

A crisis in cultural journalism?

A report on the changing coverage of culture
in the written press in Denmark



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Introduction

This report covers the first part of a project on the development and role of Danish cultural journalism in the digital age. The aim of the project is, firstly, to map this development and take stock of the current situation, and secondly – in the next phase, to follow in 2027 – to examine the future and relevance of cultural journalism at a time when it is under pressure and culture desks are shrinking or disappearing in many places.

To shed light on this, this report first outlines some trends and contexts relevant to the current situation of cultural journalism in a media landscape characterised by intense competition from digital platforms, new media and independent content creators (Chapter 1). We have elected to focus our resources on six daily newspapers: three national publishers, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken* and *Kristeligt Dagblad*, and three regional ones, *Nordjyske*, *Fyens Stiftstidende* and *JydskeVestkysten*. On top of this, however, we utilise figures and insights from existing studies that draw on other research and other sources. We have compiled figures and trends in the quantitatively based Chapter 2. This is followed by insights from interviews we have conducted with editors from the six mentioned media outlets in Chapter 3, and by a concluding discussion in Chapter 4.¹

Over the past few decades, the overall production of written journalism in Denmark has seen a marked decline. The crisis in cultural journalism must be viewed in the light of this more general drop. At the same time, we find that cultural content is not suffering everywhere, particularly among some national media. One of the questions we raise, therefore, is whether the apparent crisis in cultural journalism in Denmark should primarily be understood as a crisis pertaining to regional and local media.

One of the fundamental principles of constructive journalism is to ensure a multifaceted picture of a given issue. We have therefore focused in this first phase of the project on providing information and nuances, aiming to inform the debate on the state of cultural journalism. In the second phase of the project, which will follow in 2027, the focus will increasingly shift towards solutions, opportunities and examples of media organisations that have developed formats or business models for cultural journalism capable of inspiring others, both in Denmark and abroad. Building on the mapping and status report from the first phase, we will then explore the scope for transforming or even reinventing cultural coverage. At the core of this stands the question of how we can reinterpret and mobilise a *critical* approach to media coverage of culture. Not in contrast to the ideal of constructive journalism, but as a prerequisite for it.

¹ We have drawn on discussions with and assistance from a range of researchers and sources. In particular, we would like to thank Professor Nete Nørgaard Kristensen of the Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen, and information specialist Max Odsbjerg Pedersen of the Royal Danish Library. Not least, we are grateful to the Louis-Hansen Foundation for making this project possible.

Chapter 1: Background and context

Culture and cultural habits in Denmark

Culture is a complex concept that has been understood and used in a wide array of ways over time (Fink 1988; Køber et al. 2022). In this report, we focus on the way culture is covered in the media, and this is not the place for lengthy discussions in intellectual history. That said, it is worth noting the fundamental difference between a *broad* and a *narrow* understanding of culture. In a broad understanding, culture is viewed as habits, traits or ways of life that characterise a larger or smaller community of people (e.g. Russian culture, a feminist subculture, or a corporate culture). By contrast, in a narrow understanding culture refers to the specific forms of expression constituting the ‘cultural life’ or the ‘cultural sector’ of a society: music, theatre, dance, film, literature, etc.

Cultural journalism is typically produced with the latter, narrow sectoral understanding as its focus. Yet at the same time, the broad concept of culture serves as an implicit framework behind many discussions in the cultural sector – and thus also in journalism about culture – not least when it comes to understandings of *Danish* culture and the way the cultural sector exemplifies, reflects and supports it.

For example, the very project behind this report builds on a concern for ‘social cohesion’ in Denmark at a time when many media outlets are cutting down on the coverage of culture. This is informed by a broad understanding of culture: culture viewed as the glue of Danish society. We find a similar concern in recent political calls, in Denmark, for what is termed ‘spiritual rearmament’ [*åndelig oprustning*]. The former Minister of Culture’s launch of the *Council for Cultural Resilience* [*Rådet for kulturel modstandskraft*] is based on the same logic: in February 2026, the minister spoke of “the values that shape us” and “the open-mindedness, openness, tolerance, democracy and a willingness to protect what is ours”, which, according to him, the cultural sector can and should address.² Here, culture is perceived not merely as the individual (narrow) work but also as the (broad) national community, which the individual piece of art and the cultural sector as a whole are understood to contribute to, support or protect. The idea of a body for cultural resilience thus clearly draws on both understandings, as (narrow, sectoral) culture is assumed to function as a tool that can be used to strengthen (broad, Danish) culture.

The overarching point of this study is that culture is understood and described in different ways, including in the media, and that these understandings are subject to change. An examination of developments in cultural journalism is therefore also an examination of broader shifts in ideas about culture and cultural significance. And while most cultural journalism is still practised on the basis of a narrow understanding of culture – focusing on the work of art, the artist, the performance, the exhibition, etc. – it does not stand alone.

² In this report, all translations of quotes from (written or spoken) Danish are our own.

For some of the editors we interviewed for this report, one can sense a shift from earlier, narrow understandings of culture towards new, broader categorisations of the subject area or its components. At *Nordjyske*, for example, where the conventional culture desk was disbanded in 2020, a new desk, *Identity*, was launched in 2026. This desk can be said to subscribe to a broader, regional concept of culture, focusing on the community of people from Northern Jutland and their ‘gathering points’ (to be elaborated in Chapter 3).

Part of the evolution in the perception of culture involves challenging traditional ideals and hierarchies, where certain cultural genres were previously regarded as more legitimate and more journalistically significant than others. Such hierarchisation and prioritisation of ‘high culture’ is increasingly being challenged, both in the media and in society at large, where what ‘counts as’ culture is shifting as more complex and popularised understandings of culture gain ground (Kristensen and Johansen, forthcoming 2026). For example, gaming, gastronomy and street art are now regarded as relevant cultural genres, at least in some media, whilst coverage of the performing arts and classical music is more marginalised in the overall picture.

The cultural sector and cultural habits

This project deals specifically with cultural journalism, not with the cultural sector itself. Nevertheless, it is useful to outline the trends and consumption of culture in Denmark. Here, we address culture in the narrow sense, e.g. literature, art and music, which one can ‘consume’ or otherwise engage with. An obvious starting point is the so-called cultural habits surveys [*kulturvaneundersøgelserne*], which have been conducted at regular intervals since 1964, first by the Danish Ministry of Culture and subsequently by Statistics Denmark. They are based on interviews with a representative sample of the Danish population replying to questions on their consumption of culture, leisure and media. Over the years, parts of the survey design have changed (see Bentsen and Nørtoft 2025: 4), but it is nevertheless possible to identify certain trends and patterns. The most recent major cultural habits surveys are from 2004, 2012 and 2024.

The 2012 survey showed that overall (compared to 2004), Danes “read more fiction, listened to more music and visited museums more often, whilst almost the same number frequented the cinema, and fewer borrowed books from the library and read non-fiction” (Køber et al. 2022). The latest 2024 survey shows, among other things,

- That the *reading of fiction is at its highest level in 30 years*, with the proportion of the population who read fiction daily or almost daily having risen from 14% in 1993 to 23% in 2024
- that *fewer people visit libraries in person* in 2024 than in 1987, with library use during this period peaking in 2004
- that *more people attend concerts today than in 1987*, this being driven by pop concerts (which 33% have attended within the last year, compared to 22% in 1987),

whilst attendance at classical concerts has remained stable at around 15% over the same period

- that *listening to music* has become *more widespread* – primarily via digital formats – whilst *fewer people sing or play music themselves* than in 1987
- that *the reading of printed newspapers has plummeted* (from 87% in 1987 to 21% in 2024), but that this does not reflect a general decline in news demand, as the 2024 figures also show th 77% access news via TV, PC, tablet or smartphone, 46% via radio

Sources: *Nyt fra Danmarks Statistik*, 6 Feb. 2025, “Læsningen af skønlitteratur på højeste niveau i 30 år”; *Nyt fra Danmarks Statistik*, 11 Dec. 2024, “Faldende aldersforskelle i kulturvaner”; Bentsen and Nørtøft (2025) “Kulturvaner i 60 år”. For an overview of patterns in previous cultural habits surveys, see T. Bille et al. (2005) *Danes’ cultural and leisure activities 2004*.

Other surveys from Statistics Denmark shed light on developments in the museum, cinema and performing arts sectors in Denmark. Among other trends, they show

- that *museums have seen a significant rise in visitor numbers over recent decades*. In 2025, they were visited a total of 17.6 million times, an increase from approximately 10 million visitors in 2004 and approximately 13 million in 2012
- that *cinemas have seen a decline in ticket sales* since 2013, from around 13 million in 2013 to 9.9 million in 2025, whilst streaming of films and series has surged
- that *state-subsidised theatres* have, on the whole, *maintained their audience numbers* since the turn of the millennium, with total annual ticket sales of between 1.9 and 2.5 million, most recently 2.4 million tickets sold in 2025

Sources: *Nyt fra Danmarks Statistik*, 1 June 2026, “Besøgende på museer stiger for tredje år i træk”; *Nyt fra Danmarks Statistik*, 16 May 2025, “Fortsat flere museumsbesøg i 2024”; *Kultur 2023*, Statistics Denmark; *Statistisk tiårsoversigt 2024*, Statistics Denmark; “Tilskuere på statsstøttede teatre efter tid”, Statistikbanken, Danmarks Statistik (<https://statistikbanken.dk/TEAT3>); “Biografer og Film”, Danmarks Statistik (<https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/emner/kultur-og-fritid/film-og-teater/biografer-og-film>).

