

DIALOGUE.

Enhancing constructive journalism on social media through dialogue-based storytelling.



Erasmus+

Teaching constructive and dialogue-based journalism to B.A. students

# Student evaluation report

May 2022

*[Handwritten signatures and names in black ink, including 'K. B. J.', 'E. M.', 'Louis', 'Joh', 'D.', 'S. N.', 'B.', 'M.', 'S. H.', 'Z. H.', 'M.', 'Catalina']*

**DMJX**

Danmarks Medie-  
og Journalisthøjskole

hogeschool

**Windesheim**



HOCHSCHULE  
DER MEDIEN

## Introduction

Do students find the teaching in dialogue-based journalism useful and relevant for their future careers?

This is the question the project partners in the DIALOGUE-project asked 15 students at the 5<sup>th</sup> and final workshop. We invited five students from each partner institution, who all fitted two criteria: They have all done or are currently doing a course in dialogue-based journalism, and they have all worked with media partners or done internships (some are doing internships right now).

The students have all read our three intellectual outputs, and on that ground, they have discussed, evaluated, and come up with suggestions for future teaching. All while being together in Aarhus for five days.

The students were asked to do three things:

- 1) **Evaluate our view on students.** What do we need to understand about the students (assumptions, qualifications, pre-understandings) and should we adjust our view?
- 2) **Evaluate our view on the business:** What do we need to understand about the media partners – and the reality you meet with these tools, methods and mind set?
- 3) **Come up with suggestions for future teaching:** How can we twist our courses, so the teaching in dialogue-based journalism becomes as useful and relevant as possible for your future work?

The students are:

Danish: Louise Østerlund Thomsen, Emil Østegaard Nielsen, Oskar Leo Matthiesen, Søren Albert Bach Christensen, Line Fjordside Jensen

Dutch: Sushmita Lageman, Britney Sieben, Jos Smit, Jesse Nijmeijer and Jasper van den Hoek

German:

Kai Leitenberger, Maya Rehwinkel, Severin Koehler, Catalina Taccone, Dilara Inceosman

From here on, this report consists of their words only. Enjoy!

## Evaluation of the project's understanding of students

*What do we need to understand about our students (assumptions, qualifications, pre-understandings), and should we adjust our view?*

### Joint student conclusion

We as students believe that teachers in most cases understand what our point of view is when talking about our role as journalists in society, but in terms of constructive and dialogue-based journalism there are still some adjustments needed to improve our teacher-student relationship. We experience that some aspects of constructive and dialogue-based journalism during our study are not taken thoroughly into consideration yet.

One of the consequences is that it creates a distortion in terms of how we as students see our roles as journalists. This is reflected in the fact that many students see journalists as watchdogs, but it is important to keep in mind that not all students look at journalism the same way.

We need to find a middle ground for all of us where journalistic values are discussed from the start of our education, and we can challenge the way we see them by listening to other points of view together both teachers and students. Besides, you can only do this if the teachers and the whole organization believe in this new method and way of thinking about Journalism first.

Additionally, students are different in many other ways and assumptions about us should be left aside when thinking about the teaching methods. It is important for teachers to not think we have resistance to what they teach us, some of us might, but others are very open to learning as much as possible. Teachers: Don't generalize your diverse group of students and use this as an advantage.

Together with the last point, we want to hear the critics about constructive journalism as well, this enriches our points of view and how we see this in our field. We want to see how it has failed or how people who are against it think and why. Only seeing the positive side makes it feel unreal.

Furthermore, the way constructive and dialogue-based journalism are taught might be too idealistic and lack a more practical approach and examples of how we can apply it in our field. The language, and the way this is presented to us, often creates a distance in between us and constructive journalism, because people for example see "dialogue" in a much more non-approachable way than a "conversation" or other words that we are more familiar with. It is a challenge to transform the teaching language into one that is more close to us to feel capable of applying these sometimes new concepts in our work.

## 1.1. Danish perspectives

To answer this question we have pointed out three aspects of teaching dialogue-based journalism to students at the DMJX in Aarhus, Denmark.

