that through Facebook and so on.

Yes, and if we want to read about it afterwards, we don’t look it up in [the local newspaper], where they use a paywall to block us out.

Well, at the same time, sometimes I would like to have local news, but then you can find that via Facebook links, so... It has to be quick and easy I would say, otherwise they lose me.

**Finding 6.3. The practices of readers as media navigators**

Readers’ practices entail drawing on a range of media sources to construct their own sense of news. In doing this they link local, national and international contexts, and so engage as local citizens in a national context in relation to global issues and events. This means that the regional press needs to sustain its position as a local trust anchor. However, it has to do this in relation to other media, such as social media and national media, to ensure that it remains relevant to local readers and provides a local take on national and international issues. This is a complex task but, our findings in Section 4 show that it has the ability to do this. A media navigator links media practices with journalism that is embedded with notions of identity and citizenship across the local, national and global levels. The way in which these practices are located within people’s
lives is through their media rituals. The RegPress project found that our research participants developed specific rituals in their daily routines to engage with news and media stories – whatever their level of media navigation.

Diagram 3. The complexity of media navigation and cultural practice

7. Media production of webcasts in local reporting

Newspapers have traditionally reported sports events mainly as written text, sometimes supplemented by still images. However, with developments in web streaming, newspapers are starting to include live video from sports events as part of their coverage. These productions are called webcasts (or just casts) and are based on the distribution of video and audio signals (the cast) to a group of people (the viewers).

The key question here is how can local and regional journalists and media producers create live sportscasts in a way that remains within budget and yet appears professional enough for viewers to identify with, feel connected to, and want to watch. The main challenge is that low budgets limit their choice of equipment, production methods and production team size.
Finding 7.1. People are satisfied with regional sports reporting

More than 72% of the 9,413 respondents to the RegPress survey stated that the sports reporting in the newspaper(s) they read was completely or somewhat in line with their personal interests. However, this mainly reflects traditional sports reporting approaches. Recently, some local newspapers in these regions have started to diversify, by producing webcasts of sports events as part of their live coverage, including football games. This means that new production processes have to be incorporated into their workflow and reporters need to learn the skills to operate new equipment or use existing equipment in new ways, as well as understanding how to produce these – often rather complex media products – in a way that will appeal to viewers.

Finding 7.2. People are not impressed by the quality of local webcasts and their images

One finding from the focus group discussion was that the aesthetics and visual style used in global webcasts comprise the norm that all productions are judged by. This is not in itself surprising, since most football matches are depicted in casts provided by national and international distributors. The existence of this norm was exemplified by comments like:

"Ouch! That camera position is much lower than the previous ones."

"...that was even lower."

Another comment indicated that viewers did not expect local webcasts to be produced with the same level of professionalism as the global casts, but to be a bit amateurish:

"It’s much easier to identify the players in the professional casts."

Finding 7.3. Audiences expect to see the global norm in media production

When viewers were asked to compare the aesthetics and style of local newspaper casts to the global norm, they reacted with a degree of scepticism. This was in line with the results from our statistical style analysis, which revealed that the local casts’ production style created a number of issues regarding viewers’ meaning making and potential for emotional immersion.
However, when the local webcasts managed to mimic the aesthetic norm set by the global casts, the viewers’ responses were more positive:

Yes, what a difference that was...

It immediately feels much more professional.

Here they have really been able to find the height.

Finding 7.4. Readers and viewers notice poor media production

The fact that local productions have fewer resources available than global productions was obvious to our focus group members, evidenced through their stated lower expectations of the local casts in terms of overall visual aesthetical quality. Some participants even thought that it would be irresponsible for local newspapers to overspend on these kinds of productions. One informant expressed it like this:

I think they [the local newspapers] should find a level that is good enough. Obviously, we want it to be as good as possible, but I think I would be annoyed if they invested too much on this. Then I would think that they could have used those resources better.

