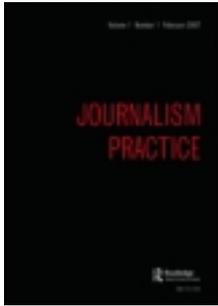


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ACTIVIST JOURNALISM?

The Danish Cheminova debates, 1997 and 2006

Thomas Olesen

This article discusses the differences and similarities between investigative journalism and activism. The discussion is based on two cases of public debate (1997 and 2006) about the Danish pesticide producer Cheminova and its export of dangerous pesticides to developing countries. Both debates were set in motion by documentaries produced by freelance journalists and broadcast on the national public television station, Danmarks Radio. The article argues that investigative journalism is a political act within the boundaries of professional standards. The article analyses empirically, (1) how the documentaries had an agenda-setting effect; (2) how civil society organizations were involved in both documentaries; and (3) how the documentaries framed the story in a way that put Cheminova on the defensive.

KEYWORDS activism; Cheminova; democracy; documentary; investigative journalism; publicity

Activist Journalism and Democratic Debate

In May 1997, the Danish public broadcaster, *Danmarks Radio*, aired a documentary about the export of pesticides from Denmark to Guatemala and Nicaragua. The pesticides were produced and exported by Cheminova, a large Danish chemical producer. Legally, the corporation had done nothing wrong. While not legal in Denmark, the exported pesticides were under no restrictions in the recipient countries. Instead, the documentary set off an intense *moral* debate. In vivid images the documentary showed how workers handled the pesticides without proper knowledge or protection. The images were juxtaposed with disturbing statistical evidence on the number of workers that die or become ill from using the pesticides every year and with Cheminova's official assurances of responsibility and high moral standards. After the broadcast of the documentary, politicians, pension funds, unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media all contributed to a heated public debate about Cheminova's and the Danish state's responsibilities. As the public pressure mounted Cheminova felt compelled to offer some concessions. Nine years later a striking repetition of events occurred. In June 2006, a documentary was shown on *Danmarks Radio*, this time highlighting Cheminova activities in India. Again, the effect was immediate; an intense public debate followed by ameliorative steps and promises by Cheminova.

The ability of the two documentaries and their investigative journalism to spark public debate and place an issue on the public agenda was undoubtedly observed by civil society organizations (CSOs) with envy. This is what almost every CSO dreams of: to have their material broadcast on national television and in front of a large audience. On the other hand, CSOs working on issues related to the environment, globalization and

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developing countries could only nod sympathetically to the documentaries and their public repercussions. Although not of the CSOs' own making, the documentaries created a receptive climate for issues that CSOs normally struggle hard and often in vain to bring to public attention. It is this activist-like dimension of the documentaries and their investigative journalism that is analyzed in this article. I deliberately say *activist-like* because *the documentaries were not primarily produced with an activist agenda in mind, but on the basis of professional journalistic standards*. Nevertheless, the way they were framed and the effects they produced have interesting affinities with what we usually expect from CSOs.

To many, suggestions of an activist-like journalism may seem a contradiction in terms. Indeed, the majority of works on the CSO–media relationship can be characterized as “skeptical” (but see Rojecki, 2002 and Walgrave and Mannsens, 2000 for more positive accounts). The skeptical approach generally emphasizes the unbalanced and biased nature of the relationship. At least four aspects emerge from the literature: (1) that the media systematically favor elite voices over CSO voices (Bennett et al., 2004; Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986, p. 77; Molotch and Lester, 1975; Ryan, 1991); (2) that the relationship between CSOs and media is asymmetrical in the sense that CSOs need the media more than vice versa (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993; Rucht, 2004a, p. 35); (3) that the media generally distort CSO messages, for example through a focus on dramatic and violent events (Gitlin, 1980; Halloran et al., 1970; Kielbowicz and Scherer, 1986, p. 76; Rucht, 2005, p. 170); and (4) that the media portray CSO activists in disparaging ways (Entman and Rojecki, 1993; van Zoonen, 1992). While I am convinced of the overall relevance and precision of these arguments, they also remain problematically one-dimensional. They depict a situation where CSOs and media are systematically at odds. Apparently working on the basis of wildly different rationales, there appears to be very little common ground and interest overlap. I challenge the simplicity of this assumption through an analysis of the two Cheminova debates in 1997 and 2006.

