

Media description and new text

“Political activists under constant surveillance”

This article is one out of a series of three about youth in Iran right now (summer 2007). This article is based on an interview with a young political leftwing, Bijan Sabbagh, in Iran, whose actions provoked the latest student revolt. The article was published in the national daily news paper Kristeligt Dagblad on the 6.9.2008 (www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk)

Kristeligt Dagblad is one of 6 national newspapers and one of the smallest, but also one of the only ones with out an increasing number of subscribers. It is a so called niche paper, which in spite of the name, that means “Christian Daily” is not religious in the traditional sence. The working title is “Faith, ethics and eksistens” and Kristeligt Dagblad does not only deal with christianity but is probably one of the most advanced papers in Denmark when it comes to communicating news and background about all spiritual and religious subjects and conflicts.

“Private guards watching dangerous mental patients”

This article is a combined front page story and back ground story. I was a story I wrote after attending a public debate with psychiatric workers and relatives to mental patients. Politiken imidiately wanted the story published as it is yet another story about the Danish economic and political state in the social sector 27.11.2007 (www.politiken.dk).

Politiken is one of the three biggest national daily newspapers in Denmark. All papers are independent and do not belong to any parties any more. But never the less does Politken have a very social profil and concentrates very much on the human beings behind the stories. Not to mix it up with the yellow tabloid press.

Politiken has resently changed its’ editorial line and to let the web edition focus on the news flow making room for longer features and perspective articles in the paper edition.

“Join if you want, leave if you can”

Is the dokumentary I have researched, shot, directed and edited and would have liked to send you along. It is about young gang members trying to get out of the criminal gangs in the slums of Central America - gangs which have taken care of them their whole life, but also made them do terrible things.

New text

I have chosen to write a comment on an aspect in the Danish society, that I have actually wanted to write for a long time:

The Ice Queen of the news critirias

It is Khaleds birthday and that should be celebrated. Ten guests for drinks and barberque in the back yard. Cheering and laughing the party continues in the subway heading for the centre of the city. A couple of hours later the good mood and atmosphere is gone. “Happy birthday,” says the sister of Khaled not knowing weather to laugh or cry. “What did you expect? We are too many foreigners!”

It is a fact that many young people with a different ethnic background than Danish are discriminated in the night life of Copenhagen. It does not just happen once in a while, as the head of the Copenhagen police force, Erik Søndborg, states. In nine out of ten night clubs foreigners are being rejected only because of their ethnicity every single weekend.

I know this because I have it on tape. With the camera rolling in my bag I caught doormen poke out young immigrants standing in line, even before they reached the entrance. "You won't enter here and you know why!" Others were rejected with the excuse of not being on the guest list. A list none of the entering Danish guests were confronted with.

Many heard this story already. Some might even yawn now that they read about it again. Stories about discrimination at clubs have found the way to the newspapers' columns several times also accompanied with new information bites about so called "foreigner quota" or the police's lack of reporting on incidents.

But now the medias have simultaneously reached the understanding that if anything else should be published about this subject something new has to be added. It is no longer relevant that the discrimination goes on and on and is so disseminated that many foreigners do not get in line among the blond boys and girls any more, not to put themselves in the humiliating situation. It is also not relevant any more that this differential treatment not only takes place outside in front of the door, but reaches deeper in society because the confronted club owners admit to fear the absence of Danish guests, if too many of "the others" are let in.

Even though relevance and actuality are the dominant news criteria in the Danish journalism, the 'news value' is the triumph. A criteria that at times obliterates all other criteria and prepares the way for irrelevant and indifferent stories just because they are "new". Many problems in society and the world suffer the same fate as 'discrimination in Copenhagen' and end up in the deep drawer of we-head-it-before together with AIDS epidemics in Africa, Palestine suicide bombers and three-digit victims in earthquakes. Do the editors not dare to stake on it. Do the journalists not care to write or have the citizens stopped caring to read about it?

You are forced to ask the question: Is it at all the responsibility of the media to ensure that a relevant story reaches the agenda if it can not live up to the news criteria of containing new juicy information every time? I think the answer is a loud and clear - Yes! The media is whether you like it or not an integrated debate forum in society and that entails a certain responsibility. At the same time the media is in most cases private companies and here lies the challenge: To produce relevant and current stories, which make us buy the paper, turn on the radio, zap to the tv-channel and click in on the web-page - even though we heard the story before.