



**CONSTRUCTIVE
INSTITUTE
ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018**

THE INSTITUTE IS OFF TO A GREAT START

Preface by the Chairman of the Board, Per Westergård

The ambitions were soaring from day one. "Our goal is to change the global news culture in five years," stated the man with the idea, founder and director, Ulrik Haagerup, exactly one year ago, and while you were still wondering about the scope of that perspective, he added with a smile "... and when I say five years, it's because we do not have money for longer than that."

Well, some kind of joke?

I am not the one to judge the quality of other people's jokes, but after the first year of Constructive Institute I do think, that financial funding will be available for more than five years. New sponsors have joined us through the first year, and more agreements may fall into place in the coming year.

The institute has had a great start.

It has not changed the global news culture, but it has made significant impressions in the global media debate.

Hardly one major international media conference has been held anywhere in the world without the participation of

speakers from Aarhus. A number of Nordic journalist schools have had visiting guest lecturers from the institute, as well as large and small media companies have sought inspiration and have had assistance with their internal workshops.

International institutions and media organizations are involved in discussions with Constructive Institute on actions that - perhaps, perhaps not - may result in the institute assisting in opening new offices in other countries over the next few years.

Add to this that the first six fellows have completed their one-year fellowship at the institute with a result they themselves describe in this report. The next eight fellows are ready.

Constructive journalism is today something that is being worked with, being experienced, taught and researched more than ever before in history. This is not only due to the institute. But the institute is an important initiative, and it was taken at the exact time, when the world, the zeitgeist and, not least, journalism were ready for this initiative.

The ambitions are still soaring.

BILLEDE OG INDHOLDSFORTEGNELSE

LET'S CHANGE THE GLOBAL NEWS CULTURE

By Ulrik Haagerup, Founder and CEO

"People who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."

One of the first TV commercials from Apple comes in handy as an excuse for the mission statement of a small NGO called Constructive Institute: We want to change the global news culture in five years.

Talk about moonshots...

In the beginning it was hard to say while keeping a straight face. How can anyone believe it's possible to influence the mindset of one of the most conservative industries and a profession with an identity of being a watchdog and a habit of stonewalling any criticism from the outside, as it often comes from CEOs, politicians, dictators and communication directors in an effort to avoid critical questions and get free advertising disguised as journalism.

But one year into the life of this "startup", we do in fact believe it is possible. News culture can be changed. And it is changing rapidly.

The challenges in the news industry are now so obvious that both publishers, CEOs, reporters and journalism students more than ever are open to the idea, that some of our problems and the trust meltdown in democratic institutions might come from the way we traditional news people filter the world. And they realize that it is good, not only for journalists and democracy, if we focus more on inspiration, engagement and stories about tomorrow; it's also good for business.

It might come as a surprise for many a publisher and news reporter that there is

in fact an alternative to the traditional news strategy in the exploding battle of attention: Turning up the volume giving people more breaking, more stories, more speed, sharper headlines on more platforms with more deadlines, fewer people and less money. In any other industry it wouldn't sound like a winning strategy, and it has proven not to be the case in journalism either.

For Constructive Institute it has been a busy, but fantastic first year with invitations, support and interest from all over the world: From the smallest local newspaper in The Baltic Sea, to the biggest tech companies and global press organization to newsrooms from Columbia, Taiwan and Switzerland to commercial TV-stations in Norway and startups in Denmark.

We have spent the last year following three roads to try to help the news industry change:

New Knowledge: We work with researchers at Aarhus University and elsewhere to document the impact on society from traditional news and the consequences of a more constructive approach. We focus not only on the why, but increasingly on the how, generating new journalistic concepts to share with newsrooms in both print, radio, TV and online – as well as new experimental formats.

New Inspiration: We have done keynotes (e.g. at Google DNI in Amsterdam, World News Media Congress in Lisbon, INMA Congress in New York, NewsGeist in Lisbon, Constructive Journalism Day in Taipei, Radio Days in Paris), we have done masterclasses with EBU, journalism schools in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany and the USA, done workshops in newsrooms in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, held the world's biggest Global Constructive Journalism Conference at Aarhus University with 500 people from 37 countries, awarded a global prize (to Swedish Radio) and prepared new education material for journalism training.

