NordMedia 2017

23rd Nordic Conference on Media and Communication Research
Tampere, 17–19 August 2017

Abstracts for panels
Division 2
Journalism
Thursday, 17 August

15.30-18.00

Journalism panel session 1: Making sense of constructive forms in journalism

Liesbeth Hermans & Nico Drok, *Placing constructive journalism in perspective*

Rune Ottosen, *The media and Norway's role in the "global war on terror": Peace journalism as constructive journalism*

Unni From, *Can soft news be constructive journalism?*

Anne Leppäjärvi, *"Solution Machine" tries to back up both society and journalism*

Laura Ahva & Mikko Hautakangas, *Understanding "constructive" through action research*
Placing constructive journalism in perspective

Liesbeth Hermans, University of Applied Sciences Windesheim
eahm.hermans@windesheim.nl

Nico Drok, University of Applied Sciences Windesheim
N.Drok@windesheim.nl

Constructive journalism wants journalism to contribute to a better world by changing some of the mechanisms ingrained in today’s journalism practice. Although constructive journalism can be seen as a new movement, it is rooted in former approaches such as civic/public journalism, peace journalism and solutions journalism. These movements came up from inside journalism practice itself and share their concerns about how mainstream journalism has developed. Our paper will elaborate on the theoretical foundations as well as on the practical consequences of constructive journalism and show how it can contribute to some of the challenges the news industry is facing today.

The central role of journalism in modern democracy is so obvious that people are inclined to take it for granted. However, the profession that has to guarantee relevant and trustworthy information and communication is going through a difficult phase and finds it hard to deal with an altering environment. In fact, professional journalism finds itself in a double crisis: a financial crisis and a functional one. The financial crisis concerns the diminishing reach of professional journalism. The answer to this crisis is often sought for in technological and economic innovations. The functional crisis is also about a diminishing reach, but on a more existential level. It concerns the declining meaning of journalism for citizens and for society. The answer to this crisis should be found in innovating journalism culture.

To understand the changing role of journalism in society it is essential to look at the underlying communication model. Against the background of socio-cultural, technological and economic trends such as informatization, internationalization, individualization, and informalization, the network model has begun to replace the 20th century mass media model. In the technological realm information scarcity, which is one of the central pillars of the mass media model, is turning into information overload. In the economic realm the news market is evolving from a monopoly into a market with many (news) suppliers. In the socio-political realm the mass audience is replaced by communities and special target groups, and citizens more often become part of (digital) networks.

The changing context of professional journalism is an extensive and complex process. It has brought important questions for 21st century journalism. How to meet the specialized desires of the individual consumer as well as the needs of engaged citizens? How to deal with negative angles in news that offers the
public disillusion instead of optimistic perspectives? These important challenges for journalism are difficult to meet if journalists keep considering themselves mainly as detached disseminators of neutral information.

The break-through of the network model of journalism means that other professional core values and goals are needed, cherishing cooperation, transparency and constructiveness.

Given the changes and developments in society and in journalism constructive journalism critically questions the prevailing petrified traditions in today’s professional practice. One of the important issues of constructive journalism is that it questions the overrepresentation of negative angles in news because this provides an inaccurate view of the world which has negative consequences for citizens’ wellbeing, their involvement and trust in society and in the news. Constructive journalism can be described as a form of journalism that reports on social relevant issues applying techniques from positive psychology in relation to news processing and news production in effort to create an accurate view of the world and stimulate engaging news coverage, while holding true to journalism’s core functions. By implementing practices such as “including a greater variety of perspectives”, “stimulating participation through as well as in journalism”, “using solution orientated frames”, constructive journalism wants to add valuable elements to 21st century journalism.
The media and Norway’s role in the “global war on terror”:

Peace journalism as constructive journalism

Rune Ottosen, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences,
Rune.Ottosen@hioa.no

The paper addresses the issue whether Johan Galtung’s model for war-and peace journalism (2002) could contribute to the present debate on constructive journalism. As a case, I will use the debate in Norwegian media about Norwegian military interventions in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. A government report (Godal-utvalget) from 2016 concludes that the Norwegian military presence from 2001-2014 has contributed little positive to development in Afghanistan. The question is whether the media could have played a more constructive role by writing critically against war from the very beginning.

My earlier research has shown that Norwegian media to a large extent repeated the government propaganda about a “humanitarian intervention” in Afghanistan (Ottosen 1996). When the Norwegian freelance reporter Anders Sømme Hammer decided to live and work in Kabul in 2006 he contributed to more critical and constructive reporting based on the principle of Galtung’s model. The research question is: What if the media had played a independent constructive role based on the principles of peace journalism from the very beginning in 2001?

