



The newspaper is dead, long live the newspaper.

A sharing of ideas about the the past, present
and what's around the next corner. If anything ...

«The newspaper is dead, long live the newspaper»

Q&A where experienced and price winning newspaper designers from eight countries share their views about the future of the newspaper.

While the project is informal, the topic is deadly serious.
Is print exposed to a silent suicide while digital media take the stage ?

And what about the multiplatform strategy?
Here is the Spanish journalist and news designer Javier Errea:
«Digital and print are enemies in the deep end.
I believe in print-only news companies.
You have to choose between print and digital.»

Project by **Unar Vegstein**

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THE PANEL

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Mario García

• Cuban American newspaper and magazine designer and media consultant
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Melanie Petersen

• Germany • media consultant, designer and art director for Germany's most wellknown magazines/newspapers
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Ole Munk

• Denmark • graphic design & visual communication consultant,
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• visuel-journalistik.dk

John Bark

• Sweden • newspaper and magazine design consultant, graphic designer, writer, editor
• founder/co owner of the online museum and e-shop MoGA • mogarts.se

Terry Watson

• Scotland • newspaper designer and media consultant, clients all over the world, director of PalmerWatson Ltd • palmerwatson.com

Jacek Utko

• Poland • designer and consultant in print and web, clients in 25 countries • utko.com

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• UK • founder of Mark Porter Associates, publication and editorial design • markporter.com

Javier Errea

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THE QUESTIONS

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Change is the agenda. Work smarter is the mantra.

Still most newspapers are planned, written and designed as they were 20-30 years ago.

Which changes would you suggest for the traditional newspaper?

Lucie Lacava: To be less traditional! Readers always complain about not having enough time to read the print edition. Just like we prefer to personalize our news apps, why not offer newspaper sections on demand with the subscription?

There will be less paper waste, more quality reading time. With the current concern with climate change and the environment it will be increasingly difficult to sell print editions. It will not be sufficient to throw them in the recycling bin. Print newspapers must use 100% recycled paper to ease the guilt expressed by many readers after accumulating a week's worth of unread papers.

When I teach editorial design to university students, a question which always comes up is why are newspaper pages so «dense» so «cluttered», the unspoken implied word here is why are they so «boring»?

Because they don't reflect the needs and interests of the younger generation. This has more to do with content, but certainly, improving the design, adding more breathing space or white space will make the reading experience more pleasant. Instead of investing more in quality visuals, papers are cutting budgets and letting go of their photographers, designers, the quality of the visual information is lacking.

Review the business model: giving away quality papers for free will result in more readers, more readers will attract more advertisers, more ads will generate more revenue...

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papers are cutting budgets and letting go
of their photographers, designers,
the quality of the visual information is lacking.**

Lucie Lacava

Mario Garcia: Papers in print need to adapt to the reality that we live in a multi-platform world and that about 82% of the audience is consuming news on their phones. So make your newspaper an AUXILIARY to the other platforms. But nobody breaks news in a printed newspaper. Make it more magazinish. Put your long reads there.

**Nobody breaks news in a printed newspaper.
Make it more magazinish.
Put your long reads there.**

Mario Garcia

Melanie Petersen: I think it would help if we came up with new formats for the newspaper. There is absolutely nothing wrong with long pieces, but sometimes a paper with shorter articles, different types and shapes of newsy bits and pieces would speed up the way we read newspapers. Also our reading habits have changed in the last ten years, even more so in the last five years. And probably the most in the last 12 months.

Also online news sites deal with topics in a much lighter and more playful way. Think of small info boxes with a little quiz on a pretty complex topic. Topics dealing

with the economy, financial markets, bonds, political theories,... interesting, but complex things. We don't need a long, thoughtful comment by one of the most thoughtful comment writers of the paper on these complex topics every day, do we? Why don't we create a small mindmap with loads of (clever) thought bubbles and smart insights for the readers? I'd love to see this in current newspapers much more! On online news sites fast formats and long texts have been co-existing next to each other in a really good balance for years.

If a newspaper wants to survive, it has to become a niche product.

Ole Munk

Ole Munk: Here are four important steps to consider.

① Stop thinking of your product as a «traditional daily paper». If a newspaper wants to survive, it has to become a niche product. Meaning, provide services that other media don't. The niche can be defined by topic(s), by editorial approach/philosophy/key values, or by geography.

② Know and respect your audience. One major advantage of being a niche media is that your readers/users are well defined. Have them in mind in every move you make, no matter if you're working for the editorial department or with commercial matters. Every single person in the organization must know and understand the product in detail and work to support its uniqueness.

③ Stop worrying about other newspapers. Very few people read more than one newspaper, and your niche audience almost certainly won't.

This insight also turns the traditional news timetable upside town: You only need to respond fast to the kind of news where your audience is really eager to know how something turns out. On everything else, pay more attention to how you treat a story (make sure that this treatment is in line with your key values) than to the pace with which you'll publish it. And simply omit stories that are not relevant to your specific audience – don't publish them just because everyone else does.

④ Be smart when planning your stories. Meaning, make sure that they will address the interest, curiosity, and desires of your audience by ...

a) delivering clear answers to their obvious questions;

b) using every tool in the editorial toolbox, including visual journalism, to deliver these answers;

c) and by not forgetting to mention if there may be possible solutions to the bunches of problems with which we confront our audience (also known as constructive, or solution-oriented, journalism).

John Bark: I don't believe that there are changes that would make a real difference for the printed paper this day and age.

But if anything, it is a matter of trust and conviction: If you still produce a printed paper; let's take that serious. Both regarding the readers and the advertisers.

And if you don't have any trust in the printed paper anymore, fold it.