New Role Models: We have finished our first ever fellowship program with six talents from the Danish press. After ten months at Aarhus University and time to reflect they now return to their newsrooms as ambassadors of constructive journalism. A new class of 8 fellows has been appointed from September 2019 – and funding for more international fellows is in the pipeline.

The first year of Constructive Institute has been meaningful, fun, rewarding and full of learning and hope.

We want to thank the management, researchers and students of Aarhus University for making us feel at home on the beautiful university campus.

We are proud for the support from foundations and philanthropists, who

share the belief that better journalism is key for rebuilding trust in democracy. And we are grateful for the open doors and open minds of more and more newsrooms around the world, who dare to experiment with the concept of constructive journalism and share the experience: People like it, see it, read it, share it – and might even pay for journalism which they trust, engage them and is produced with the mindset that journalism is a feedback mechanism, which helps society self-correct.

Thank you to the sceptics in journalism for the traditional critical and important questions giving us as chance to repeat what constructive journalism is NOT:

It's not a North Korean version of news, ignoring problems and painting the sky blue.

It's neither positive news, happy journalism nor good news.

And it's not activism, where journalist use their profession to manipulate people to think the same way about the world as they do.

Constructive journalism is a forward looking, critical and responsible approach to reporting integrating inspirational angles, hope, possible solutions adding a new journalistic role of an engaging facilitator.

Nothing is as powerful as an idea, whose time has come.

Help us change the global news culture.

And let's make journalism great again.

GLOBAL CONSTRUCTIVE CONFERENCE 2017

By Maarja Kadajane Co-founder and Head of Int. Office

The biggest ever Constructive Journalism conference brought together a record number of attendees - nearly 500 - from more than 37 different countries. The conference, that took place on 26-27 October 2018 in Aarhus, Denmark, was one of its kind. It allowed a diverse and international set of participants - from media professionals and journalism students, to politicians and university professors - to come together and discuss the future of journalism. The event had a wide impact beyond the walls of the beautiful Aula of Aarhus University where it took place. Constructive journalism ranked among the top conversation topics on the Scandinavian social media during the conference days.

Director General of the United Nations, Michael Moller, opened the conference and noted that: "To remain the "Fourth Estate", journalism must change course. It must abandon sensationalism and the negativity bias. In the face of the proliferation of information, the media must focus on producing quality, not quantity. It must not only analyze problems but explore potential solutions". He quoted Dutch journalist Bas Mesters: "In journalism, we have to add a sixth element to the five known W's: Who, What, Where, Why and When. It is: What

now?" This sixth element is constructive journalism, Mr. Moller said.

Among others, Swedish statistics guru and co-founder of Gapminder, Ola Rosling, demonstrated the unreliability of the worldview transmitted by the news media. Similarly, Georg Sorensen, Professor Emeritus at Aarhus University, stressed the importance of putting news in larger, long-term historical tendencies, instead of focusing on day-to-day events. Chairman of Solutions Journalism Network David Boardman explained that solutions/constructive journalism leads to greater accountability: "Because when people see there are solutions, a problem that was seen as unavoidable, comes to be seen as unacceptable". The conference accommodated also for a healthy debate with John Hansen, Chairman of the Federation of Investigative Journalism, and the Scandinavian guru of investigative reporting, Nils Hansson from Updrag Granskning at Swedish TV, on the potential value and necessity of constructive journalism.

Swedish Radio's News Department, EKOT, received the first Global Constructive Journalism award which went to the for their constructive report series "10 million". The award will be given out annually.

START UP: FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM 2017-2018

By Orla Borg, The Head of Fellowship Program

When Rolling Stones lead guitarist Keith Richards hit his first C-chord on Tuesday evening May 29th this spring 2018 in St. Mary's Stadium in Southampton it was pretty much routine.

Like so many times before The Stones had picked the hit *Start Me Up* as the first song on the evening's set list.

In a split second the fans at the concert knew exactly what was to come. They had played that riff on air guitar since they grew their first pimples.

There was no Start Me Up routine riff to strike for any one at Constructive Institute when the first six fellows of the institute arrived on Monday morning, August 28th 2017.

