Chapter 1
What is news?

When Julia, a 22-year-old shop assistant living in Stockholm, wakes up in the morning, the first thing she does is to reach for her iPhone. Living alone in a small rental apartment, she spends the first few moments of the day checking her phone, still in bed, to see if anyone has tried to get in touch with her during the night, to then scroll through social media to get a glimpse of what her friends are up to and what is happening in the world. She is interested in fitness and training, and much of her social media feed is filled with videos and images of exercise routines, health advice and news related to a fit lifestyle, with occasional postings about politics or local events. She follows several influencers known for their expertise in fitness, both Swedish and international ones, and likes to watch their videos on YouTube to get in-depth insights, although watching longer videos is more of an evening activity for her. Julia's morning time with her mobile phone, instead, is about getting a quick overview of a range of topics that she finds interesting, setting her up for the rest of the day.

Julia's morning routine does not include much of what we would normally think of as *news:* the reading of a newspaper, getting a round-up of current affairs in a news app, watching the morning news on TV or catching up with the latest bulletins on radio. She is one of many young people across the world who might seem, at first glance, to have turned their backs on news and news journalism, or at least to be circumventing the standard pathways to access it. Indeed, the digital media context has made it easy to engage with news about political and social issues, but also to opt out of doing so (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013; Prior, 2007), and young people have for long been the subject of concerns about 'news avoidance', relating to worries that those who actively avoid news would miss out on important information about society, and therefore lose the ability to understand or be able to influence it (Edgerly, 2022; Elvestad et al., 2014; Ksiazek et al., 2010; Toff et al., 2023). At the same time, young people today increasingly access news on social media, where they encounter news journalism – alongside a wide range of other types of information about politics, culture and society – in a hybrid media context shaped by social networking, practices of self-representation, and the production and distribution of varied forms of user-generated content.

Is it possible to think of Julia's humdrum scrolling through such a mixed flow of content as a form of news consumption? It is arguable, certainly, that the altered context for news interlinks not only with novel uses of news, but also with more varied understandings of the concept itself.

This idea is prompted by well-documented changes in news production, including new practices of journalists, opportunities for media users to produce and share content, as well as changes in distribution, where the involvement of media intralopers (Vulpius, 2023), social media platforms and search engines has impacted the flow of advertising revenue, as well as leading to an algorithmically governed news dissemination. Today, a wide variety of online news sites, apps and social media compete for the attention of audiences, and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have turned into prominent news sites for audiences. As in the example, young people in particular show a decline in interest in traditional news formats (e. g., Collao, 2022; Galan et al., 2019; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013), whereas micro-blogs, such as X (formerly Twitter) or Threads, can function as important sources of information for traditional media (Broersma & Graham, 2013) – but also as mass news media in themselves. Similarly, personalised news feeds on social media platforms, based on a mixture of personal posts, shared content, photos, films, videos, memes and adverts, can be defined within the sites as 'news', making rigid distinctions between 'news media' and 'social media' problematic.

News, for a long time considered a distinct commodity produced by journalists and established media organisations, is, subsequently, currently considered a concept 'in flux'. In the light of the transformations in audience behaviour, several scholars have started to question the way the very concept of news is used in news research, pointing out, for instance, that "all too often scholars rely on a traditional twentieth century notion of professional journalism to understand shifting audience conceptions of what news 'is'" (Peters, 2012, p. 699). Such a blurring of the conceptual boundaries of news is, arguably, important to study, as it potentially impacts not only how people access information about society, but also the wider role and function of news and journalism in society (e. g., Edgerly & Vraga, 2020a; Peters et al., 2022). A more nuanced understanding of what news *is*, from an audience perspective, is therefore crucial (see Bengtsson & Johansson, 2021; Swart et al., 2022).

In this book, we aim to further this discussion, based on a phenomenological study of young adults, aged 18 – 26, building on in-depth interviews and small focus groups with a varied sample of young men and women living in different parts of Sweden, conducted during a period between 2019 and 2021. Sweden is a pertinent case for the study of news in digital culture, as a highly digitised country, where almost everyone has access to broadband, and uses of smartphones and mobile internet are extensive. According to a recent international report, 84 % of the population access news online, including in social media, with social media, furthermore, used very widely and on a daily basis by almost all young people born in the 1990s and 2000s. Sweden ranks no. 4 in the World Press Freedom Index,

and Swedes are more willing, compared with people in other countries, to pay for news, although only 33 % of the population do so, with lower figures among younger people. Together with other Nordic countries, international comparisons also show relatively high levels of trust in news, with particularly high levels of trust for public service media (Internetstiftelsen, 2023, p. 238; Newman et al., 2023, pp. 100 – 101).