When I worked at Metro (now sadly put to sleep by it's new owners) for the last two years, the young editors were very devoted and serious. But many in management and sales departments constantly looked down at the printed Metro as 'old media'. Print was not cool despite that basically all revenue came from print.

In the case of Metro as a free paper, online has never really made the difference. The traffic online showed rather poor numbers, despite ambitions to boost them way beyond reality in order to sell to advertisers and affiliated companies. It was in other words hard to beat the fact that over 500 000 people read the printed Metro daily. The return rate was less than 1% so despite online versions and the strong cell phone culture, the paper paper was being read.

Problem was that the ads brought in a fraction of the income compared to the all time highs not that long ago. There was no real money in the system any more (like for all media).

The mindset across the staff has to be that the readers already know the news from other mediums therefore print has to augment the news by dealing with topics in a different way, from a different angle.

Terry Watson

Terry Watson: The planning and working processes can't really be changed. A daily newspaper has to respond on a daily basis to the agenda of the day so a morning meeting followed by a late afternoon finalising meeting is the only sensible way to work (apart from more long-term projects).

But the thinking should be different. The mindset across the staff has to be that the readers already know the news from other mediums therefore print has to augment the news by dealing with topics in a different way, from a different angle.

Make it easy for your grandma. That's the idea to survive.

Jacek Utko

Jacek Utko: It's time to be honest and say that young people will never convert into reading traditional newspapers again, it won't happen.

We must acknowledge that we have the loyal readers, but they are old readers, 60 plus usually, and older. They have money and they still want to read. Most of them don't want to convert to digital, so we will have them around for one, maybe two more decades – and we have to take care of them first as a major group of users.

But what does it mean to take care of the older people first?

It simply means to remodel the newspaper for the older people: much less content, much less busy layouts on the pages, more clarity and simplicity, it must be easier to navigate, easier to read (bigger body text font), more contrast, not too many design elements – or overdesigned pages. Think like if you are designing a phone with bigger buttons for older people. Make it easy for your grandma. That's how the new New Newspaper should look like. That's the idea to survive.

But nobody cares, nobody faces reality, everybody is doing the paper like demographics didn't change, making the paper as it was being read by 30 years old people. But they don't read print.

That's the major change I would think of if I design a paper now.

So who's doing it right? Nobody. Nobody's doing it, nobody cares. Nobody is doing the design, the layouts, the navigation, structure and the content of the newspaper for older readers.

Our products are almost the same like 10 years ago, nothing has changed while in reality everything around us has changed. We do it out of habit, our idea of newspaper that is not valid anymore. That's why we are losing. It will be really hard to change our mentality, so honestly I don't expect the papers to follow this advice, I don't think many papers will make their most loyal readers as priority.

The papers will still chase this ghost of the younger population. But that's only wishful thinking, it won't happen. We have 60, 70 and 80 year old ones who love our newspapers. And they have problems with their eyes, so we should use bigger text size to make it easier for them to read, navigate and understand what's in the newspaper.

Instead we tend to put too many elements, too many details, too long texts on the pages. Why not put all this stuff online, we can put 200 stories a day online, but just a few of them in the printed newspaper.

Another possible change is a trend towards dropping most of weekdays issues

and focus on weekend. The weekend paper will be the major product very soon. This is happening already, and I was tallish about it for the last 5-7 years.

And with the pandemic these changes just accelerated and we will see the weekend's edition as the major product very soon. This is inevitable.

Plenty of papers are now either going to die or they will reduce the number of weekly editions, with a focus on Friday and Saturday. So weekend printed paper plus website 24/7 with paid content behind paywall, because that's the only way to run this business now. And high quality content. Less but better.

For many papers this would mean only one edition per week. They will simply not afford more print and distribution costs. The weekend editions will be thicker, with more stories and more magazine style, in terms of design and content. They will compete with typical weekly magazines, Newsweek-style, but not on a glossy paper. So the newspaper identity will be kept, the quality of content will be very competitive but costs will be much lower. This is most likely the future of printed newspapers.

2021 will be a breaking point for newspaper industry. In this situation we have to reevaluate what we put into the paper. If you're not sure about the quality of your sports pages, stop doing them. There may be others doing much better sports pages. If your culture section is bad, then stop doing culture. Identify your strengths and focus on them. Put resources there. If you are great in economy, do even better economy section. The next generation newspapers will be more specialized, more niche. Multi section tick papers are the history. This is exciting time, time for doing bold decisions. Change or die.

Mark Porter: Almost too many to mention. Publishers need to be much more prepared to think the unthinkable and consider any form of innovation which does not compromise a newspaper's core journalistic mission. In recent decades we have seen big changes to design, with some newspapers now looking more like magazines. But I don't see much effort to reimagine writing and editing. Fundamental questions need to be asked about what newspapers should cover and how they cover it. We could also do more experimentation with formats and production. The classical newspaper is not dead (one or two may be able to survive with a limited circulation) but is probably not a viable business in the long-term.

**Print has a promising future if we take
radical, solid decisions.**

Javier Errea

Javier Errea: I would say that it is a question of conviction and that it affects a company as a whole: Do you believe in print or not? Be honest and manage it accordingly.

This is the radical question news companies and news executives have to answer. We have to respect our readers and, above all, our subscribers. We have to invest money and do our best in print. It is just the opposite of what most newspapers are doing. It is nothing to do with a cutting-costs strategy, nothing to do with visuals, nothing to do with technology. It is a very deep change needed related with credibility, brand-power and quality. Current situation demands a radical attitude from news companies. Print has a promising future if we take radical, solid decisions. Focus, size, platform, flows... Each and all decisions about these topics have to be radical.

Let me say something brave, maybe crazy?