No one had done this before. The tune we were about to play had to be made up from scratch. And we had to compose it as a band – the fellows and the staff together.

Only minutes before the fellows arrived the small staff of four at CI had put tables, chairs and green office lamps in the 11 offices in building 1328 at Bartholins Allé in the heart of the campus of Aarhus University.

We had put a handwritten poster made from A4-sheet that read "Welcome Fellows 2017/2018" on the notice board in the corridor.

That was about it.

This was all about laying down the tracks in front of the running train.

Naturally we had this great idea of the need for a new direction in journalism, we had blown the horn by establishing an institute to do so, but we had no experience in laying out a schedule for the train.

The main challenge for all of us at the Fellowship Program at Constructive Institute at this point was to make sure that three things happened for the fellows within the 10 months to come:

We wanted the fellows to develop as professionals in their field of journalism, gaining new knowledge by attending their individual courses at the university.

We needed them to discuss and develop the concept of constructive journalism in order for them to spread the idea of and debate on constructive journalism once they would return to their jobs after the fellowship.

And we hoped for them that this could be the best obtainable year of their life.

We set out to do all of it.

We had to figure out how to balance their individual studies at campus with the meetings around constructive journalism that was the common ground of the fellowship.

After some attempts and some adjustments, we ended up with a plan of three weekly meetings in the Lounge.

1. Getting Wiser

This type of meeting had experts from either the university or from public or private companies come enlighten us on a subject of societal importance. For instance, we have recently had the assistant professor of Criminal Law, Nicolaj Holst, take us into the legal questions concerning the Danish prohibition of masking, the so called "Burka-law".

Our notice board in the middle of the corridor now shows almost 70 pictures of guests who appeared in our Lounge in the first fellowship year.

2. Editorial Meetings

At the second type of meeting we have had editors, journalists or other professionals from the media business give a presentation on an experiment or a new idea that the media in question had done to try to renew journalism. For instance, we had the News Editor of TV2 Lorry, Ninna Kokholm, present an experiment of having young students doing the 7.30 News Cast. We have also gone on countless excursions to newspapers and tv-stations all over Denmark in order to learn what they thought of constructive journalism and to see how they might have tried to introduce it in their newsrooms.

3. News of The Week

And at this third type of meeting we have been looking for constructive stories in sessions we have called "News of The Week". Each fellow has scanned Danish and international media to find examples of constructive journalism or what could have been developed into constructive stories. For instance, we have discussed attempts to do constructive journalism in The Guardian from Great Britain, De Correspondent from Holland and TV2 from Denmark.

Especially at the "News of The Week"-meetings we discussed *The Big Why* and *The Huge How* – i.e. why is it necessary to rethink the news culture in the direction of constructive journalism and how does a reporter then go about doing actual stories that have a constructive element?

The why was the easier one.

Just looking at the numbers of decreasing readership in newspapers, declining shares of viewers on flow tv, the slump of advertising revenue for legacy media and a whole new generation drifting on to new social media platforms would convince any news man or woman that change had to come.

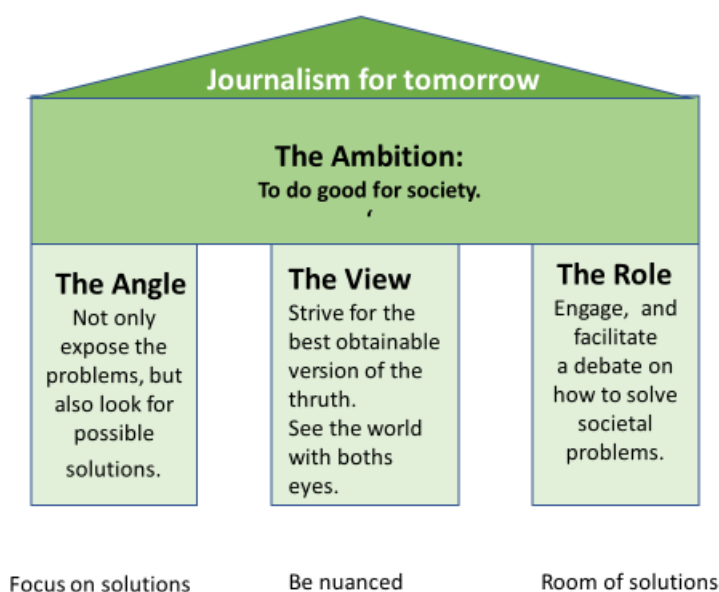
The *how* was harder.