In a broader theoretical and sociological sense, I see at least two contributions emerging from such an analysis. The first concerns the way we usually study CSOs. In a recent article, Dieter Rucht (2004b) observes how too much research on CSOs is stuck in an unfortunate dichotomy, which pits CSOs against an opponent of some kind: a state, a corporation, an institution. Rucht, instead, calls for a broader conception that situates CSOs in an interactional dynamic with media, parties and other movements. This is an important point. First, because it underlines how modern democracies are “movement societies” (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998; Rucht and Neidhardt, 2002) in which CSOs are an integrated part of the political process. And second, because it opens movement research to interdisciplinary dialogues. But even in this interactional approach, CSOs are kept at the analytical centre. While this certainly makes sense in many cases, I want to argue that the complexity of modern democratic societies compels movement scholars to move beyond such movement-centrism. Movement-centrism desensitizes us to those cases of claims-making and activism where CSOs play minor or less visible roles. This does not necessarily sideline CSOs. Rather, it indicates a pattern where CSOs may positively interact and/or share motivations and objectives with other social and political actors; in this case, journalists.

The second contribution of the article's discussion brings us to the heart of (essentially normative) debates on the media and the character and quality of the modern public sphere (e.g. Bennett, 1990; Ferree et al., 2002; Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990;

Habermas, 1989 [1962], 1992). To exaggerate a little, the skeptical literature sketches a situation in which CSOs struggle to enrich public debate with critical issues, but are continually stopped or transformed beyond recognition by the media filter. The cases studied here indicate a different pattern of pluralism and dynamism in which investigative journalism can contribute to public debates in modern democracies in ways that are at least partly congenial with CSOs. The combination of professional journalistic standards focused on hard facts and the activist-like and critical dimension inherent in most investigative journalism is well-suited to bring issues to public attention that are overlooked or purposefully hidden. This debate will be taken up again in the conclusion.

Investigative Journalism and the Tension Between Objective and Critical Reporting

How can we theoretically understand the activist-like role of journalism in modern democracies? I propose that we view journalists as parts of a complex field of democratic publicity. Democratic publicity does not imply that representation in the public sphere is evenly distributed. It means simply that politics in modern democracies is shaped in the public sphere and journalists and media are active participants in this process (Gamson, 1998, p. 62). This section focuses on a genre of journalism with a particular affinity to activism: investigative journalism. The main point of the coming discussion is that *investigative journalism is a political act within the boundaries of professional journalistic standards*.

Most of the news day's output consists of routine description and analysis. Investigative journalism in turn attempts to go below the surface to uncover instances of abuse, fraud or neglect. Since it consists of thorough research over long periods of time, it has much in common with scientific research. Like scientific research, investigative journalism is based on professional standards of objectivity and factual accuracy. At the same time, however, it is often also more political in the *choice of topic* and in the *framing* of its stories.

The distinction between choice of topic and framing is similar to the distinction between agenda-setting and framing as two steps in the same process (McCombs and Ghanem, 2003). When the media gives attention to a topic it is likely to become part of the public agenda. The ability of the media to make a problematic situation known to a large audience is often enough to make politicians and corporations react in fear of losing legitimacy, votes and profits. Even if such media actions are wrapped in an aura of objectivity they are still political in the sense that they involve conscious decisions to print or air that particular story and not some other story. But there is more to the political role than simply choosing a story and publicizing it. No matter how objective and true to the facts, journalism always involves *framing* the story (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). The journalist has a huge amount of material that he or she needs to condense into a story. This process is full of choices that may be more or less consciously made. Some facts will be chosen over others; some sources will be given more space than others. And in the television medium, images will be selected from among an infinite number of alternatives. This demonstrates that journalism, and perhaps especially investigative journalism, is a narrative with dramaturgical elements that could have been presented in many other ways that would not necessarily have been less "true" (Ettema and Glasser, 1988; Lund, 2002, pp. 43–5; Protess et al., 1991).

Investigative journalism usually involves an *exposé*, the unmasking of a situation of abuse or neglect (Gans, 2004 [1979], p. 56). *Exposés* are intended to trigger moral indignation. They do this by employing dichotomies of guilt and innocence and victims and perpetrators (Protess et al., 1991, pp. 5–10) and by placing them in the context of deep-seated societal norms about justice, freedom and democracy (Lund, 2002, chap. 6). *Exposés* often lead to what some authors have called media storms (Pedersen and Kjær, 2000) where a wide variety of social actors and media become involved in public debate. It is important to stress that investigative journalism is not about political statements. Despite the narrative and dramaturgical form, it needs to be based on professional journalistic criteria of objectivity. The facts must be correct and different sources and interpretations must be presented in the analysis. This ritual of objectivity is intended to maintain professional protection and autonomy for journalists and the media in general (Tuchman, 1972). In fact, it could be argued that investigative journalism needs to be especially thorough and balanced. By revealing abuse and neglect it will invariably attract criticism and opposition from the actors it puts under investigation. Any weakness in the factual material will be used by opponents to discredit the journalists and their product (Lund, 2002, pp. 42–3). Investigative journalism can also claim neutrality by referring to its social role. The interest in neglect and power abuse is linked to the media's self-perception as watchdog. This role transcends the mundane world of politics in the sense that the revelation of such situations can be said to be in the general interest of the population. Power abuse is a *democratic* problem no matter where the "perpetrator" is located in the social field.