The more recent cases of Libya (2011), where Norway took part in the bombing, and Syria (2016-2017) where Norwegian soldiers are involved, the media seems once again to have missed the opportunity to play a constructive critical role. As Galtung has showed in his model from 2002, the present mainstream war coverage is violent and victory-oriented. This is often linked to a dualistic method, a zero-sum game where the winner takes all (as in sports journalism). A potential consequence is that war journalism can contribute to escalating conflicts by reproducing propaganda and promoting war. Peace journalism is more constructive and people-oriented in the sense that it focuses on the victims (often civilian casualties) and thus gives a voice to the voiceless. It is also truth-oriented, in the sense that it reveals untruth on all sides and focuses on propaganda as a means of continuing the war.

My contribution to the idea of making journalism more constructive will be to also look critically at some weak points in Galtung’s model. I have criticized the model for underestimating the visual aspects of war and peace reporting and lack of gender perspective in the model (Ottosen 2008, Lippe and Ottosen 2016). With my Swedish colleague Stig A. Nohrstedt, I have suggested the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a supplement to the peace journalism model (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2008, 2014). A combination of Galtung’s peace journalism model and CDA has the advantage of being able to include a historical framework for case
Ruth Wodak’s (1996) historical approach to critical discourse analysis is a particularly useful supplement to Galtung’s model since it compensates for the somewhat strict framework of the model and opens up to include long historical perspectives in the analysis. By building on earlier historical experiences from Afghanistan and Libya, the media could play a constructive role in the coverage of the Norwegian war efforts in Syria: it could go beyond the government propaganda and discuss whether the Norwegian military presence is counter-productive.
Can soft news be constructive journalism?

Unni From, Aarhus University, imvuf@dac.au.dk

Often constructive news are associated with peace journalism (e.g. Kempf 2007, Bläsi 2004, Rodny-Gumede 2016) or how journalism can provide solutions to conflicts related to the political sphere and democracy (e.g. James 2007). This paper will, however, make the case that journalism on culture and lifestyle can also be provide constructive journalism.

Theoretically, the broad field of cultural journalism, and lifestyle journalism in particular, has been characterized by addressing audiences in their capacity as consumers, private persons and clients (Eide 1992, Eide & Knight 1999), and thereby the traditional role of journalism as serving the citizens is extended. In that sense soft journalism has for long provided solutions and guidance to the complexity of modern life (Kristensen & From 2012, From 2007). Moreover, soft journalism often provides reflexivity on modern life by taking up cultural phenomena, everyday life and analysing cultural trends and lifestyles (ibid).

This paper provides theoretical contribution by discussing how different types of soft journalism can establish a constructive perspective on life-world issues and thereby include soft journalism in the ongoing scholarly discussions of constructive journalism.
“Solution Machine” tries to back up both society and journalism

Anne Leppäjärvi, fi Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences
Anne.Leppajarvi@haaga-helia.

We live in a world where the flow of information and the potential for citizen participation have never been greater. Yet, many feel disempowered by the news, are disappointed in their political leadership and disengaged from decision-making. This generates a democratic deficit through indifference and polarization. This is the motivation for Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Journalism Degree Program’s project “Next 100 years”. The project consists of several campaigns in where we have challenged the Finnish media houses to do journalism with our journalism students and use constructive, solution-based journalism as a tool. As a part of the “Next 100 years” we have created a journalistic campaign called “Solution Machine” together with Finnish broadcasting company Yleisradio, YLE. In this campaign journalism students are working with YLE reporters from different regions of Finland from up-north to south during Spring 2017.

Before reporting we started with crowdsourcing. Solution Machine asked people from different areas in Finland: a) What are the solutions that have changed the life in the area and for which they are proud of? b) What is the next challenge they should focus on? Here we are following steps modeled by Ulrik Haagerup, executive director of DR News in Denmark and author of the book “Constructive News” (2014): Constructive journalism concentrates on what is inspiring, what is positive and what is working. We want people to see things they could be proud of and stop seeing through a victimizing lens.

After crowdsourcing we picked up the topics to report and started working with them with the people in the area. We tried to find the right individuals to answer questions as how the solution was made as a process and who and what was needed to do it. The final journalistic product we are building is a digital map of Finland, where we will use data journalism tools. With this map the Finnish people have an opportunity to find different challenges and solutions.