First, I really don't know if multiplatform is the correct strategy for newspapers. I prefer a one-platform, more exclusive strategy to be influential and necessary. In addition, I am quite convinced that Google and Facebook are bitter enemies, and that future is only possible out of their dominance.

Which newspapers have identified the problems and made changes?

Mario Garcia: Well, your own Aftenposten has done it excellently well. So have papers like Dagens Nyheter, The New York Times, Süddeutsche Zeitung, The Washington Post, Berlingske Tidende, among others.

Melanie Petersen: Sure! There are papers who have identified and adressed these issues in a remarkable way in the past. But naming names and blaming the ones who haven't changed so much doesn't help, I think. In the end every CEO and every editor in chief of the bigger and smaller papers worldwide is steering their ship on their very own into a misty ocean. You can't blame those who would like to do this a little slower than others.

Ole Munk: Of course, my best example is Kristeligt Dagblad. In Denmark, also Weekendavisen also doing well. And Politiken, to some extent.

Outside Denmark, I am impressed by The Guardian's journalism – especially the new, more personal storytelling formats they have introduced – but I only read The Guardian online and your scope seems to be limited to print newspapers?

Terry Watson: Politiken tried to, more than a decade ago, condensing standard news to a small area of the paper and focusing on big news features. They were ahead of their time – readers objected to the lack of a news service.

**I do not personally know of any newspaper
which is getting things right in print.**

Mark Porter

Mark Porter: The Guardian tried hard while I was there, but it is clear that now the momentum has shifted to digital and the supplements, and the news section feels underpowered and unloved.

The New York Times does stunning things, but has still not made radical changes to the traditional news pages. Some of the more open-minded European papers, like De Volkskrant have made some progress with story formats etc, but there have been no radical leaps. None of the more experimental approaches (e.g. i) has gained a large readership. I do not personally know of any newspaper which is getting things right in print.

Javier Errea: Not sure. It is extremely difficult to say. Global brands such as The New York Times seem to have found the path, or at least some promising path to go. What I like about the Times is that they value print, so that they subsequently create valuable print stuff. They don't ignore half or so the revenues still come from print. Other newspapers stupidly ignore print instead. The challenge is to apply The New York Times print and quality strategy to local and regional brands.

Ideas. Learning. Inspiration. Where to look?

Mario Garcia: Follow those newspapers that are totally mobile first, but that do print happily and effectively. I think that perhaps The Washington Post and The New York Times do it best. Study them.

**There are smaller publications
with very little budget
who come up with brilliant ideas all the time.**

Melanie Petersen

Melanie Petersen: Everywhere! There are smaller publications with very little budget who come up with brilliant ideas all the time. These publications are not always comparable to the big papers, of course, but if The New York Times is setting up an inhouse team of researchers, and if this research team keeps a strong eye on good ideas both online and offline, why is not every publication capable of doing this?

Ole Munk: All of the newspapers mentioned in the former question.

John Bark: I often think of the phrase and book title 'The art of looking sideways' by the late great graphic designer and creative thinker Alan Fletcher, one of the co founders of Pentagram. That line says it all for me. Then by definition, everything in your life can be used as inspiration.

For inspiration, look to who ever produces a paper or online news/content/feature with confidence. The lack of confidence and belief in especially the printed media, is part of killing the newspapers.

Actually, the lack of confidence is part of the weakening of journalism and editorial values. One has to stay convicted especially when media is under attack from many sides. That is of course a much bigger issue than that of design. But they are linked as well.

Terry Watson: Everywhere. Nobody has all the answers.

Jacek Utko: We can look at the media we will be competing soon – weekly and monthly magazines. I'd analyse their content, editorial tools, storytelling, design. I am talking about it for years and actively merging best ideas from magazines to a daily newspapers.

Mark Porter: As in any creative project it's important to look beyond our peers and our immediate surroundings. The first step is to try harder to really understand our audience. With that as a basis we should be looking at magazines, digital, streaming, and any other form of communication and information/entertainment delivery to see what is working in the modern world.

Javier Errea: The indy magazine landscape is very inspiring. You can smell energy in there. Plenty of good ideas. Smart and brave decisions. And above all a loving courage. They love print.

What kind of content can forever be removed from the print edition?

Mario Garcia: Well, I would start with columns of brief items. The printed newspaper is more about longer pieces. People read short items already on their mobile. INCLUDE more local commentaries and stories.

Melanie Petersen: I think the columns or articles in which authors have been talking to their readers in an rather authorative voice are long overdue. There has been a time when those authors have been quite popular for some reason, but at most publishing houses these authors have left the papers already. And that's a good thing! The media world has changed so much in the last years. And the voice and tone in which articles and comments are written nowadays, are much more creative, moderate, more open minded, much less sarcastic. Sarcasm has never been a good tool when talking to your readers anyway. Never.

Ole Munk: That's a hard one. The logical answer is «all the stuff that's more effectively found, and used, online» – such as TV listings, small ads, stock exchange tables, weather forecast, etc.

However, we are still in a transition period and we know from reader surveys that some (mainly older) readers highly value these services. To some Kristeligt Dagblad readers, the Friday TV supplement tends to be their main reason for subscribing! So one aspect of knowing and respecting your audience means not taking away stuff they like.

Everything aimed at younger readers, teenagers and kids. Waste of time.

John Bark

John Bark: Everything aimed at younger readers, teenagers and kids. Waste of time.

As far as visuals, all full body images and photos of journalists and columnists that reveals their wrinkly clothes, badly fitted jackets and poorly polished shoes. Surprisingly, you can still find those photo bylines in print. And online. Delete!

Terry Watson: Old-fashioned blow-by-blow sports reports («In the 32nd minute Player A scored a neat goal from 20 yards out from a cross by Player B»). You either know it already or you're not interested in it.