Taken together, the cultural surveys paint a picture of a thriving cultural life in Denmark, where some genres are growing – for example, literature and museum visiting – whilst others either maintaining or almost maintaining their appeal, even at a time of a greatly increased supply of culture, including from online and digital services.

Like the culture concept itself, the ‘cultural habits’ – a term with a slightly antiquated ring to it – are a changeable and dynamic phenomenon. The global gaming industry has long since overtaken the film and TV industry measured on turnover. The podcast market is expanding rapidly. Gastronomy and wellness are becoming independent drivers in the race to attract attention and revenue, whether or not these sectors are seen as ‘culture’ in the conventional sense. They are part of a global experience industry linked to the market forces of tourism and the pervasive forces of nation branding and place branding, where culture and experiences are increasingly becoming competitive parameters (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Dicks 2004; Lash & Lury 2007). Today, not only Denmark or Copenhagen

are marketed as cultural destinations and brands; so are other places and cities, all attempting to stand out, for example through new festivals or other local ‘gatherings’ themed on culture, food or climate, or by otherwise working to create experiences and events, and to engage the public not merely as spectators but often as active participants.

The predicament of cultural journalism

The trends outlined above indicate a Danish cultural scene that is stable or growing in several areas, with rising figures for reading, concerts and museum visits, amongst other things, but also with certain genres in decline, for example cinema attendance.

One might expect that this interest in culture would also provide a solid foundation for cultural journalism. However, developments in the Danish media point in a different direction. For despite a continuing active cultural life, cultural journalism has in many places been scaled back over the last 15–20 years. In many media organisations, culture desks have been cut, closed down or merged across journalistic genres as a consequence of continuous cutbacks and the loss of journalism jobs.

The fact that the media have downgraded cultural content may seem paradoxical in light of the Danes’ significant consumption of culture. To understand this apparent paradox, the development of cultural journalism must be viewed in the context of the radical changes in the wider media landscape.

For it is not only cultural journalism that has been hit by cutbacks. In general, over the past 10–15 years, daily newspapers have been affected by a strongly negative trend involving extensive cuts to editorial staff, which has naturally led to a marked decline in journalistic output across all genres. In the following, we review developments in the media’s structural conditions, including editorial staffing, and examine the prioritisation of cultural journalism in a selection of daily newspapers.

Increased competition

The changes in the media landscape are rooted in the fact that digitalisation and new distribution forms have altered both the competitive landscape and the role of the media.

Crucially, the daily newspapers’ business model has collapsed in the wake of digitalisation and the altered the economic conditions for daily newspapers. Falling advertising revenues, changing media habits and the rise of social media and algorithms have eroded the foundations of the traditional newspaper economy. At the same time, the internet has enabled citizens, cultural institutions and new niche media alike to publish content directly to the public, bypassing traditional media (Gulyás & Hammer, 2013). The vast majority of these new offerings are free, a fact that challenges the media’s business model based on users paying for content.

Taken together, these developments have meant that the scale of *cultural dissemination* is greater than ever. Today, cultural content is produced not only by established media, but also by cultural institutions themselves, by individuals and by digital platforms.

Among the *key players in today's cultural media landscape*, we find:

- niche media outlets (e.g. Soundvenue, Ekko and Passive/Aggressive)
- cultural institutions' and cultural producers' own websites and newsletters (e.g. Musikhuset in Aarhus and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art)
- cultural institutions', artists' and performers' own social media profiles (e.g. Gyldendal Stream, Hamletscenen, Lukas Graham)
- hyperlocal online media and local Facebook groups (e.g. KunMors, TjekFredensborg)
- user and fan groups on social media
- cultural calendars, guides and other forms of cultural and consumer information
- commercial platforms, foundations and organisations with their own cultural programming (e.g. Madbillet, BilletLugen)

Taken together, the emergence of these new players means that the amount of cultural content and cultural dissemination available today is far greater than before. At the same time, the traditional media's position as the natural gateway to information about art and culture has been weakened.

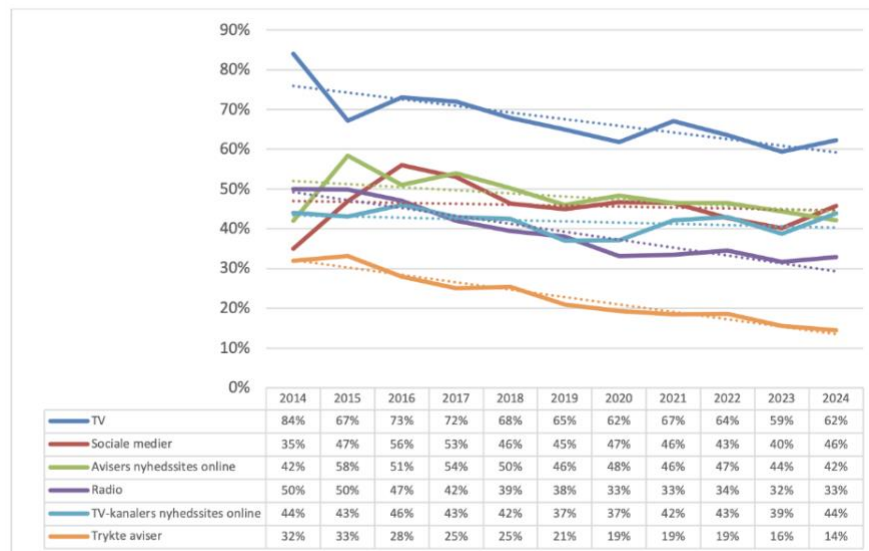
These changes have led to what can be described as a loss of relevance for the established media, because citizens are no longer dependent on obtaining information via the media's monopoly and, in many cases, no longer perceive the media as having an especially authoritative or significant voice in cultural dissemination compared to other voices. In light of this loss of relevance, the public has increasingly turned away from the media, and newspapers in particular have seen a sharp decline in subscription sales.

For more than 25 years, newspaper circulation figures – the number of print copies sold – have been in constant decline. Circulation figures have not been published in recent years, but the effect can be seen in various surveys, such as readership surveys.

The figure on the next page shows the results of a survey of a representative sample of the Danish population asking respondents which types of news media they had used as a source of news over the past week. In line with the cultural habits surveys it shows that the use of printed newspapers has fallen more than 50% over the past 10 years.

Whilst in 2014, approximately one in three respondents stated that they had used a printed newspaper as a news source, the figure had fallen to 14% by 2024, and the trend is clearly downward. An possible explanation could have been that, instead of using the publishing houses' printed newspapers, the public had switched to using their news websites to a correspondingly greater extent. This is not the case, however. The use of newspapers' news websites has remained unchanged throughout the period (42%), and thus one cannot identify a growth to compensate, so to speak, for the decline in the

reading of printed newspapers. Similarly, the use of TV stations' news websites has also remained unchanged during the period.



Source: Schröder et al. (2024) *Danskernes brug af nyhedsmedier 2024*. The question asked was: “Which, if any, of the following have you used as a source of news in the past week?”

Sharper journalistic prioritisation

The need for tougher prioritisation of the ever-dwindling editorial resources is widespread. As awareness grows among editors of the low readership figures plaguing large parts of the written journalism, including cultural journalism, and as this is combined with massive reductions in journalistic staffing at daily newspapers – reductions that we describe in more detail in Chapter 2 – one finds an emerging need to prioritise all journalistic content production more rigorously in order to reduce the waste of resources on producing stories deemed not to be read or consumed enough.

In slightly oversimplified terms, it used to be the case – before digitalisation provided insight into actual readership figures – that any local museum, amateur theatre production or concert could expect to be covered in the local daily newspaper, simply because it happened and existed. Today, such stories are assessed to a far greater extent on the basis of standard news criteria such as topicality, relevance and significance. This means that cultural content which would previously have been covered in the newspaper is now more often excluded from daily editorial prioritisation. In Chapter 3, we hear from a number of editors about these priorities and how they differ from previous times.

The legal framework

When describing the media's declining journalistic coverage of culture, it is necessary to consider media legislation as well. Many people assume that the editorial line and decisions of the Danish media are completely free and independent of the state. However, this is not the case, at least not for the news media that receive public media funding – which virtually all news media do and depend upon. The funding relies on a number of conditions, one of which is a requirement that the media outlet must cover culture.

The purpose of distributing media funding is to ensure society's need for a news offering of a certain scope and diversity, including, amongst other things, 'news of a cultural nature', as seen in the overview below:

Formål med den nuværende mediestøtte

- At fremme et alsidigt og mangfoldigt udbud af nyheder af samfundsmæssig og kulturel karakter med henblik på styrkelse af det danske demokrati og den demokratiske debat i Danmark.
 - At sikre fortsat produktion og udbredelse af publicistisk indhold af høj kvalitet i Danmark, og at indholdet spredes på flest mulige relevante platforme til flest mulige borgere.
 - At understøtte væsentlige funktioner i et demokratisk samfund ved at sikre informationsspredning og debatskabelse samt ved at støtte det frie ord.
-

Kilde: Forslag til lov om mediestøtte (L 20, fremsat 2. oktober 2013).

The purpose of the Media support act, as stated above, is to “promote a varied and diverse range of news of a social and cultural nature with a view to strengthening Danish democracy and democratic debate in Denmark”. The Act has subsequently been extended from covering only more traditional news media to also include printed and digital current affairs magazines.

The cultural requirement is just one of a number of criteria. In order to qualify for support, news media must, amongst other things, also appeal to a broad audience, and their editorial content must primarily address political, social and cultural themes.

