

TOWARDS MORE CONSTRUCTIVE DOCUMENTARIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Hardly any concept in journalism has divided opinion as strongly as constructive journalism. I also had very mixed feelings about constructive journalism when I started as a fellow for the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation at the Constructive Institute in Aarhus, Denmark. Like several of my colleagues, I too thought constructive journalism as something that dulls the proverbial watchdog's canines and turns journalism into an easy-to-chew bun – that it was about positive news that give the reader a good feeling.

I worked in the current affairs department of Yleisradio (Yle), the Finnish public broadcaster, when Atte Jääskeläinen, the former editor-in-chief for news and current affairs, attempted to introduce solution journalism into Yle's work culture. I vividly remember how divided opinions were regarding solution journalism and constructive journalism, and how discussions about it sparked a debate on the nature of journalism and its underlying principles. In an article titled "Yle-case, solution-trend and critical journalism" by Hannele Huhtala, Sami Syrjämäki, and Jarkko S. Tuusvuori in *Niin&Näin* magazine, they argue that solution-oriented journalism compromised the core values of journalism at Yle.

In their article, Huhtala, Syrjämäki, and Tuusvuori mention Ulrik Haagerup multiple times. Haagerup is the founder of the Danish Constructive Institute and is considered the "father figure" of constructive journalism. Prior to establishing the Institute, Haagerup served as the news director of the Danish public broadcasting company, Danmarks Radio (DR). Similar to constructive journalism itself, Haagerup's ideas have also generated divided opinion, with some Danish newsrooms expressing less favorable views about him.

A good ten years ago, Haagerup sought to reform the news criteria. He argued there was a distortion in journalism, as it tended to overemphasize conflict and crisis. People get tired of bad news and want to turn away from them. According to Haagerup, more hopeful news is needed to get people to commit and become more active. (Haagerup 2017.)

The news criteria that Haagerup wished to change was written by the Norwegian peace studies professor Johan Galtung. In his study *The Structure of Foreign News*, Galtung listed criteria such as newness and importance, but also sensation and conflict. (Galtung & Ruge 1965.) These criteria became the journalistic standard for determining whether an issue should be reported on.

However, more than 50 years after the publication of his study, Galtung said in an article in *The Guardian* that the purpose of the study had been completely different. Instead of describing how things should be done, his work was intended to serve as a cautionary example of the consequences for the way news media filtered the world. However, it is worth noting that Galtung was interviewed for *The Guardian's* story by Ulrik Haagerup.

Negative emphasis in the news makes citizens passive. The constant highlighting of problems causes media consumers to lose faith in both democracy and society in general. The public will commit if they are also told about opportunities and hope in connection with social issues. (Ahva, Haara & Hautakangas 2018, 5.)

The research article *Taking a Break from News: A Five-nation Study of News Avoidance in the Digital Era*, utilizes findings from a large dataset of 488 in-depth interviews with media consumers, conducted in Argentina, Finland, Israel, Japan, and the US. The article points out two factors influencing news avoidance: cognitive and emotional. Cognitive avoidance of news is related to a certain period or course of events. In a simplified way, the media consumer is exposed to a certain topic too much, from too many different directions, and so gets tired of it and begins to avoid the news. Emotional avoidance of news, on the other hand, is about the more persistent negativity of the news. Media consumers want to protect themselves, and therefore they avoid news that causes strong negative emotions. According to the article, especially among young people (18-34 years old), emotional avoidance of news was pronounced. (Aharoni & Boczkowki & Hayashi & Kligler-Vilenchik & Mitchelstein & Tanaka & Tenenboim-Weinblatt & Villi 2021.)

The first principle of the *Journalistic Guidelines* says: "A journalist is responsible above all to his readers, listeners and viewers." The relevance of journalism is therefore determined by who the journalism is made for. How should the media react to news avoidance?

Currently, constructive journalism and its research is largely focused on news journalism. However, in broadcasting companies such as Finland's National Public Broadcasting Company Yle, documentary productions have a strong position as part of the public service. In my essay I will examine how the principles of constructive journalism fit television documentaries and television documentary series, and how it would be possible to add elements of constructive journalism to those genres. I will focus on examining the development of documentary productions through the three main pillars of constructive journalism.

2. CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM

In amusement parks, one often encounters funny mirrors that distort reflections, exaggerating certain features and emphasizing external aspects of one's appearance. The proponents of constructive journalism liken journalism to such a peculiar mirror that distorts the dimensions of the world, giving excessive emphasis to negative aspects and creating a skewed perception that makes reality appear much darker and more hopeless than it truly is. In other words, if the image in the mirror displeases you, there may be something amiss with the mirror itself.

Constructive journalism recognizes that there is no reality that can be objectively reflected as such. Telling about the world is never just relaying information or repeating events as they are, but the image of reality is built through different choices. The media is inevitably involved in the world it reports on, and as an example, the publicity gained by conflicts often affects the course of events. (Ahva, Haara & Hautakangas 2018, 5.)

According to advocates of constructive journalism, one of the reasons for the negative bias in journalism lies in the news criteria used to determine what is newsworthy. Because of the news criteria, conflicts, problems, tragedies and scandals are highlighted in the news coverage. (e.g. Hageruup 2017.) In her book *From Mirrors to Movers*, Cathrine Gyldensted writes about the "disease model of the world" when describing negative-focused news coverage and how, in her opinion, it has gone to excess. The "disease model of the world" consists of e.g. "about negative things like negative emotions, bad relationships, conflict, disagreement, post-traumatic stress and persecution". Gyldensted does agree that negative topics belong in journalism, but in her opinion, reporting focuses too much on problems. (Gyldensted 2015, 60.)

Several surveys show that one of the reasons for news avoidance is precisely the negativity of the news and the resulting emotions. In the Reuters Digital News Report 2020 32% of respondents said they actively avoid news. Almost 60% of them said it was because news negatively affected their mood, others described a powerlessness to influence what was happening.

The general goal of the media is to create tension and confrontation in the issues they cover, and thereby increase the public's interest in following the issue. Opposing viewpoints and disagreements easily find space and visibility in the media. (Kuutti 2015, 30.) Proponents of

constructive journalism see that where the media tries to find the truth between opposing views, it only succeeds in increasing conflict, creating a bubble effect and increasing polarization. Journalism, which should serve the common good, ends up doing the exact opposite. (Bro 2019,3.)

The answer of constructive journalism is to add solutions and good practices to journalism. Instead of just pointing out problems, journalism should offer media consumers the means to solve those problems. Showing positive developments and possible solutions encourages action and shows that the future is not hopeless. (Ahva, Haara and Hautakangas 2018, 5.)

Constructive journalism originates from among the journalists themselves. The two most known advocates of constructive journalism in Europe are the previously mentioned Ulrik Haagerup, who used to work at DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation). While still working in the management positions of a public broadcasting company, Haagerup wrote in his column that constructiveness should be added to the news criteria as a new criterion. Haagerup started lecturing and writing about constructive journalism and in 2017 founded the Constructive Institute at Aarhus University in Denmark. The Institute of Constructive Journalism annually offers more than ten journalists a fellowship at the Institute.

Another prominent advocate of constructive journalism Cathrine Gyldensted comes from Denmark as well. Gyldensted also worked for a public broadcasting company until, according to her story, she got frustrated with the way journalism was done and ended up studying psychology. Gyldensted began to combine the teachings of psychology with journalism and, like Haagerup, she also lectures and writes about constructive journalism.

Both Haagerup and Gyldensted share a desire to change the negative bias they see in journalism. What differs the most in their thinking is the role of the journalists themselves in that change. Haagerup represents a more passive side, while Gyldensted is more ready for a more active approach.

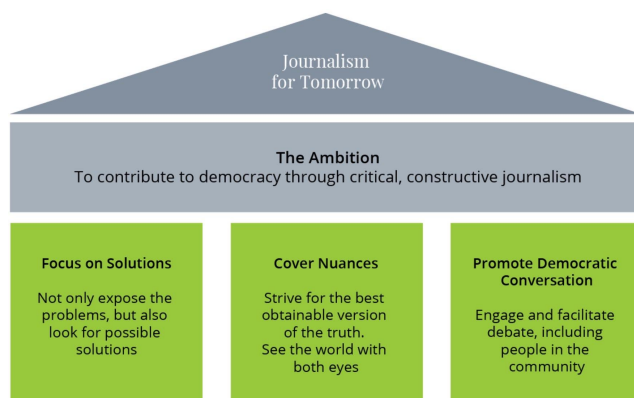
The role of the journalist in constructive journalism is probably the subject for which constructive journalism has been criticized the most. In criticism, constructive journalism is seen as advocacy journalism. However, both Haagerup and Gyldensted strongly disagree with this. Both also oppose the criticism that constructive journalism is just "positive news". Both Haagerup and Gyldensted emphasize that a critical approach is still important. Haagerup compares traditional news reporting to seeing the world with one eye, while good journalism is seeing the world with both eyes. Traditional journalism is not untrue at the

factual level, but it leaves the picture of the world lacking. (e.g. Haagerup 2017, Gyldensted 2015, Bro 2019.)