In this project essential is that we are encouraging not only the audience to use their freedom of expression in a constructive way but also journalists themselves. When teaching journalism we can look at it from three angles: 1) There are exercises where we do journalism as we see it is done in professional editorial rooms. It is often great, but it is not enough. 2) We also need training where we are exploring journalism as it should be: fact checking projects are a good example of this. 3) When it comes to constructive journalism, I see we are doing journalism as it could be and this is the most valuable training for business from my point of view.
One of the leading characters of constructive journalism, Cathrine Gyldensted, journalist and director for constructive journalism program in Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in Netherlands, says in her book “From mirrors to movers” (2015) that journalists believe that they mirror the world. But journalism is not a mirror but it moves the world, she argues. And the critical question for every journalist is in which direction they are moving it. Democratic society needs a professional journalism bringing balanced facts that fuel constructive debate. That we really see as a great gift for 100 years old Finland from us journalists. This gift may also help journalism itself as Ethan Zuckerman, the director of the MIT Center for Civic Media, put it in the first global conference for Constructive Journalism held in Windesheim December 2016: “It is not the public’s job to save journalism. It might be journalism’s job to save civics. Saving civics – or, at least, understanding it – is the first step saving the journalism.”
In recent years, the polarization of societies and increased aggression in public debates has been recognized as a problem throughout the Western world. On the wider scale these tensions can be labeled as clashes between conservative and liberal values and policies; in practice this means that public discussion around topics ranging from immigration and austerity politics to nutrition recommendations and wolf hunting almost certainly lead to aggressive and hateful speech. In this atmosphere, it has become increasingly difficult for journalists to do their work and provide common public arenas for constructive discussion. Furthermore, journalism can be blamed for often adding to these tensions because of certain journalistic routines, practices and ideals. Clickbait headlines, “he said, she said” coverage and emphasis on conflict and negative changes as news criteria are examples of such problematic tendencies.

This is also the case in Finland. After the 2015 Parliamentary election and the increased immigration to Europe, the Finnish public discussion seemed to run into a crisis. Newspapers shut down their heated online commentary sections and editors of leading Finnish newspapers signed a petition to resist the aggression that their journalists were facing. False media sites were gaining popularity and talk of different forms of state-governed propaganda started to become more common.

Our ongoing research project on conciliatory journalism (2016-2017) was developed in this context. The basic question was, is there anything that can be done from the viewpoint of journalism? And how could journalism research be useful in this development? We examine whether conflict-sensitive issues can be covered in a manner that releases tensions, or at the very least does not increase them. Making use of theories from the field of speech communication and their knowledge of mediative processes, we ask, should journalism strive to be the agent that listens to different views – and makes them listen to each other (O’Donnell 2009)? Could tools of mediation help in facilitating public discussion that is conciliatory rather than contradictory (Wetzstein 2010)?

The conciliatory journalism project seeks to answer these questions via action research. This includes working together in workshops with journalists and students to develop new work methods. The project has brought together altogether 52 journalists and 7 students in five workshops in different parts of Finland, each workshop meeting four times. During and between these meetings, the participants discussed themes and work practices that had proven problematic in their everyday work; developed and carried out journalistic experiments to try out improvements; and reflected on their experiences in relation to what the
research and theories have to offer. This way, the participants and researchers together sought to answer what could “conciliatory journalism” be and where and how could it be usefully implemented.

In this paper, we will discuss the findings of this action research in relation to the “constructive” trend within journalism. Although we did not label our research project as “constructive” in the beginning, the goals and principles that were described from the outset as the framework of our project resonate strongly with the constructivity discourse. Also the different constructive forms of journalism were often explicitly discussed within the workshops. Therefore our empirical evidence provides a good view on how the ideals and goals of constructivity are received in the current context of Finnish journalism; in which areas of journalistic work are they most needed, and with which topics; and how can this constructivity be carried out in practice (or when is it impossible).
Thursday, 17 August

15.30-18.00

Journalism panel session 2: Local media and journalism in the Nordic Countries I

Katja Lehtisaari; Jaana Hujanen; Mikko Grönlund & Carl-Gustav Lindén, *New forms of hyperlocal media in Finland: The fifth expansion period*

Mikko Villi; Katja Lehtisaari; Carl-Gustav Lindén & Mikko Grönlund, *Business models for local newspapers in Sweden, Denmark and Norway*

Carina Tenor, *The role of media accountability in hyperlocal website’s entrepreneurship*

Gunnar Nygren, *Local media ecologies – networks, flow and dependencies*
New forms of hyperlocal media in Finland: The fifth expansion period
Katja Lehtisaari, Jaana Hujanen, Mikko Grönlund, Carl-Gustav Lindén
Katja Lehtisaari, katja.lehtisaari@helsinki.fi, tel. +358503112590

Local journalism and local media in Finland, like in other countries in Europe and Northern America, are living through a time of intensive changes as part of the structural deformation of the whole media environment. In Finland, four different eras during the second half of the twentieth century have been recognized (Picard 2003). In the classification by Picard (2003), the following eras phases are identified: Era of print and universal public service radio (from 1950 to 1957); era of popular public service radio and growth of television (from 1957 to 1970); era of media commercialism (from 1970 to 1985), and era of media businesses (1985-2000). Based on the latest development in media landscape and our findings on the development of hyperlocal media, there are groundings to an argument that now we are witnessing the fifth expansion period. The fifth period is characterized with several simultaneous trends which include consolidation of larger media entities, and the rise of media offerings for small, targeted audiences.