There are no fixed quantitative requirements specifying how much cultural content the news media outlet must produce to meet the law's requirements, but the preparatory work for the law elaborates on the requirement. It states that the following conditions must be met:

- at least half of the magazine's content must consist of editorial material in the form of articles, etc., covering a broad range of topics and dealing with current news stories.

- at least half of the editorial content must deal with *political, social and cultural themes* [our emphasis], and at least one-third of the editorial content must be independently journalistic in nature.
- Furthermore, at least one-sixth of the news media's total content must be independently produced journalistic material.

Adgangskriterier for redaktionel produktionsstøtte til nyhedsmedier

Nyhedsmediet skal bl.a.:

- have et skrevet indhold, der udgør mindst en tredjedel af mediets samlede indhold,
 - være et selvstændigt medie med en ansvarshavende chefredaktør,
 - have minimum tre lønnede redaktionelle årsværk,
 - henvende sig til en bred kreds af brugere,
 - have et indhold, hvor mindst halvdelen er redaktionelt stof m.v. inden for et bredt emneområde og med behandling af aktuelt nyhedsstof,
 - i det redaktionelle stof primært behandle politiske, samfundsrelaterede og kulturelle temaer, og
 - have et indhold, hvor mindst en sjettedel af det samlede indhold er selvstændigt journalistisk bearbejdet,
 - udkomme minimum ti gange om året.
-

Kilde: Lov og bekendtgørelse om mediestøtte

The Act adopts a broad definition of culture, which also includes, for example, articles on sport, music, literature, theatre, libraries and architecture. These themes are interpreted broadly, such that reviews of non-fiction, coverage of local cultural events, etc., are also considered cultural content. Articles on cultural themes described from the specific perspective of the media outlet in question, such as an economic or technical angle, are also deemed to meet the requirement. List-based content, such as sports results, TV programme listings, comic strips and satirical cartoons, will not, however, be able to meet the requirement on their own.

The committee recommends abolishing the requirement for cultural content

In October 2025, Denmark's then Minister for Culture Jakob Engel-Schmidt presented a series of recommendations from the committee on media support he had appointed just over a year earlier. One of the committee's tasks was to ensure that media support becomes more platform- and technology-neutral in the future. According to the committee's report, the current content requirements, including the requirement for cultural content, are based on an outdated understanding of the media's editorial priorities. In the report, the committee describes the condition that the media outlet

must cover cultural themes in its editorial as “disproportionate” (Media support committee 2025: 29).

In its recommendations, the committee proposes replacing the specific content requirements, including the requirement for cultural content, with a new requirement that the media outlet must have journalistic activities as its primary purpose, following an overall assessment of whether “the content is, in all material respects, intended to inform, analyse and provide a basis for public discourse on social issues” (ibid.: 59).

In case the committee’s recommendations are followed and the law is amended, the consequence will be that the previous requirement that half of the editorial content must deal with political, social and cultural themes will lapse. The exact consequences of such a development cannot be predicted, but it is probably not unreasonable to expect that in in such a scenario, overall coverage of culture would shrink further.

Chapter 2: Figures and trends

As we described in Chapter 1, cultural journalism today finds itself caught in several structural and contextual pressures. In many parts of the Danish media landscape, cultural desks or cultural journalism resources have shrunk, not least in the regional media. In this section, we provide an overall picture of the extent and nature of these trends, based on quantitative studies conducted by ourselves and others. As mentioned in the introduction, our focus in this report is on written journalism, exemplified by our own studies of six daily newspapers – three national ones, *Jyllands-Posten* (henceforth, JP), *Politiken* and *Kristeligt Dagblad* (KD), and three regional ones, *Nordjyske*, *JydskeVestkysten* (JV) and *Fyens Stiftstidende* (FS). It is beyond the scope of this report to examine the cultural journalism profiles and challenges of audio and visual media, though it is clearly essential to take these into account as part of the broader picture.

As part of our project work, we set out to map a selection of the cultural content in the six daily newspapers. The aim was to obtain quantitative evidence for an analysis comparing the output and composition of (parts of) cultural journalism in these newspapers over a single month – April – in the years 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2025. To match our team resources, we narrowed our scope to three areas of cultural journalism, two of which are relatively conventional – the coverage of the *museum* and *theatre* scenes – and one on the fringes of the cultural sector, namely *gastronomy*. A contributing factor behind these choices was that in two other key subject areas – namely *literature* and *music* journalism – we have access to others' quantitative analyses, which we also draw upon below. We used the media monitoring service and article database *Retriever* to search for – ideally – all articles on museums, theatres and gastronomy published in the six newspapers during the four months mentioned: April 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2025.³

For reasons of resource constraints and research methodology, this quantitative survey has not yet been completed. We have established an extensive dataset of articles on the three cultural areas in the six papers. This means that, for now, we can (merely) consider *the number* of articles on the each subject area in the six newspapers. Conversely, we

³ Specifically, we developed and adapted three long search strings in the Retriever system, supported by an information specialist from the Royal Library. In the strings covering museums and theatres, we searched for articles containing the name of one or more Danish museums or theatres, respectively. The gastronomy search string was trickier to design, but we used a database of articles from Danish newspapers dating back to 1916 to identify a wide range of gastronomy-related words and terms which we incorporated into our search string. That said, no search strings are perfect, and there may exist both relevant articles that our search has overlooked and retrieved articles that do not actually deal with the mentioned themes and must therefore be subsequently filtered out. We are, however, willing to accept a certain margin of error, as the aim has not been 100% accuracy but rather to identify general trends in the coverage of the three areas over a period of 15 years. Personal communication with the team behind the Retriever system has assured us that, with regard to material from the newspapers we are focusing on, nothing suggests that the margin of error in the results lists would be greater for a set of articles retrieved from 2010 than for one from 2025.

are yet to carry out a more detailed analysis of the nature and content of the articles. This task will form part of the second phase of the *Culture Explorer* project in 2027.

Bearing these ‘work-in-progress’ reservations in mind, below we outline some preliminary, overall trends in the six daily newspapers’ coverage of museums, theatres and gastronomy during the period 2010–25, based solely on *the number* of articles (print + web) that our searches yielded. In this preliminary overview, it has not been possible to distinguish between the type or length of articles, or to determine, e.g., whether one finds a growing tendency to split a single longer story into several shorter articles. Nor has it been possible to assess what proportion of written cultural journalism has been replaced by, for example, podcasts, moving images or live blogs.

The cultural sector: Important context

A very important contextual factor when assessing the production of articles on culture is that all six media outlets underwent general, in some cases very extensive, cutbacks during the period 2010–25. The consequences in terms of staffing will be discussed at the end of this chapter. As for journalistic output, this means that, overall, significantly fewer articles were published across the newspapers in April 2025 than in April 2010 (i.e. all published articles on all topics). The reductions average 38% but are unevenly distributed. Whilst JV published just 12% fewer articles in April 2025 than in April 2010, and KD 14%, the decline at Politiken is 50% and at JP 65%. The largest decline is found at Nordjyske, publishing 81% fewer articles in April 2025 compared to April 2010. These figures indicate that the patterns of *cultural journalism* output that we describe below must be viewed as part of larger, drastic changes affecting *general* written journalism.

The museum field

Politiken and *Kristeligt Dagblad*, both of which position themselves as prominent cultural journalism flagships, maintained a relatively unchanged volume of articles on museums in April 2025 compared with April 2010. *Politiken* saw a 10% decline, whilst KD saw a 5% increase. Bearing in mind the general decline in output mentioned above, this actually represents an increase in museum content at *Politiken* when measured as a proportion of total output (10% fewer museum articles in an output that has, overall, shrunk by 50%). In contrast, there is a 71% decline in museum coverage at JP, which roughly corresponds to the general reduction in the newspaper’s output. The same applies to Nordjyske, where museum articles in April 2025 are 86% fewer than in 2010, roughly matching the paper’s dramatic, general reduction in output during the period. In effect, museum coverage has virtually disappeared from both JP and Nordjyske, if April 2025 is taken as an indicator. In FS and JV, on the other hand, we still see some coverage of museums, although both publications show a decline in museum-related content that is significantly greater than the newspapers’ general decline in output between the two Aprils in 2010 and 2025 (41%

in FS compared to a general decline of 19%; at JV 60% in the context of a general decline of 12%).

The theatre field

Regarding theatre journalism, Politiken stands out, as the newspaper published no less than 99% more articles on this theme in April 2025 than in April 2010. It should be noted that this is in a newspaper which, as mentioned above, halved its total output over the same period, meaning that the doubling of theatre coverage actually represents a fourfold increase when considered as a proportion of the total number of articles. We cannot assess whether there are specific circumstances underlying this apparent outlier (e.g. a Copenhagen theatre festival in April 2025), but the figure stands in stark contrast to the declines in theatre coverage in the other five media outlets from April 2010 to April 2025: 33% fewer articles in FS, 34% in KD and 49% in JV – all three showing a sharper decline in theatre articles than in their overall output. As with museum coverage, JP and Nordjyske show very steep declines (JP 75%, Nordjyske 88%, again in both cases steeper than the general decline). Apart from Politiken's apparent expansion, theatre coverage in several publications is so limited in April 2025 that it appears to reflect overarching editorial priorities. We return to input from editors at the six newspapers in Chapter 3.

Gastronomy

We wanted to explore a subject area that does not have the same 'established' history in the culture sections of Danish newspapers as theatres, museums, music, visual arts and literature. We chose to look at the coverage of gastronomy and wine, based on the expectation that the growing interest in restaurants, cooking, ingredients, locality, microbreweries, etc. must have made its mark in written journalism too. In this area, however, we encountered certain technical challenges in the search process, which means that the preliminary trends outlined below must be treated with extra caution until we have the opportunity to review the material more thoroughly in 2027. Until then, they should be viewed as tentative indications rather than definitive conclusions.