We explore, in this specific geo-cultural context, how young women and men from different backgrounds perceive news, how it is integrated into their everyday practices and media use, and how they experience the role that news, as *they* define it, plays in their lives. Doing so, we follow a longstanding tradition of research that has aimed at understanding news as embedded in everyday life, searching for ordinary young adults' experiences of news as interlinked with mundane practices and settings, and acknowledging news as meaningful beyond its political function, while recognising everyday life as a formative site for communicative experiences and identities that may still interlink with the news audience as political beings (see Dahlgren, 2000, 2009). As will be discussed throughout this book, news and traditional news media may be seen, at least by *some* people, as a form of public 'good', perceptually linked to notions of informed citizenry and the requirements of democracy. For others, however, news, understood as something broader than just news journalism, is mainly experienced as something they need to navigate and manage their *own* lives, and they hence see news as interesting, important and worth paying attention to primarily in relation to how they think of the world they belong to and their own agency to act in that world. One area that the book provides insights into is thus what kind of information – from news journalism as well as information provided by other formats and sources – young people find important and interesting to pay attention to and stay updated on: in short, what kind of information they engage in and find worthwhile when navigating the essentials in their lives.

Navigating the news in everyday life

The book is called *Navigating the News*, which is in line with how we have approached news in our study. The idea of navigation provides a way of thinking about media practices in the cross-platform, or 'high choice', media landscape in relation to both news use and media use from a broader everyday life perspective. Brita Ytre-Arne, in *Media Use in Digital Everyday Life* (2023), uses navigation as a metaphor to describe how we use media "to orient ourselves as we move through our everyday lives", underlining the routinised dimensions of media use across, and in between, social domains, and the role of digital technologies in this: practi-

cally and specifically, but also socially and existentially (2023, pp. 8 – 9). Joëlle Swart et al. (2017c) use navigation to explore user practices in the contemporary media environment, as well as for understanding shifting user preferences underlying the evaluation of news. We similarly view *navigation* as a way to think about news use as a routinised, mundane, yet conscious and at the same time instinctive, way of choosing which media to engage with and pay attention to in one's media environment. Navigation, equally, implies an element of uncertainty and risk, and can be more or less difficult, depending on the situation. It requires a degree of skill as well as the right tools and knowledge, for not getting lost and for finding one's way – which, too, seems to capture the challenges facing contemporary media users continuously grappling with multiple choices and uncertainties in determining what information can be trusted and what is real. Everyday life in digital culture, then, is complex and multidimensional, not least as cross-platform environments multiply the arenas where people can be present and interact with others, and we hence constantly have to choose where to stay, when to leave and what to turn our attention to (Campo, 2015, p. 137). This is of course not something we can be constantly wary of, and those choices are neither consciously made, nor made in a vacuum, but often immediate, unconscious but built on our previous experiences, and socially structured. Navigating the world (of news), hence, includes the continuous acts of acknowledging and evaluating, following and drifting, interpreting and acting, as part of our routinely conducted everyday practices. *Navigare necesse est*, the old Latin quote says, and in contemporary digital media culture, navigating certainly is necessary.

Etymologically, to *navigate* means to direct the way a ship or an aircraft will travel, or to find a direction across an area of water or land. Today's media landscape, with its rich and diverse ecology of media technologies, platforms, content, formats and varied forms of distribution, has more in common with an open sea, vast and shifting in its character, than it has with how media, and news, were organised when primarily directed by large media houses in the age of print and electronic media. The shifting role of TikTok in the media landscape in Sweden during our fieldwork exemplifies this, as several of the young research participants, not without a certain portion of shame, talked to us about how they were drawn to TikTok and could get stuck in its stream of content for hours, yet perceived it as a childish medium, which they felt they should not be wasting their time on. Since then, the role of TikTok has changed, and it is today a more established platform, used by politicians and news producers as a way of reaching out to (primarily) young audiences. Hence, just as the sailor knows the sea, navigating the news is not conducted in a vacuum. As media users we walk through life with some idea of where we are heading; we follow the paths we have taken before, and those that others have threaded before us. And just as the ancient sailor kept a con-

stant, yet disengaged, gaze at the stars, only paying them immediate attention when he found himself in the wrong direction, we often navigate our everyday lives in similar ways, somewhat intentional, yet routinised and, as such, without paying immediate attention to our choices or actions. To navigate, is, hence, an intentional way of acting, as it has a direction or a goal, although it is most often not deliberately or consciously conducted.