First of all, we had to define constructive journalism. What precisely is it – and what is it definitely not?

We could quickly rule out positive news, cute stories before the weather, activism and so on. But would constructive journalism mean the same to a reporter at a local newspaper as it would to a journalist at a public service tv-station? Where was the limit to what a reporter could do crossing a line between being a journalist and a moderator? And how could constructive journalism build an add-on to news reporting and investigative journalism?

We have describe constructive journalism in a house with three columns:

The three columns of constructive journalism



Secondly, we had to find out how then to do constructive stories. Was there a way to do it or were there several? And once we had found out how could we then shape different models for constructive stories that could be helpful for colleagues in the media that you like to do constructive journalism? We are still refining these models.

Thanks to the fellows we have come a long way. When they return to their jobs they will be able to introduce constructive journalism in the newsroom – both in discussions about renewing the news culture and in helping colleagues who want to try doing constructive stories.

The first fellows will – so to speak – be ambassadors of the idea of renewing journalism with constructive journalism.

But they have already been ambassadors for journalism in another sense.

In their fellowship year they have appeared at numerous lectures, workshops and seminars at Aarhus University representing the press and trying to explain to the academic world what it is like out there in the media and why journalists think and act as they do.

This has been a payback gesture to the university as a thanks for the university's generosity by letting the fellows attend courses throughout the year.

A warm thank to the six great fellows, Nanna Schelde, Gerd Maria May, Sabrina Skjødt, Jacob Fuglsang, Mathias Friis and Bruno Ingemann, for their great contribution of getting Constructive Institute through the first year.

It was you who started us up.

THE MEANINGFUL BUMP OF BEING A FELLOW

By Nanna Schelde, Trygfonden Constructive Fellow 2017-2018

When older people look back on life they tend to remember events from their teens and their twenties the best. The phenomenon is called the "reminiscence bump." According to the American psychologist Dan McAdams, events from this period make such a big impression because it is when people are most preoccupied with forming an identity. This, I believe to be true. However, I have just experienced another very important and identity forming bump in my life, even though I am no longer a teenager: the bump of being a Fellow.

For almost ten months I have been part of the Constructive Institute in Aarhus. I joined the fellowship program with the mission of getting a deeper understanding of the 21st century human being – in my own term "FOMO Sapiens". FOMO – The Fear of Missing Out - refers to a state of being derived from our increasingly digitalized lives where we are constantly bombarded with alerts, news, messages, e-mails, pictures, calls – all trying to win the battle of our attention. At Aarhus University I attended courses such as "Personality Psychology", "Social Media on the Body" and "Life Stories and Well-being" in order to explore this phenomenon. This was when I got acquainted with the reminiscence bump. After only a few classes it became clear to me that as a journalist there is a lot to be learned from psychology, for instance the fact that the sense of belonging is the core motive of every human being.

The question is if we as media are able to include our readers, viewers and listeners? Do we give them a sense of belonging or are we just blindly firing news at them – not really considering how there are being received?

As journalists, we often claim that media moguls such as Facebook and Google create echo chambers with their algorithms only mirroring what we as users already like and know. I agree, but we journalists too, quite often seem to live in bell jar deciding what makes a good story. But a good story to whom? To the editor, the award committee or to the people who are supposed to be our costumers?

In my psychology classes I learned that it is general human trait to believe that tomorrow will be better than yesterday, and that optimism actually lasts trough our lifetime. In my opinion news should reflect this optimism more often, but most likely stories about problems and conflicts dominate the front pages. During my fellowship I have met media professionals from all over the world, and especially one message was repeated over and over: Include the community. We as journalists should strive to empower, inspire and engage our audience. We should ask ourselves the question: do we actually engage our consumers at all or are we just going through the motions of filling our platforms?