Our preliminary figures, however, suggest that gastronomy is viewed very differently across the six newspapers. For example, KD's coverage of gastronomy is virtually non-existent throughout the entire period. KD simply does not cover the area – whilst JP and Nordjyske, following a steady number of articles in 2010, appear to have cut their coverage of gastronomy almost entirely since then. In contrast to this we find JV (+109%) and, in particular, FS (+219%), which appear to have prioritised coverage of gastronomy and the restaurant scene significantly. At Politiken, we found a slight increase between April 2010 and April 2025 (+18%), which must still be viewed in the context of the newspaper's overall halving of published articles.

Studies made by others: music and literature coverage

Whilst we are in the process of reviewing our own figures for museum, theatre and gastronomy content, others have recently carried out comprehensive quantitative surveys of music and literature coverage. In this section, we therefore draw on a report, *Has music journalism disappeared?*, compiled and published by the music industry organisation Art Music Denmark (Mortensen et al. 2025), as well as on a forthcoming report, *Literature in the Media*, commissioned by the ‘Bogpanelet’ committee under the Ministry of Culture and authored by researchers at the University of Copenhagen (Kristensen and Johansen forthc. 2026).

Art Music Denmark’s report, like ours, focuses on a selection of the written press. Its authors selected *Berlingske*, *Information*, *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*, counting and categorising their music journalism articles for the calendar years 2014, 2015, 2024 and 2025 to examine developments over these approximately 10 years. In the literature report, the time span of the study is almost the same, namely the period 2015–24. Here, the data source is *Bogintra*, a database which has recorded book reviews since 2010, and other book-related news since 2015, across all media on a daily basis. The database focuses on seven national and two regional newspapers, but it also includes the recording and monitoring of online book reviews and mentions on websites, blogs, Instagram profiles, etc. The literature report is therefore also able to compare book content in the print media with the online jungle of book blogs and other literature-oriented sites.

The music field

The main point of Art Music Denmark’s report, as its title suggests, is that a large proportion of music journalism has disappeared since 2014. It finds that across the daily newspapers examined, there has been a reduction of more than half (51%) in music content, and at *Berlingske* and *JP* a reduction of more than 60% (Mortensen et al. 2026: 12). In contrast to the other papers in the survey, *Information* has maintained a relatively stable – though in absolute terms somewhat smaller than the others – output of music journalism over the period (ibid.: 7).

Furthermore, the report identifies which *types* of music journalism articles have been particularly affected by the decline. Here, it is evident, among other things, that conventional reviews of recorded music have fallen by 60%, whilst reviews of live music have dropped by 41%. Finally, the report also examines trends in the coverage of different *music genres*: here, coverage of “new music, sound art, classical and related genres” and “jazz and related genres” has dropped the most, by 62% and 59% respectively, whilst coverage of “Rock, pop, hip-hop, electronic music and related genres” and ‘roots, folk music and related genres’ has dropped the least, by 37% and 39% respectively (ibid.: 10) over the ten-year period.

Finally, the report mentions the same point we highlighted above as a significant contextual factor, namely that one must also consider the decline in the *overall* journalistic output and not merely look at music journalism in isolation. In the music report, the authors estimate that the total reduction in journalistic output across the selected print media over the period is 33% (in our own searches covering the period 2010–25, we found a slightly larger decline, namely 38%, which could be explained by the fact that we go back a further four years compared to the music report and thus to a time when the total output was higher). Although the decline in music journalism is thus steeper – as mentioned, it has roughly halved, according to the report – this framing within the *general* crisis of the print media adds an important and necessary perspective.

The literature field

The report *Literature in the Media* frames literary content as part of cultural journalism and highlights that, in contrast to, for example, the performing arts and visual arts, literature remains “a priority in the cultural news mix in many countries”, including Denmark. It also emphasises, as we have done, that the book market and the publishing industry are occupy strong positions in Denmark, and that Danes’ general inclination towards reading is on the rise. Despite this, the report paints a picture of a general decline in literary content in the print media – in line with the overall decline in journalistic output.

The report devotes considerable attention to the traditional book review, as it still accounts for almost half of all literary journalism across the 13 media outlets analysed in the report.⁴ Reviews are also the dominant article type on book blogs and online media.⁵ The report shows that the total number of book reviews in the 13 media outlets has halved between 2018 and 2024, whilst the number of other literary news items has fallen less dramatically. Furthermore, the report documents that between 2015 and 2024, significantly more reviews were published on book blogs and online media (approx. 5,700 annually) than in *Politiken*, *Berlingske*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Information*, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, *Børsen* and *Weekendavisen* combined (approx. 2,600 annually). The report’s authors emphasise that these figures are not directly comparable, but nevertheless state that “book blogs and online media have a significant overall presence in the Danish media landscape in the field of book reviews”.

The literature in the media report contains a wide range of detailed analyses, including thorough qualitative reviews of the 20 most frequently mentioned and reviewed books

⁴ The thirteen media outlets in the report are *Politiken*, *Berlingske*, *Jyllands-Posten*, *Ekstra Bladet*, *B.T.*, *Børsen*, *Information*, *Kristeligt Dagblad*, *Weekendavisen*, *Nordjyske Stiftstidende*, *Fyens Stiftstidende*, *Alt for Damerne* and *Femina*.

⁵ Bogintra distinguishes between book blogs (typically run by a single person) and online media (which include, among others, journalistic media such as *dr.dk* and *POV International*), but the report’s authors point out that the boundary between the two categories appears to be fluid.

over the period. In relation to the quantitative perspective we have adopted in this chapter, the report's other key points are

- that literary coverage is far strongest in the national media, where Politiken and Weekendavisen in particular are dominant
- that over the period, Politiken alone accounted for just under a quarter of the literary coverage that was not reviews
- that the individual media outlets have markedly different profiles, with Weekendavisen, for example, featuring more reviews than other literary articles, whilst Alt for Damerne publishes almost exclusively reviews
- that despite the blogosphere being volatile, some blogs have managed to survive and published several thousand book reviews over the period (the largest being *bogblogger.dk*, *bogrummet.dk* and *litteratursiden.dk*)
- that it is primarily fiction that is reviewed, particularly novels and crime novels
- that reviews on book blogs are typically slightly more positive than in the mainstream media (although here too they are more often positive than negative)
- that “despite a more diverse media landscape overall”, fewer book releases are covered than previously, which is why it has generally “become more difficult to achieve visibility for literature published in Denmark”
- that the report's authors see signs that “the heyday of book blogs and online media for literary reviews is on the wane” compared to the late 2010s.

Decline in editorial staffing in the media

It is crucial, for a comprehensive understanding of the negative trends in cultural journalism, to examine developments in the editorial capacities of news media and the fact that these have been drastically cut over the past 15 years or so. To shed light on this, we have collected figures from the Danish Union of Journalists (DJ) and from a number of news media outlets that have carried out major rounds of redundancies in recent years.

Despite differences between individual media outlets, the overall picture is that the number of journalists (members of the DJ) has fallen significantly in just a few years. The Danish Union of Journalists (DJ) reports that the number of journalists employed by daily newspapers fell from 1,790 in 2015 to 1,483 in 2020 and is projected to reach 1,203 by 2025. There has thus been a reduction of 587 journalists at Danish daily newspapers over ten years, equivalent to one in three journalism posts. In some places, the number of editorial staff has more than halved. The decline in the number of journalists has led to a corresponding decline in journalistic output across all genres, and editorial management has been forced to apply increasingly strict journalistic priorities both generally and in the cultural sector specifically.

We have once again chosen to focus our attention on the three regional newspapers — *Fyens Stiftstidende*, *Nordjyske* and *JydskeVestkysten* and the three national newspapers *Politiken*, *Jyllands-Posten* and *Kristeligt Dagblad*. Editorial cutbacks have occurred

across virtually all daily newspapers, and in most cases have also affected the culture desks, with Politiken and KD representing exceptions. The latter has not made any cuts to either the editorial team as a whole or the culture desk throughout the entire period. At Politiken, the culture desk has remained nominally unchanged, despite the fact that the editorial team as a whole has been reduced by 27%.

The following section reviews developments in editorial staffing at the six media outlets based on information from union representatives and figures from the editorial staff associations. The figures include only members of the Danish Journalists' Union (DJ), whilst reductions and redundancies of editors-in-chief, editors and other non-members of DJ are not included in the data below.

Nordjyske

In 2011, Nordjyske's editorial team consisted of 215 permanent journalists, including 15 photographers. Over the following eight years, this figure fell by 65 to 150 permanent staff, including photographers, and since 2019 a further 115 editorial staff have been made redundant, whilst five or six journalists have resigned of their own accord. Today, Nordjyske's editorial team consists of 42 permanent editorial staff and seven trainees. There are no longer any photographers. The last five were made redundant in June 2025. The culture desk was disbanded in 2020 as an independent editorial unit. At the time of its closure, it consisted of four permanent journalists and a team of reviewers comprising both external and internal reviewers. The in-house reviewers were normally attached to other editorial departments. The external team of reviewers consisted of eight or nine reviewers who contributed reviews of art, books, classical music, film/TV, popular music and popular music releases. When the culture desk was closed in 2020, it was decided that cultural content would no longer be a focus area on nordjyske.dk. The reasoning was that cultural content did not attract any traffic to the site, and it was concluded that Nordjyske's online readers were not interested in culture. Cultural coverage was handled by a single journalist and primarily at a political level. In 2026, there is still only one permanent journalist covering culture, with the focus remaining on cultural policy. The structure has been rethought in 2026, and a new editorial desk, 'Identity', has been created, incorporating parts of the cultural coverage. For the printed cultural content, there are now (spring 2026) five regular contributors/reviewers of cultural content, who cover new books, particularly those with regional attachments, theatre reviews, interviews with authors or artists, art reviews and music reviews – both classical and popular. In addition, articles are also produced to a certain extent based on press releases about cultural events.