We have been informed by phenomenological theory and methodology when exploring how young Swedes navigate the news in everyday life. As will be developed further in Chapter 2, this means we have used an open approach, both regarding how we talked about news with the research participants (trying not to predefine the concept in the interview situations), how we strived to understand it as part of their everyday lives, and how we conducted our interviews, inviting narratives about a wide range of media practices and mediated experiences rather than a discrete focus on journalism or a particular news genre, as well as attempting to, as much as possible, comprehend accounts of news use in relation to individual 'life-worlds' and social contexts. And, just as the ancient sailors navigated by the stars and migrating birds navigate by the moon, we have paid particular attention to the equipment and platforms that contemporary audiences use when navigating the news in everyday life, here often their mobile phone and other digital media, as well as the social networks they provide access to.

Why news?

Before examining the perspectives of young people today, it is important to briefly consider the way in which news has been theorised as a particularly vital genre in media and communication studies, journalism studies and related areas of scholarship. On the one hand, the circulation of news has been linked to the development of modern democracy, and on the other hand, to the power to shape public opinion and construct interpretive frames and discourses on a range of topics. From Benedict Anderson's (1983/1991) influential notion of the newspaper as paving the way for an 'imagined community' of readers, holding disparate groups together in a common notion of belonging to a nation, to early critical analyses highlighting how news represents different social groups and constructs dominant discourses on social issues (Beharrell et al., 1976; Hall et al., 1978), news has largely been considered to *matter*, having significant consequences in people's lives and acting as a structuring and powerful agent in politics, culture and society. In the introductory chapter to her classic book, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (1978), Gaye Tuchman illustrates this well in underlining how news can

be "a window on the world", but also noting how the view from this window will change depending on the frame:

> News is a window on the world. Through its frame, Americans learn of themselves and others, of their own institutions, leaders and life-styles, and those of other nations and their peoples. The urbanized and urbanizing nation's replacement for the town crier ('Ten o'clock and Mrs. Smith had a baby daughter'), the news aims to tell us what we want to know, need to know, and should know.
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> But, like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panels or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard. The unfolding scene also depends upon where one stands, far or near, craning one's neck to the side, or gazing straight ahead, eyes parallel to the wall in which the window is encased. (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1)

News media, consequently, are often analysed as powerful institutions, which can enlighten the public as well as obscure their view (Curran & Seaton, 2018; Eldridge, 1993).

At the same time, news has been understood as a particular kind of product, drawing attention to economic, political, technological, social, cultural and organisational frameworks of its production (e. g., Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Gans, 1979; Hermida & Young, 2019; Schudson, 1978, 2003; Tuchman, 1978; Örnebring, 2016), while, at the same time, the idea about the crucial role of news in a democratic society explicitly or implicitly underlies much scholarly discussions of news. News journalism, in the latter sense, can be viewed as a 'public good', serving as a common ground for citizens and functioning as a basis for civic engagement and the construction of an informed citizenry (Clark & Marchi, 2017, pp. 59 – 62; Broersma & Peters, 2013). Key here are the ideals of balance and objectivity, which have a long history in the development of certain forms of news journalism (McNair, 2013; Schudson, 1978, 2001), but which have throughout history existed side by side with other journalistic norms, competing with more opinionated, sensationalist and entertainment-driven forms of journalism (Conboy, 2002; Johansson, 2020a, 2020b). Similarly, a strong, but not unproblematic, common normative ideal for journalism as a democratic force is that of independence and autonomy – from the state, the market and politicians, technology and other actors (see Örnebring & Karlsson, 2022) – with news journalism, likewise, distinguishable as a media genre aspiring to tell the truth, with accuracy an important ideal for many journalists.