The upshot of these observations is that investigative journalism may in some instances perform activist-like roles. CSOs are also in the business of putting themes on the social agenda and framing them in specific ways. However, it is important to emphasize that these roles are only *activist-like*. Investigative journalism is not primarily motivated by political aims in the same way that CSOs are. One of the main differences is that most of today's media exist on pure market terms. Investigative journalism may of course have certain personal convictions and political orientations as a driving force, but it is also motivated by the search for the good story that enhances professional reputation and sells newspapers or increases viewer ratings. Further, as discussed already, journalism must maintain an objective aura in the sense that the facts presented are correct and that all involved parties are given or at least offered a voice in the report. CSOs also need to be credible and base their arguments on facts; indeed, this is the very basis of legitimacy for most CSOs (Sikkink, 2002, p. 314). However, CSOs are more readily accepted as representing a certain political position. This freedom is not granted to journalism, not even its investigative variant.

It should be emphasized that investigative journalism, despite its activist dimensions, is not the same as public journalism (e.g. Bro, 2004; Rosen, 1999). Public journalism in general outlines a more directly activist role for journalism than one finds in the investigative strand. In public journalism, journalists cannot confine themselves to exposing wrongdoings. He or she must actively engage in the struggle to devise alternatives and forge changes. Investigative journalists may also be concerned with social and political change, but they limit their journalistic role to uncovering the unpleasant facts and leave the business of change to politicians and CSOs.

The Documentaries and the Debates that Followed

This section consists of three elements: (1) a detailed description of the documentaries; (2) interviews with the journalists involved; and (3) a map of the public debate following the documentaries.

The Documentaries

The documentaries are described in detail in Tables 1 and 2. The descriptions are based on two intensive viewings and provide information on two aspects of the journalistic product: the oral (the narration) and the audio-visual.

The Journalistic Process

This section describes the production processes related to the making of the documentaries. The data presented are based on two in-depth interviews with the journalists behind the documentaries.

"Made in Denmark" (Jakob Gottschau). Gottschau is a freelance journalist working in Copenhagen. He founded the independent TV production company *Express*. *Express* TV focuses on issues related to poverty, the environment, development and globalization. Gottschau describes how he became aware of the problems related to pesticide use in developing countries during a trip to Costa Rica in 1995. He then started to consider whether or not Cheminova could be active in Central America. Greenpeace Denmark had tried to campaign on the pesticide issue before, but according to Gottschau they had not presented substantial evidence. Gottschau explains how the first step in the process was to document with hard facts that Cheminova was active in Central America. These facts were mainly found in US databases on import–export, which provided detailed information on dates, destinations and types of pesticides (this information was later corroborated during the shooting of the documentary, when Gottschau found numerous official records with information about Cheminova's practices as well as pesticide containers with Cheminova's name on them). When this documentation was in place Gottschau could proceed with the project and seek funding. He describes how he was ambivalent about the role he was about to take. Despite seeing himself as a critical journalist he was afraid of appearing as a judge and of involving his own standpoints too directly. The decisive factor, however, was Cheminova's public proclamation that they were acting in a socially and environmentally responsible way. The ability to juxtapose these statements with contradictive empirical realities, Gottschau felt, would enable him to present the problematic in a more balanced way and keep his own moral judgments out of the story. The "They say one thing, but do something else" contradiction consequently became the central argument of the story. Gottschau notes how it is becoming increasingly difficult to sell investigative journalistic products to the major media organizations in Denmark.