The presentation shares the first results of an ongoing research project with the aim to map the current situation of hyperlocal publishing and media in Finland. The number, the geographical positions and the categories of hyperlocal media in Finland in 2017 are examined with an aim to publish an online map and database with these features. The research looks at local publishing outside the traditional local newspapers and freesheets, and both professional and amateur led new local (journalistic) openings are counted for. In order to be able to examine characteristics of emerging hyperlocal media, publishing and local media ecosystems as well as to discuss future views of hyperlocal publishing, a comparative analysis is done on the current situation of local newspapers and freesheets.

Hyperlocal media is defined in previous research as offering an online news or content service pertaining to a small community such as a town, village or single postcode. According to Metzgar, Kurpius and Rowley’s (2011), geographic elements, community orientation, original news reporting, origination on the web, filling perceived gaps and civic engagement form a framework for identifying and analysing hyperlocal media. The motives of the publication can be different, as well as the background of the people, participating in its production. Unlike in “traditional” professional media, the production team can consist merely of the amateurs or "enthusiasts", or the publication can be semi-professional one, where professional journalists and amateurs act together. In our study, we argue for a both less normative and thematically broader framework. Such a framework makes it possible to recognize such emerging forms of communication as hyperlocal media which cannot be seen as producing professionally produced ‘news’ but which have similar
role in people’s everyday lives locally as the traditional news media have. The paper also suggest that funding sources, business models, motives, and overall content as well as contextual factors (local media landscape, business climate) are important parameters when redefining hyperlocal media.
The study focuses on business models in companies publishing local newspapers and freesheets in three Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway and Denmark). Many previous studies have focused on the state of media industry in single countries, notably the US, although the industry has distinct features in different countries (Siles and Boczkowski, 2012). Through the comparative setting it is possible to examine the differences in business model processes and to study what societal, economic and cultural factors (e.g. Nordic welfare state model) can be found that affect innovation in media and sources of funding. As theoretical framework in the comparative study we utilize the media system dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach, 1985) that focuses on the ecological relationship between different players in society, in our case mostly media system activities at the macro-level. Media system activities include organizational structure and goals and organizational policies and procedures (Ball-Rokeach, 1998).

The study contributes theoretically by developing the media system dependency theory as a framework to compare how newspaper companies in different countries perceive and implement innovation in media production. The study provides methodological contribution in joining market and financial performance data with qualitative interview data for analysing media innovation in newspapers. Two data sets were gathered in Scandinavia in the spring of 2016. The qualitative part of the study consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews (N=31) with CEOs, editors-in-chief, and other managers in local newspaper companies as well as industry experts. The quantitative financial data for newspaper companies covers years 2005 to 2016; this timespan corresponds well with the accelerating digital transition in the newspaper business.

The master frame in the newspaper industry crisis debate is that the appropriate response is to be found in innovations, new business models and better ways to reach out to audiences (Brüggemann et al., 2016). However, a continuous and aggressive innovation activity may be challenging for newspaper publishers who often need to break loose from the old paper production model. Organizations tend rather to reproduce the concepts of past successes, focusing on incremental changes, rigorous brand alignment, and top down-monitored, commercially steered activities (Järventie-Thesleff, Moisander, & Villi, 2014). Media executives often hesitate to make bold high risk moves because the landscape keeps changing so fast (McDowell, 2011).

The study carried out demonstrates that newspapers companies have not been tremendously innovative when it comes to media production, business models and sources of funding.
The role of media accountability in hyperlocal website’s entrepreneurship

Carina Tenor, Södertörns högskola, Carina.tenor@sh.se

The emerging local news websites is a growing field of international research, often viewed from the hopeful perspective of them filling the gaps left by traditional local newspapers. The risk of looking for an idealised “fictive” hyperlocal entrepreneur, empowered by the digital age, has been pointed out by Harte, Turner and Williams (2016). This study therefore takes a broader stance on what is going on in the local digital media landscape – still posing the question of how hyperlocal website’s entrepreneurs are handling the balancing act of closeness and critical distance. Is objectivity and independence even a goal these new entrepreneurs all aim for, when reporting on the local community? What is the reason to be from their point of view? Is promoting local community and identity an equal or even more important goal for hyperlocal media?

This study is based on the results of the first extensive mapping of hyperlocal news media in Sweden. According to their level of journalistic skill set and their business models, we divided about 90 independently owned and managed local news websites into four different groups: business/professional, business/amateur, non-profit/professional, non-profit/amateur. The objective of the study is to broaden our understanding of connections between both economic issues and various driving forces and journalistic professional values. How to address and promote media accountability in this developing sector can be seen as a vital question for policymakers, education institutions and the public – as well as for the future of local journalism.
**Local media ecologies – networks, flow and dependencies**