The role of news in a democratic society is often linked to the notion of the public sphere, as developed by Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 thesis, translated to English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989. The concept of the public sphere has been famously critiqued (e. g., Fraser, 1992; Negt & Kluge,

1972/1993) and redeveloped over the years (e. g., Butsch, 2008; Dahlgren & Sparks, 1991) – with one, for our purposes, particularly relevant rethinking provided by Couldry et al. (2007a, 2007b), who, based on a qualitative UK study, examined how civic knowledge and participation interweaves with various dimensions of media use. Couldry et al. emphasise how citizens' mediated connection, in reality, often is far from engaged, and neither particularly rational nor overtly political, arguing that the concept of 'public connection', as a description of a more fleeting engagement with news and information based on a wide range of different kinds of media, more accurately captures contemporary interlinkages between news, media, and civic knowledge and participation. Public connection, thus, points to the myriad ways in which people are directed towards a shared space for issues of public matters, where pre-political communication, entertainment and a range of everyday practices can feed into understandings of common concerns. Although such a notion can be problematised (see Hovden & Moe, 2017; Kaun, 2012), it directs attention towards the broader means in which news can function within the public sphere.

Another aspect to take into account is how digitisation has paved the way for novel understandings and roles of news in society, where the rise of social media platforms as key actors in news distribution and consumption, alongside the (uneasy) entanglement between these and news organisations, have led to a greater reliance on algorithms for news selection and the technological context for producing and accessing news (Bucher, 2018; DeVito, 2016; Thurman et al., 2019). José van Dijck, Thomas Poell and Martijn de Waal (2018) argue that this means that traditional news organisations, in a sense, lose control over news selection and the comprehensiveness of news, and that it places a greater emphasis on the individual in the selection and creation of a totality. The fact that news is often distributed via social media platforms contributes to a process of 'unbundling' and 'rebundling' of news content – where single articles or videos become separated from the original 'bundle', such as the newspaper, to be placed in the platform context. This also separates the previous 'bundle' of advertising and news product, as advertising revenues are increasingly shifted to search engines and social media platforms – which indicates a shift from news as a public value, a 'public good', to a personal value, as simply personal 'content' (cf. Broersma & Peters, 2013). Similarly, the emotion-driven dynamic of sharing on social media platforms impacts on what kind of news is produced and shared, placing the onus on user preferences, which, van Dijck et al. (2018, pp. 51 – 52) point out, contributes to how entertaining and emotionally charged content travels the fastest. So, although social media have been found to function as relatively important but contested spaces for learning about politics for young people (Bode, 2016; Holt et al., 2013; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021), inspiring varied forms of political conversation (Highfield, 2016; Sveningsson, 2015), they

equally provide a challenge to traditional news media. We have already mentioned scholarly concerns about 'news avoidance' in some social groups, whereas other current challenges include a more fragmented public sphere, with the risk of 'filter bubbles' (Pariser, 2011), incompatible views on reality and polarisation among different citizen groups (Möller, 2021), while the incorporation of AI services, tools and infrastructures in news organisations raises questions about journalistic autonomy (Simon, 2022). In relation to these contemporary debates and the increased engagement with news aggregators and platforms outside of conventional journalism, it is imperative to take an open approach to how young individuals conceptualise, use and make sense of news in contemporary digital culture.

Rethinking news

An important first step towards doing so, we argue, is to engage in a conceptual discussion of what news, in fact, is. A long-established definition of news defines it as a commodity produced and packaged within organised journalistic institutions – involving, among other things, an emphasis on newness, a truth-claim, a specific tone, and a set of particular values and actors determining what is newsworthy to an audience (e. g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). With some variation, this is also the way the concept is commonly used in news research, even though it might be classified into sub-categories, such as, for instance, 'local' and 'national' or 'hard' and 'soft' news, or be distinguished by stylistic features, different types of media or content, or particular sub-genres (see Reinemann et al., 2012). Mark Deuze and Tamara Witschge (2020) have posited that journalism is transitioning from a coherent industry to a highly varied and diverse range of practices, which is a reason to look 'beyond' journalism and theorise it from the ground up, without being constrained by old preconceptions about its nature. From a similar standpoint, Chris Peters's (2012) call for scholars to look beyond professional journalism when addressing how audiences understand news (cf. Papacharissi, 2015; Zelizer et al., 2022) equally opens the way for more varied conceptualisations stemming from audience research.