“We are living in a period of time with too many words, too much noise”, said the dean of Aarhus Cathedral, when we visited him with the Constructive Institute. I agree. We need fewer words, less news - but better words, better news.

The competition in the media world is real and the best and most relevant content will win. The younger audiences do not even care about brands. They just pick the pieces they find most interesting and don't really take notice of the national flow news at 6.30 pm. Maybe because they do not meet themselves in the broadcasting.

In our reporting we have to reflect the society in the best possible way. For instance by interviewing an equal number of men and women and be better at representing minorities and age groups.

That goes for the newsroom as well. The great majority of editors and leaders in the Danish media industry as well as worldwide are men. Diverse leadership will result in more diverse content, and we need that. As well as we need less quick news fixes, more in-depth reporting, more diversity and nuances and more optimism.

Personally, I feel more optimistic after my year as a Fellow. We can do a better job with our reporting. We can get the attention from FOMO Sapiens if we are able to give them a sense of belonging. The time at Aarhus University has helped me see what I believe in as a journalist as well as what I do not believe in. I feel confident that as I get older I will define my Fellow-year as one of the most meaningful bumps of my life.



Nanna Schelde is a reporter and feature writer at at Liv og Sjæl, Kristeligt Dagblad

WE CAN DO BETTER – FOR OURSELVES AND FOR SOCIETY

By Bruno Ingemann, Trygfonden Constructive Fellow 2017-2018

Being part of the first cohort of fellows at the Constructive Institute has been a great pleasure and a privilege.

I have more than 30 years of experience as a media professional, more than half of them as a leader, and over the years I have been involved in, and responsible for, numerous strategic and project based developments in newsroom and media businesses. Often with the desire to find a quick fix. On top of that, I have studied a Master of Editorial Management.

Therefore, it is fair to say that I have had the opportunity to wonder about the future of media repeatedly.

The fellowship differs from all that because it is an opportunity to seek inspiration without a deadline or an objective. Therefore, my fellowship has been 10 months of immersion, conversations with interesting people and slow learning

I set out exploring for ways to bridge the trust gap between the media and the public and to improve traditional investigative reporting with constructive journalism. That was what I wrote I would do, when I applied for the fellowship.

In addition to that I have studied: 'Social Science Methods in Journalism', 'Political Science', 'Behavioral Psychology', 'Being Professional on Social Media', and 'Digital Journalism', just to mention a few of the topics I have worked with.

What did I learn about trust?

I might not have found a solution to the issue, but I know now that we can do

something about it. Because of my interest in the subject, I reached out to professor Gert Tinggaard Svendsen at Aarhus University, a renowned researcher in trust, and professor Rasmus Kleis Nielsen at Oxford University, internationally leading researcher in media.

In a series of meetings and talks with them, it has become clear to me that we can influence the public's trust in media. A simple suggestion is that journalists have to move out from their offices and meet with the people they report about – and for. When people meet, they are more likely to trust each other.

It is worth trying, and it is relatively easy to implement. However, it comes with a cost. The modern day journalist produces many articles at her desk using only the computer to do research and sometimes the telephone to talk to someone.

Leaving the office and meeting with people will result in fewer articles.

Gert Tinggaard Svendsen suggests that media once every month host a meeting with citizens in their community on topics of local interest.

I also did a single case study at the local media TV2 Østjylland, where they have done something like that and I learned that the contact between the public and the journalist can create trust.

What did I learn about combining investigative reporting and constructive journalism?

We need more research in that field, since there are not many examples from the

media. The most common answer from investigative reporters and editors is that the revelations from investigative journalism in their own right are constructive because they show society what is wrong and should be corrected. However I am not sure it is enough. For what if no one takes the responsibility to correct the system behind the problem? What if they just blame it on one of the persons involved? Then it may continue to go wrong.

My interest in this field led me to contact colleagues in US, where they have formed what they call Solutions Journalism Network. They invited me to their office in New York and to a field study in Philadelphia, where a group of media collaborate to solve important societal problems.

The people at the Solutions Journalism Network have developed the idea of implementing solutions to the problem in the investigative journalism-project. Because: 'covering solutions can strengthen accountability', as they put it. I agree. It is inadequate for journalists to simply uncover what is wrong and hope for society to change.