Gunnar Nygren, Södertörns högskola, gunnar.nygren@sh.se

Even in a globalized world with access to an endless number of media outlets, the local news from the area where people live are still the most important (Nygren and Leckner 2016a). But the local media landscape is changing rapidly: old legacy media is downsizing and closing local offices (Nygren and Althén 2014) and new kinds of local media is developing on all platforms: printed weeklies for free, hyperlocal online news sites and local community radio (Williams and Harte 2016, Leckner and Nygren 2016). This development is not unique Swedish or Nordic, it is observed in all kind of western countries (Kleis Nielsen 2015)

Development can be analysed from an ecological perspective. Studies of local media ecologies include different actors in the system (producers of news, local actors and audiences). These studies are focused not on single newspapers or newsrooms, but on how the system works, how different types of media and audience in an on going collaborative process produce and consume news (Anderson 2016, Nygren 2016b). Questions concerns how stories develop and travel in local society, how multiple local identities are developed and together form some kind of common understanding of local society (Coleman et al 2016).

Some key questions are:

- What is the function of different kinds of media for people to be informed and to participate in local community?

- How are news and debates moving between different kinds of media – social media platforms, hyperlocals, legacy newspapers and regional public service?

- Where is the power of control in these local media ecologies? Is it possible to get a picture of the media networks in these places?

Local media ecologies look different, depending on the type of local society. In the project Hyperlocal publishing, local media ecologies in four places are analysed: a part of a metropolitan area (Södertälje), a regional center (Helsingborg), a small commuting municipality (Gnesta) and a municipality in a sparsely populated area (Sollefteå). In these four places, media flows are analysed in all levels from local Facebook groups to regional public service. Actors are interviewed and local structures are mapped to achieve a picture of the local media ecology.

In this extended abstract and presentation, some preliminary findings from the project are discussed. The local media ecologies are analysed from the perspective of “hybrid media systems” where old and new
media logics compete and adapt to each other, a media ecology where old media are still present but also change to survive in the new media environment (Chadwick 2013).

References:


Friday, 18 August

10.15-12.00

Journalism panel session 3: Pushing the Boundaries of Journalism: Comparative Perspectives on Cultural Journalism in the Nordic Countries

Jostein Gripsrud, *Covering the Cultural Public Sphere*

Nete Nørgaard Kristensen & Anna Roosvall, *Editorial and cultural debates in Danish and Swedish newspapers: Understanding the terror attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in early 2015*


Kirsten Sparre & Unni From, *Journalists as tastemakers: An analysis of the coverage of the TV series Borgen in a British, Swedish and Danish newsbrand*

Heikki Hellman; Nete Nørgaard Kristensen & Kristina Riegert, *Media and cultural legitimation of a bestseller: a comparative case study of Millennium 4 in the Nordic press*
“Covering the Cultural Public Sphere”

Jostein Gripsrud Jostein.Gripsrud@uib.no

This paper tackles the thorny issue of how to define the broad and blurring boundaries of the field of cultural journalism in relation to the notions of a cultural and a political public sphere. It discusses the three roles cultural journalism play as a key genre in the cultural public sphere: a source for identity, empathy and argumentation. The essay provides both historical and contemporary examples of the importance of various artworks for social and political discourse and public opinion – and shows how cultural journalism mediates between experiences of art and a wider set of cultural and political influences on societies. Finally, it discusses the digitalization of the media as a set of challenges for cultural journalism, outlining their implications for democracy and public discourse.
This paper analyses Danish and Swedish editorial/op-ed and cultural opinion articles in the aftermath of the terror attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in early 2015. Based on a theoretical framework detailing agonistic democracy, and deliberative and antagonistic approaches, a quantitative analysis maps who voices opinions and what conflicts and contexts are evoked, pointing to similarities in how the events are understood on a broader level. A qualitative analysis of polarizations, key concepts, reference points, and linguistic registers, specifying who is pictured as “other” and how relationships to “others” are imagined, indicates differences both between countries and between newspaper sections: While editorials, particularly Danish, often display one-sided stereotypical polarizing antagonistic world-views, and Swedish articles display tendencies to abandoning previous multicultural approaches, cultural opinion articles (particularly Swedish) evoke conflictual co-existence, drawing on multiple cultural/political/philosophical contexts, thereby underlining cultural journalism’s crucial role for agonistic democracy in a globalizing world.