Fyens Stiftstidende

In 2010, FS had around 160 editorial staff, including trainees. Today there are around 65; a reduction of 95 staff members, equivalent to approximately 60%. Years ago, FS was a

newspaper with a focus on culture and a separate weekly culture supplement. The culture desk consisted of five to seven permanent journalists, as well as freelance film and book reviewers. The culture desk was phased out over the second half of 2023, and it was decided to incorporate cultural content into the local editorial teams' coverage of their respective areas. With that decision, cultural content became increasingly absent from FS's media, as cultural articles rarely had much impact online in terms of clicks and readership. Previews are no longer produced at all. FS currently has no journalists whose primary area is culture. One journalist, previously at the culture desk, writes seven or eight reviews of theatre and performances a year, and another, who covers pop concerts, writes a similar number of reviews annually. Classical music is no longer covered.

JydskeVestkysten

In 2011, there were approximately 130 journalists and photographers at JV, spread across 14 different desks. Today, there are 83 editorial staff members at JV, spread across 10 desks. This represents a 36% reduction in the number of editorial staff. Organisational changes have been implemented, resulting in the gradual disappearance of subject-specific editorial teams. First, the business desk in 2011, whilst the culture desk, with two journalists, disappeared around 2016. In 2025, the sports desk was disbanded as an independent unit, and its content and staff were transferred to the local desks. The society desk was disbanded back in 2015 but re-established a couple of years ago. It now covers regional news. Cultural content was deprioritised several years ago because data showed it had a very limited readership. Culture is still covered, particularly major, popular events such as festivals, by JV's local editorial teams, but with different priorities than before. Press releases on culture do not get much coverage, while associations and organisations themselves can enter events and the like into a calendar facilitated by JV.

Jyllands-Posten

At JP, there were 157 permanent editorial staff in 2010. Following the latest round of redundancies, there are now fewer than 70. Consequently, JP has lost 87 journalists over roughly 15 years, representing a 55% decline. The culture desk was effectively disbanded in autumn 2023 as the sport, domestic affairs and culture desks were merged into a single unit. At the time of the merger, there were seven or eight permanent staff at the culture desk. Today, JP has two permanent journalists covering culture. In addition, culture is covered by other journalists at the society desk. At the same time, JP publishes freelance reviews of books, theatre and films. This remains unchanged from previous practice, and the scope has not been expanded as the culture desk was downsized and subsequently closed down entirely in 2023. Since the merger, JP's cultural coverage has consisted of occasional features, focusing on selected coverage of priority events. The closure of the culture desk in 2023 came after the editorial team had been relocated to

Aarhus in 2018. The move itself resulted in fewer culture journalists, since far from everyone moved with the team – and no new staff were hired.

Kristeligt Dagblad

Against a general sector backdrop characterised by significant editorial staff cuts, KD stands out by having maintained a relatively stable editorial workforce over time. The newspaper's union representative states that KD's workforce has stood at around 45 editorial staff members for a number of years. Culture and cultural content is central to the newspaper, which continues to have a separate culture desk. This consists of four journalists, a deputy editor, an editor and an intern, a figure remaining unchanged or increased over a period of time.

Politiken

The figures from Politiken show a similarly, significant downward trend as in most other newspapers when it comes to the size of the newspaper's editorial staff. From 2012 to 2025, the total number of staff at Politiken's editorial office (DJ-employed) fell from 186 to 135 – a reduction of 51 journalists over 13 years, equivalent to 27%. However, the newspaper, which has culture as an editorial focus area, stands out from most other daily papers in that the culture section has been largely spared from the general downsizing. In 2025, there were thus around 34 editorial staff members attached to Politiken's culture section, a figure remaining largely unchanged since the turn of the millennium. In particular, the number of staff writers on culture has remained fairly constant, whilst in 2016 cuts were made to the editorial team, where staffing levels have been halved over 10 years from ten to five. The stable number of staff in the culture section has meant that culture's share of Politiken's total editorial team has been increasing. Until ten years ago, editorial staff at the culture desk accounted for around one in five of the total staff. Today, it is one in four, and in some years the proportion has even been slightly higher. These figures include permanent and fixed-term staff. In addition, Politiken employs a group of relatively regular freelancers comprising around 15 contributors who deliver articles on a regular basis, alongside more casual contributors with more sporadic deliveries.

Chapter 3: Editorial Responses

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the editorial explanations and priorities underlying the developments and trends described above. To understand how these changes are being managed in Danish newspaper newsrooms, we draw on insights from qualitative interviews with editors from the same six national and regional media outlets that we also focused on in the previous chapter. We have spoken to culture editors or other editors responsible for cultural journalism at the newspapers. Our interviewees are:

- Mette Davidsen-Nielsen, acting culture editor, Politiken
- Johannes Henriksen, culture editor and managing editor, KD
- Martin Johansen, domestic editor responsible for cultural coverage, JP
- Kathrine L. Jeppesen, editor of the *Identity* section, Nordjyske
- Poul L. Kjærgaard, editor-in-chief, FS
- Mette Cramon, editor-in-chief, JV

As already described, there have been significant cutbacks across virtually all daily newspapers over the past 10–15 years, with Politiken and KD being the exceptions among our selected media. These differences raise the question of how individual media outlets have chosen to tackle the changes and challenges that cultural journalism and the industry as a whole have faced over the period. Thus, the interviews provide insight into how cultural journalism is prioritised, understood and organised across national and regional media, and how these choices are shaped by different editorial and structural conditions. In this chapter, we first examine editorial responses from the three national newspapers, followed by those from the three regional ones. While a number of similar concerns and considerations are found across all six, we also find significant differences in conditions and audiences, which make such a division meaningful here.

Nationwide responses: flagships of culture and strong self-images

Across Politiken, Kristeligt Dagblad and Jyllands-Posten, a picture emerges of cultural journalism in flux, but – despite cutbacks – not of a subject area that the editors themselves perceive as less journalistically significant than before. On the contrary, cultural content is presented as closely linked to the newspapers' identity and their relationship with readers. At the same time, however, the three editors describe a field characterised by sharper priorities, restructuring and changing demands regarding, among other things, pace and reader interest.

The role and position of culture in the three newspapers

Martin Johansen describes how the culture desk at JP was merged with other editorial departments as part of general cost-cutting measures and a reorganisation at the newspaper, as we described in Chapter 2. In the interview, he emphasises that this development is not limited to the culture section but found across the editorial departments at JP. However, the termination of the culture desk has led the newspaper to change its profile in terms of cultural journalism: *“I think it’s perhaps fair to say that there used to be broader cultural coverage. Previously, niche art forms would feature more prominently. Performing arts and theatre probably featured more than they do now.”*

Johansen also describes the strategic reorganisation in which the culture desk was moved from Copenhagen to Aarhus in 2018. According to Johansen, the move was motivated, among other things, by a desire to challenge the perception of cultural journalism as too Copenhagen-centric and elitist, and instead to orient the content towards broader cultural phenomena and readerships. Regarding the relocation of the culture desk, he explains that *“there was a statement in that.”* He elaborates:

“It was something we took pride in. That you didn’t necessarily have to be part of the elitist art and culture scene. You had to consider it [culture] more broadly. And from a different starting point than the echo chamber of Copenhagen.”

Politiken has also seen changes in cultural journalism, at least if you look at the number of articles published, says Mette Davidsen-Nielsen: *“If you look at it quantitatively, it may well be that cultural journalism has declined in terms of how many articles are published.”* However, according to her, this is not just a change that has taken place at the culture desk – it is reflected in the paper’s other editorial departments as well. And she does not view this change as necessarily a bad thing: *“We produce far fewer units across the board at Politiken. Year on year, we produce fewer and fewer units. On the other hand, we don’t have fewer and fewer readers. So you have to separate the wheat from the chaff.”*

For Davidsen-Nielsen, this development is not a sign of de-prioritisation, but of a conscious editorial prioritisation. The aim is not to produce as many articles as possible, but to devote resources to journalism with greater impact and relevance for readers. For example, she describes a shift away from what she calls traditional “poster-column journalism” or previews of cultural events. Instead, Politiken now increasingly prioritises investigative cultural journalism, in-depth interviews and agenda-setting stories, she says:

“We have tried to focus more of our efforts on investigative, critical cultural journalism. We have cut back on what we have perhaps regarded as the ‘routine stuff’ (...) Reviews are very rare. Today, there has to be some kind of story in them,” she says. This is a conscious choice, even though, according to Davidsen-Nielsen, users still need to keep up to date with cultural events.

“It’s not that readers don’t need previews, but they simply find them elsewhere, since they follow the Royal Theatre, for example, or whatever else you can think of (...) Our job is not to do marketing.”

At KD, on the other hand, there have been no major changes in cultural journalism. According to Johannes Henriksen, the newspaper places great importance on maintaining ambitious cultural coverage and a broad cultural-critical perspective:

“The culture desk is an absolutely central part of a newspaper that sees itself as a cultural and existential newspaper (...) We have by no means scaled back. The desk is larger than it has previously been in terms of staff numbers. We remain committed to comprehensive cultural criticism across all traditional cultural fields, and we devote considerable effort to developing our cultural journalism and cultural criticism.”