According to Gottschau, the documentary was made with support from Ibis, a large Danish NGO working on development and democracy in developing countries. Ibis provided assistance in the period of shooting the documentary in Central America. During Gottschau's trips to Guatemala and Nicaragua he was assisted by Ibis' representative in Central America, Jørgen Laurvig (a personal acquaintance). Laurvig's assistance consisted

TABLE 1

Oral and audio-visual aspects of "Made in Denmark" (Jakob Gottschau)

Oral	Audio-visual
Every year 20 million farm workers poisoned, 10 thousand die. Commentary from local men and women; describe symptoms.	Images of fields being sprayed with pesticides (solemn music).
A Danish company has exported some of the most poisonous pesticides to developing countries.	A skull appears with the words "Made in Denmark" (concludes the introduction).
Cheminova has been highly successful in pesticide export; especially parathion and methylparathion.	Images from Cheminova's factory in Denmark.
Cheminova is owned by the University of Aarhus and various pension funds. Interview with chemistry professor Finn Bro Rasmussen; says very poisonous pesticides. Parathion and methylparathion no longer legal in Denmark; Cheminova produces 5000 tons for export every year.	Images of cargo ships (apparently departing for Central America). Images of fields being sprayed with pesticides.
Quote from Cheminova's information manager Kurt Aabo (from radio interview in 1996); says only export to countries where pesticides are used responsibly.	Images of cargo ships (apparently departing for Central America). Images of fields being sprayed with pesticides.
Interview with representative from official office for pesticide poisoning in Guatemala. Interviewer asks if pesticides are used responsibly in Guatemala; answers no.	
Refers back to Aabo comments on responsible use; concludes that on the basis of the above information Cheminova should not sell pesticides in Guatemala.	
Official import records in Guatemala show Cheminova is very active in the pesticide market.	Images of records with Cheminova's name on them.
Interview with representative for official office for registration of pesticides; says 100 tons methylparathion from Cheminova this year (1996) (four times more than last year).	Images of pesticide spraying from airplane (solemn music).
Accident in 1996 where women are sent into field after spraying; interview with women describing symptoms.	Images of containers being filled with pesticides.
Pesticides necessary for production (especially cotton). Interview with Douglas Murray, professor, Colorado State University; says methylparathion introduced early 1950s.	
Cheminova has a long history of exporting methylparathion.	Images of barrels with Cheminova's name on them.
Interview with representative for Nicaraguan company that uses Cheminova products.	

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Oral	Audio-visual
Interview with 20-year-old worker exposed to pesticide poisoning.	Images of barrels and spraying machines on the back of workers.
FAO pesticide black list in preparation; will include parathion and methylparathion.	Images of fields being sprayed.
Reference to Aabo comments about responsible use; reference to WHO documents that say methylparathion must not be hand sprayed and only used by workers with proper education.	Images of fields being hand sprayed.
Interview with woman poisoned by pesticides; holds a small child that was also affected through breast milk.	
Murray interview; says pesticides typically used irresponsibly; poisoning occurs through the skin.	Images of fields being hand sprayed.
	Images of containers being filled with pesticides; shows bare feet in sandals; shows handling with bare hands; spraying from airplane (solemn music).
Interview with WHO representative in Nicaragua; says pesticide market unregulated. Interview with street vendor; says education not necessary.	
Murray interview; says complete lack of knowledge about effects; examples of parents using pesticides to kill lice on children.	
Cheminova's environmental policy formulates ambitious goals in relation to responsible use.	
Murray interview; corporations cannot control responsible use.	
Denmark has given 10 million dollars in aid to Central America to treat and investigate effects of pesticide poisoning.	
Interview with WHO representative; need for systematic research and treatment in relation to pesticide poisoning.	
Interview with workers exposed to poisoning; ready to work again.	Images from cotton farm and barrels with pesticides. Images of spraying from airplane and families with children (solemn music). Images of children touching crops after spraying; bicycling between the fields.
Foremen at farm say they cannot control children's exposure.	
Murray interview; more focus on long-term effects.	Images of workers being paid at farm.

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Oral	Audio-visual
Reference to Aabo comments about responsible use in which he ensures that Cheminova will stop sales if informed about irresponsible use; narrator's voice says Cheminova knows about products' effects.	
Cheminova has not wished to comment on discrepancies between their ethical standards and the realities documented in the documentary; despite assurances of openness and transparency Cheminova has not wished to take part in the documentary.	
Interview with Bjørn Albinus (director of Cheminova) from 1992; says Cheminova does not export to developing countries.	
Export figures are usually available to the public; but in this case they are secret due to competition considerations.	
PIERS in New York collect information about products that arrive in the United States, South America and Central America.	Images from New York.
Data from PIERS show extensive Cheminova exports; not only to Central America, but also numerous countries in South America.	Images of document with information about countries (somber drum).
	Images of spray airplane taking off (somber drum) (concludes the documentary).