Kristina Riegert, kristina.riegert@ims.su.se
Heikki Hellman, Heikki.Hellman@staff.uta.fi
Leif Ove Larsen, Andreas Widholm & Silje Nygaard

This paper compares how Nordic public service media institutions (Finland: YLE; Norway: NRK; Sweden: SVT/SR) define and interpret their remits regarding cultural news. Relying on policy documents, interviews with managing cultural news editors and a sample week’s broadcast and online cultural news output, the results show distinctive national differences in the ways cultural news is conceived, the resources and organization of the cultural news desks, and differences in news content during the week studied. The countries are most similar in their broad popular culture offering, and by that fact that all the companies provide broader cultural news coverage on their websites than in their broadcast versions. However, the distinctions between the online and offline platforms are less clear than those between the three countries. So, despite the commonalities of the Nordic media model, the values and practices of cultural journalism show enough differences to warrant further study.
This paper presents a comparative content analysis of the ways in which journalists have engaged with and defined what counts as good taste and cool culture in relation to the internationally successful Danish TV series Borgen in three national newsbrands: The Telegraph from United Kingdom, Svenska Dagbladet from Sweden and Berlingske from Denmark. Taking our point of departure in the theoretical concept of the ‘cultural intermediary’ (Maguire & Matthews 2014), we demonstrate on the one hand that the coverage is anchored in traditional cultural criticism, showing for example how all three newsbrands use reviews and previews to evaluate Borgen as both ‘good taste’ and (more rarely) ‘bad taste’. On the other hand, the analytical findings indicate that tastemaking is a very complex process and that journalistic tastemaking also occurs and is performed outside the cultural pages in articles characterised by hybridisation (Baym 2016) in which fictional and real narratives are combined.
“Media and cultural legitimation of a bestseller: a comparative case study of Millennium 4 in the Nordic press”

Heikki Hellman, heikki.hellman@staff.uta.fi
Nete Nørgaard Kristensen, netenk@hum.ku.dk
Kristina Riegert, kristina.riegert@ims.su.se

The Swedish author Stieg Larsson’s Millennium trilogy (2005-2007) was an unprecedented literary and commercial event in the Nordic book market. But what happens when such a bestselling trilogy gets a controversial sequel written by another author? Drawing on cultural sociology (e.g., Bourdieu 1984, Janssen & Verboord 2015) on how symbolic values are produced in a struggle between various agents of the literary field, this paper analyses the debates about and reception of David Lagercrantz’ fourth Millennium-book, The Girl in the Spider’s Web (2015), in 36 leading Nordic newspapers from late 2013 to end 2015, claiming that journalists are key cultural intermediaries contributing strongly to cultural classification. Theoretically, we offer a model distinguishing between four quality aspects in the literary field, addressed by cultural journalists and critics in their coverage and debates. The first two are well known: literary quality and commercial quality, while the last two are our proposed contributions to nuance contemporary discussions of literary quality: professional quality and reader/audience quality. Applied on the Millennium-4-case, this analytical framework demonstrates that the four qualities are intimately intertwined, and that judgements of the merits of the book are no longer reserved for critics alone, since its news value increased diverse and contradictory quality demands on it. While its commercial quality was most talked about in contrast to its literary quality, its professional quality appears to have been able to compensate, to some extent, for its lack of literary quality. Thus the paper demonstrates how Nordic cultural journalists actively engage with various aspects of quality and thereby play a multidimensional role in the social process of cultural
Friday, 18 August

10.15-12.00

*Journalism panel session 4: Local media and journalism in the Nordic Countries II*

*Sara Leckner; Carina Tenor & Gunnar Nygren,* *Everybody is a journalist? User participation in hyperlocal news media in Sweden*

*Henrika Zilliacus-Tikkanen,* *Case Lauttasaari – old and new hyperlocal media on an island in Helsinki*

*Lottie Jangdal,* *Local Democracy and the Media: Can Hyperlocals Fill the Gap?*

*Birgit Røe Mathisen & Lisbeth Morlandstø,* *Wider scope or polarized debate? The role of regional media in regional public*

*John Grönvall & Mats Nylund,* *A new analog newspaper in the digital age – cause and effect of the crisis of superlocal journalism*
Everybody is a journalist? User participation in hyperlocal news media in Sweden
Sara Leckner, Malmö University, Carina Tenor and Gunnar Nygren, Södertörn University
Contact person: Sara Leckner, sara.leckner@mah.se

In the age of downsizing and declining of local legacy media, hyperlocal publishing has attracted sustained interest from the news industry, investors and policy makers, as well as consumers and researchers (e.g. Barnett and Townend 2015; Williams et al. 2015). Hyperlocal news operations are often presented as a reaction to a perceived market failure and a solution to fill the gaps of declining legacy media; to meet a need for locally oriented news (Kapius et al. 2010; Metzgear et al. 2011). In particular, hyperlocal publishing emphasis a stronger relying on user participation than traditional media (Kapius et al. 2010; Paulussen and D’herr 2013), ranging from user-generated content in form of tips, blogs, comments to contribution through different forms of civic and participatory journalism. Other studies on user engagement have, however, found a low level of uptake of user-generated content among both journalists and consumers (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013; McCollough et al. 2017)

By using methodological triangulation – surveys (probability sample from the national SOM survey, and of all hyperlocal media actors in Sweden), interviews (with all municipalities in Sweden, and selected hyperlocal actors), and content analysis (of hyperlocal Swedish Facebook groups) – the present study examines to what extent users participate in the content production of hyperlocal news operations and to what extent such media fill a perceived news gap. The users’, the producers’ and the municipalities’ perspectives are taken into account.