The focus group discussions revealed the dilemma faced by local newspapers. On the one hand, their livecasts are judged against the global norm, so they need to be similar to their aesthetics and style in order to be considered trustworthy and interesting. On the other hand, they need to be careful not to appear to spend too much of their total resources on these productions.

Finding 7.4.1. Details of cameras

The local newspapers stream images that tend to have a wider framing, and therefore distance the viewers from the football games. This effect was increased in some of the local casts, since the vertical camera angle of the match camera was not big enough to provide an objective overview of what was happening on the pitch. These aspects were found to be especially problematic when play was conducted close to either goal area.
The local casts also included more distracting irritants and, in some cases, they lacked meaning-making features such as a match clock and current score graphics.

Global webcasts use a number of different cameras to capture the action: the match camera, high centre line camera, low centre line camera, corner camera, camera behind the goal, camera inside the goal, vertical camera, spectator camera, coach and bench camera, aerial camera and tactical camera. In contrast, fewer cameras are used in regional productions, which makes the local reporting appear less visually dynamic.

**Finding 7.4.2. The importance of attention to media production and aesthetics**

Poor production and media aesthetics affects how viewers engage with, and feel close to, a webcast. If the production is good enough, it generates a close social distance with the topic being shown that makes people want to watch. However, if the production is of lower quality, it creates a wide social distance that makes viewers less likely to engage with it or continue viewing any programming. One main factor to consider is avoiding distancing the viewer from the match by using framing that is too wide. Other factors are: ensuring a big enough vertical component for the images to show an overview of the game, offering graphical information of the score and the match clock, and avoiding visual irritants. However, as long as the local or regional newspapers in this area manage to provide aesthetics that are sufficiently similar to the global visual norm, the production team can deliver visuals that are good enough in terms of the ability to assist meaning making and deliver an enjoyable viewer experience – even on a tight budget.
8. Opinions about the cost of local newspapers

Finding 8. Most respondents thought that regional newspapers were affordable, although a significant number considered them too expensive

Our survey found a range of opinions about the cost of local newspapers, as depicted below.

Diagram 4. Is the cost of a local newspaper subscription affordable for you? (9,289 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The price is too low</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I think so</td>
<td>65.01%</td>
<td>6,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, it’s too high</td>
<td>34.87%</td>
<td>3,239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though the survey mainly reached those who already possessed a subscription to a local newspaper, it still shows that most respondents believed the cost to be affordable. It is particularly noticeable that a significant number of respondents (almost 35%) felt that it was too expensive for them to subscribe to the local newspaper.
Diagram 5. Is the cost of accessing a newspaper’s web material affordable for you?  
(8,754 respondents)

The price is too low  0.61%  53  
Yes, I think so  74.91%  6,558  
No, it’s too high  24.48%  2,143

An even larger majority replied that online news material was affordable for them, while a smaller number of respondents considered it too expensive.
Diagram 6. Is the cost of buying single copies of a newspaper reasonable?
(9,011 respondents)

In relation to buying single copies, the respondents were almost equally divided in considering the cost to be either about right or too high. Although this shows a good level of satisfaction with newspaper pricing, a significant number of respondents felt that the cost was ‘too high’ and not affordable, in answer to all three questions, as shown in the tables above.

The interviews also provided some insights into people’s perceptions of cost:

Yes, I would say that we belong to Kalmar municipality, although we don’t live in Kalmar. That’s one of the reasons I think it’s worse, because it’s mostly about Kalmar city.

Is that why you have stopped your subscription?
Yes, among other things. Plus, I actually think it’s too expensive for what you get. We talked about having had a newspaper for all those years, mostly
Barometern, but we’re getting the feeling that it’s not worth the money any more.

This respondent thought that the paper was no longer worth the cost—a sentiment that was expressed in other interviews as well. The respondent quoted next spoke about having previously moved their subscription from one local paper to another, depending on which was the cheapest at any particular moment (although this respondent had now cancelled their subscription completely):

Yes, we used to subscribe... that was many years ago now. We have had both Sydöstran and BLT, whichever was the cheapest. Sometimes people share magazines on Maxi, so I usually take a copy, and sometimes I might read it if I’m in the library, just browse through to see if there’s anything interesting... but that was a few years ago now, it’s safe to say at least five years since we last subscribed.