The documentary was broadcast on *Danmarks Radio* on 1 May 1997. Its duration was 34 minutes. Where nothing else is indicated the text in the table refers to the documentary's narrator.

of local knowledge and fluency in Spanish. The project was funded by TV94, the media branch of LO, a major Danish trade union. TV94 became involved when Gottschau had provided solid evidence of Cheminova activity in Central America.

"Når tilbud dræber" ["A Killer Bargain"] (Tom Heinemann): Heinemann is a freelance journalist working in Copenhagen and runs the one-man media company Heinemann Medier. He currently works on issues related to economy and globalization.

Heinemann is keen to underline that he is not a campaigner. He does, however, self-identify as a critical and investigative journalist motivated by power abuse. As Gottschau, he describes investigative journalism as an up-hill battle today. Heinemann has been working on issues related to the global economy since the 1990s. He has traveled and worked in India numerous times and was aware of social and environmental problems in that country. But, he says, it is very difficult to sell stories about developing countries to Danish broadcasters. They will always ask about the Danish angle to the story. The fact that Cheminova has a factory in India provided that link (the documentary also shows how Danish warehouses buy textiles in India produced under conditions severely affecting the health of workers). As also noted by Gottschau, Heinemann points out how the discrepancy between what is being said and what is actually done was a motivating factor for the documentary. The project was initially almost shelved because of a lack of funding. But Heinemann and his production company finally succeeded in getting support from the Danish Ministry of Education and the Danish Ministry of Environment, as well as from *Danmarks Radio*. Nevertheless, there were still considerable gaps in the budget,

TABLE 2

Oral and audio-visual aspects of "Når tilbud dræber" (Tom Heinemann)

Oral	Audio-visual
There is nothing as comfortable as a soft towel.	Small child being bathed by mother and wrapped in towel (up tempo melody).
Towels, sheets and other textiles are marketed at low prices.	Pictures of logos of major Danish warehouses.
What the consumers do not know is how the goods are manufactured; often under very dangerous conditions.	
For the warehouses it is about profit.	
For months the producers of the program have unsuccessfully tried to get in dialogue with the warehouses; apparently the issue is highly controversial.	
	The introduction is concluded with the image of a barrel and a skull and the title of the documentary.
Every morning at 9.20 the so-called cancer train leaves the station for a cheap charity hospital for cancer patients.	Images of Indian railway and train (slightly melancholic oriental music).
The number of Indian farm workers with cancer has exploded in recent years; victims in the struggle for global markets where price seems to be the decisive factor for consumers.	
Many of the cancer-stricken workers come from Punjab and an area known as the cotton belt; Punjab is the first step in a long process before products reach consumers in the rich part of the world.	Images of cotton fields in Punjab (oriental music).
Pesticides are being used everywhere and one of the producers is Cheminova.	Images of pesticide barrels and hand spraying of fields.
Cotton worms can ruin the lives of farmers and farm workers.	Close-up image of cotton worm.
Many of the products are so poisonous that they are illegal in Denmark; but not in India.	Images of pesticide containers with Cheminova's name on them.
Interview with farm worker; speaks about symptoms of poisoning.	
Interview with representative from Indian institute for work and occupational health; tendency to overuse of pesticides.	
	Images of hand spraying of fields.
Interview with seller of Cheminova products; says very popular.	Image of Cheminova's name in big letters on Indian building.
Pesticides are very dangerous and therefore provided with instructions for use; but what happens when many cannot read?	
Interview with seller of products; someone else in the family can read the instructions.	
But that is not good enough (refers to statement by professor emeritus in chemistry, Finn Bro Rasmussen).	Images of pesticide barrels.
Products are often accompanied by pictograms for illiterates.	
We saw no one taking any precautionary measures during stay.	Images of hand spraying.