In constructive journalism, people are primarily seen as citizens, as possible actors in society, not as victims or mere spectators. (Bro 2019, 6.) Similar public agency can be seen at least in peace journalism, citizen journalism, participatory journalism, mediating journalism and solution journalism. In research, solution journalism is often used synonymously with constructive journalism, although at least Haagerup makes a distinction between the two trends. Haagerup refers to the similarity of the different movements when he writes: "The experiments had names like public journalism, Civic journalism, solutions journalism, citizens' journalism, and many other terms – all with the intention to promote more problem-solving reporting". (Haagerup 2014, 67.)

2.2 THE THREE PILLARS OF CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM

The "three pillars of constructive journalism" are presented on the website of the Constructive Institute. The Institute itself describes them as the practical basis of constructive journalism. It is not only a model but also a vocabulary to discuss constructive journalism and how to implement it. The three pillars are also intended to serve as an easy guide for journalists. When writing a story, a journalist can use the pillars to review whether it contains elements of constructive journalism.



2.2.1 First pillar: Focus on solutions

Don't just uncover problems, but also look for possible solutions.

In constructive journalism, it is considered that journalism is no longer "critical scrutiny reporting" but "critical attitude reporting". (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2018, 664.) Instead of only sensationalism, conflict and negative developments crossing the news threshold, constructive journalism strives to include solving problems and, for example, innovations that move society forward. (Aitamurto & Varma 2018, 704.)

In the ideal of constructive journalism, reporting goes beyond pointing out problems: the purpose is to present and find out what kind of solutions are available, or what has been done in the past to solve similar problems. (e.g. Haagerup 2017.)

2.2.2 The second pillar: cover nuances

Strive for the best obtainable version of the truth. See the world with both eyes.

In-depth reporting has changed its form to "he said - she said" reporting styles. According to supporters of constructive journalism, instead of reporting on a single case, one should find out what developments and events can be found in the background. (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2018, 664.)

According to constructive journalism, by following the news, you get a one-sided picture of the world, much more negative than reality is. (Haagerup 2017.) In addition to telling about what has just happened and what is happening in the present moment, journalism should also strive to tell about the future. In interviews, the journalist should ask questions such as "how could the problems be solved and what kind of progress can be expected in the future?". (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2017, 25.)

Journalism should also increase diversity. We humans are not alike and the world is not divided. Increasing diversity also aims to fight against polarization. Journalists should avoid stereotypes and see people as individuals. Hearing from the public and citizens also enables the journalists themselves to better understand the context and find new perspectives. Journalists should also tell the public about positive developments and find inspiring stories. (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2018, 669-671.)

2.2.3 The third pillar: Promote democratic conversation

Engage and facilitate debate, including people in the community.

The Constructive Institute's website states that journalism should be a feedback mechanism that helps society correct itself. Journalism could fulfil this role, for example, by creating opportunities for discussion and participation, and by cooperating more closely with its audience. Journalism should take a role in society, but that does not mean that constructive journalism is activism or lobbying. It should never try to define the best possible solution to problems, but rather it should remain neutral and stick to its objective role.

In constructive journalism, individuals are primarily viewed as citizens with the potential to take action. Media consumers are not mere bystanders or spectators; they possess the power to make a difference and influence outcomes. Journalism has the opportunity to act as an enabler for this force of change.

The table on the Constructive Institute's website about the differences between constructive and traditional journalism also reflects the effect of the three pillars in practice. When comparing constructive journalism with breaking news or investigative journalism, a different perspective is obtained in terms of time axis, goals, questioning, style, role and focus of journalism.