**Why did you stop?**

The cost. And because it doesn’t offer enough to make me think it’s worth the money. Also, it’s because you read more and more online, so you can get that information there ... you do not find the papers so useful any more.

The following interviewee had also stopped subscribing because of the expense incurred:

Now you use Barometern’s online edition... So it’s not the payment function, which is actually rather short?

Yes, I do. We also discussed that too and we said that no, you can’t put a human price on the paper magazine so that’s that.

This respondent had been given a subscription to their local newspaper as a Christmas present, and spoke about just taking the paper on and off at various periods, depending on when they were offered a good deal. They stated that the annual subscription cost was too high to keep up, as it felt like a huge amount of money to them.
One way to counter the cost of subscribing was to only read the free material online and read a printed copy at work, if the workplace subscribed to it.

We don’t read Smålandsposten at home – however, I sometimes browse through the newspaper when I’m at work because we have it there. Also, I might read it if there’s something I’ve heard about or if I have enough time to read it a bit more carefully. It’s expensive to subscribe to – although, of course, there’s free online reading. Otherwise, we have a web subscription to DN – that was also expensive. At first I thought the bill had changed after two months, but then – so I called up and checked if it was wrong, but it turned out they had increased the price. Then we had a chat about it at home and decided to get a web subscription to the newspaper. At first, I didn’t really think I would like reading it on my mobile phone – but now it’s actually OK. It’s actually really easy, I think.

Some respondents just did not think it worth the cost to keep subscribing to a newspaper:

But I think that’s what you get in the newspaper; it’s not worth two and a half thousand or whatever it costs a year.

Then there are those who keep subscribing, even though they feel that the cost has gone up:

I read SMP every day, because I subscribe to it. I think it has become expensive, though you can access more on the internet nowadays. I can find old articles there if I need... to look up things we are discussing and see how it really was. My company also has DN so I read that when I’m there. Otherwise, I don’t use the internet to read the newspaper. Just – it’s hard to know what to choose and I understand that not much is available unless you subscribe. I have SMP and before I also had DN, but now I read it at the library when I’m there sometimes during the week. It has become so expensive to subscribe to morning newspapers now. It’s definitely understood that everything is more expensive
now that they both print the magazine and have a web page with current news. But I like to read the newspaper in a printed form.

The cost of any product is always contested, however, in general terms people felt that the price was fair. However, for those who find themselves in vulnerable positions, the cost of local and regional papers may be too high. It is important to give them access to papers via subscriptions maintained by libraries and community centres, because those in disadvantaged positions need to stay included in local society, they need to know where to go to for advice, where to look for jobs, and so on.

9. Framework of the regional press in a global media age
This section outlines a framework that addresses the balance that regional media need to maintain as being both dynamic and a trust anchor for many people. In today’s digital media-saturated world, people obtain their news from a range of sources, via many different platforms and media. Their sense of the local and regional is tied to the feeling of ‘us’ that each constructs in relation to their everyday lives and the places where they live, but which is also crafted in relation to national and international media and social networks. Therefore, this section develops the notion of the media navigator into the idea of the hybrid engager and into a framework of engagement in both media and community.

9.1. Hybrid engager
The concept of the ‘hybrid engager’ is a framing device for understanding how readers engage with news stories and media, and how producers envisage readers. Our conceptualisation involves understanding the ways in which individuals and groups draw on different cultural resources and use different modes of engagement to engage in social, cultural and political life within their communities, their nation and the international community.