Jacek Utko: Generally as I mentioned before we will have to start making LEAN newspaper. The newspaper without all the traditional sections, only with content that we are best at. I don't believe in papers that has everything: politics, national, local, culture, economy, culture, sport...

The lean paper will be much thinner. They will still be a hybrid model – some news, some evergreen content. But evergreen, timeless stuff will be gaining importance and volume. These are best converting stories online – human interest stories, timeless longer reads, not fast news. Not reactive journalism but creative journalism. Newspapers will become less newsy, we will keep on shrinking briefs and telegram stories. Exclusive news stories with impact and evergreen magazine-style content will dominate.

**Columns depend on who is writing them.
They can be brilliant or terrible. They should not
be in the newspaper unless they are brilliant.**

Mark Porter

Mark Porter: That depends on the newspaper and the audience. But it is clear that the generic mid-length newspaper story which reporters love to write is not very useful to the audience. Shorter faster information and longer more in-depth reporting and analysis are both more rewarding. British newspapers have far too much dubious political content based on off-the-record «briefings» from shadowy sources. This is more about allowing political correspondents to maintain their profile and contacts and has no value for readers. Columns depend on who is writing them. They can be brilliant or terrible. They should not be in the newspaper unless they are brilliant.

Javier Errea: So many! We should challenge the traditional structure pagination based on Local, National, World, Finance, Lifestyle/Entertainment and Sports. We should also reconsider average number of pages, which is still high, and produce shorter newspapers. Of course, all kind of lists should be removed completely. We should control number of opinion columns as well. Newspapers now are crowded of opinion. In my view opinion is cheap and easy to include compared to quality journalism. What we mostly need es extremely good material in our pages. We have to avoid average typical briefs or medium-short pieces coming from the wires. We also need beauty back to newspapers' pages. Print means luxury.

«News section in print? Oh my God, nobody will read it soon. I've seen all these headlines yesterday, on the web. I need something different. Added value,» says designer and consultant, Jacek Utko, in one of his lectures.

Digital first means that every story is old when it reaches the print reader, published online at least 12 hours before.

Some papers even publish their e-paper online the evening before.

Naturally, print readers complain over the amount of old news. Within the business no one cares.

How to reduce the impression of an old newspaper?

Melanie Petersen: I think the first step would be to reinvent the idea of a newspaper. And many, if not ALL newspaper have done so in the past. Offering their loyal readers a smart paper with more insights on a topic or even a really good infographic would surprise their readers. Also, filling up a paper of 48 pages with one article next to the other can't be a solution. Readers nowadays just love to find new formats and ideas in their paper! And this isn't a question of age! Even loyal readers who have been reading the paper for more than 25 years, are online nowadays, on their tablets and smartphones. And their reading habits have changed as well over the years.

But I've been participating at quite a few meetings at newspapers (and magazines) where during a relaunch process at some stage someone in the room cleared his throat in a very polite way, before he said: «We would LOVE to throw most features and formats out and become a super modern and much more flexible paper. But we can't. Because if we do so, if comments are not on page 4 and 5 anymore, we'd shock our elderly (and loyal!) readers to death. They'll be furious and will cancel their subscriptions straight away!»

I think this is not the case anymore. I have noticed over the years that elderly readers are incredibly open for new formats. They really love and appreciate inventive ideas.

«... the trick is to be more concerned with how to treat a story than when to publish it.»

Ole Munk

Ole Munk: At Kristeligt Dagblad, we are very aware that the newspaper – be it printed or in e-paper format – is our main product and we generally don't publish digital-first. Only if we know that our readers are eagerly awaiting the outcome of something, we decide to put the news online before we put them in the paper.

Again, part of the trick is to be more concerned with how to treat a story than when to publish it. A modern media audience can get news all the time, everywhere, so their reason for choosing Kristeligt Dagblad will have to be quality and distinction (clarity in style) rather than tempo. And our readers have expressed no dissatisfaction whatsoever with being able to read our e-paper on the night before the printed version arrives in their mailbox. On the contrary, they just see it as an extended service.

Terry Watson: In a perfect world you would have separate staff working separately and differently for digital and print, with very different approaches to their reporting, thus ensuring no duplication.

In our imperfect world, maybe Ara in Barcelona is doing the best thing. Their writers write first for social media, second for web and third for print.

Jacek Utko: If we present the news story in print, we need: added value, next steps thoughts, what it means to me, expert's opinions, different angles... So everything that will be relevant also tomorrow. I know it is extremely hard to do on a deadline.

That's why we shall focus on 1-2 things in such newspaper, not 15 things.

Newsrooms will be more like spaghetti organizations, moving resources to the places that are most valuable for the reader next day. Imagine we have an extremely important news story today and still you want only two guys working on the story that EVERYBODY will be talking about tomorrow while other 50 journalists writing their standard stories as nothing happened? No, this model is completely ineffective.

**«Print also has an opportunity to stand up
for truth and balance in an age when
misinformation and hate are thriving online.»**

Mark Porter

Mark Porter: Commodity news should be drastically reduced. It can still be present in the form of summaries or roundups. But print should focus on subjects where more words can add depth, context and understanding.

Print could also explore subjects and themes which are not commonly reported in online news. Most stick far too closely to their traditional areas of coverage and focus on the same stories as all their competitors. Print has a great opportunity to follow a more diverse and eclectic mix, and to focus more on stories behind the headlines. Print also has an opportunity to stand up for truth and balance in an age when misinformation and hate are thriving online. Anybody can tweet but it takes infrastructure and resources to print a newspaper, which should give print an advantage in credibility and trust. Sadly many newspapers squander this advantage.