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Oral	Audio-visual
The number of cancer hospitals in the cotton belt has gone up from one to nine.	Images of the cancer train.
Interview with doctor at cancer hospital; increase from 1000 cancer cases in 1998 to 6000 today, mostly farm workers; says connection between cancer and pesticides.	
Interview with Finn Bro Rasmussen; says there are both long- and short-term effects of pesticide exposure.	
Interview with doctor from cancer hospital (same as above); says no one uses gloves or washes hands.	
Interview with Finn Bro Rasmussen; says knowledge of effects have been available for many years.	
Indian environmental organizations have shown the pesticides are accumulated in the body.	Images of hand spraying (oriental music).
Interview with representative for Indian NGO, Centre for Science and Environment; blood samples reveal traces of pesticides in farm workers (the concentration in Punjabi workers is very high).	
Cotton accounts for 5 percent of crops, but uses 50 percent of pesticides.	Images of handling and loading of cotton (lively oriental music).
Factory has been in use for nine years; out of 11 products manufactured at the factory, seven are illegal in Denmark or European Union.	Image of Cheminova's factory in India and of sign outside factory with names of pesticides being produced; names of pesticides are highlighted on yellow background with skull. Image of quote from Cheminova website.
Cheminova says unfortunately accidents happen in the use of monocrotophos; monocrotophos most important product.	
Monocrotophos can change genes in humans and animals; illegal in Denmark since 1991.	Images of pesticide containers.
Interview with Finn Bro Rasmussen; says some pesticides on par with weapons of mass destruction.	
Interview with citizen in village close to factory; complains about air pollution and symptoms resulting from fumes.	Images of serious rashes.
We have continuously asked Cheminova to comment on conditions in the village, but unsuccessfully.	Image of rashes alongside image of Bjørn Albinus (director of Cheminova), smiling and wearing a suit.
Danish wage earners are owners of Cheminova; ATP and LD (large Danish labor market funds) and the University of Aarhus own 90 percent of the shares in Cheminova. The University of Aarhus has also refused to comment on the issue.	Images of the University of Aarhus.
Pesticides end up in ground water; Indian environmental NGOs have found pesticides in Coca Cola and Pepsi.	Image of Indian vegetable market.

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Oral	Audio-visual
Interview with representative for Centre for Science and Environment; says pesticides in ground water. India does not recognize the seriousness of the problem.	
Interview with representative from Indian NGO, Toxics Links; criticize overuse of pesticides and lack of knowledge of proper handling and effects.	
Interview with family at cancer hospital; say they know effects well.	Images from cancer hospital (slightly melancholic music).
Interview with representative for WHO Southeast Asia; says problem well-known and something must be done.	
Interview with representative for Institute of Health Management Research; says effects expectable. Calls corporations merchants of death and says that they market murder.	Images of dying boy at cancer hospital. Images of sick people in their beds.
Interview with Finn Bro Rasmussen; says merchants of death is apt term.	
We have been trying to get comments from Cheminova and the University of Aarhus, but without success.	Images of Bjørn Albinus and Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen (rector of the University of Aarhus).

The documentary was broadcast on *Danmarks Radio* on 19 June 2006. Its duration was 57 minutes (however, only about 20 minutes of the documentary directly concerned Cheminova; the remainder was focused on other Danish and Scandinavian corporations' activities in India). Where nothing else is indicated the text refers to the documentary's narrator. The English title of the documentary is 'A Killer Bargain'.

meaning that Heinemann and others involved in the project have had to work without wages in some periods of the production process.

As shown in Table 2, Heinemann uses representatives from Indian CSOs extensively. He also describes how in the initial research process he made use of information provided through the websites of Indian CSOs. This information convinced him that there was a story to be told about pesticides in India. Heinemann is careful to emphasize that he did not promise the CSOs anything in return for the participation. He describes how he used them mainly because their information was better documented and more credible compared to official sources. In Denmark, Heinemann says, he did not have any contact with CSOs before or after the documentary's broadcast. Heinemann is also keen to stress that he did everything possible to get comments from the relevant actors in Denmark during the research process, but none of them wished to take part. These include Cheminova, The University of Aarhus and pension funds (see Table 4).

The Debates

This section maps the public debate following the two documentaries (Tables 3 and 4). Methodologically, the section builds on news items from two national newspapers, *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*.¹ These two quality newspapers could be