The mediation of news stories and reports is facilitated by three components. First, the technological medium. Second, the design of pages, websites, webcasts, and the use of text and images within the politics of representation. Third, we found that it is important for the engagement and imagination which readers employ to engage in stories to be combined with the knowledge and professional expertise of the journalists and editors
who construct stories. When this happens, the regional press creates a positive social
distance between itself and its readers that supports them to engage with their
community and interests in an open and deliberative way. This engagement includes
serious topics and specific interests, as well as fun and entertainment. When these come
together in a balanced way, the regional press acts as an actor in the community
dynamics of a local society.

We suggest that there is a continuum of hybrid engager ideal types, from the least
engaged to the most engaged individuals:

- **Highly individualised hybrid engagers** who may be visitors to the area, attendees at
  a special event, or someone who does not live and work in the locality who
  experiences news reports in an individualised and distanced way. These people may
  buy a copy of the local paper as something to do while visiting and might also look
  at some online news and information.

- **General community hybrid engagers** who are interested in many things across the
  community and use the regional paper in a highly ritualised way, reading it in the
  morning and/or evening. They will often rely on the local press as their main source
  of regional news and will discuss the content with friends, family, colleagues and
  special interest groups. These people usually subscribe to a regional paper.

- **General community hybrid engagers plus** who are interested in many things across
  the community and use the regional paper and a range of online media. They rely
  on the regional press and a range of online sources to get their news and discuss the
  content with friends, family, colleagues and special interest groups.

- **Interest-specific hybrid engagers** who are interested in a particular subject or issue
  and use the regional paper to follow that interest. They rely on the regional press to
  get their news and discuss the content with special interest groups.

- **Interest-specific hybrid engagers plus** who are interested in a particular subject or
  issue and use the regional paper and a range of online media, as well as national and
  international press, to follow that interest. They rely on the regional press to get their
  news and discuss this with special interest groups.

- **Digital and regional press hybrid engagers** who are strong digital and social media
  users but still rely on the regional press to check news stories and to mobilise local
  participation.
9.2. Mediated experience

We argue that the mediapolis – that is, the community and media combined – is constituted by journalists and editors within regional press institutions in relation to the social context of a story and the visions of their target hybrid-engagers. We use the term ‘mediated experience’ to denote how people engage with and interpret these stories. The way a story is constructed and represented will shape the entity of ‘us’ that is constructed and represented which, in turn, shapes how close and interested the readers feel to it. Media scholar Roger Silverstone asserts that readers should feel close enough to understand a story and far enough away to maintain respect about its details.

We argue that a mediated experience involves analysing how that experience is managed and by whom; that is, how stories are constructed for the envisaged users. Managing this experience means that the dynamics of the dimensions within the mediapolis construct the user, as well as the story. This is not a strongly determined process, as it contains three levels of uncertainty:

- How to construct an overarching story and any sub-stories
- Who the storytellers are and what their stories are
- Who the readers of the story are and how they interpret the story.

The relationship between the substance of a story and the form of its telling is influential in creating a communicative sensibility that facilitates readers to identify with a story and recognise themselves in the story. That is not to say that stories determine the hybrid engager’s interpretation, but rather that their ‘reading’ of the story via digital or print media is a joint production where the forms and language of media, and the characteristics of the stories, foster a range of reader distances and engagement. The regional press maintains its position as a trust anchor by communicating stories that open up spaces which are informative, interesting and entertaining for local people. The press needs to maintain relevance and identification for a variety of readers within the community to support openness and deliberation – whilst, at the same time, recognising the specific aspects of a place, including its people and its culture. There is a diversity of contemporary readers who all have different patterns and rituals of reading the newspaper. They draw on different media and sources to obtain news, so the regional press needs to have a specific, distinct role and modus operandi to keep people wanting...
to read their local paper. Trust and quality journalism are important for this, along with an understanding of the local society.