1.1.1. How teachers look upon students when it comes to their understanding of a journalist's role  
When trying to teach the ideas, values and methods of this branch of journalism it is important to keep some basic circumstances in mind.

Strictly speaking for DMJX there is an institutional framework that divides us into distinct groups of different specializations when attending the 4th semester, where dialogue journalism is taught. Therefore it is important to bear in mind that students see the world differently.

In Report I01 the teacher's view upon student's understanding of the journalist's role is described as following:

*"Students see themselves primarily as watchdogs and hunting dogs, which is fair enough, whereas the roles of the guide dog (including the readers in the process) and the rescue dog (seeking solutions) are considered less important."*, (report I01, p. 17).

This is a very traditional way of describing journalists in general but also it is stated that there is an understanding among journalism students that this is the only role of journalists today. Our point is that the education of the students in the dialogue project begins at a base that is misunderstood by the teachers. We as students do not have to be convinced that the different nuances in the role of the journalist exist because we already have the insight to some extent.

Not all students see themselves as the traditional watchdog. As we see it there *is* a large group that buys into that notion, though we want to add that it is not all black and white.

Because of this, there will without a doubt arise a challenge when trying to teach the methods included in the umbrella term dialogue-based journalism since some might be reluctant towards lowering their guard so to speak.

1.1.2. The presentation and teaching of constructive and dialogue-based journalism.

Whilst we who have attended the course have undergone a sort of indoctrination (in a good sense) into the thoughts and arguments of the movement, others might be more reluctant to the way the ideals and the reasons behind dialogue based journalism are presented. There is a tendency to feel that the teaching becomes preaching - they might be reluctant to study it.

The students all see the value in thorough and strong journalism - and this invites exactly that. But as it accurately mention in Report I02:

*"When it comes to concrete methods, the students are still asking for more. They have gotten far in thinking outside the box in where to reach people and where to allow them into the journalistic process. But when it comes to how to do it in a fruitful way, they are still lacking tools."*

We agree on this but will add that we do leave the course with concrete tools - only we might not see that before we finish the course. We are forced to be creative but at the same time, we do not know how to convert that creativity into direct results, and that is the source of the students' frustration.

1.1.3. On which grounds students choose the *constructive and dialogue-based* course in the 4th semester.

As mentioned above many students look upon the journalist's role as a watchdog. This is the root of the challenges there are in terms of which grounds students choose the constructive and dialogue-based course when facing the 4th semester.

Because we are not introduced to some of the ideas of constructive journalism throughout the previous semesters we are facing the course with either a critical view upon constructive and dialog-based journalism or a more activist approach to journalism in general.

## 1.2. Dutch perspectives

### 1.2.1. Differences between students

To start off this topic, there are big differences between students who start journalism-studies. Some have really broad interests, and some don't. People with a broad interest can have a strong opinion. The other students, who don't have that broad interest, don't really know what to expect and have (almost) zero understanding of journalism.

On both sides you need to get them to the same middle ground as a starting point. In conclusion, don't focus on topics (based on pre-existing opinions of certain students), but make sure that the new journalistic values are key and create activism on journalistic thinking.

### 1.2.2. Implementing constructive and dialogue-based journalism

We think it's important to implement this new journalistic mindset from the very beginning of the studies instead of later on, like the modules that are being implemented right now. You can only do this if the teachers and the whole organization believe in this new method and way of thinking about Journalism.

### 1.2.3. Support for the program

The teachers who worked on this project and wrote the reports really feel the urgency, but not all old and traditional teachers feel it as well. So, you need to create a shared vision with all the teachers to make this method work. We know it's not an easy way to make all the teachers think alike, but we believe it is necessary to make this work.

## 1.3. German perspectives:

### 1.3.1. What Constructive Journalism is about

We experienced Constructive Journalism as something abstract and difficult to define in the beginning. Like an approach for giving activists more space for transporting their agenda, with the neutral image of the newspaper they're writing in. Because they decide what solutions they offer

to the audience, they could influence the audience in a specific way. After our participation in Aarhus it's clear that Constructive Journalism is just a term and a mindset, and there are existing subcategories, like dialogue-oriented journalism, which includes the audience more and subsumes a part or variation of Constructive Journalism. That was misunderstood.