**«I believe in
print-only news companies.»**

Javier Errea

Javier Errea: Nothing. It is an impossible fight. Should you feed digital first, you have nothing to go on the next morning in print.

Sorry to say, but news is a must for print newspapers. We have to be able to deliver news, not just analysis or long-form reports. I agree that most of what we print in newspapers is old. The problem is that we have to feed our digital platforms first. That is why digital and print are enemies in the deep end. It is quite paradoxical, very crazy that we want print newspapers to be old but at the same we feed digital first with the same people working for both platforms. We are killing print. No way. What would happen if we dedicated journalists for print first? Easy: digital would be at risk.

I believe in print-only news companies.

You have to choose between print and digital.

If you were to make a brand new print-edition today. What would you put in it?

Mario Garcia: I probably would not start a print newspaper in 2020, honestly. But if I did: it would be a good weekend newspaper, NOT daily.

Melanie Petersen: A whole new concept of a newspaper would be SO much fun! New ideas, new formats, re-inventing the term of newspaper. Thinking kind of upside down! I'd love that! I would copy a lot from magazines and online formats. Make a paper that includes long formats as well as fast and easy-to-read formats.

Ole Munk: I think the fact that there's still an audience for printed newspapers is based mainly on tradition, and the minority of younger people who choose to subscribe to a printed newspaper do so because of that tradition – because of the reputation built over decades.

I am convinced that new media will have to be digital. Then maybe – just maybe – if you succeed in building a loyal audience for your digital publication (very few actually do), expanding your activities with some kind of printed «luxury» product might be an option. But I'm doubtful about that.

Terry Watson: Anything and everything, but only 10% news.

Jacek Utko: I'd make a competition to weekly glossy paper magazines but on newsprint paper. So the same or higher content quality but much lower costs. Great magazine with long reads, human interests stories and high quality (but simple) design. In 2021 it would still be a hybrid model but ready for a full magazine format in the future.

Mark Porter: Coverage of the climate emergency is by far the most crucial issue of our age, and even in the quality press the coverage is inadequate. Proper science should have a much more important role. I would have much more coverage of society and the changes in the way we live, especially as they affect young people and ordinary families. And I would try to look at a much wider and more surprising range of subjects. I would also make sure that it only printed «evidence based» facts and informed opinions.

Javier Errea: I would go with no sister digital platform along. Newspapers have to fight for exclusive news and premium reporting. We are not inventing anything, just protecting your platform choice. It is so obvious that it hurts.

Maybe people prefer to read about what is happening around them and with them more than just what happened yesterday.

Are we too obsessed with the word news?

Lucie Lacava: It depends on the market. Focus on local might work in some large cities, but less so in quiet safe sleepy suburban communities. I don't believe in dumbing down the information. Since news breaks first on line, offering more analysis on print is a nice solution.

Mario Garcia: Not really. People LOVE news when it happens and they lean forward into their phone for that, but then they lean back to read more leisurely, an analysis and explanation of the story. We know that people read long pieces on mobile, too.

Melanie Petersen: The news cycle has always offered a certain pace and it will stay like that, because that's what this business is about. Otherwise we would have to think about re-naming the term «newspaper».

Ole Munk: Yes, I think you are.

John Bark: The way to survive is to give the background and the deepening analyses. The papers has to make the fight for democracy their fight. You do that through 'names' and editors that has an input and are wellknown enough to be read and listened to. Dagens Nyheter does that in a good way. The Guardian too. Or New York Times and others. The design is there to serve that purpose as well.

Terry Watson: I think newspapers have been doing this for some time. The good ones at any rate.

Jacek Utko: Easy and difficult question to answer. Easy because we all know we have news somewhere else already, on TV or the internet. Everybody is not getting news only from the web, that is not true, the older people get the news from TV.

So one may think let's just kill the news in print, but its not that easy. Because the daily paper of today, in 2020 and 21, still has to be hybrid.

Why so? Well, because it's so hard to make that added value without the stories that give the deeper insight, the news analyses or the spreads with fresh graphics and different angles and comments. It's easy to say, but hard to do, because we have limited resources, less people – photographers, info graphic artists, illustrators etc. So we should be doing better but in reality, we don't have people to do this. These market expectations are impossible to fulfil. It's a paradox. Additionally it's become much harder for the newspapers to attract talents now, nobody wants to work for such old medium without the future. So we have to be smarter when it comes to design and content. It means use very little effort to make things with great visual impact. Is it even possible? Yes.

When you cover old news from yesterday you have to be smart too. Bring added value, present things from a different angle, comments, opinions, explanations, next steps... You have to predict the future, not just report. Editors have to predict how this news will evolve in 12 hours ahead. After tv, online, facebook, twitter... What kind of questions people will keep asking tomorrow. That's a huge challenge.

Also for the design it's a challenge. How can we make this exciting, magazine style design with less resources, less people, less talented designers – this is a million dollar question.

Here is one solution. Either we make a newspaper like an old-style book, black and white, classic, very text drive simple in production... That sounds easy, cost efficient and also refreshing in the world full of colours and motion pictures.

The second option is to make an eclectic type of design, merging old style, classic typography with modern cutting edge graphical elements placed in key pages of the newspaper. Your planning is crucial here, your flow has to be like a good movie, with rhythm and surprises. You place those elements very carefully, not randomly. Then nobody will tell you it's an economic design, they will tell it's cleaner and easier to digest! Make everyday only one page or spread that people will remember and talk about. One is enough. It will be easier with more creative and timeless content, not simple news reporting.