Yet, although developments within the contemporary digital media landscape have contributed to a lively scholarly discussion regarding the current features and functions of news, it is possible to situate a rethinking within historical and comparative perspectives, too. John Maxwell Hamilton and Heidi J.S. Tworek (2017) argue that we must acknowledge not only the current changes in news consumption practices, but also the larger historical misconceptions in news and journalism research regarding what news, seen from a broader temporal and spatial angle, is and can be. They claim that the 'Anglo-American model' of journalism

(that has dominated news research) is only one way of understanding news; one that easily gets challenged both by historic perspectives and current news consumption patterns, as well as by a global outlook. Disentangling the concept of news, they underline that "news is about more than journalism and existed before professional reporters and editors, before the idea of fairness and objectivity, before newspapers", emphasising how there have been "many ways of disseminating news throughout history", "from songs to jokes, to today's multi-platform media" (2017, p. 392; cf. Conboy, 2002). From such a broad sociocultural perspective of news, Maxwell Hamilton and Tworek conceptualise these transformations as 'epigenetic changes' that convert the essence of what journalism and news are, changes which are necessary to acknowledge when aiming for a nuanced understanding of what news can be today.

When thinking about news as a more malleable concept, it is important, too, to keep in mind how cultural differences can play into its meanings and functions. Elizabeth Bird (2010) makes this point in the edited volume *The Anthropology of News and Journalism*, arguing for a comparative cultural approach, which, similarly to what is suggested by Hamilton and Tworek (2017), would account for news outside of a Western or Anglo-American context. While comparison is not the focus of this book, it is nevertheless important to keep in mind how news can take different meanings in different cultures: a perspective that is also relevant for understanding news use in a digital and multi-platform media landscape, as global technologies are equally adapted in specific cultural settings. Such a reminder also points to the relevance of investigating audiences' perceptions and practices of news, where, in our study of young adults in a specific geo-cultural context, we have primarily drawn inspiration from scholarship examining news consumption from a qualitative, 'bottom up', perspective (see Madianou, 2013), relating to practices and meaning-making situated on a micro level.

Digital news in everyday life

Although an evasive term, 'everyday life' is used in many academic subjects to highlight the importance of habitual or mundane activities and settings that, while seemingly invisible and 'taken for granted' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 24), condition a great deal of our human existence (Highmore, 2001; Bennett, 2005; Pink, 2012; Sheringham, 2006). Studies of everyday life, as both an intrinsic context for media use and as itself shaped by mediated communication, constitute an influential tradition in media and cultural studies (see Alasuutari, 1999; Bird, 2003 Markham, 2022; Storey, 2014), stressing the need for acknowledging situated practices and experiences in order to gain a fuller understanding of audience engagement

(e. g., Bakardjieva, 2005; Bengtsson, 2006; Dahlgren & Hill, 2022; Moores, 2000; Silverstone, 1994; Pink & Leder Mackley, 2013). As noted by Ytre-Arne (2023, p. 5), everyday life is, equally, the signal of an analytical position which prioritises human experience rather than technological systems, ordinary media users rather than professionals and institutions, and situated contexts rather than generalisable data.

We follow this tradition and its interests in the meaning-making, contexts and practices of news audiences, in routines, time and space (Bausinger, 1984; Madianou, 2013); social and family contexts (e. g., Hagen, 1992; Lull, 1990; Morley, 1980); social identity (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999); storytelling (Bird, 1992, 1997) and the way news plays a role in audience communities (Johansson, 2007; Wasserman, 2010) and to youth (Buckingham, 2000). Although there are early examples of qualitative studies of news audiences that have focused on dimensions of news consumption beyond informational and political uses, notably Bernard Berelson's (1949) landmark study, 'What "Missing the Newspaper" Means', this research orientation was for a long time less developed, relating to what Barbie Zelizer (2004) has highlighted as a tension between cultural studies and the study of journalism, with the former focusing on subjectivities and the construction of meaning, and the latter emphasising the categories of facts, truth and reality as objects of analysis. As argued by Bird (1997, 2000, 2011) though, news audiences often pay sporadic attention to news and make sense of it based on its narrative dimensions or in relation to social interaction and 'news talk' with other people, underlining the importance of situating our understanding of news use in its everyday context – but also of understanding this as part of *culture.* Writing from an anthropological perspective, Bird outlines what such a 'cultural approach' can entail:

> An anthropological (or cultural) approach to journalism sees news embedded in everyday practices. It may focus on the way real people – professional journalists or newsmakers in the broadest sense – are able to turn events into stories. (…) It may also explore how news circulates or is received, as stories take on new meanings in the telling. Or it may focus on news narratives and a discussion of what meanings come to dominate in particular settings. And perhaps more than other scholars of news, anthropologists are open to see news as a process that operates in forms outside of the traditional definitions of journalism.
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> (Bird, 2010, p. 14)

Bird's suggestion appears to point forward towards the current surge in scholarly interest in news audiences, deemed an 'audience turn' in the study of news and journalism (see Costera Meijer, 2020; Swart et al., 2022).[1] Here, the shifting condi-

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1 Although there are continuities between earlier qualitative news research, taking a 'cultural' approach, and that which has emerged more recently as part of the 'audience turn' in journalism

tions for producing, distributing and using news have sparked an interest in scholarly approaches to news in everyday life, emphasising, for instance, multi-platform news use and mobility as crucial elements in contemporary news experiences (Jansson & Lindell, 2015; Picone et al., 2015), and how emerging practices such as 'checking', 'sharing', 'clicking' and 'linking' (Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015) become part of assembled 'news repertoires' increasingly integrated into other daily activities (e. g., Peters & Schrøder, 2018; Schrøder, 2015; Swart et al., 2016; Vulpius, 2023); blurring the earlier fixed times of news as well as traditional news geographies (Phillips, 2012). Another area concerns how digital contexts correlate with distinct forms of news use, including routine surveillance, incidental news exposure and directed consumption (Antunovic et al., 2018), as well as how the material and sensorial dimensions of digital news consumption impact on users' engagement with news content, situated in specific physical movements and mindsets (Groot Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2019).

A particularly important strand of research, for us, has attempted to *reconceptualise* news in the light of such changes. Joëlle Swart, Chris Peters and Marcel Broersma (2017b) provide key theoretical rethinking of news in relation to public connection, whereas Cory L. Armstrong et al. (2015) challenge well-established ideas of news values based on audiences' own evaluations. Irene Costera Meijer and Tim Groot Kormelink's (2015) influential study of news consumption likewise reveals a broadening definition of what counts as news according to audiences: not only events described by journalists, but all types of content that are new, from developments in the personal life of one's Facebook friends, or opinions on Twitter, to information from specific websites of interest. Stephanie Edgerly and Emily Vraga (2020a, 2020b) similarly have suggested the term 'news-ness', defined as "the extent to which audiences characterize a specific piece of media as news" (2020b, p. 420), for capturing more varied responses to news on an audience level. Lynn Schofield Clark and Regina Marchi's (2017) extensive ethnographic study of teenage news use, furthermore, explores teenagers' news practices and mediated political engagement for an empirically grounded understanding of how news fits into their lives. They refer to 'connective journalism' when describing the news orientation of the youth, emphasising practices around sharing and participation in the making of a story as dimensions of political engagement, and exploring how young people evaluate news items and other kinds of information partly circumventing conventional news journalism.

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studies, it seems that there are few links made within the latter to the former. It is our view that such links could strengthen current scholarship, by providing historical context and further addressing the cultural functions of news.

Two recent Scandinavian studies have also underlined new understandings of people's ways of accessing and understanding news journalism and other kinds of information. Peters et al. (2022) show how young Danes use a wide array of media content – beyond news journalism, and including blogs, podcasts and influencers – to stay informed about the world – whereas Henrik Örnebring and Erika Hellekant Rowe, in a study of hyperlocal information contexts that more or less equates 'news' and 'information', for example state that "for some people the local grocery store is probably more important than any traditional news outlet in terms of influencing how they act in their everyday, community lives and how they orient themselves towards the world" (2022, p. 40). In *Changing News Use, Unchanged News Experience*, finally, Irene Costera Meijer and Tim Groot Kormelink (2020) argue that even though the practices of using news have changed substantially from the mid-2000s to today, the experience of using news may not be as different as sometimes believed.

Such work opens up for continued enquiry into the category of news itself, while raising further questions about its meanings to audiences. Young adults can be seen as a group particularly affected by the developments characterised so far in this introduction, as young people are the most avid users of social media, and young adults represent a dynamic life stage shaped by the passage from youth to adulthood, where we develop an adult identity and encounter civic responsibilities, as well forming media practices likely to continue later in life (see Bolin, 2017). Young adults today also share the experience of growing up alongside the expansion of social media, as well as in environments where the consumption of news in public life has gradually become less visible, due to the shift towards personal and digital devices for news use (see Peters et al., 2022, p. 63, Peters & Schrøder, 2018). And while there for long has been an intense academic interest in studying young people's news use from a political or citizen point of view, in this book we pay attention to a range of situated news experiences and practices of a more mundane character. It will hence add insights into how news is perceived and engaged with by a broad variety of young adults, where some hold a deep societal engagement, but where the majority are, at an everyday level, mostly concerned with their own day-to-day life.