### 1.3.2. The process of understanding constructive journalism

Before participating in the DIALOGUE project, it was hard for us students to understand what constructive journalism really was and give it a down-to-earth view and a more practical way to see it. It has no clear definition or description as many other concepts we are usually taught. It is a complex and emerging concept for the traditional media eyes. However, after reading the previous project reports and participating in the EJTA Conference 2022, we now understand it as a mindset and not a method, which makes us acknowledge constructive and dialogue-based journalism in our roles as future journalists and transform our learning experience into a more comprehensive and practical one.

In the middle of the trip, we had the feeling that we misunderstood the topic in the lessons we had in Stuttgart. However, this is not because it was explained or defined incorrectly, but because we only touched on the topic superficially and only in between various other topics and lessons. But the trip to Aarhus showed us the diversity and especially the depth of the topic. The fact that we gained so much more background information makes what we have learned in class seem so different. Through the workshop, we also learned that once you have dealt with a topic for a longer period of time, which can also be applied to articles that are written constructively, there is so much more that contributes to the topic, gives it depth and makes the topic appear to us in a completely different way and in a different dimension. And that can also be so valuable for future readers, because articles and topics are given a completely different quality.

### 1.3.3. Digging deeper rather than scratching the surface

From our point of view as students of Stuttgart Media University, we can state that in our International Content Production course, which has only 8 ECTS, there is no time to really familiarize ourselves with the topics of dialogue-based and constructive journalism. In contrast, we are currently experiencing this in-depth familiarization and engagement with these topics at the conference and workshop in Aarhus at the DMJX. Compared to our fellow participants from Denmark and the Netherlands, we do not have the same in-depth knowledge as they do, but after reading the three reports, we can draw an overall picture of the "dialogue-based journalism" mindset. This in-depth familiarization could not take place in our course, as we attend other courses at the same time, which are equally time-consuming and have completely different topics (e. g. Leadership, Innovation Management). Perhaps it would also be possible in the future to not mix teaching units within the week, but to "work through" each course weekly. So, for example, to work through a course intensively for two weeks, so that you can also deal with one topic/subject in depth and then only work on the other subject and then again in a different depth. This would then also gain something like a workshop-feeling.

### 1.3.4. No debates in Germany anymore

In Germany, real dialogue is not common anymore. People tend to not talk or discuss with people who are not in favor of their own opinion. One politician once told one of us that we as German

society have forgotten how to debate. Here, dialogue-based journalism can contribute to more debating in our society and that would be really empowering to our democracy.

## Evaluation of the project's understanding of the media business

*What do we need to understand about the media partners – and the reality you meet with these tools, methods and mind set?*

### Joint student conclusion

#### Media culture

In the relation between the school and the media during internships we have noticed big differences. It sometimes feels like a separate part of the journalism study instead of an integrated program because between what you learn, and the internship lies a big difference.

The problem we see is that there is a huge toolbox for constructive and dialogue-based journalism but in the practical work life there is a lack of using it.

We've noticed that there are media partners who do not view it as their job to come up with solutions, only presenting the problem and the solution lies in the society and journalism does not have to take a role in that. There are also media companies that see the importance of constructive journalism and want to act like it, but they have trouble being consistent.

At the same time, a lot of media companies are very well-established. They know what kind of journalism they want to make, and they have a special routine that they already know works for their business. This means that sometimes there isn't a lot of room for bringing new angles, ideas, or ways of doing journalism. So, it can be difficult to implement what we have learned in our courses on dialogue based journalism.

To sum up, a lot of media have other priorities, and the culture is often traditional, which doesn't leave room for dialogue based journalism. Try to learn different business models so that you know what to expect and how it can ensure that money comes in the drawer.