Mark Porter: (See answer above). More focus on the realities of everyday life in society would be very welcome, But world news is also very important. Most western newspapers are just too obsessed with the usual parts of the world – Europe, the USA, the Middle East – and not at all interested in what is happening off their traditional beats except when there is a disaster or atrocity . I believe there is a

great appetite for more coverage of the global South, and events, life and culture beyond the usual international agenda.

Javier Errea: I do believe that people are interested in the news as always. The problem is that we lost the battle for distribution. We used to control the news distribution channel, not any more. But we still produce content, so that we have to make money from content. What is happening around people and with people is news. This hasn't been changed. We have to be obsessed with the word news. If we want to be influential in the future, if we want to be significant for our democracies, we have to be obsessed with news and public institutions surveillance. Credibility is the only way to go.

The last 20 years media houses have successfully been chasing female readers.

The hottest topic, *How to attract a younger audience?*, remains unsolved – because they've decided not to read, or they can't.

The typical newspaper subscribers in Scandinavia are 60-80 years old, financial independent, well educated and informed. They love the print edition (responsible for about 60-70% of the revenues) and are by far the most satisfied customers. Many of them will still be around for 20-30 more years.

Are reader habits a question of gender and generation?

Lucie Lacava: That's the status quo. Don't believe the younger generation will consume print unless it is «niche» tailored to their particular interest.

Melanie Petersen: I think female readers have for some reason for a very long time been quite neglected and forgotten at the big papers. Even if there have always been a view incredibly talented female writers the main language and the topics have been quite male. Women are incredibly interested in politics, business news, science, and so on, but these fields have been dominated by male leaders and male writers for a long time. This has changed in the last ten years which is great.

Ole Munk: Due to the focus on existential and ethical issues, Kristeligt Dagblad has a majority of female readers. As for the generation question, I think I have already expressed my thoughts in the above.

«Stop targeting women, older, younger. A good story touches all readers.»

John Bark

John Bark: If you publish a paper in print, take your readers seriously. Believe in them, your staff, your paper, your advertisers ... Be proud of print or get out of the business.

Good content as well as good functioning design works for everyone. Stop targeting women, older, younger. A good story touches all readers. Too much energy has been spent over the years trying in vain to reach certain groups of readers – guessing what they prefer to consume. Trust your intuition instead.

With that said; you need to know what you're doing and for whom. But if you have to use surveys for everything you will never reach the readers hearts anyway. I always think about what Joachim Berner said when we redesigned Dagens Nyheter 1996; «Let's do all the focus group surveys we can muster. Then forget about them so we can do what we believe in and want ourselves.»

Terry Watson: The age / gender profile of the staff should reflect the profile of the readership. That's not easy to achieve but to choose to ignore an imbalance is not smart.

Jacek Utko: We should make the newspaper for old people. We should slowly come back to make the old, traditional newspaper. If I ask my son, he will never read a newspaper. We have to stop chasing our dream of attracting younger audience. This will not happen.

We must rethink the whole concept of the newspaper. The newspaper should be easy to read and navigate, with a simple structure, legible, bigger font size, clear logical page architecture and maybe less pages – just shorter version of the online content.

Look for the content that interests the older audiences, give it more space. Why the stories about the new pension system may not be on the cover? It is not a narrow niche topic, it is most relevant for your hard-core readers.

Mark Porter: This discussion happens in every newspaper company. The print audience, especially for quality papers, is largely male because when those people were acquiring the newspaper reading habit, papers were mostly edited by and for men. Many of those attitudes still persist.

Often, talented female journalists, particularly in News, can only further their careers by falling into line with the traditional macho approach to writing and editing. But there is no reason why an open-minded, humane and intelligent newspaper should not appeal equally to men and women. The generation question is more difficult. As a father of two teenage boys I can say that many young people do not like to read, especially long text. Up to a point, this problem is insoluble. But there are print publications which attract an enthusiastic young audience (one of my clients, Internazionale, is a good example).

If we make great efforts to produce more relevant, more interesting and more engaging journalism, in more innovative and enjoyable formats, there is at least a possibility of bringing some young readers with us.

Javier Errea: Gender is not a problem. Being significant is. Young readers? New generations? I remember when we were young that my colleagues at the university didn't read at all or didn't buy newspapers. The news is not for young people.

Maybe the printed newspaper should be made primarily for elderly people.

Should newspapers pay more tribute to those who pay, read and enjoy the paper?

Melanie Petersen: This is actually not the case at all newspaper houses. Some do really care about their readership and about fierce readers who have been a loyal customer for 35 years and more (for instance, the German business daily Handelsblatt and weekly paper Die ZEIT or Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung or papers like Die WELT and Die WELT am SONNTAG, published by Axel Springer SE.)

I have worked for these publishing houses and know for a fact that they REALLY care about their loyal and paying readers. They always did and will always do. And people in charge of these papers were aiming for an outstanding product, for a paper or a news website which would be loved by their readers, ALL the time. I never sensed less than a HUGE humble gratefulness and appreciation towards loyal readers in these houses.)

Ole Munk: It is not at all unthinkable. At Kristeligt Dagblad, that's exactly what we do. But at the same time, we put a lot of effort and resources in our digital activities. Mainly for branding purposes, I would say; we have managed to establish Kristeligt Dagblad as a voice in the Danish media landscape which no one can ignore, old or young, male or female, and that's largely due to our online presence.

Terry Watson: It's true there is often a perception that print readers can be easily neglected in the quest to achieve a sustainable digital future. Which is very wrong.

«We were ignoring our most loyal readers for years.»

Jacek Utko

Jacek Utko: Because we were making a ghost newspaper for years, ignoring the changes around us. We are in the old people's business now. Many editors and journalists may hate this idea, but hello: It's time to face the reality. We were ignoring our most loyal readers for years. Thanks God they are still with us!