9.3. Dynamic framework of the regional press: press and reader relationship and nodes of communicative activity

The way the press works in local people’s lives is through their practices as media navigators, and their media rituals in a locality and places in that locality (the home, workplace, library, evening sauna, sports group, reading online mobile news on a bus, etc). Readers not only have their own personalised ways of engaging with news, they also share and discuss news. The combination of these practices is part of community communication – one of the ways in which people engage with and participate in civic life. This may be done to a lesser or greater degree, with people finding their own preferred levels and types of engagement through their experiences as a media navigator and hybrid engager. The way they do this is linked to how the regional press and other media fit into their everyday media use. Thus, readers and the press have a relationship with each other at different points along a continuum.

This continuum of levels of engagement across the relationship exists because people have varying interests and levels of engagement in their role as civic engagers. This continuum relates to what people refer to in terms of scope and reach of an issue, as well as its related community and/or network, which we call an issue network (issues and networks involving local, regional, national or global networks as well as, possibly, imagined communities). Links are fostered between civic engagers of various types and issue networks of various types by interests (of both civic engagers and issue networks) and interpretations (by civic engagers, issue networks and wider actors within the local society). These configure in different ways but combine in particular forms to generate meaning in civic, cultural, community and political engagement that draws on and re-informs the meanings of particular aspects of social life that underpin civic meaningfulness.

The broad dynamics of this materialise in concrete terms through access to, and use of resources; through different communication mediums and media, such as regional press, social networks and institutions; and any issue of interest including how that issue is made meaningful within the local society. This is a networked model with several nodes
of activity that relate to and interact with each other. These nodes are not just print or
digital hubs but, rather, communicative actor spaces that catch facets of interests and
interpretations which are, in turn, then configured and communicated into varying levels
of ongoing activity. These types of nodes materialise and act in diverse ways within
networks of local social life, and are outlined below.

9.4. Nodes of activity within a networked model

- **Issue based.** In this node news, information, opinion, data, culture, politics, scandals
  etc. configure and gain significance from the information sources that generate it
  and from those who read and engage with it.

- **Regional paper as social actor.** In this activity-based node an issue is interpreted in
  relation to knowledge of the sources, the credibility, perceptions, trust, emotional
  responses and rationalities of the civic conversation. This also includes the social
  use of communication media within the public sphere (online and offline).

- **Mixed use of internet.** This communication-based activity uses the affordances
  of the internet, including social media. This node contains a range of sources, the
  mixing, use and reuse of information, data, reporting and interpretation. Here we see
  how social media is positioned within a broader media and communications
  environment. This node involves the integration of media sources and configuration
  of media use in applications and platforms, as well as in usage. This node also
  reveals the rise of digitally-distinctive media rituals including social media rituals, in
  relation to established media habits. Further notions of mobile media – social media
  and communication on the move – and archival sources based on relatively static
  document collections also feed into the mix of digitally-mediated communication.

- **Representation.** The work of this node is embedded in practices of representation in
  social and digital media, as well as traditional print media. The work of
  representation is central to how issues are considered, shaped, expressed and
  circulated. It also involves the negotiation of identity and roles within issue stories
  and issue networks, as well as in any mobilisation of community activity.
  Representation is a key feature of the way that people can express their opinions, the
  influence of their voice compared to others, and what those other voices stand for
  within a differentiated public sphere.

- **Engagement.** There are several ways to define ‘engagement’ in relation to
  participation. This model refers to a type of engagement that involves reflection or
knowledge as well as action. Engagement can occur in each, across relationships between the citizenry and formal institutions, or as horizontal relationships among citizens. It can cover the local, the national, or the global scale. There is a need to consider: the balance of civil rights against civic responsibilities; the importance of morality and ethics in journalism and social media; and the degree to which citizens deliberate, advocate, monitor, care, and work in various aspects of social life. Engagement is also about the ways that people learn about issues and decide which topics they want to know about and engage with. It can also encompass the ways that people identify future issues or how current conditions can be addressed.