#### Time is an issue

Another thing that we see is that time is a huge problem. In day-to-day news it is not always applicable due to the deadlines. Of course, with breaking news it is logical that a constructive approach is not being used immediately but can be used in follow-up stories. But in daily shows for example it is not really applied where there are opportunities to do it. Therefore, we think that shows and newspapers need to take more time afterwards to reflect on the day and always remind themselves in which way they used a dialogue-based approach.

The phrase “constructive journalism” can be an issue in itself

From our experiences in internships or as working students, we feel that the use of the phrase “constructive journalism” and “dialogue-based journalism” could be an issue. We assume from our experiences, when it comes to implementing constructive journalism and dialogue-based journalism in newsrooms, it is a problem when a young journalist uses these buzzwords in the editorial office to approach heads of department or fellow editors, as it may scare-off the decision-makers. We have experienced this rejection even from some long-established editorial colleagues.

However, this problem can be avoided by simply integrating dialogue-based journalism and its tools into your journalistic work, as they can contribute to the core values of journalism and significantly improve output. We would advise you to just start integrating this mindset into your daily editorial work, but without making any big announcements or labeling it as “constructive” or “dialogue-based” because it might deter some critics.

Interns have other things to learn than revolutionizing the business

Working with media partners and doing internships is a big part of our education as journalists. It is where we learn to actually use the methods and tools we have learned in order to make real journalism that will be published and will be received by an audience.

Therefore, we have a lot to learn while doing our internships - and a lot to do. This means that there isn't always time or space for using constructive journalism and the methods behind dialogue based journalism. Some days you just have to finish the assignment you are given by your editor using more “traditional” methods instead of revolutionizing journalism.

Use of audience data

In our experience, a lot of modern media companies have an extensive use of audience data. Questions like how many clicks an article gets or how many listeners a radio program has is something journalists face in their everyday work.

In our experience the media focuses on this, because it is necessary. But it is also an attempt to get closer to their audience, which links it to dialogue based journalism.

The use of audience data is something we were not prepared for. Therefore, it is something that could have been implemented on the course, since metrics can to an extent end up determining which stories we choose and choose not to tell.

Teach us what to expect

From our point of view, it is important to mediate between theory and practice, like our universities already do. As journalism students, we should have even more opportunities to get in touch with media houses and editorial offices that use constructive and dialogue-based journalism in order to learn from their successful examples and mistakes.



On the other hand, however, it would be very beneficial to talk to media that have not integrated or implemented dialogue-oriented journalism. Here it would be very interesting to engage in a discussion in order to find out what the reasons for this are, what counterarguments there are and what editorial processes might conflict with the introduction of dialogue-oriented journalism. With this knowledge, journalism students can better assess how to integrate constructive approaches into internships or their first jobs without upsetting editorial colleagues or revolutionizing existing processes.

## 2.1. Danish perspectives

### 2.1.1. Idealism meets reality

In the end of section 2.1.2 of Report IO3 the following is concluded:

*“First of all, there is a will among students to make use of the methods and mindset taught in the course – all though few have found ways to incorporate this into their working routines.*

*Second of all, there is still a mixed landscape in the business, where some media welcome the dialogue-based approach (at least in theory), while others don’t have a focus on it at all.*

*And lastly, it is clear that lack of time and high pace in the news and editorial rooms are perceived as obstacles to integrating a dialogue-based approach in their reporting.”*

We believe that to some extent the conclusion pretty accurately sums up our individual experiences.

There is a general openness to the ideas, and to a certain degree they are already part of the raison d’être of the media outlets. Several of us have experienced that our employers have been interested in the mindset. At the same time the culture and structure of our workplaces means that we have not always been able to adapt our good intentions and knowledge from course into everyday work.

### 2.1.2. Business model

In the real world there is a strong focus on data and metrics: Clicks, amount of listeners and subscriptions sold is very much also a side to the industry’s attempt to get closer to the people.

And that is something we were not prepared for and something that could have been implemented on the course.

That can end up making attempts at innovation and experimentation difficult, since metrics can to an extent end up determining which stories we choose and choose not to tell.