A new project at the University of Oregon, called The Catalyst Journalism Project, wants to dig deeper into this issue. and I will keep in touch with them after the end of my fellowship.

In conclusion: We as individual journalists can do a better job in our relation to the public, and so can the media trying to improve society.

The journey does not stop here.

MAKE SENSE

By Sabrina Skjødt, Trygfonden Constructive Fellow 2017-2018

Back in April, when I was on an airplane on my way back home from a number of visits to different media in Oslo, I had this feeling of meaningfulness in my job; that the purpose of my fellowship, my own career ambitions and the needs of the media industry suddenly came together on a nice constructive level.

My project as a fellow during 10 months at Constructive Institute has been to look into how to create relevant public service-news for young people.

Communities, breaks, hope, acceptance and understanding are some of the need that the future media users demand, it appeared from my notes from NRK Ung, Aftenposten Junior and NRK Ultra. Young people need breaks from a noisy digital world and from demanding surroundings and they need professionals in the media to accept who they are and what they do, without talking down to them. Like every one of us they want to understand the world they live in, with all its atrocities and all of its progress. They expect the media to cover their world and not only the world. We need to make sense to them.

It was on that plane I realized how vital this topic is for this industry and how deeply committed I feel, and it suddenly became crystal clear to me, that this fellowship is all about finding meaningfulness in one's working life. This young group of media users, whom the media industry talks so much about, is not just a bunch of young people with weird media habits that a special unit in

the editorial office needs to figure out how to reach. They represent the future of journalism. It may sound banal, but I see everywhere that it has not quite dawned on our industry. The young users do not give up on their fragmented media use to eventually turn to the evening news. They are the future, the future is here, and we need to adjust our journalism on their terms.

We have to experiment, thoroughly practice and get to know them really well, the earlier the better, so that we fully understand who they are. Journalists need to be world champions in insight, they stated on NRK Ung in order to get through to them and catch their attention. I was kind of relieved on behalf on the Norwegians when the news director of NRK said, that she thinks, that innovation is just as important as investigative reporting.

When you decide to leave your job for a year it is not necessarily because you are tired of your job - you just want more. Journalism is a tough business and people tend to burn out. A fellowship is not only about getting inspired to rethink your profession – it may be even more about rethinking yourself. What kind of journalist am I? What kind of journalist would I like to become? What part of my job makes me happy? And how can I contribute to the development of the industry? A fellowship year gives you the time to reflect and to find the greater meaning in your job.

So, what have I been doing on a daily level? At Aarhus University I have attended courses in anthropology, psychology, media science and interaction design. I have visited media both in Denmark and abroad and I have learned from both the successful ones and the ones that failed. I have traveled around Denmark and I have returned to the high school years, interviewing students here about their media habits. I have read numerous books, surveys, reports and articles about this difficult target group. And last but not least, I have, through our sessions at Constructive Institute, got a much better understanding of my profession, it's

challenges, it's big responsibilities and it's huge privileges.

The above written is the part, that I am actually able to describe today. But the deeper values of this fellowship will probably not appear until in the years to come. And eventually, I will be aware of all the things this year has given me both personally and professionally.

For now, I know that this year has provided with the very best base for returning to DR, loaded with ideas of how to include the young target group in our coverage. And in the end help us to make sense for them.

YOU MIGHT CALL YOURSELF A JOURNALIST - BUT ARE YOU ALSO A RESPONSIBLE REPORTER?

By Mathias Friis, Trygfonden Constructive Fellow 2017-2018

I am a journalist, but I am also an idealist. I believe one of our most important tasks is to facilitate an informed public debate for all citizens. In the aftermath of the 2016 US election, I worried about the consequences of the divisive discourse used by both sides of the aisle. I was afraid people were losing faith in democracy, and I wondered if news media could do anything to prevent it. That is why I applied for a fellowship at Constructive Institute.

In the past 10 months, I have studied the impact of harsh and uncivil rhetoric. I have read academic papers from throughout the world, and much to my surprise, it turned out some of the most interesting research was done right here on campus. A recent study from a political scientist at Aarhus University found that while political disagreements on issues do not affect voters' trust in politicians, disrespectful rhetoric – known as incivility – does. It also makes partisans more hostile towards their opposing party, its politicians and their supporters.