The review as a continuing central genre

As we outlined in Chapter 2, the classic review is, on the whole, in decline. As early as 2017, the newspaper Information published a large series of articles under the title “A Denmark without reviewers”.⁶ However, even as cultural journalism is changing in character, our interviews with the editors of the three national media outlets show that the review continues to play an important role, at least in these places. Among our selected examples, this is particularly true at KD, where Henriksen describes reviews as a central journalistic task. He points out that the newspaper has deliberately chosen to maintain an extensive team of reviewers: *“We have theatre critics who write eight times a month, and people who produce 40 book reviews a year.”* He emphasises that the newspaper continues to prioritise what he calls an “extensive cultural-critical perspective”, where readers can count on significant books and exhibitions being reviewed. According to Henriksen, it is precisely this perspective that benefits the newspaper:

“I believe that we are gradually reaping the benefits of readers being able to count on us covering a broad range of cultural criticism, and that one can read about such things in Kristeligt Dagblad,” he says.

At JP, reviews continue to be published. For example, according to editor Johansen, music and literature have continued to be prioritised. This does not, however, apply to the fields of art and theatre. *“We do have reviews, but they are perhaps more sporadic than they used to be, for example in the performing arts and when it comes to art exhibitions,”* he says.

At Politiken, reviews are still a priority, but the newspaper does not feel obliged to review every film that has a cinema premiere, as it did in the past, Davidsen-Nielsen explains:

⁶ See <https://www.information.dk/serie/danmark-uden-anmeldere-0> (accessed 5 June 2026).

“We still produce a great many reviews, but we probably produce fewer units than we did 10 or 15 years ago. But this also has something to do with the fact that, if you go back in time, we used to review every film that premiered in Danish cinemas. We don’t do that anymore. It’s down to an extreme explosion in volume. This applies to both the film and music sectors, and so you could say that it’s a fundamental requirement [today] that we need to be more curatorial. Otherwise, our role becomes merely one of recording, and we don’t believe that’s our role. We’re not the Royal Library or anything like that.”

There have been other changes regarding reviews at Politiken, namely in terms of speed. Davidsen-Nielsen explains that Politiken today prioritises quick reviews of major concerts and cultural events because readers expect an immediate journalistic response. Pace and digital immediacy thus play a greater role than before, when reviews could often be published with a longer timeframe.

“We can see that we’re really pushing hard on live events – music reviews, for example. We make a real effort to get out there and be quick. If you’re at a concert, Simon Lund’s or Pernille’s or Lucia’s review will be up overnight or the next morning, for example. We’re really going for it. That’s what people want.”

Cultural journalism as part of (some) media outlets’ identity

Despite cost-cutting and organisational changes at some media outlets, the national editors describe cultural journalism as indispensable to the newspapers’ overall profile, particularly at Politiken and KD. Here, cultural content is presented not merely as a supplement to news coverage, but as an area through which the papers can assert their identity, values and specific journalistic competencies.

Johannes Henriksen from KD links cultural journalism closely to the much-discussed “spiritual reinforcement” of today: *“There is, of course, an agenda of spiritual reinforcement, which all media outlets naturally address, but which suits Kristeligt Dagblad exceptionally well. To view culture as something that reflects the spirit of the times. As something that carries weight and seriousness. As something that also helps to emphasise what is important for a society. What is important for a community.”*

Here one senses a shift towards what we in Chapter 1 called a broad concept of culture, which concerns (national) ways of life, communities and values. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that it is the *relationship* between narrow cultural expressions (art, films, literature, etc.) and the broader cultural communities and hinterlands that is explicitly cultivated in this cultural journalistic stance.

It should be stressed that such a development, away from a narrow conception of culture primarily as institutional art and towards a broader and more everyday-oriented understanding, is not always linked to a national agenda or a focus on Danishness. At JP, for example, Martin Johansen explains that the newspaper continues to prioritise cultural

content, but in broader shapes than before, and cites stories about K-pop, social media phenomena and trends as examples of cultural journalism that deals with contemporary phenomena and has a different social relevance than classical art criticism alone.

More generally, Johansen emphasises that JP still wishes to prioritise cultural journalism and to build its brand around it, despite the fact that the paper no longer has a separate culture desk. As an example, he mentions JP's literature prize, which was established in 2022. *"It is one of the biggest prizes in terms of the amount of money involved. So, it is an area that has been strengthened over the years, and which is quite significant for us."*

At Politiken, Mette Davidsen-Nielsen describes cultural journalism as "absolutely central" to the newspaper:

"Culture as a subject area is absolutely central to Politiken and always has been. This has to do with Politiken's roots, and of course there are also target audience considerations, because our current and potential readers are incredibly culture hungry. So, in a way, it's almost a no-brainer for Politiken to prioritise cultural journalism."

The interviews with representatives of the national media thus point to a dual trend: on the one hand, cultural journalism is coming under increasing financial pressure. On the other hand, cultural content continues to be central to the newspapers' identity, their relationship with readers and their journalistic ambitions.

Regional responses: culture on market terms

Whilst our interviews with the editors of the three national newspapers revealed self-assured and proactive views on culture as core content, we find a different reality among the three regional dailies in our study. For the editors at *Fyens Stiftstidende*, *Nordjyske* and *JydskeVestkysten*, conventional cultural journalism faces particularly tough conditions, and all three have closed their former culture desks over the past ten years. This does not mean that cultural journalism is not practised at all in these media, but it does mean that cultural journalism – like all other subject areas – exists on conditions heavily influenced by readership figures and commercial considerations.

At the same time, it is a fact that the majority of readers of these three regional media outlets do not have the same profile or cultural consumption as, for example, the readers of Politiken or KD. The basic role of the media in readers' lives is often different. Editor-in-chief Mette Cramon of JV said to us that the "contract" her newspaper has with its readers in Southern Jutland is about "what is essential" for them to thrive as "good citizens" in their local area. According to her, this includes *"shops opening and closing, major events, public welfare, politics, business, and so on"*. Cramon explains that *"we do not produce journalism to make money, but we make money to produce journalism"*, and that therefore subscribers' values and assessments of relevance are crucial: *"Thus,*

obviously, if we keep doing journalism about ballet (...) and nobody wants to read about ballet, well, then we'll stop doing it, because otherwise we can't pay our journalists."

Cramon does not observe any crisis for cultural journalism at JV, but she challenges conventional ways of perceiving the subject area, as we will elaborate. At FS and Nordjyske, whose self-image and history are more closely tied to a single regional city – Odense and Aalborg – the editors, by contrast, express more tentative positions. Poul Kjærgaard and Kathrine Jeppesen describe their media as being in varying degrees of cultural journalism crisis and transformation. Kjærgaard goes so far as to describe cultural coverage as FS's "problem child", because the newspaper has failed *"to transfer the public's engagement from the theatre, concert hall or art museums to a reader interest that justifies maintaining the kind of cultural coverage we know from 'the good old days'."* Below, we take a closer look at the three editors' and media outlets' quite different considerations and strategies in the face of structurally comparable conditions.

Culture as a subject area like all others

For several of the editors we have spoken to, it is a key point that culture – and the actors of the cultural sector – do not enjoy a special status. Mette Cramon puts it this way when we ask her whether she sees culture as an important factor for a region's social cohesion:

"Well, this is how I see it: What is important to people in an area? Yes, it's important to have a strong business sector, that there are jobs (...). It's important to have a good urban development, so the area doesn't become depopulated because everyone wants to live in Copenhagen or Aarhus. (...) It's important to have a good education system, meaning that new generations are educated, and that there are attractive educational institutions. So, it's really a combination of many things. It's important to have good infrastructure so you can get from A to B. It's also important to have a good cultural and leisure life. (...) That is, if you feel like going out to have fun or be entertained, there are opportunities to do so. That is also a human need. So, I see it as a completely natural part of a society, but I don't see it as more special than business development."

Others, however, continue to emphasise the unique nature of culture: Poul Kjærgaard, for example, describes culture as *"a key player in this very society we call a democracy; in other words, it is part of the social cohesion of a democracy"*, and he stresses that he *"will never be editor-in-chief at a publication without culture."* Regardless of how our interviewees view the importance of cultural life, however, they agree that *cultural journalism* must maintain a critical approach that does not pander to the local cultural scene.

This may sound like a rather banal position. In our interviews, we nevertheless encounter several variations of the view that cultural coverage in the past could become too toothless, even sycophantic, and that some cultural journalists and reviewers were too close to their sources and cultural institutions, making it difficult to distinguish between

their roles. Kathrine Jeppesen from Nordjyske explains that a few years ago, the newspaper's staff were very closely involved with the *Ordkraft* literature festival in Aalborg, so much so that in certain cases the interests of the newspaper and the cultural scene seemed to be almost identical.

The regional editors also describe a tendency towards what might be called a sense of entitlement among some cultural-sector actors, who had become accustomed to a situation where enough resources were available that virtually all of their productions were reviewed in the newspaper as a matter of course – but who, in many cases, essentially just “*want some publicity so they can sell tickets; they want some reviews so they can put some stars on the poster*”, as Kjærgaard puts it succinctly. According to him, some cultural-sector actors on Funen miss “the old” way of writing about and reviewing culture.