At the same time haste sometimes makes the methods and ideas fall in the background as you need to fill the paper or broadcast. As we see it, it is important to include that in your teaching- If you take the time to learn to navigate both your editors and their expectations, we find there is sympathy towards the methods and the mindset.

## 2.2. Dutch perspectives

### 2.2.1. Differences between theory and practice

In the relation between the school and the media partners during internships we have noticed big differences. It sometimes feels like a separate part of the journalism study instead of an integrated program. We experience a large difference between what we study and the realities of Journalism in practice.

The problem we see is that there is a huge toolbox for constructive and dialogue-based journalism but in the practical work life these aren't (completely) utilized. We've noticed that there are media partners who did not see it as their job to come up with solutions, only presenting the problem. The solution lies in the society and journalism does not have to take a role in that. There are also media companies that see the importance of constructive journalism and want to implement it, but they have trouble being consistent.

### 2.2.2. Convincing the media companies

They need to be reminded of the constructive part and that it is important to keep a dialogue with your guests and your audience. This can also be done in an indirect way where the schools remind their students to come back from their internship with a constructive or dialogue-based production. Hereby, you can force the media partner to let their interns practice with a new journalistic approach. In the Netherlands this has not happened enough. When a student comes to a company with a constructive mindset they can remind the company to be constructive, although it is hard to change the way a media company operates.

### 2.2.3. Theories and tools are not always applicable

Another thing that we see is that time is a huge problem. In day-to-day news it is not always applicable due to the deadlines. Of course, with breaking news it is logical that a constructive approach is not being used immediately but it can be used in follow-up stories. However, in daily shows for example, it is not really applied even though there are opportunities to do it. Therefore, we think that shows and newspapers need to take more time afterwards to reflect on the day and always remind themselves in which way they used a dialogue-based approach.

## 2.3. German perspectives

### 2.3.1. Implement constructive journalism in newsrooms

In our view, when it comes to implementing constructive journalism and dialogue-based journalism in newsrooms, it is a problem when a young journalist uses these buzzwords in the editorial office to approach heads of department or fellow editors, as it may scare-off decision-makers. We have seen some of this behavior from long-established colleagues in newsrooms. One reason for this may be that media companies continue to focus heavily on clicks, and an intern should, for example, produce three click-through image galleries. One solution to this problem might be for an intern or a young journalist who wants to implement dialogue-based and constructive approaches, to simply implement and incorporate them into the articles without making a big announcement. In this way, you can avoid colleagues who are hostile to innovation and who are at the top of the levers.

### 2.3.2. Constructive Journalism against time

One more problem we assume is that Constructive Journalism is a very time consuming approach for newsrooms. Audience- and consumer-maintenance takes a lot of time and so does the research. You can't publish in the same "fast news" way the media is actually doing.

### 2.3.3. Setting a new mindset to the media

It is very important to include into the discussion about this new mindset the media who develop these best practices to learn about their failures and successes according to their contexts and initiatives, but also those who are currently not explicitly working with constructive and dialogue-based journalism. Why are they not incorporating new concepts in their daily tasks or training their journalists in these matters? By knowing this, people can investigate further about what are the most important challenges for our field to spread this mindset in our field. Then, we will have more opportunities as students to get involved in media without leaving behind our learnings of constructive journalism, since founding your own media product or having a strong influence in the decision-makers is not always possible, especially when we start an internship or have our first job.

## Recommendations for future teaching in Dialogue-based Journalism

### Joint student conclusion

To better understand journalism as a whole, the basics should be addressed in the first year. It is difficult to understand such a complex subject if you only scratch the surface. So, some depth needs to be taught to understand the basic understanding and foundation.

Intensive block seminars or workshops, help to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of dialogue-based journalism. Enough time should be given to explore a topic. Open group discussions help to accept other opinions and to represent one's own.

The aim should not be to learn the theory at its core but to apply it by encouraging practical units such as talking to the public or exchanging ideas with other students or journalists and media houses.

It is easy to say that you want to get closer to your readers, but this also requires a lot of reflective, personal action. Not just talking and wanting to defend your own point of view, but also really listening to the person you are talking to, asking questions, questioning your own dealings with people.