The results show that most of the content in hyperlocal media is produced by the owner(s), often a sole individual with a background as a professional journalist. Thus, “amateur reporting” does not account for a significant part of the content in Swedish hyperlocal media, but increased submissions from the audience is wanted and encouraged. Additionally, looking at the population as whole, the citizens state that their participation to content creation are low in analogue media outlets, but somewhat higher in online and social media. The municipality’s claim that much of the local news reporting and debate have moved to local Facebook groups. Looking more closely at them, they have moved conditions toward a more ideal setting of participation, however lacks the gatekeeping function. At hyperlocal level, Facebook groups function as a good environment for user participation, although they do just partly fill the function of legacy mass media. Thus, the thesis “everybody is a journalists” is a truth with modification, both with regards to breadth of
content and engagement. Hyperlocal media do not currently secure the future of journalism and news reporting, but nonetheless provide good conditions for improvement of the local news media landscape.

References


Case Lauttasaari – old and new hyperlocal media on an island in Helsinki

Henrika Zilliacus-Tikkanen, University of Helsinki, henrika.zilliacus@helsinki.fi

The paper is part of a research project mapping and defining hyperlocal media in Finland in 2017.

Where citizens get information about local activities and how they are able to participate in them are critical questions from a democratic perspective. The project contributes to the discussion about the future of journalism by presenting results from a study on hyperlocal media in Finland.

This paper focuses on a case study of the local media in the Lauttasaari-area, an island with about 23 000 inhabitants close to the center of Helsinki. The traditional local media is the free weekly paper, published by the local organization Lauttasaari Society since 1968. It is distributed to the households, and free to collect in local stores. For several years the information to the inhabitants is also largely transmitted through social media. The facebook group Laru-liike (The Laru movement) has by February 2017 collected over 5 000 members.

The case study will examine the background, the editors and the goals of the paper and the facebook-group. Research questions are: To what extent are social media in general, and the facebook group in this case, taking over the function of local fast news reporting? To what extent has the local debate moved from the printed weekly paper to the social media? To what extent is there a dialogue or exchanges of news between the news outlets? The primary research method is interviews with the editor of the paper and the group behind Laru-liike. In addition content will be analyzed and categorized.
Changes in the Swedish local media landscape: Media entrepreneurs taking over news reporting on the countryside

Elisabeth Stúr, Mid Sweden University
Asta Cepaite-Nilsson, Lunds universitet
Lottie Jangdal, Mid Sweden University
Contact person: Elisabeth Stúr elisabeth.stur@miun.se

During the last decade, local press all over the world has undergone vast changes. For instance, in Sweden, one of three editorials has been shut down and more than 2000 reporter jobs have disappeared (Nygren & Althén, 2014). Nowadays reporter’s working at head offices manages most of the local news coverage. As a result news reporting of smaller communities has weakened or even ceased to exist, creating locations of “blind spots”, places without any local news coverage (Nord & Nygren, 2002; Nygren & Tenor, 2016).

In the track of this development, a new movement has emerged in Sweden with entrepreneurs starting local media offices in purpose of producing and publishing local news in communities where “blind spots” exists (Holt & Karlsson, 2015). One of the outcomes of entrepreneurs working local with producing news is the phenomenon of hyper-local media and hyper-local journalism (Radcliffe, 2015). Going hyper-local is an act of dealing with the very local in a community, reporting of events that have interest of smaller and specific local groups in a society (Ibid).

The consequences of this change of local journalism – bringing entrepreneurs into the local media market – are of great interest for future studies. Not just from a Swedish point of view, but also from a Nordic and an international one then the same development can be traced on the local media market worldwide.

The theoretical context in this case emerges from several scientific fields of research about communication, media and journalism on a local level. One involves ANT, Actor Network Theory in due to explain how entrepreneurs act in these particular situations, also theories about sustainability and entrepreneurship pinpointing the importance of useful strategies and working models for surviving on the local media market. Theory of social responsibility is useful regarding communication of information in communities.

Concerning the content and journalistic working processes different kind of definitions of hyper-local journalism as for instance citizen, participant and community journalism are used. In discussions about
consequence of the development on the local media market concepts as the “blind spot” hypotheses are used (medieskugga).

In finding some answer concerning what the entrepreneurs signifies for local journalism and local news reporting we are in this ongoing study investigating local media entrepreneurs in Sweden – who they are, how they act as producers of local news, which platforms they are using to publish their material and also what the main focus is in the news material they are publishing. The final object of the study is to display strategies and working models for a sustainable local media entrepreneurship, producing and publishing local news in communities.

In this study the material consists of 50 to 60 local media entrepreneurs from all over Sweden. They are strategically chosen from several hundred existing different local media agencies. To be picked out for the study we used references, as for instance they should be mainly involved in producing local news for a recognizable community, working at least semiprofessional and not as a hobby, also have some sort of sustainability in economy and performance.