I am a journalist, but I am also an optimist. On the surface, these findings might seem depressing. But if you think about it, it is actually good news. First, it means people are able to cope with strong political disagreements without losing confidence in their elected officials. Second, perhaps even more importantly, it shows that news media can reduce political alienation and create a more

inclusive dialogue by increasing the level of civility in newspapers, TV broadcasts and radio programs.

A good starting point for achieving that goal might be to rethink how we filter the world. We tend to reward legislators with headlines and airtime if they badmouth their opponents. We predominantly frame politics as a strategic game, fostering distrust towards politicians while depriving the public of insight into real issues. And we enhance the perception of incivility by our use of split screens in televised debates and our tendency to select images of aggressive-looking politicians when illustrating our articles. All things considered, it is no surprise incivility in the mass media has been on the rise over the last 50 years.

Some might argue we are simply doing what is necessary to compete with Facebook, Netflix and Instagram in the battle for attention. But research suggests our actions create a downward spiral that eventually make people disengage and opt out of society. If we claim we are in the fact business, we cannot ignore the evidence: Public trust in government is now near historic lows. Today, only 18% of Americans say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right. There are undoubtedly several explanations to this. But it would be ignorant not to acknowledge that news media has likely played a role.

I am a journalist, but I am also a realist. I could spend years diving into this issue from my desk at Constructive Institute, but I cannot create real change if I do not lead by example and practice what I preach. I am sure my fellow colleagues have the best intentions when they frame their stories, unaware of the unintended consequences of their actions. Until I started my fellowship, I was too. That is

why I am now excited to go back to the news industry, spread my newfound knowledge and apply the theoretical perspectives to practice.

I will always remain a journalist. But if I can pave the way for more responsible and reflective reporting, I hope one day people will also consider me a vanguardist.

FIVE THINGS I LEARNED FROM BEING A FELLOW

By Gerd Maria May, Fynske Bladfond Fellow 2017-2018

A year as a fellow at the Constructive Institute led me through ways I didn't know existed. It led me to a new understanding of the importance of journalism, it brought back good habits and let me to meet inspiring and generous people.

1. The Stop

The value of stopping is way underestimated. The time I spend not hurrying to a meeting, preparing a presentation or chasing a deadline, helped me in ways I couldn't have imagined. When I started as a fellow, I was planning to study leadership, but while I stopped and gave myself time to think, I ended up among other things following a philosophy-class with a wonderful professor, Dorthe Jørgensen, who opened my world for a new way of thinking. Her classes started my thinking on and working with designing a new set of news-criteria, that I think can help us think of journalism in a new way. A way where we define a good story as a story with an impact. A good story should be a story, that inspires, helps society develop into a more nuanced and trustful place, where people feel curious and included. Let us stop and think about whether the story, we are going to make, is doing any good to society. If not— then change the angle or choose another story.

2. The definition

I rediscovered my definition of journalism.

One of the most important things, I have learned during my year as a fellow at the Constructive Institute is, what I think journalism is actually about. When you are in the middle of a sharp deadline, it feels like journalism is about storytelling, filling your pages or timeslots, and trying to make the frontpage or the top of the show. But when I got time to think and to look at journalism from a distance, I got a new understanding. Or rather, I got back to, why I wanted to be a journalist. Journalism is about making people care, and the most important journalistic competence is our ability to choose. The ethical judgment in every decision and the personal integrity. As one of our many guests said during a talk in the lounge; The opposition of love is not hate, it is indifference. Anne Marie Pahuus is philosopher and a pro dean at Aarhus University. And she got me thinking why the role of journalism is so important to society. We must use and constantly refine our ethical judgement and integrity in order to stop the indifference.

3. Read Books

I love reading books. But for a long time I haven't prioritized reading anything but non-fiction. I have felt, that I only had time to read about the media, startups, digitalization and so on. But this year I rediscovered my love in literature. I have been reading a lot of different literature, and every time I turn the last page, I feel happier, wiser and more thoughtful. But most of all I feel curios. And curiosity is a powerful engine, when you want to learn, to develop and to broaden your mind. If I

should recommend one book, I read this year, it will be "Educated" by Tara Westover. Read it and share your thoughts with me. In that way I hope, I can continue this one good habit, I won't back during this year.