Maybe also making the profession of journalism more accessible, not seeing it as "the media as an individual and maybe the audience as an individual working against each other". Less blaming, more togetherness, more accessible content that comes from common ground and common interests.

Making the audience feel that they can be part of the story and have contributed to the publication. So, it should not be about teaching traditions, but about teaching values that prepare us for a much changing media world.

It is important to keep in mind that constructive journalism and dialogue-based journalism should be seen more as a tool and a mindset, not a cure. It is not one or the other.

#### Getting acquainted with the professional approach

When you start to consider the more practical sides to COJO or DBJ, it would be fruitful to us as students to have an introduction to the media landscape we need to practice it in.

Having examples on how the newsrooms across the national landscapes presented by the practitioners like journalists and editors will help us see the opportunities as well as the challenges to the techniques. This could be done as guest lectures and preparation for further exercises.

In that way we will be better prepared and less discouraged when the ideal conditions of the classroom are exchanged with the sometimes harsh realities of newsflows and deadlines.

A concrete idea discussed during the workshop was having a Constructive News Week. Here the students would work in mock newsrooms. They would look at the news of the day, discuss possible constructive angles and then write new stories based with a constructive or solutions-based angle.

The purpose of this is to test the methods when working within a deadline. On top of that it would make clear how to develop ideas within a group while strengthening skills of cooperation.

#### Further techniques

Another example of these interactions could be, involving (established) media partners into the dialogue-based modules that are being taught in journalism schools. During these courses students come up with a lot of great ideas for constructive or dialogue-based stories, but with the current course of events these potentially great stories do not get written by the students.

We think that by involving media partners into these courses students can be offered an established platform to write or produce these potentially great stories for. For the students it is actually a great way to practice with the methods of constructive and dialogue-based journalism, but also generally with writing and producing their stories for a real platform. It is a great way of combining the ideal world that sometimes exists within journalism schools and the real world from the media partners.

Since it is important to keep an open mind, we as (future) journalists can learn a lot from other professions. Therefore, we think it could be quite useful and interesting for students to get guest

lectures from people of other professions where communications skills and techniques are very important.

For example, a police officer could visit the classroom to tell more about how to get certain information from someone who does not want to give you that information. As journalists we could learn a lot from the techniques and skills police officers use in their work. Especially, if you consider how important it is to have a good set of communication skills when using the dialogue-based approach in journalism.

We think it is also important to stress that we still need to talk about journalism in itself. As future journalists we believe it is important to have open, reflective and professional discussions about our role in society as journalists for example.

Constructive and dialogue-based journalism teaches us that our role as journalists is to serve the public, but how do we as students reflect on that. It is important for us to keep that conversation going to become more aware of our role as journalists and the impact we can have on society.

### 3.1. Danish perspectives

#### 3.1.1. Spread out the ideas

We think that it would be beneficial to implement the thoughts of dialogue based journalism and maybe even some of the exercises during the first two semesters of the education.

That way, we as students will be more primed to the mindset and some of the opposition to constructive and dialogue-based journalism could be softened as the understanding of the ideals behind become clearer. It is recommendable to include some more discussions on a more ethical or reflective level.

#### **Potential topics for discussion could be:**

- What kind of journalists do we want to be?
- How do we find sources and stories?
- What questions do we ask?

#### 3.1.2. More emphasis on Constructive Journalism as a tool, not a cure:

When you attend the course you are introduced to the journalistic wheel and the three pillars of constructive journalism. On top of that you are introduced to all the ways you can introduce dialogue-based methods into your work process. That is part of the course and it can serve as inspiration for further work. We argue that the course is teaching the method in an “ideal situation”. We have all the time and room to experiment. When you attend your internship and have to use it in the industry, you realize that time issues and work pressure put a limit to the methods. We argue that even though there is at great value to being taught and produce journalism in the idea settings, the reality needs to be included in the course.

#### 3.1.3. Choosing the angle

We believe that more exercises to practice brainstorming on alternative angles on current stories

would be a beneficial addition to the course. In the following we present **The Constructive News Week** to serve as inspiration.