The study is performed with interviews, which have been set up as surveys, mainly short questions and answers. However, some of the questions are of a more qualitative character, with open answers in due for the object of interviewed to give more profound responses.

The study is in progress so the result is not completed.
Wider scope or polarized debate? The role of regional media in regional public

Birgit Røe Mathisen and Lisbeth Morlandstø, Nord University

Contact person: Birgit Røe Mathisen, birgit.r.mathisen@nord.no

In recent years, regional media has narrowed their news scope, mainly covering the town where they are published (Nord & Nygren 2002, Kristoffersen 2010, Holand 2013, Omdal 2013, Engan 2016). They become more like local patriots and guard dogs for their publishing towns (Mathisen 2010, 2013) than actors for the entire region. The consequence of this narrowing might be a lack of public debate in important matters for the region. Some fear a democratic deficit, were important voices of small communities are silenced (Omdal 2013, Kristoffersen 2010), further “black holes” in the coverage of important political levels (Nord & Nygren).

Paradoxically, the media development is contrasted by a general regionalization in society, were several public tasks are transferred onto larger regional units. However, there seem to be opposite trends between the news reporting and opinion based journalism in regional media; were media companies in the latter are aiming at a wider scope, addressing both regional, national and international matters (Mathisen & Morlandstø 2016).

In this paper, we will explore the role of regional media in regional public debate, through a case analysis of the newspaper Nordlys and their opinion based journalism online, called Nordnorsk debatt. Nordlys is published in the town of Tromsø in the northern part of Norway. Traditionally, Nordlys has been a regional newspaper, with distinct opinions from the arctic region as an important mission (Christensen & Tjelmeland 2002). As all other regional newspapers, Nordlys has narrowed their news coverage, mainly focusing on the town of Tromsø. Within the opinion-based journalism though, Nordlys is broadening the scope, exceeding the borders of the town as well as the county. The aim with Nordnorsk debatt is to create a new arena for public debate, as well as facilitating and serving the regional public.

Through a case analysis of Nordnorsk debatt, we will explore this attempt of Nordlys, addressing an overarching debate about the relations between local and regional media, and their role in regional public. The paper will discuss relations between what is local and what is regional. We will explore identity and belonging on the one side, and disputes and conflict of interests on the other. The research question asked is how do Nordlys carry out their role in regional public? The empirical data contains a content analysis of the columns; focusing on themes and issues on the agenda, as well as identifying the voices that contribute in the debate. Further, we will draw upon interviews with editors and columnist of both Nordlys as well as
other local media within the northern region. Theoretically, the discussion draws upon institutional theory, as well as theories about media and democracy.
A new analog newspaper in the digital age – cause and effect of the crisis of superlocal journalism

John Grönvall, Arcada, Helsinki University
Mats Nylund, Arcada, Helsinki University

Introduction

In this paper we present preliminary results of our empirical work on how a super local newspaper in Lovisa, Finland has managed to create a sustainable ecosystem for readers, local businesses, journalists and the paper itself.

Background

The continuing digitalization of our society has meant a major paradigm shift for the news media industry. We see a decline in sales of printed newspapers and an intensified competition for advertising revenue on the whole. The discourse of the crisis of journalism is comprehensive. Moreover with recent events in the U.S. both the American and the international news media are rapidly adapting to a new reality in the post-truth society.

With global news readily available on social media, we get the necessary information about what is happening in the world. The national papers and evening news are giving away much of their content for free. The real remaining market lies within the super local context, people are still curious about what is happening next door in their hometown.

A new super local newspaper called “Nya Östis” (the New Eastern Nyland) was founded in the summer of 2015. The paper was created from a demand where the local inhabitants were unhappy with the changes. Originally the 5-day a week newspaper “Östra Nyland” had existed since 1881 when it was founded by baron Magnus von Born. From the beginning of 2015 the old paper was merged with another local newspaper called “Borgåbladet”. Borgå is a city 50km west of Lovisa. The citizens in both towns became critical towards the new combined newspaper “Östnyland” as soon as it was released. The readers wanted more relevant content about the local affairs.

Objective

The aim of this article is to contribute to the understanding of why this new paper was created and how its existence is affecting the citizens of Lovisa. Furthermore we look for the universal tendencies in this
particular case and analyze how much of the phenomenon is due to special circumstances and whether other cities could benefit from the lessons learned in Lovisa.

Method

Our work is based on a case study of the first of the Finland-Swedish newspapers that was resurrected, “Nya Östis”. In depth interviews with some of the producers and readers of the newspaper constitutes the empirical material used in the study.

We analyse how these mediated activities affect social and civic engagement in the city. Furthermore, we explore the working principles of the paper and how its role in the superlocal media ecosystem could benefit local municipalities and communities elsewhere in Finland where the circumstances are similar.