- Creating and reading issues. This mode is concerned with the way that individuals, groups, networks and institutions such as regional press create issues, how they communicate their concerns about those issues, and to whom. It focuses on how people select which news to access and how journalists, bloggers, Tweeters and users of various social media platforms decide what to focus on. This may involve a tendency to select in line with a wider sense of publicness – whether imagined in networks or made tangible through more traditional civic society lenses. It can also entail specific selections that are based on interest in – and possibly commitment to – particular causes. Other reasons for selecting a certain issue may be based on personal interest and, thus, might involve a highly-personalised response. In the pre-digital era, the production and selection of issues was seen as distinctive and separate from finding out about issues, reading about and engaging with them. This meant that institutions such as the press, government and trade unions frequently defined what the most important issues of the day were, while the crowd – the public, organised groups and individuals – then took up one of these as a cause. However, with social media and the digital communications environment, this selection of issues is a much more interactive process that can involve a range of actors who each configure in different ways. Sometimes this selection is crowd-based, social media-based or social movement-based, and at other times it is made by more formal institutions such as the press, government and think tanks. Again, the way that issues develop or do not develop is dynamic and dependent on the interaction between spheres, the actors involved and levels of active engagement or more passive following. There is also a different relationship between the acts of writing and reading that stimulates what can be termed the ‘lifecycle of issues’.
• **Crafting communication.** In this node we find a range of skills and approaches in using tools and networks to craft ways of communication. This node focuses on the ways that people develop varying skills of engaging in civic communication and social communication. Embedded within these skills are levels of written literacy, media literacy and digital literacy.

All of these nodes exist in a dynamic relation to each other. The nodes are only enacted in regional public communication once several are brought together through a regional paper at particular places, in particular instances (whether daily ritual, special event news, or through a combination of online and offline news stories and networks with a group of readers). The ways these nodes come together creates what can be called the ‘socialness’ of regional press. People have a set of expectations of the regional press, which are based on its position as a trust anchor in their community. They expect it to keep them informed, to reflect and generate interests, and as a source of identification and sense of identity. Our research found that, in the areas investigated in the RegPress study, the regional press was fulfilling that role to a high standard. Since the relationship between regional press, other media and readers is dynamic, the regional press needs to maintain its traditional role as a trustworthy commentator and reporter, whilst simultaneously being agile and adapting to the rapidly-changing digital and social media communications environment. Readers as skilled media navigators are, on the whole, willing to support the regional press in that role, partly because of its established reputation. However, this is only true provided that the journalism remains high quality and relevant to particular localities and regions, as well as being knowledgeable about – and embedded within – those localities and regions.

10. Conclusion

This conclusion refers back to the RegPress project’s research questions. It first considers the secondary questions, before addressing the principal research question.

Research questions:

• *How do regional press organisations connect at the regional level?*

  The regional press connects with its readers through quality reporting, knowing the communities it serves, generating news stories which are relevant to their readers,
and by the way its readers engage with, and talk about, what is in the regional paper. The printed paper is still liked, especially by older people, however, this format also works well in workplace staff rooms, where colleagues can pick up and discuss the paper with each other, and it is still popular across a wide range of readers. Younger people, commuters and busy parents stated that they obtain their news online, often on their mobile phone for convenience. The way to understand this connection is that, at its heart, there is a relationship between the press and its readers. That relationship is maintained through a reflective and reflexive consideration of the quality of the paper, its trustworthiness, how interesting and relevant the reporting is, and how it features in regional life.

- **How do printed press and digital press connect at the regional level?**
  The regional printed and digital press work on the basis of what is seen as good journalism by both journalists and local and regional readers. Readers and journalists clearly recognise the role played by the regional and local press. This recognition means that issues including the quality of writing, the validation of sources, impartial reporting and the identification of relevant topics are constantly evaluated and reflected upon. On this basis, the paper acts as a key point of reference for local people, who refer to it to follow local politics, cultural events and a range of civic concerns that are important to them. As well as providing readers with information about what is happening, the local papers provide an additional function. Readers use the paper as a basis around which to talk to each other, to share interests and to critically engage with concerns in their locality, the wider region and beyond. They also use it to identify people they know (or know of) in the news, and gain great enjoyment from recognising people they know personally in the newspaper, especially if the story is about positive community work. They also expect the newspaper to scrutinise events in local society and act as a watchdog for them. There is no real difference between the regional papers being online or offline, beyond people’s preferred reading practices. It is the reputation of the paper that is important and, although people may gain some news from social media channels, they do not believe that this provides the same benefits of quality journalism as their local press. The regional papers inform people, bring community interests together, foster community discussions and act as a focus for local deliberation.
- **What is the importance and relevance of the connection fostered between regional press and local communities in the civic sphere?**