TABLE 3
The 1997 Cheminova debate

Actors	Claims and activities
Politicians	
S. Auken (Social Democrat, environment minister)	Critical of Cheminova practices; calls for withdrawal of products; defends documentary.
E. Gerner Nielsen (Social-Liberal Party)	Critical of Cheminova practices; refers to moral responsibility; threatens state intervention.
S. Gade (Socialist People's Party)	Critical of Cheminova practices; calls for changes in development policy towards sustainable production.
Organizations and independent experts	
Ibis (development NGO)	Demands a stop to the export of pesticides not legal in Denmark.
Greenpeace Denmark	Welcomes moral debate; note that earlier attempts by the organization to generate attention were overheard.
SID (union)	Calls for global program against pesticides.
Finn Bro Rasmussen (chemistry professor and pesticide expert)	Critical of the use of parathion and methylparathion.
Cheminova	
Director Bjørn Albinus	Without pesticides farming in poor countries not possible or less profitable; if Cheminova leaves the market competitors with no moral scruples will take over. Promises development of less poisonous products; recognizes need for education of local workers. Sends delegation to Guatemala and Nicaragua; stops sale of methylparathion to Nicaragua, but not Guatemala; says no deaths could be associated with Cheminova products; questions documentary.
Media	
Jakob Gottschau (documentary journalist) and chief sub-editor Jørgen Ramskov at <i>Danmarks Radio Politiken</i>	Criticizes H. Lehmann for accusations of "staging" (see below).
Communication analyst N. Brinkmann	Investigative journalists report critically on conditions in Guatemala in relation to the use of methylparathion; own investigation. Criticizes what he calls the media's smearing campaigns against Cheminova and other corporations.
Pension funds	
Magistrenes pensionskasse	Sells Cheminova shares to protest policies.
Other pension funds	Criticize Cheminova, but do not sell shares.
University of Aarhus	
Rector H. Lehmann	Accuses documentary of being "staged" and supports Cheminova and the university's majority share in Cheminova.
Student council and university employees	Critical of H. Lehmann's position and the university's majority share in Cheminova.

The debate map covers the period 1 May 1997 to 24 June 1998. The total number of news items is 89.

TABLE 4
The 2006 Cheminova debate

Actors	Claims and activities
Politicians and international institutions	
Connie Hedegaard (Conservative, environment minister)	Critical of Cheminova; says practice morally problematic.
Dan Jørgensen (MEP, Social Democrat)	Critical of Cheminova; says practice morally problematic.
Ole Christensen (MEP, Social Democrats)	Critical of Cheminova practices; calls for EU measures.
Steen Gade (Socialist People's Party)	Critical of Cheminova; calls for national meeting on global responsibility.
Eyvind Vesselbo (Liberals)	Critical of Cheminova.
FAO	Calls on Cheminova to stop sale of dangerous pesticides.
Organizations and independent experts	
3F (union)	Critical of Cheminova; says Danish unions must monitor global practices of Danish corporations. Calls for international convention on use of pesticides.
Folkekirkens nødhjælp (humanitarian assistance NGO)	Expresses indignation over Cheminova practices and government inaction; says alternatives exist.
Finn Bro Rasmussen (chemistry professor and pesticide expert)	
Cheminova	
Director Bjørn Albinus	Denies alleged relationship between pesticides (especially monocrotophos) and cancer; argues that pesticides are central to survival in developing countries. Promises ameliorative measures and more openness (annual reports).
Media	
Politiken	Critical article on corporations' empty promises; critical interview of Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen; calls for University of Aarhus to adopt more critical stance. Own investigative project in Brazil; finds dangerous use of methylparathion. Criticizes campaign against Cheminova.
Jyllands-Posten	
Pension funds	
ATP and Lønmodtagernes Dyrtdidsfond	Ask Cheminova to explain practices and stop selling monocrotophos; will not sell shares; refers to FAO code of conduct in relation to pesticides.
University of Aarhus	
Rector Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen	Expresses confidence in Cheminova; also call for improvements.
Arne Rolighed (member of university's governing board)	Adopts more critical stance than Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen.
Employees	Some groups express concern over university-Cheminova connection.

The debate map covers the period 19 June to 23 December 2006. The total number of news items is 58.

expected to cover the debates closely, and as they represent different political orientations they should provide a representative picture of public debate on the issue. To extract the news items, the electronic database Infomedia was employed. The initial search was deliberately broad in order to identify as many claims and claims-makers as possible. The search word "Cheminova" thus yielded 328 items for *Politiken* and 381 for *Jyllands-Posten* in the period 1 May 1997 to 1 January 2007. These items were read to

identify and extract only those that dealt with Cheminova's export of pesticides to developing countries in the following two periods: 1 May 1997 to 24 June 1998 and 19 June to 23 December 2006 (in both cases the first date in the period is the date of the broadcast of the program; the last date is the date at which the debates can be said to have disappeared or considerably waned). This left 84 items for *Politiken* and 63 items for *Jyllands-Posten* (89 for the 1997 debate and 58 for the 2006 debate). All of them were provided with a content summary and placed in chronological order.

Differences and Similarities Between Activism and Investigative Journalism

This section analyzes the documentaries' (1) agenda-setting effect; (2) involvement of CSOs; and (3) framing.