	Breaking News	Investigative Journalism	Constructive Journalism
Time	Now	Yesterday	Tomorrow
Goals	Speed	Blame	Inspiration
Questions	What? When?	Who? Why?	What now? How?
Style	Dramatic	Critical	Curious
Role	Police	Judge	Facilitator
Focus	Drama	Crooks and Victims	Solutions and Best practice



3. DOCUMENTARY

The world's first film shown at a screening was a documentary, *The Arrival of a Train*, or *L'Arrivée d'un train en Gare de La Ciotat* (1895) by the Lumiere Brothers.

This one-minute film depicts people walking, boarding, and disembarking from a train. Notably, the film presents the filmed material in its entirety without any editing. It is important to note that the Lumiere brothers did not set out to create a documentary film; instead, they were experimenting with their camera and capturing reality as it unfolded. Initially, these films were intended for entertainment purposes, without the foresight of preserving historical records. Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* from 1922, which follows the life of an Inuit family, is considered the first real documentary film. (Helke 2006.)

The word "documentary" was used already at the end of the 19th century, when photographer Boleslaw Matuzewski recognized the film's ability to document history, everyday life, and even medical procedures. The concept of documentary film was introduced by theorist and filmmaker John Grierson in the late 1920s. Grierson used the word when reviewing Robert Flaherty's work, praising its "documentary value". However, the documentary began to establish its own genre in the 1930s and 1940s. Grierson defined documentary film as a "creative treatment of actuality". For Grierson, a documentary is not only a reproduction but interpretation: the ability to give creative shapes to define realities. According to Grierson, documentary film has a clear and important task of giving citizens the necessary information to function in a democratic and complex world. Although for Grierson the documentary is not a reproduction of reality as such, the purpose of the documentary is to create trust in the viewer. (Aaltonen 2006, 34-36.)

In his dissertation *Todellisuuden vangit vapauden valtakunnassa*, film director Jouko Aaltonen describes documentary film as a social and societal art form. Aaltonen says that documentary film still means to most viewers a film that conveys information, teaches and educates, some kind of higher quality journalism. The documentary also has a historically significant relationship with the sciences: when photography was born, it was considered a scientific instrument in particular, and similarly, film also gained its legitimacy from science, research and education.

Still, documentary film is an art form that is firmly rooted in the social-historical world we share. Like science, the purpose of a documentary is to observe and understand the world.

However, this has also been questioned by saying that even the purest documentary is a fiction, since it always has some structure and dramaturgy and thus cannot achieve reality as such.

Traditional documentary film has even been accused of being deceptive when it presents itself as a transparent reality and conceals its ideological nature. (Aaltonen 2006, 29-38.) Documentary is often considered as evidence, when it should rather be seen as a possibility or an interpretation. (Helke 2006, 49.)

In feature films the director is God; in documentary films God is the director. The documentary is best understood in relation to the fiction film, because the documentary film is seen as the opposite of the fiction film. One of the most fundamental definitions of a documentary has been that the author of the documentary is less involved in what happens in front of the camera than the director of a fictional film – the director records and conveys historical reality. (Helke 2006, 19.)

Authorship is often concentrated in one person, because the documentary director can do everything himself if he wants to. Everyone has their own point of view, and the documentary director's way of seeing the world is at the heart of the documentary. The director must be interested in seeing things in his own way, however, understanding that others may see them differently. (Aaltonen 2011, 45.) In Jouko Aaltonen's dissertation, documentarian Virpi Suutari describes doing background work in documentary films as making sure that her own observations of the world are correct. In her opinion, the documentary's sociological argument must be true and the documentary must be based on verified information, even if the documentary itself does not present "hard facts". (Aaltonen 2006, 119-120.)

In my essay, I specifically deal with television documentaries and television documentary series. Although the limitation to television documentaries sounds quite outdated these days, when a large part of all documentaries, regardless of genre, end up on streaming services (and television is hardly the primary for any audiovisual product anymore), documentary films are primarily made to be shown in theaters instead of on a small screen. The demarcation is essential because, in television documentaries, unlike documentary films, the starting point is usually journalistic. In his book *Seikkailu todellisuuteen*, Jouko Aaltonen describes the difference, saying that while a television documentary is about conveying information, a documentary film is more about conveying emotions. In a television documentary, the structure is subject-oriented and argumentative, while a documentary film relies more on experience.