4. I really love journalism

During my fellowship year meetings and discussions about journalism with professors, entrepreneurs, media innovators and a lot of other people, got me more and more convinced, that journalism is extremely important to society, to democracy, to creating understanding and to deleting fear and hate among people. I rediscovered, that to me, journalism is - despite its bad reputation - one of the finest and most important things, I can spend my time trying to develop and push forward.

Working with journalism is truly important and meaningful to me.

5. It is all about the people

Even if people are successful, busy and on a tight schedule, they very often say yes—if you only ask. I am by nature a very optimistic person, but I have been blown away by the generosity of all the people that have said yes, when I asked. I have had lunches, skype-meetings and have been drinking a lot of coffee with people, who had no other reason to say yes to me, but to help me out.

And I am so thankful to my fellow fellows and the staff at CI for creating an atmosphere of curiosity, generosity and a room for loud discussions where it has been possible to be in doubt and even wrong on my way of broadening my mind.

LONG LIVE THE BEAT REPORTER

By Jacob Fuglsang, Trygfonden Constructive Fellow 2017-2018

What am I doing here?

That was what I'm thinking sitting in the fourth row in an auditorium at Aarhus University taking down the professor's words in my notebook: "digitalization is a means to develop the competencies of the learning subject..."

Okay then, I thought. That was one way of putting it..

I am a journalist and not a student, and language alone reflects that. My world is actual. The academic world is abstract. In every sense I found myself far away from the newsroom at Politiken that I know so well. But then again not really. Because even though it is more than 20 years and countless kilometers of columns since I was a student myself, the theoretical foundation presented at Science of Education makes sense. The lectures in the candidate portion of Science of Education that I followed in my fellowship year at Constructive Institute were in fact in my journalistic field of expertise: Education.

The lectures I attended built upon many years of lived and described history of education, and along with the texts I read and the discussions with educators and students it provided a theoretical framework for my field of study.

To me constructive journalism is closely linked to the idea that journalists must know what they are writing about. As the vice-president of Google news, Richard Gingras, put it 8649 kilometers from the lecture hall of Aarhus University, users prefer beat reporting over articles written by generalists. Richard Gingras put forward his views on journalism to our

group of fellows and employees of Constructive Institute when we visited the Google headquarters in Mountain View in California. Aside from specialized journalism he pointed out transparency as crucial to recovering the credibility that the journalistic profession has lost. His words resonate well with my conclusion to a year full of intense discussion on my field. The journalistic professions crisis of credibility is not initially about a lack of ethics or about the journalists being unprincipled. It is about the fact that in too many cases journalists write with a few gaps in their knowledge. Knowledge is not, as it has been previously asserted, a hinderance to expression. It is a prerequisite. This is no less true in a world, where knowledge and pseudo-knowledge compete for attention, and where millions of websites are just a click away.

On my journey through the fellowship I have followed these two paths.

On the one path I have been searching for a constructive approach to news through discussions with the other fellows and representatives from the other media industry. It is obviously true, that the media must find more constructive ways of describing the world. But it is damn hard figuring out how. This is what I - in collaboration with the other fellows - have been attempting to establish a series of models to do.

The other path has been to delve deeper into my subject area by uniting the theory, I have met at Aarhus University with my practical experience as the editor

of education at Politiken – as a journalist with a beat.

It is not a given thing, that the two paths lead in the same direction. It is often seen that beat journalists run the risk of falling into one of two camps. One is cynical and arrogant, which leads to pessimism without perspectives. The other is getting too close to the sources and as a result getting disproportionately excited about every news initiative.

For constructive specialized journalism to work, one must find the middle ground.

As the editor of education, in charge of Politiken's team of three journalists I have great prerequisites for applying the models in the ongoing coverage of schools and education. Not every time and not in every article. But in the collective coverage, so that the reader experiences a constructive approach to the selection and editing of the material surrounding education. I am looking forward to getting started.

INDLÆG FRA RUBIN – AFVENTER

ØKONOMI-SIDE + NØGLETAL