**The idea is as follows:**

- Over a week the classroom will become a newsroom
- That newsroom will look at the newsflow each morning.
- The student will choose a story from the newsflow.
- The student will then have to look into a constructive angle on the story, develop the idea and then write the story.

**Outputs:**

Each student has written three constructive news stories when the week is over.

A better understanding of how the workflow in the media business works. And experience with developing original and alternative angles that use the methods from constructive journalism.

Additionally, editors and journalists from the business could be included in the preparation for the week, giving concrete examples and inspiration on how to brainstorm and develop ideas from start to finish.

#### 3.1.4. Change the phrasing

We believe that when presenting the ideas it would be recommendable to reevaluate the terminology. Opposition seems to arise from the fact that the terms used sound like buzz words from Silicon Valley.

The Constructive House, The Journalistic Wheel, models and so on of course makes the ideas clear, but sometimes it also feels too business inspired and in that sense too far from the deeper and actually sympathetic thoughts you are trying to get across.

Instead use a wording that is closer to everyday use: conversation or talk instead of dialogue for example.

### 3.2. Dutch perspectives

#### 3.2.1. Course on communication techniques

When dialogue-based journalism is implemented from the beginning in the curriculum we think it is a good idea to also start a communication techniques course. With this course we do not mean to learn about interview techniques, but learning about connecting with 'normal' people, who are your audience later in the work field.

#### 3.2.2. Ways to practice

We think that students need an understanding of society before starting a journalism approach. You can create more mutual acceptance between journalists and the public when students learn how people think, view their lives and their society. For example, in this course you could give an

assignment where students pick two branches in the work society, they think are interesting, or think they will never visit. For example: the medical field or construction work.

In this assignment you will work along and visit the work branch and just start talking with these people about what is important for them and how they view life. By picking two completely different branches you open your view and can explode your own bubble. You then do not make a production about this, but just an essay on how the student experienced this and what they have learned by talking with these different types of people.

After this course the student has a better understanding of people's views through the country and will give the student more confidence starting with journalistic production.

Another task in this course could be 'connecting with a person in the comment section'. Many times, we see 'regular' people commenting below news articles which are written quite aggressive or frustrated. This happens on social media, like Facebook and Instagram. It often leads to very polarizing discussions. It would be good to get in touch with these people and just ask them why they commented like this and what concerns they feel in their life and society. In this conversation it is the goal to just listen without judging. Here you also write an essay about it, discussing what the student has learned. With these types of tasks, the student can later remind him- or herself of the people you are writing for and take their views into consideration. When these groups of 'angry' people feel understood, we can fight polarization in news and society.

### 3.2.3. Mandatory assignment during internships

Add a mandatory assignment for students during their internship to try and stimulate the use of dialogue-based journalism at the media outlet. If the media outlet is not willing to use the tools and methods of dialogue-based journalism the students can make two different versions of the story. One in the traditional way and one in the constructive and dialogue-based journalism kind of way. In order for this to work the students need to try hard to make at least one story with the tools and methods of constructive and dialogue-based journalism.

### 3.2.4. Meeting experts and learning from experience

As students we think it is quite interesting and inspiring to hear about experiences from real life journalists. We therefore think it is a good idea for Journalism Schools to invite established journalists to speak about topics like dialogue-based journalism, polarization, and the role of journalists in society. For example, students could get a seminar on how to moderate a conversation and how to start a dialogue instead of a debate. For students it is very inspiring to hear about the experiences from the new and constructive workflows of these journalists and interesting ideas of journalists about journalism as a topic.

### 3.3. German perspectives

3.3.1. Intensive block seminars or workshops to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of dialogue-based journalism.

An in-depth familiarization of the topics of dialogue-based and constructive journalism could not take place in our course, as we attend other courses at the same time, which are equally time-consuming and have completely different topics (e. g. Leadership, Innovation Management). Perhaps it would also be possible in the future to not mix teaching units within the week, but to "work through" each course weekly. This would then also gain something like a workshop-feeling.