  The regional press plays a key role in local community life. It is extremely important for people to know what is going on in their locality and region and it provides a transparent and impartial view of local and regional events, issues and general news. The way in which readers and journalists evaluate the quality of its reporting, editorial decisions and overall media production qualities means that the newspapers maintain a position of relevance and trustworthiness within the local society. The connection between press and readers is vital for the civic sphere because that relationship makes readers as citizens aware of local issues, encourages them to consider their own views about them, share and discuss them with others. They do this about issues that concern them personally, but also in terms of good news and the things they want to celebrate about their local community. Regional press which delivers good coverage of local areas provides substantial support for a vibrant, informed and open civic sphere by acting as a basis for individuals and groups to address areas of concern, as well as supporting and generating a sense of identity and values that expresses the ethos of a locality and region.

- **What is the influence of regional press on local democratic processes and citizen participation in the public sphere?**

  The regional press has significant influence on local democratic processes through its role within civic and community life. The way it works and is organised in local life, the way it connects with readers and citizens, and its relevance and trustworthiness all support a strong and vibrant civic sphere. A strong civic sphere is the basis of a functioning democracy, so the local press constitutes a key influence in supporting democracy. It is influential in the following ways too. First, its direct reporting of political issues and events informs citizens and supports their knowledge of local politics. Second, through its editorial columns it offers interpretations of political issues, from perspectives which may be biased but are transparent, since a paper’s editorial stance is usually well known. Third, it acts as watchdog on concerns that are relevant to public life. Fourth, it acts as a trust anchor for items that are presented as ‘news’ created and circulated on social media, as readers check information they glean from social media by reading the regional paper. The papers support and influence the processes of regional and local
discussions and deliberation by comprising a source of reliable and impartial reporting. Their editorial slant is transparent and they have to maintain as objective an approach as possible in their reporting. Readers are very quick to pick up on biased articles or reports which they feel do not positively support the ways they can engage in local civic and democratic processes.

In answer to our central research question:

- **What is the role and value of regional media in a global media age?**

Thus, the RegPress study found that the regional press has a very important role in a global media age. Its function is to inform, support and facilitate an open and engaged local and regional society. It also ensures that people have a sense of their local community and region in terms of their values. Furthermore, the regional press provides significant information about the economy, politics and cultural life. The regional press is valuable because it supports a vibrant and informed civic society at the regional level. This, in turn, impacts on the quality of local democratic debate and politics. The regional press has to balance a focus on the local and regional with reporting wider national and global issues. In playing a central role in civic, cultural and political life, it has a responsibility to ensure that it meets the very highest standards of journalistic ethics.

11. High-level recommendations

RegPress offers ten recommendations for the regional press, based on the findings of this study. We suggest that the regional press should:

1. Continue focusing on, and supporting, the highest-quality journalism to maintain its reputation as a trust anchor.
2. Develop its profile in line with the ways that contemporary readers draw on a range of media to obtain news.
3. Support local strategies to ensure that readers maintain and develop their media literacy skills.
4. Improve the quality of webcast production of local football – and other sporting – events.
5. Ensure that local reporting covers news stories in the community which support community identity and enhance people’s enjoyment of reading the paper.
6. Develop journalism skills that can evaluate the ‘information’ circulating on social media. Journalists need the relevant skills – or access to those skills – to reverse-engineer the algorithms that shape the way that information is selected and spread across social media.

