

The year of constructive thinking

A fragmented media field, commercialization of news and their oversupply, as well as a general suspicion towards journalists. Indeed, the media world faces many challenges to maintain its credibility. The trust of readers and listeners must be earned every day by those who have the courage, curiosity, and ability to look from the perspective of many. At least this is what I have learned in Aarhus.

This year has truly been remarkable with its corona pandemic and the presidential election in the US. Therefore, it has been very interesting and rewarding to follow the occurrence almost from the front seat at Constructive Institute in Denmark's second city Aarhus. In my mind the institute has been a kind of laboratory where small and bigger news events have been researched and analyzed and where various conclusions have been drawn about the state of journalism, its vulnerability, and its necessity of renewal.

Visiting lecturers have brought out their own perspectives and many of their stories have left me an unforgettable impression, whether it was reporter and author David Trads saying "commentate, don't demonize" or Åsa Linderborg, the former head of culture at the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet, pointing out that the trauma and the turbulence of #MeToo-movement made her a better human being, but a more chicken-hearted journalist.

For me who's working with cultural journalism, the hectic everyday life of the newsroom with all their grand news and political gambit sometimes tend to be a bit distant and overwhelming. Still this year in Århus has shown that even a cultural journalist can embrace solution-oriented news journalism that has significant nuances and encourages discussion. But wait! Isn't this what cultural journalism is at its best: in-depth discussion, constructive criticism, and an effort to understand and expand the worldview through art? Could cultural journalism even be an extension of news journalism that explains, deepens, and sometimes even provokes with its statements?

In a conversation with two cultural editors, Lisa Irenius (Svenska Dagbladet) and Björn Wiman (Dagens Nyheter), it stroke me that both of them were praising long subjective cultural articles, and that the audience had come to the same conclusion, since this particular content allured new readers and brought subscribers to the newspaper.

What does this tell us about the state of journalism? At least that there is always room for good journalism, no matter if it's produced in the newsroom or by a cultural journalist who prefers to commentate and analyze the state of the world through art.