However, Aaltonen continues by saying that drawing a line is often a line drawn on water. The maker of a documentary film can take much more freedom with regard to the truth, as the work is often oriented towards reality, but is at the same time creative expression. The author of television documentaries is bound by journalistic guidelines and rules. A journalist's job is to try to present things as objectively as possible, while an artist has the opportunity to look at things purely subjectively. (Aaltonen 2011, 20.)

4. CONSTRUCTIVE PILLARS IN DOCUMENTARIES

4.1 PILLAR ONE IN DOCUMENTARIES: SOLUTIONS

Adding solutions may sound simple, but concrete steps in work may be surprisingly difficult. When I was discussing the use of constructive journalism in news work with other fellows at the Constructive Institute, one of the most important challenges mentioned was the lack of time: in order to be able to present solutions as well as the the problems, the journalist would need to invest a significant amount of more work to their story. The need to follow up on the covered matter would grow significantly as well. There is rarely time for such a luxury in hectic news work. There is barely enough time to report the day's topics, and the next day there are already new things on the agenda.

The second challenge was criticality. Constructive journalism states that criticality should not be forgotten, but how can a journalist credibly offer solutions to issues for which there may not even be any available yet? Or how is the journalist to make sure that the solutions presented are really the right answers to the problems?

In fast-paced news work, searching for and presenting different solutions may seem unreasonably laborious, even impossible. However, documentarists have different time frames, as the follow-up and processing of the matter often takes considerably longer. News and documentaries also serve different purposes for the media consumer. While the current news world offers information in a fragmented form, documentaries have taken on a role similar to that of a book in the past - it digs deeper into things and manages to structure things. Because of this essential difference, documentaries offer fertile ground for finding and presenting solutions.

The emphasis on criticality in news journalism also differs from documentaries. Journalist Reetta Rönkä interviewed Mia Halme, the director of the HBO documentary series First Five in Yle's Uutispodcast (News podcast). The documentary series follows the five female ministers of Finland's previous government. In the podcast, Rönkä and Halme discuss the documentary series that already caused a stir beforehand, but also Halme's work as a documentary director.

Halme says that she consciously kept daily politics separate from her work and tried to focus on reporting things from a different perspective. Halme describes her work saying: "When I

do my job, I am in a profession and I have my own principles of how I am. My way is not to challenge the person I am filming, unless there is a very special reason for it. My way is rather to try to imagine being in her place and thereby getting the person to be herself." After Halme's answer, Rönkä says that as a journalist she feels she should say "where is the criticality, where is the challenge?". However, Rönkä adds that for those questions there are different arenas as Halme's documentary series is not journalism, it is a documentary.

Often, the topics of the documentaries are based on something other than breaking news topics. Often they are new approaches to problems that are generally recognized and known. However, when it comes to problem orientation, it is good to remember that the conflict should be able to be described through a universal theme, so that it also speaks to the people who are not directly affected by the issue. (Aaltonen 2011, 63-69.)

Directing a documentary is an interaction with the world being filmed, and often the making of documentaries is described with metaphors of research, expedition, search and discovery. Unlike in news work, documentary makers often have the opportunity to stay with their subject for a long time. Time, on the other hand, makes it possible for processes to change, and change often offers more solutions or solution models for situations. (Aaltonen 2006, 160.)

During the documentary planning stage, the director actively seeks opportunities to capture moments of change, recognizing that witnessing events as they unfold can be a profoundly impactful experience for viewers compared to retrospective narratives. Even in the early ideation phase, the director contemplates shaping a dramatic arc by focusing on problem-solving. The starting point is often a compelling issue that the documentary aims to explore, seeking answers or presenting solutions. (Aaltonen 2011, 64-69.)

When she says "the series is a documentary, not journalism", journalist Rönkä places the documentary in the position already reserved for it in history, between journalism and art. Criticality is at the core of a news journalism, and the news journalist's job is to point out grievances, while a documentarian often strives more to understand and explain - and most importantly, to show.

According to film theorist Bill Nichols: "Each film establishes internal norms or structures of its own but these frequently share common traits with the textual system or organizing pattern of other documentaries. Documentaries take shape around an informing logic. The economy of the logic requires a representation, case or argument about the historical world.

The economy is basically instrumental or pragmatic: it operates in terms of problem-solving. A paradigmatic structure for documentary would involve the establishment of an issue or problem, the presentation of the background to the problem, followed by an examination of its current extent or complexity, often including more than one perspective or point of view. This would lead to a concluding section where a solution or path toward a solution is introduced". (Nichols, 1991, 48.)