Navigating the book

This book builds on extensive fieldwork conducted in Sweden between 2019 and 2021. We have attempted to stay close to our empirical material and strived to include our participants' voices in the book as much as possible, to allow the readers to catch glimpses of the stories, expressions and dialogues of the research partic-

ipants. This introductory chapter as well as the following chapter are mainly theoretical, whereas the remaining parts of the book provide a pendulum between examples and discussions of the empirical material in the light of specific theoretical concepts and ideas. The themes dealt with, in part, follow concepts that for long have been at the core of journalism studies, such as relevance, trust and news as narrative, where we use what the young adults found particularly interesting to talk about to guide us through the material. The chapters are also partly organised along the way that the interviews and focus groups were set up, where we started by asking for accounts of an ordinary 'media day', moving on to more specific or challenging subjects.

Having introduced the book and fields of research in this chapter, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical and methodological framework for analysis, introducing main theoretical concepts and analytical perspectives that have guided our research. It starts by outlining how a phenomenological approach can help researchers move beyond a focus on news solely as a source of information, underlining how attention to audiences' everyday practices and experiences of digital news can broaden the analytical approach. In this chapter, we underline 'bracketing' as an important concept that is both part of our theoretical framework and guides the research methods, as well as introducing the 'media day' as a specific approach to understanding news as part of everyday life.

Chapter 3 discusses how the young adults in our study describe how they come across and relate to news in relation to a wide range of media formats and content. Central to the chapter is the analysis of news encounters as interlinked with social media use, highlighting the blurring boundaries between news and social media from a young audience perspective. In the chapter, we argue that the notion of news can encompass more than merely the product of journalism, and include information gained from influencers, memes and social media personalities, but also emphasise how news and other types of information can appear, to a young audience, as part of an automated flow, with the notion of news as 'just appearing' underlined in the chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on the everyday practices and interests relating to news use. It looks at three dimensions of news use in the young adults' everyday life, including spatiotemporal news practices and the meaning-making around these, as well as the areas that the young adults are interested in getting information about. It introduces how the participants constructed distinctions between 'big and small news', and the relation between news journalism as 'world news' and other news relating more immediately to their everyday life.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis of how the young adults understand how news, seen from a broader perspective, is relevant to them, and why. Based on an analysis of young people's notions of news relevance as understood through the phe-

nomenological concept of the *structure of relevance*, the chapter details how news becomes meaningful in relation to different dimensions of the participants' lives, discussing what this perspective means for the understanding of news in digital culture.

In Chapter 6 ideas about facts, events and storytelling are discussed in relation to how these categories are viewed by young people when relating to digitised news. Departing particularly from theories about news and journalism by Gaye Tuchman and Walter Benjamin, as well as the phenomenological concept of *horizon*, the chapter examines the meaning-making processes around digitised news by young audiences as well as their views on news journalism versus other types of 'news'. It presents the argument that the digitisation of news has emphasised the role of facts in news, but in this has also made journalists and journalism less interesting from an everyday life perspective.

Chapter 7 focuses on the question of what young people trust in news, by examining how they talk about issues of trust and how they articulate what are deemed to be trustworthy sources of news and information, and why. The chapter makes a distinction between common *ideas* of trustworthy sources, including certain brands of legacy media, and *practices*, relating to the more frequent reliance on social media for obtaining news and information, and develops a discussion about how young audiences attempt to come to grips with this dilemma by relying on a range of micro-practices to evaluate different kinds of information.

Finally, Chapter 8 summarises and synthesises the conclusions of the varied analyses. Based on our analyses about news practices, meaning-making and spatiotemporal directedness in the understanding of 'news' among our young participants, we elaborate on the notion of *synchronisation*, and how digital, and particularly social, media have changed the temporal organisation of news today, and hence also the way in which it relates news users to the world around them. In line with this, the chapter further proposes that our contemporary digital culture has many similarities with how news was distributed, used and perceived before printed communication dominated the world.