Today, however, there is no room for such a default position in which virtually everything is covered and reviewed, in a media landscape where media outlets have generally been cut to the bone and where readership figures and dashboards relentlessly reveal which stories ‘perform’ and which fall through the readers’ attention filters. The response from the editors we have spoken to differs, but it is a recurring theme that, in the current climate, efforts are made to not give the cultural sector preferential treatment compared to other industries. Jeppesen explains that at Nordjyske, “we try to take elements (...) from political journalism or investigative journalism and bring them into cultural journalism, so that it is also far more critical.” As for what exactly constitutes modern, critical cultural journalism – as something distinct from conventional *cultural criticism* – the views seem to differ.

What culture and cultural journalism can also be

During our conversations with the regional editors, it often seemed as though the very idea of culture as a distinct (and distinctly relevant) part of society and subject matter was fading. At least if culture is understood in a narrow and conventional sense. But one could also phrase it differently: that the concept of culture itself was being challenged and attempts were made to broaden it in these interviews. For what, exactly, should we understand by culture? This question preoccupied, among others, JV's Mette Cramon, who argued for a break with traditional notions of (high) culture and (high) cultural journalism. As we saw above, she was mindful of her readers and their everyday lives and needs for information and guidance. At the same time, she listed a number of popular regional cultural events, including Grøn Koncert, Tønder Festival and Vorbasse Market, which JV covers extensively because they attract thousands of people. JV makes a point of guiding readers, both practically and logistically, based on one of the newspaper's identified user formats, “Give me an advantage”. Cramon gave an example from the newspaper's coverage of Tønder Festival:

“If, for example, you’re working with ‘Give me an advantage’, it could be: Where are the best camping spots on the campsite? Where’s the smartest place to park? How do you secure a spot at the Bolero stage? Because there might be queues and so on.”

She continued: *“For me, that’s cultural journalism too. It’s a cultural event, and perhaps, many years ago, there was a slightly more elitist approach to being a cultural journalist. It was people who were really close to the cultural sector. Whereas today we approach it a bit more from a user’s perspective and not so much from the perspective of the cultural sector. So, you could say there’s been a shift. We devote exactly the same amount of resources to covering the Tønder Festival, but we produce fewer reviews.”*

This explicitly anti-elitist and user-focused perspective seems quite different from traditional cultural coverage. Yet the other regional editors, too, spoke in their own ways about rethinking cultural content through a process of normalisation comparable to how other topics are covered. Kjærgaard from FS spoke of approaching the inner workings, finances and operational practices of cultural institutions with curiosity but also a critical eye – very much in line with how local businesses are covered – though he conceded that his newspaper still has not truly succeeded in getting readers on board with this shift. He also emphasised that such a critically scrutinising approach must go hand in hand with what he called a ‘local patriotic’ spirit. Just as in FS’s coverage of the city’s flagship football club, OB, which he said FS covered critically but also passionately, Kjærgaard believed that in the cultural sphere too, the aim must be to produce *“loving, critical and constructive journalism, because that is how you treat those you care about.”*

At Nordjyske, the culture desk was closed in 2020, when the former editor-in-chief abruptly abandoned culture almost entirely on the basis of a hard market calculation, Jeppesen explains. In the spring of 2026, however, with a new editor-in-chief at the helm, the paper’s structure had been rethought and the new ‘Identity’ desk established, headed by Jeppesen, to include aspects of culture, but also nature and urban development (more on this below). According to her, however, Nordjyske faces a significant task of rebuilding trust with the local cultural scene, which felt abandoned and, in some cases, almost betrayed by the newspaper in 2020. The task is now, on the one hand, to explain that there will be no return to the pre-2020 era, when *“we had perhaps become a little too much a part of the [cultural] milieu, rather than someone standing on the sidelines watching or observing it”*, but on the other, to convince cultural stakeholders that the newspaper *“works, just like them, for a stronger North Jutland.”*

Searching for new paths

At FS, Editor-in-Chief Kjærgaard lamented that they had not yet succeeded in finding a format capable of transferring *“the enthusiasm and interest from the direct encounter with art on stage to fyens.dk”*. One of the new paths he was exploring involves seeking out collaboration and funding agreements with foundations or private or public partners.

The inspiration comes from the paper's climate coverage, which he described to us with obvious parallels to cultural journalism: *"We have a climate editorial team because I have decided that the climate agenda is so vitally important that we will simply go ahead with it, even if it is not [financially] sustainable,"* said Kjærgaard.

He elaborated that when you ask people what the most important issues of our time are, they will mention the climate and the green transition, but *"when we write about these things, when we try to produce journalism that doesn't just describe how the end is nigh"*, but also constructively outlines ways in which readers themselves can contribute to the green transition, FS *"can't get readers to buy into it"*. That is why Kjærgaard has found support from the Odense Climate Partnership – a major collaboration of 60–70 businesses led by Odense Municipality – allowing the newspaper to remove climate journalism from its paywall and make its important climate content available to users. Kjærgaard emphasised that this does not solve the whole problem if readers are fundamentally still not interested in the articles, but he is nonetheless in the process of discussing similar opportunities for cultural journalism with a number of potential partners.

At Nordjyske, as mentioned, a new shift towards "Identity" is underway, a subject area that brings together elements of culture, nature and urban development and seeks to make them relevant in new ways. They have identified three "super-topics", as Jeppesen called them, namely *surroundings*, *gathering points* and *self-understanding*. The idea is to cultivate a distinct regional relevance, where the "gathering points" of the Northern Jutlanders – e.g., major festivals, Kulturmødet on Mors, or Naturmødet in Hirtshals, but also sports and fan communities – are given new prominence. At the same time, the core editorial task is described in Nordjyske's background papers as a shift "from event to meaning", and it is these deeper insights and background stories that are to characterise the 'Identity' content.

Jeppesen, who has been involved herself in identifying the new focus areas, explained that this entails focusing on regional developments, changes to the environment, regional trends and value conflicts. She gave a couple of examples based on the "super topic" of *self-understanding*:

"Many people say that Aalborg is a city of culture, but how is that actually experienced in practice, and what does it entail? So we're trying to take a critical look at the narratives we have and find out who it is that defines them. When Thy is mentioned in the New York Times as a place worth visiting, who is it that has been working behind the scenes to make that happen? In order for us to not just jump on that overly optimistic bandwagon (...) but instead ask: Who has been working behind the scenes to make this happen? What forces are at play, and what consequences does this have for the local community?"

It is too early to assess Nordjyske's new editorial structure and its potential. But the change – at a media outlet which, as we saw in the previous chapter, has experienced a

drastic reduction in resources over the last 10–15 years – is an attempt to take an alternative approach. It is also a good example of how the well-defined but rather narrow concepts of culture and cultural journalism from earlier times are undergoing a radical overhaul. To the extent that the ‘Identity’ desk at Nordjyske deals with culture, it does so in a broad, almost anthropological or ethnological sense, where the focus is on regional context and vitality, and where new categories cut across familiar subject areas and link them together. Changing formats or desk structures is not in itself revolutionary – Politiken, in particular, has historically cultivated the practice of challenging and pushing the boundaries of what can be described and assessed through a cultural lens (Kristensen 2010: 83) – but the North Jutland experiment of bringing culture and nature under the same editorial team resonates with wider current trends, including academic ones, where cultural analysis is increasingly cutting across these familiar dividing lines.

In other words: if North Jutlanders – and everyone else for that matter – do not perceive their everyday lives as sharply divided into ‘cultural’ and ‘natural’ spheres, perhaps it is no longer necessary for the media to categorise the world in that way either. In a completely different yet related way, Nordjyske, like JV, seeks to anchor its coverage in the everyday lives of its core readers and their needs for orientation, navigation and context.

These are tough times for regional media, who do not receive public service funding, as they try to find and forge various paths in cultural journalism within a commercial and competitive present. In this section, we have rehearsed and compared the perspectives, views and doubts of three of these regional players. Their responses are quite different, yet they share common features distinguishing them from the conditions faced by national daily newspapers. Taken together, the chapter’s six editor interviews outline a series of intersecting themes and questions that can form the basis for a substantive further discussion of the future of cultural journalism in Denmark.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This report constitutes a mid-term status of the *Culture Explorer* project we carried out at the Constructive Institute in Aarhus in the spring of 2026. Its purpose is to examine the conditions and challenges facing cultural journalism in Denmark today and – in the next phase – to put forward proposals and recommendations regarding future possibilities. This first phase has therefore primarily been exploratory and mapping-oriented, whilst phase 2 of the project, to be carried out in 2027, will focus more on alternative approaches to cultural journalism at home and abroad through a more solution-oriented approach – in line with the ideas on constructive journalism promoted by CI.⁷

We have approached the task by gathering material for further analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as by drawing on existing knowledge, research and analyses concerning cultural journalism and cultural consumption. In Chapter 1, we laid the groundwork by examining the cultural habits of Danes and the overall ‘predicament’ facing cultural journalism, including declining readership and fierce competition, not least from digital cultural platforms and services. In the quantitative section of the report (Chapter 2), we outlined the dataset we have assembled and are in the process of exploring, comprising articles from six daily newspapers on three cultural sectors – museums, theatres and gastronomy – and their development from 2010 to 2025. A detailed analysis of this data will take place in 2027, while so far we have been able to observe some general patterns and draw tentative, preliminary conclusions.

In addition to our own data, in Chapter 2 we drew on two major, recent reports on music and literature journalism respectively, both of which track significant, overall declines in coverage (Mortensen et al. 2025; Kristensen and Johansen forthcoming 2026). To support and nuance the figures and trends, we interviewed editors from the same six selected daily newspapers, which are situated in different contexts and are differently affected on their cultural journalism profiles (Chapter 3).