7. Manage the balance between print and online papers, by monitoring people’s reading practices and habits.

8. Reflect on balancing the coverage of localities within a regional context to ensure that no localities are neglected.

9. Consider how it can maintain its local knowledge and retain local journalists within resource constraints.

10. Consider how to support those who cannot afford to buy a paper to get access to regional newspapers. This could be achieved through maintaining special subscription rates for libraries, community centres, job centres and so on.

12. Further research

The RegPress team suggest that the follow areas would benefit from further research:

1. Comparative research to see if the RegPress findings are relevant to other regions and nations.

2. Research into people’s changing reading and media use, to inform any changes in producing print and online papers.

3. Research focusing on young people, to identify what they would like to see in the regional press, in order to foster the next generation of readers.

4. Research on the media production of webcasts to understand the degree of effect that the aspects identified in this study have on the overall viewer experience. This could include ascertaining how the audio aspects are configured and how the commentary affects viewers’ experiences of these local video webcasts.

5. Research into how citizens use, integrate and interact with local media in their daily lives, and how these experiences inform the local press’s development of content and interactions with news consumers.

6. Research on the interaction between the media and varying media use practices, to ascertain how the local press can support involvement through developing and maintaining active readers’ use-practice groups.

7. Research on the role and value of sport to enhance engagement in regional society.
8. Research into how the local and regional press can contribute to developing community engagement that might lead to social innovation in the local community.

9. Research on developing professional training for journalists in the digital age. This could include understanding sources, ethics and news constructions, as well as learning how to assess and investigate social media outputs, ‘fake news’, ‘alternative facts’ and the way that algorithms spread ‘news’ and ‘trending topics’.
Acknowledgements

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Appendix
Impact activity 2016 to 2017

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<tr>
<td>ECER 2016 &quot;Leading Education: The Distinct Contributions of Researchers in Research Areas to Universities and Researchers&quot;, University College Dublin (Bridgette Wessels)</td>
<td>22-26&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of August 2016</td>
<td>Roundtable on research data management and projects</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of RegPress (Annelie Ekelin)</td>
<td>27&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of September 2016</td>
<td>Barometer Foundations Annual Board meeting</td>
<td>Kalmar</td>
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<td>Presentation of project, dialogue and discussion on local journalism with visitors at the LNU booth (Annelie Ekelin, Emelie Kempe)</td>
<td>22-23&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of September 2016</td>
<td>Gothenburg Annual Book Fair</td>
<td>Gothenburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keynote Speech (Bridgette Wessels)</td>
<td>17-18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; of November 2016</td>
<td>National Event on Local Journalism &quot;A Local World&quot;, co-organised between Barometer-OT, Gota Media, LNU, Fojo, Informer AB and Kalmar Municipality</td>
<td>Kalmar</td>
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<td>Top Leader Forum (Dialog)</td>
<td>Stockholm 29-30&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; November 2016</td>
<td>Presentation during the Swedish Governments Open Forum for Digitization, as well as in the follow up workshops The Society and the Individual citizens</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open House at LNU Campus Växjö (Annelie Ekelin, Britt-Marie Ringjord)</td>
<td>February 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 2017</td>
<td>Presentations at a shared booth (Intermedia and Multimodal Studies research group), Discussions with the public</td>
<td>Växjö</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;The role and value of regional media: Opportunities and challenges in Swedish, English and Dutch regional contexts.&quot; (RegPress team)</td>
<td>May 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; 2017</td>
<td>Workshop presentations of regional projects, discussions, networking and exchange at the Newcastle university</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate on the conditions for local journalism with the Swedish National television (SVT) Anette Forsberg, Annelie Ekelin, Anders Enström</td>
<td>June 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; 2017</td>
<td>Presentation of RegPress project, roundtable and discussion on the conditions for local journalism and future developments</td>
<td>LNU Kalmar in collaboration with SVT</td>
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Bibliography


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