Mark Porter: This is mainly attributable to an obsession with novelty, and a kind of desperation, as the print market contracts, which forces editors and publishers to focus on looking for the next big thing, in this case usually digital. But it's also true that to be sustainable in the long term, newspapers, like any other business, do need to add new customers, that is simply a matter of logic.

Javier Errea: This is an unbelievable mistake made by news companies. I am so pissed off! Can't believe that my paper is free in digital and that I have to pay 400 euros a year as a subscriber for print edition, which is hardly a resumé of the digital platform menu.

Yes, you are right. I come back to my initial point: if you don't believe in print, you'd better quit. Print is for those who love reading in print. How many people is this? That is a good question. You have to focus on those loyal people. I wouldn't say that print is simply premium and digital is economy class. I would say that both are premium and that companies should be consistent.

Two Norwegian newspapers, Klassekampen (6 days a week) and Morgenbladet (once a week), have prioritized print. Kristeligt Dagblad in Denmark has had a similar strategy. They have all experienced a massive growth in circulation by practicing the *viewpaper* and *usepaper*.

Why is growth in circulation unthinkable?

... and do you know other papers with the same success story as Klassekampen, Morgenbladet and Kristelig Dagblad?

Lucie Lacava: As publishers increase their budget for digital, they decrease it for print. It is a vicious circle. We will not see increase in circulation unless publishers decide to reinvest in print.

Melanie Petersen: Since The New York Times, The Guardian, the Financial Times and others have been experimenting with paywalls, and this quite successful as well, in German newspaper houses there has been a trend to do so as well. Also I assume it didn't feel right to German editors in chief that readers would read every article online for free. How would they pay their writers if no one was willing to pay for a brilliant article online. I think it is really great to come up with a strategy for the existing print edition, but at the same time you just have to keep trying to find readers who would rather read the paper online or mobile.

Ole Munk: Kristeligt Dagblad has enjoyed continuous growth since 1994 and currently has the highest circulation ever.

John Bark: I am a strong believer in papers like Morgenbladet. But I do also believe that their strongest asset is their confidence in all they do. It is now a long time since I consulted there and was part of one of their redesigns. But that feeling of that they knew what they were doing (correct or false) was very present.

Terry Watson: It is heartening to see examples of print expansion. For niche publications (either politically, socially or geographically) I think they can be successful. For general publications in tough markets I think it is more difficult.

Jacek Utko: I think that growth of circulation is thinkable, but not 10, 20 to 30 percent a year like some

10-15 years ago, this is history. Zero is the new plus. But as you say here, there are countries and regions that has products with really good value for the readers, papers that can still grow among their core audiences, the older generations.

There is a wave of investing in print again. I had some cases in my recent work of papers that forgot the printed products, focused on web. All they were saying Digital first!, then Mobile first! They somehow forgot about the printed products, even though there were still money there. And there were readers that didn't want to convert to digital subscription.

With mobile first strategy editors were neglecting their printed products recently. Readers started to notice that their newspaper became a kind of mere newsletter to the website, and that's not good. And last year I had some experiences that showed that editors wanted to turn back from this dangerous path. On elf them was the FD, the Dutch financial newspaper. Once they had a great printed product, but then they put most attention to the digital. And suddenly they realized that a lot of people still love print and may not switch to digital so fast. So we together made a step back and tried to make a printed newspaper great again. We delivered the concept of newspaper very content driven, addressing the issues that readers were complaining about. They said more in-depth stories, we want to be smarter: we made a whole new section with analysis. More overview, we feel lost and overwhelmed: we made a beginning of the newspaper allowing them to clearly see what's important, what's not. The result: love letters from the old readers about the new redesigned formula.

But do we really want more circulation? There are countries where papers can still increase subscription numbers. Do we really want it? Because it may be expensive. Some big newspapers in India, like Times of India, may lose money when they print too many copies. Maybe the smartest is to print less pages in fewer editions, but much higher quality. It doesn't mean you automatically make less money, especially for a niche papers, like business ones. You may live really well with small circulation and high income audience. It's a matter of a business model.

Mark Porter: Structural changes in society and media habits mean that the age of large-circulation newspapers is never coming back. But this does not mean that it is impossible to have a sustainable print-based business.

Others with success, well, not a newspaper, but Internazionale in Rome, who I mentioned before, is an encouraging example. After making significant investment in digital, and not seeing any serious returns, they decided to pivot back to print. The website has become a digital version of the weekly magazine, and they have put their energies and resources into developing new print ideas. Along with the weekly, they publish 4 one-off magazines per year, which they use as an opportunity to experiment with formats and ideas. One – a magazine for kids – has already been spun off into a regular monthly, and it looks like more will follow. Print still has a future if it is done intelligently and innovatively with a true understanding of the audience.

Javier Errea: It is not!!!! It all depends. Print is not massive anymore. But many newspapers could experiment some kind of growth based on a radically new strategy in print. Readers are not stupid. They don't want to pay anymore for average stuff that can be taken from any free platform.

I know many magazines and some newspapers, yes. I admire Las Últimas Noticias in Chile. Their strategy is just print. Their website is just a pdf of the print edition. And it works! Ad clients do pay for both platforms as many people want to consume the paper in pdf-format, not in a digital version. In Guatemala, Nuestro Diario is an amazing quality popular newspaper just delivered in print. No website at all!

Never ask a barber if he thinks you need a haircut, but still:

Can newsdesign be a game changer in the years to come?

Lucie Lacava: The last time I was given carte blanche to innovate with the print edition was more than a decade ago. Today publishers play it safe, it is evolution, no more revolution. There is no demand for trying new ways to present the information, no more risk taking. If the 2020's is to be the final decade for the print newspaper as we know it, why not go out with a bang. Be bold, be different, be radical, be innovative, maybe then we will find the formula for survival.