Broadly speaking, we can observe an obvious decline – in some media outlets a dramatic decline – in the cultural output. At the same time, however, we have emphasised that this decline must be understood in the context of the general downsizing in the industry and the fact that overall journalistic output has also been significantly reduced over recent decades. The closure of culture desks has been widespread across outlets, but these closures are part of a much broader trend: the terminations and mergers of editorial departments *in general* are part of the widespread and significant downsizing in the Danish media landscape over the past 15 years or so.

In this concluding part of the report, we list a number of new questions that have emerged from our first project phase and briefly discuss their relevance for the further analysis.

⁷ See <https://constructiveinstitute.org/why/> (accessed 16 June 2026).

A paradox where ‘culture’ thrives but cultural journalism suffers?

The starting point of this project was an assumption that in Denmark one can observe a paradox between a cultural life that is thriving and a cultural journalism that is struggling. Put somewhat simply, the question was why Danes do not bother to read about culture when they do enjoy culture itself.

Our research shows that speaking about such a ‘paradox’ is appropriate for parts of what we have studied, but also that it is too simplistic to be considered a generic diagnosis.

It is factually correct that significant parts of Danish cultural life enjoy great and widespread popularity: museums have seen impressive increases in visitor numbers since the turn of the millennium, the book industry and the desire to read are growing, and the concert and festival scene is thriving, for example. Other branches of the cultural sector are not booming quite as much, but it is fair to say that cultural life in Denmark is vibrant and popular.

It is also true that cultural journalism – at least in its written form – is under pressure in many quarters, that culture desks are disappearing, and that the appetite for cultural content fluctuates a lot. However, we also see that certain national media outlets *do not* seem to suffer in their cultural journalism, but indeed take pride in maintaining a strong culture desk, even in times of cutbacks. Among ‘our’ six media outlets, Politiken and Kristeligt Dagblad stand out in particular in this regard, while in a broader picture, Information and Weekendavisen can also be said to belong to this category.

Furthermore, it is important to note that we have limited ourselves here to addressing the print media, and that one would most likely see different patterns if audio and visual journalism were included. Here, we are thinking not only of TV and radio in their own right, but also of the podcast market, which the major publishing houses and many other players are tapping into – but which has remained outside our scope here. How cultural journalism thrives and is practised in audio and visual journalism is a question that could easily warrant a separate analysis.

Overall, the point is therefore that the “paradox” label only partially captures the general situation, and that individual media outlets appear to be more strongly segmented today compared to 20 years ago, when every media had a culture desk: today, they serve distinctly different target audiences, and the intensified competitive environment means that individual newspapers must prioritise fiercely in the pursuit of their exact profile. In that process, there is not always room for culture, as we have seen, especially among the regional media in our study. This leads to the question:

Is the crisis in cultural journalism primarily regional and local?

As we have demonstrated and discussed with the three regional editors featured in the report, the conditions – and often the interest – in cultural journalism are distinctly

different in their respective regions compared to the national dailies. The expectations from and the “contract” with readers are different, as one of the editors put it. This does not mean that culture cannot be covered at a regional level, but it does mean that it must constantly be considered within the context of local relevance criteria and formats. It also means, at least for the sample of editors we have spoken to, that cultural journalism must increasingly be seen and assessed as any other subject area. It means that the self-evident legitimacy with which ‘culture’ as a subject area has previously been regarded is no longer a given. And it means that the regionals see themselves as representatives of a break with the figure of the cultural journalist as an archetype perceived as being often a little too closely intertwined with the cultural life he or she was supposed to cover.

At the same time, cultural journalism is alive and well in other places – and, importantly, it is not just cultivated out of nostalgia for an old genre. As we described in Chapter 3, for a paper like Politiken, culture simply constitutes a core part of the paper’s product – and which the newspaper’s culture-consuming readership demands.

It is perhaps an oversimplification to claim that the crisis in cultural journalism is solely a regional one. But in our data, it is certainly striking that the realities facing the three regional media outlets are very different from those of the national ones, and that cultural content seems to face harsher conditions. This is certainly the case if we regard culture first and foremost as something that exists, thrives and is showcased within a specific sector. One might also ask, however:

From narrower to broader understandings of culture in the media?

One of the things that strikes us about how the editors in our study understand and view culture is that the concept appears to be in a state of constant flux. Culture has, of course, never been a static entity, but it is probably fair to say that, as a subject area in the media, it was for many years shrouded in a certain automatism and traditional thinking, where ‘culture’ was equated with the cultural sector: books, films, theatre, music, etc. That way of thinking has not disappeared – we saw, for example, how certain editors spoke warmly of the review as a genre that remains relevant – but in our material it is accompanied by a range of alternative, broader interpretations of what culture *also* refers to. Everyday life, social cohesion, identity, gathering points, spiritual enrichment, connectedness: such more holistic or perhaps anthropological understandings of what culture can also be taken to entail, and thus also what cultural journalism can engage with.

In this shift lies also, at least for some, an attack on elitist and highbrow conceptions: if culture is what brings people together, and the local market or the fish auction on the harbour actually do bring people together, then they too are culture. This is a conception of culture that can be described as bottom-up rather than top-down, that is, with an emphasis on what is happening in a particular area and what people (including readers) themselves define as significant.

Once again, it must be emphasised that we are not claiming that this broader understanding of culture has never existed before. But in today's world, characterised by external threats and varying degrees of dystopian thinking, it is as if these broad understandings of culture as the common ground that unites or defines a group (e.g. Danes, women, Europeans) are being articulated more directly and explicitly. Thus, one can trace a shift towards a less narrow concept of culture in the media.

This also points to a broader trend in journalism, where the boundaries between cultural journalism and other subject areas appear to be becoming less distinct. Where cultural journalism is increasingly concerned not only with reviews or coverage of cultural events, but also with the social conditions of which culture is a part.

We see this, for example, in recent cases such as the exposure of #MeToo structures in the cultural and film industries, the scandal surrounding the Danish Film Institute's rooftop venue *Filmtaget*, or the criticism of conditions at the Royal Theatre's ballet school. Here, culture is treated not only as art and experience, but also as a workplace, a power structure and a social institution. In this way, cultural journalism is evolving from narrowly defined genre to a broader approach in which culture also becomes a means of examining and describing society more generally. As such, the question of narrowness versus breadth is connected to yet another central discussion:

The ideal relationship between the culture journalist and the culture sector?

A recurring theme in our editor interviews is the question of proximity and distance between cultural journalism and the cultural scene. Several editors stress that the relationship could previously be too close and 'billboard-like', with cultural journalists in some cases almost embedded in the very circles they were supposed to be covering.

Against this backdrop, our interviews point to an ideal of a more balanced relationship. The aim is neither journalism that stands on the outside and lacks insight, nor journalism that becomes so close to the sector that it loses its critical perspective. Instead, an understanding of cultural journalism is emerging in which cultural institutions are treated more on a par with other social actors, whilst the cultural journalist maintains an investigative and critical role.

One shift in this context concerns the relationship between access and relevance. Previously, cultural journalism was heavily dependent on access: to environments, people and events which were a prerequisite for covering the subject matter at all. Today, access is less of a scarce resource, because the cultural sector itself communicates directly with the public via its own platforms, social media and digital channels.

This means that the challenge for cultural journalism is now more about relevance. The question is no longer simply whether the journalist can gain access to the material, but

whether the journalistic treatment is perceived as meaningful in itself – that is, whether it adds perspective, criticism or explanation that is not already available elsewhere.

An offensive upgrade that puts cultural journalism at the centre?

Our study does not point unequivocally to a crisis, but rather suggests that cultural journalism is developing in different directions. Some media outlets have significantly scaled back this area, whilst others – particularly Politiken and Kristeligt Dagblad – have maintained or even prioritised culture as a strategic core area. One could say that in a world where attention and subscribers are in short supply, it is more important than ever to have a distinct profile and to target a well-defined audience. All things being equal, this is a less difficult task for national newspapers such as Politiken and KD, as they have a larger ‘pool’ of potential readers to draw from, whereas regional players are constrained by their demographics. This is possibly also part of the explanation of why culture seems to be faring better on the national stage than in the regional and local media.

Therefore, for the vast majority of media outlets, a new offensive approach to cultural journalism would not entail reviving the classic coverage that some actors in the cultural sector miss. Previews, calendar features and information on virtually all cultural events have largely moved to other platforms today. If cultural journalism is to be strengthened, it would seem, instead, to be rather a matter of identifying the areas in which journalism can still contribute something that does not already exist elsewhere or has been taken over by other non-journalistic actors. Such a strengthening is far from a free editorial choice, but largely a question of resources, business models and audience relations.

Culture Explorers: the next phase

The first phase of our project has not confirmed a clear-cut picture of cultural journalism as a sector in crisis across all media. Instead, the study points to a more complex and segmented picture, in which some forms of cultural journalism are under pressure, and in which regional media in particular find that cultural journalism as we once knew it is no longer viable. A number of new questions regarding the role, function and future prospects of cultural journalism have emerged on the back of these findings.

These questions will be central to the project’s second phase in 2027: How can cultural journalism be developed in order to remain critical, relevant and sustainable within a digital media economy? What new formats can create value for both users and editorial teams? And how can cultural journalism be reimagined so that it strikes a balance between critical practice and constructive, cohesion-building approaches?

These are the kinds of questions that will form the basis for the further work to be undertaken in the second phase of the *Culture Explorer* project in spring 2027.

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In addition, a range of publications and press releases from Statistics Denmark's website [dst.dk](https://www.dst.dk) have been used, including the reports *Kultur 2023* and *Statistisk tiårsoversigt 2024*. See the detailed list of sources on p. 4.