3.3.2. Integration of the mindset of constructive and dialogue-based journalism into the basic training of the studies

This avoids the need to integrate a new concept such as dialogue-based journalism after learning the basics of journalism (e. g. news journalism in the first semester at Stuttgart Media University) as this leads to confusion and difficulties for students in applying the tools (e. g. integrating the audience) later. However, if you integrate the mindset of constructive and dialogue-oriented journalism as a matter of course into the basic education, you circumvent this problem.

3.3.3. Choose more established media partners which might not use Constructive Journalism yet. Instead of working with small niche newspapers, it would, compared to the Danish media partners, be more interesting, ambitious and motivating in working with larger media houses. Maybe they're not actually using Constructive Journalism and see a chance in this collaboration.

3.3.4. Teachers should talk about the different business models of media and how they have changed through time as well.

It is usually a topic that is not discussed inside the classroom and, even if we don't necessarily decide directly on how it works or other disciplines are in charge of developing them, we need to know about this, especially if we have the opportunity to start our own media product. Furthermore, different and alternative models than the ones used traditionally should be taught, more importantly, those that promote constructive and dialogue-based journalism, for example, RUMS from Münster focuses on finding the "right target group" that is willing to pay and values the product you are offering.

3.3.5. Journalists are relationship builders.

This brings us to the idea that this approach needs to be more established in education. We often see fellow students taking themselves more seriously than the subjects and people they are reporting about. It is not about journalists and their self-fulfillment, but about people, their stories, and their contribution to the social debate. This idea that journalists are not the main characters should be more important. After all, only when the idea that one as a journalist should remain in the background is fixed, can the approach of dialogue-oriented journalism work. Because, in order to understand the readership as a source and echo chamber with valuable input, journalists have to accept that they are no longer the focus themselves, but that the audience and also the stories and opinions of the people are more important.



## Final conclusion

Getting to a conclusion we agree that there are many good points that came out of this project over the last years. We as students all agreed upon the fact that dialogue-based and constructive journalism is an essential in the way we see journalism as a subject, but also in the way we work as current and future journalists. All students from the three journalism schools agreed upon the point that we should implement this type of seeing journalism earlier on in the curriculum. Right now, it feels as an add-on in the study, but when you implement it from year one in different forms, students get to see the importance from the beginning on, so students have a broader view on journalism and the different approaches.

When implemented, we have several ideas of how to teach the different skills of this type of journalism. At first, we need to integrate this the dialogue-based way in the current program. It is not old versus new or traditional versus constructive, but it all belongs together. In the end we will give some discussion points about how we need to implement it.

Second, we as students need to figure out how we view journalism and how we think of our role in the journalistic world. We advise to do this in an open discussion in the classroom between students, but also teachers. Because teachers have more experience in the way journalism has been used over the years so they can help us steer coming to a personal conclusion. Using seminars and workshops done by professionals can help in this process, because it empowers and inspires future journalists on how to act, react and work in different situations using constructive journalism.

Furthermore, an important part of this journalistic approach is to learn how to start and keep a dialogue with the public and your audience. You need to have an insight on how different people think and behave in life in different groups of society. This is needed to understand how to engage with different groups of citizens and also let them feel understood. In this way we can fight polarization in news and society.

At last, we think that it is also good to teach students different business approaches within journalism. When we know the different types of jobs and media businesses, we can get familiar with the world we are going to work in. This also concludes freelance journalism or the way to start up your own constructive media outlet. It can vary from simple basic tools to getting to know the structure of media.

Of course, these conclusions give very good insights about how we should tackle and implement constructive and dialogue-based journalism in the curriculum, but there are of course many points of discussion on how to tackle this. Like said, we need to implement this way of journalism in the curriculum,

but there was a discussion whether constructive journalism is seen as the cure to fight the problem that journalism faces or as a tool in the broad toolbox journalists have for producing,

meaning use it next to all the traditional roles we already learn for many years. Of course, this connects with the open discussion we think is important to have in the classroom. There is no right or wrong, but this will help seeing the importance of at least using it in journalism.