The research and use of constructive journalism has traditionally focused on news, but in recent years in the United States, where solution journalism has been studied more, a solution approach in visual journalism and documentaries has also begun to be discussed. In Tina Rosenberg's article A Solutions Approach to Documentary Journalism published on the website of the International Documentary Association (IDA), documentarians Lauren Mucciolo and Matthew O'Neill talk about the use of a solution oriented approach in documentaries. Both share the opinion that solution journalism is a natural fit for documentary films. Usually, documentarians seek new innovations through technology or visuals, when in fact they should focus more on the interestingness of telling the story. The frame of the story can not only contain unpleasant and sad things, but also solutions and reforms. In the article, documentarian O'Neill describes how journalists sometimes hesitate to try a solutions approach because they don't want to give the false impression that the problem is solved, or seem to be picking winners. Both are easy to avoid. According to him, good solutions journalism doesn't celebrate a response to a problem – it reports on it. Context can come through interviews, or just by showing nuance. According to O'Neil, we as a culture need to understand success stories in our institutions just as critically as we understand those institutions' failures.

4.2 PILLAR TWO IN DOCUMENTARIES: COVER NUANCES

The second pillar of constructive journalism reminds journalists to cover nuances. Journalist's task is to strive for the best obtainable version of the truth. Journalists should not only cover individual cases but also explain and give it context. The media consumer should also get information about what can be found in the background of individual events. In addition, journalists should work against the media's polarizing dynamics and increase diversity.

Cathrine Gyldensted often compares constructive journalism to anthropology. According to her, journalists should act like anthropologists or future researchers. The same comparison

has also been used by Jouko Aaltonen, among others, when talking about the work of a documentarian. According to Aaltonen, a documentarian should, like an anthropologist, strive to see and understand a foreign culture from the inside. For Aaltonen, a foreign culture is anything from a couple to an entire ethnic group. (Aaltonen 2011, 233.) The comparison to anthropology for both constructive journalism and documentaries is quite interesting when you look at both, especially from the interview perspective. While the main purpose of a journalistic interview is usually information gathering, documentary interviews are also about collecting opinions and experiences. Interviewing is a narrative method in documentaries, in which case feelings and the interviewee's subjective view may become more important than information. In addition to conveying information, interviews aim to move the story forward and to explain, comment and reveal. (Aaltonen 2011, 307.) Similarly, advocates of constructive journalism insist that people should be asked about their experiences and personal values. Stereotypes should be avoided and people should be shown as individuals without placing them in a specific ideological compartment. This, in turn, is essential in the fight against polarization. (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2018, 669-671.)

Proponents of constructive journalism also urge adding a question about the future to interviews. According to them, journalism should be more than just daily reporting, and stories should go beyond the present. (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2017, 25.) Looking to the future is quite natural for a documentary director. Even as early as when doing the script, the documentary filmmaker has to plan and predict what will possibly happen and what kind of different options are on the horizon. What happens next is always in the back of the filmmaker's mind. Because the documentary naturally relies on the future, it often also brings out alternative solutions and several different perspectives. Whereas in news the most important part is always served first, in documentaries the background is often first and the viewer is led to the main point. In documentaries the relations of things, but also the randomness of things, come to light. In Jouko Aaltonen's doctoral thesis, *Todellisuuden vangit vapauden valtakunnassa*, interviews with documentary directors show appreciation of coincidence. Aaltonen sums up that the coincidence gives the documentary its special quality.

According to supporters of constructive journalism, journalists should tell inspiring examples of people who have changed the world. The public would then get tools for change and it would encourage them to actively participate in society. (McIntyre & Gyldensted 2018, 669-671.) It is typical in documentaries that large-scale phenomena are shown through the eyes of an individual. By identifying his feelings or his story, we get to grips with the wider phenomenon. Also, when choosing the topic of the documentaries, more timeless and social

issue topics are emphasized. In the opinion of many, the work of a documentarian is basically searching for stories. Even if the matter is presented from a person's subjective point of view and in a narrative form, it does not mean that the information or the basis of truth is flexible. In documentaries, the filmmaker has to think about the main character and how the viewer identifies with this. At its best, the documentary captures the viewer in such a way that they are able to live with the main character. Just like in fiction, the main character in the documentary has goals and objectives, and a clear inner change takes place during the documentary. (Aaltonen 2019, 69-73, Aaltonen 2006, 212-214.)