**«If the 2020's is to be the final decade
for the print newspaper as we know it,
why not go out with a bang.»**

Lucie Lacava

Melanie Petersen: Good graphic design has always been the key to everything. And even more so in terms of newspapers and magazines. The most important job for designers in publishing houses is the organization of news. Helping writers to prioritize. Finding ways to surprise readers with vivid and joyful layouts, page after page. This means as well to work with and include interesting photos of the most talented news photographers and witty illustrators throughout the paper (and its digital companions, both e-paper and mobile app). As a designer it is SO much fun to start from scratch every morning, with a blank paper, ready to be filled with great stories.

Ole Munk: Design is a communicative tool. Research shows that people find information more interesting – AND more credible – if it pleases the eye (or ear). However, putting lipstick on a pig won't alter the fact that it's a pig. The design must always reflect the contents and the tone of voice of the publication, and you cannot fool people into buying a news media just because it is good-looking.

John Bark: I don't believe in design as a game changer. That time is over. All you can do as a designer is a good, descent job. Design is a servant. Important as always, but still a servant.

Maybe the sole purpose of newspaper design of today is to show confidence?

Why not, since there is a lack of that editorially.

Terry Watson: In the UK, the fortnightly satirical news magazine Private Eye completely eschews digital and every year its readership grows. Its editor Ian Hislop simply says: 'Why would I give it away for nothing?'. He's right. If you have unique content that people value, they will pay for it.

In the same way they always (hopefully) have done: making the consuming of good content a pleasurable experience.

Jacek Utko: Design can make a difference if we do 3 things using design and design thinking.

① Design papers that are easy to use for old people. It's a UX matter: clear structure, legibility, easy to digest product. A mix of a classical old style newspaper and a phone for your grandma with big buttons.

② Another thing is 'Smart Design'. It's my term for doing more with less. Put attention and resources (design and editorial) only to stories that matter. It may be only one page a day. But the page that people will talk about. Forget the rest. Be very selective and smart.

③ And the last thing is rethinking the structure: do we need a paper 6 times a week that forces us to make low quality product? Do we need all those sections and pages because our competition also have them? We will face the revolution very soon. Tuesday, Wednesday issues will disappear. Papers will become thinner. But quality will be much higher.

This is all design and design thinking: the way to rethink and redefine our products to make it future proof, ready for digital transformation.

«It is all too easy to put mediocre journalism in a beautiful package and think that you are making something which will appeal to readers.»

Mark Porter

Mark Porter: I think that if anything, design has become too important in many newspapers. It can be a trap because it allows editors and publishers to believe that they are doing something contemporary and relevant without questioning their journalistic habits. It is all too easy to put mediocre journalism in a beautiful package and think that you are making something which will appeal to readers. Of course as an editorial designer I believe profoundly in the power of design, but it only has value when it is attached to great thinking. Designers can have an enormous influence on the future of print but only as part of teams with editors, writers, image-makers, and business people who are ready to think with an open mind, take risks, and strive for quality.

Javier Errea: Designers have to change their minds and act as innovation active actors. Design is not just displaying the news the best way possible in any platform, but to help any organisation to work and flow better, to be more proactive, to think different, to try other solutions, to be updated... Taking into account that beauty is a must for future print newspapers, designers have to be engaged with beauty in a wide sense. But at the same designers have to transform themselves into reporters, smart journalists and editors, etc.

**«Seriously speaking,
print has a sustainable future.»**

Javier Errea

...or maybe this is just a silly dream from a romantic dinosaur heading for doom?

Ole Munk: Being a Chelsea fan, you just have to be an over-romantic dreamer. Nothing wrong about that.

Terry Watson: Ha! There's nothing wrong with being a dreamer – every industry needs them.

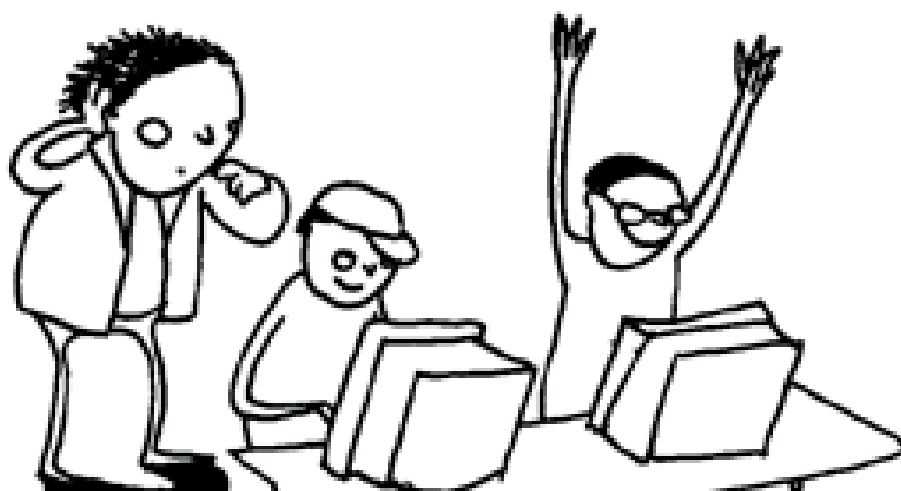
Mark Porter: The «golden age» is gone and will not return. But we should be looking for solutions rather than losing ourselves in nostalgia!

Javier Errea: Ha, ha, ha. Maybe. Who knows. Seriously speaking, print has a sustainable future. Our challenge is to remark those exclusive print attributes and make money from them.

– thank you for your time!

«The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated»

Mark Twain (1835-1910)



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