4.3 PILLAR TWO IN DOCUMENTARIES: PROMOTE DEMOCRATIC CONVERSATION

According to the third pillar of constructive journalism, journalism should take a role in society and act as a feedback mechanism that helps society correct itself. Journalists should offer the public more opportunity for participation, organize debates and cooperate more closely with their audience. This would also help the journalists themselves to get new perspectives and new types of information.

One example of the third pillar of constructive journalism in the case of documentaries is Docventures, hosted by journalists Riku Rantala and Tunna Milonoff. The TV-show Docventures was aired weekly and consisted of a documentary film, which was preceded by an introduction and a discussion about the topic of the documentary. After the documentary, Rantala, Milonoff and the studio guests discussed the documentary and its themes. The topic was expanded with inserts featuring, for example, people related to the topic. Viewers could participate in the discussion via social media. Already in the introduction, Rantala and Milonoff addressed the audience, guided them into the discussion and facilitated the discussion. Docventures managed to create a sense of community around them and people were guided to participate in social change. Viewers were encouraged to have their own "teleparties" while watching. The program gave rise to phenomena such as "meatless October", when studio guest citizen activist Leo Stranius challenged host Rantala to stop eating meat for a month. Meatless October has since remained a concept in Finland and has been repeated regardless of the year, even though the program has ended.

Another example of the third pillar is Helsingin Sanomat's Musta laatikko. Musta laatikko is a live journalism event produced by Finland's largest newspaper Helsingin Sanomat. In Musta laatikko live events, carefully edited and rehearsed journalistic content is presented to a live audience. In her master's thesis, Tarja Vilén says that live journalism can be one answer to

how journalism can be made more engaging, transparent and responsible. In live journalism, public performance combines the power of rhetoric and the humanity of storytelling, when the journalist appears on stage as a vulnerable and humane self. In the thesis, interviewed journalists felt that audience interaction and the opportunity to give feedback, whether it was in everyday work, live events or on social media, was felt to be important in terms of audience engagement and trust. (Vilén 2020)

5. DISCUSSION

Is constructive journalism a panacea that will save the media from itself? Constructive journalism wants to present itself as a savior. In the name of healthy criticism, those who preach salvation should ask the question: is journalism really somehow fundamentally broken?

Journalism has different types, which have their own tasks in the information transmission. The criticism faced by constructive journalism is justified when constructiveness is tried to be forced into news journalism, whose purpose is to tell people what is happening at that very moment and highlight the most important events in the world. The purpose of news journalism is unchanged. In the name of journalistic independence, journalists must oppose any effort that could manipulate this mission. Criticality is and should be the core of news journalism even when it appears as cynicism or pessimism. The purpose of news journalism is not to change the world, but to tell about it.

The purpose of the documentary is different from that of the news. The purpose of the documentary is not to be objective, but to offer perspectives, question and deepen. The documentary plays on a different level of communication.

Documentary is visual and ambiguous, at least compared to the news, which is linguistic, literal and unambiguous. The documentary conveys information and emotions, while the news should be informative and neutral. The news is supposed to offer answers, while the documentary is allowed to be contradictory and leave the answers for the viewer to chew on himself. The news educates, the documentary activates people to understand, maybe change their thinking and act.

At the beginning of the essay, I asked the question, how should the media react to the fact that people avoid the news? In my opinion, journalism is not supposed to act like a ten-year-old child on the soccer field – everybody running after the same ball. Also in journalism, different roles have different strategies. It is natural for a documentary to have dialogue with the audience, which is constantly changing. The documentary aims to identify society's sore points and blind spots, touch them and shine a light on them. The purpose of my essay was to examine how constructive journalism fits into documentaries and how elements of constructive journalism could be added to documentaries.

In conclusion, constructive journalism finds a more natural fit within the realm of documentaries rather than news reporting. The objectives of constructive journalism align harmoniously with the essence of documentaries, resulting in a diminished likelihood of facing the same negative reactions or criticisms encountered by traditional news journalism. The inherent nature of documentaries justifies the adoption of a constructive approach, as constructiveness is already ingrained in their very DNA.

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