Agenda-setting

Tables 3 and 4 demonstrate the agenda-setting effect of the documentaries. In both cases the documentaries came at a time where there was very little or no public debate on the issue of pesticide exports to developing countries. In other words, the documentaries sparked an extensive debate that was not there before. It is worth noting how Greenpeace Denmark had tried to generate attention before the broadcast of "Made in Denmark" in 1997. This fact was observed both by Greenpeace itself in 1997 (see Table 3) and in the interview with Gottschau. The debate maps demonstrate the breadth of the debates. In both cases the debate soon became a media storm that spread to the political level and to actors economically tied to Cheminova through investment (pension funds and the University of Aarhus). The documentaries also inspired other media to pursue investigative projects. In both 1997 and 2006, *Politiken* launched its own investigations.

The ability to set the public agenda is also central to CSOs. Because CSOs do not possess legal or political decision-making powers, their primary goal is typically to generate awareness about an issue in such a way that it ignites public debate. There are important similarities and differences between CSO and investigative journalism in this respect. Both can be said to have an interest in setting the public agenda, but for different reasons. For CSOs, agenda-setting is the main road to obtaining political goals. For the investigative journalist agenda-setting has at least two motivations: on the one hand, it may lead to results reflecting the journalist's personal convictions, and on the other hand, the ability to set the agenda with a journalistic product confers professional status on the journalist. As it emerges from the interview with Heinemann, the investigative journalist will go to great lengths to downplay the personal motives and highlight the professional ones. This adherence to the ritual of objectivity is not observed by CSOs in the same way. As noted in the theoretical section, CSOs are more readily accepted as actors with political goals. However, there are more similarities here than immediately meets the eye. Many modern CSOs are professional organizations which find themselves in a continuous struggle for organizational survival and development. The CSO sector in modern democracies is consequently characterized by competition among CSOs. In other words, setting the agenda can do more for a CSO than simply leading to goal achievement. It can also enhance the professional status of the CSO in the eyes of the public, the media and the political system, and thus contribute to its future survival and development.

The CSO–Documentary Nexus

CSOs were involved in both debates. However, this was more notable in 1997. As Jakob Gottschau states, Ibis became a key player in the 1997 debate, even to the extent that, according to Gottschau, many associated the initiation of the debate with Ibis. This underlines the rather blurred boundaries between the documentaries and CSO goals and values. In the 1997 case Gottschau notes how the process of making the documentary benefited from the assistance from Ibis employee Jørn Laurvig. As Gottschau observes, the collaboration was partly the result of personal relationships. It seems reasonable to say that if Ibis had been unsure of the overall orientation of the documentary, they would not have entered into such collaboration. The fact that Ibis was subsequently able to exploit the awareness generated by the documentary suggests that the debate climate it created was conducive to a furthering of Ibis' claims. The critical position taken by the documentary placed Cheminova in a defensive and morally problematic position from the outset. The documentary thus opened a public space with considerable resonance for claims that judged Cheminova practices morally untenable. It is also worth noting how the 1997 documentary was financed by TV94, a TV production unit under LO, a large Danish union, devoted to supporting journalism with a critical edge.

In 2006, Danish CSO involvement in the debate was less conspicuous. CSOs, however, were still centrally involved. As evidenced by Table 2, the documentary extensively used Indian CSOs as sources of information. Although Heinemann is eager to stress that he was not defending the case of the CSOs, it is clear that there is a mutual interest at play: the journalist gets information that supports the overall critical line of his inquiry, while the CSOs are probably glad to share their information with the journalist in the hope of achieving the media and public attention that most CSOs value.

Framing and Blaming

Framing, whether we are talking about CSO activities or investigative journalism, always involves a definition of a problem and the placing of responsibility for that problem. The problem that both documentaries revolve around is the handling by workers in developing countries of highly toxic pesticides without proper knowledge and protection. This is relatively straightforward. The more complex framing work in the documentaries concerns the chain of responsibility. Legally, Cheminova is on safe ground: the pesticides are not illegal in the user countries and the products are provided with guidelines for their safe use. Instead, the strategy used in both documentaries is to lay moral responsibility at the door of Cheminova. This is achieved by juxtaposing the corporation's public formulations about responsibility with the empirical realities on the ground. These facts come from the journalists' own investigation and from a range of presumably credible experts in the field (e.g. CSOs and university professors) as well as from various official records (see Tables 1 and 2). The discrepancy between ideals and reality can be the result of either a lack of knowledge on the part of Cheminova or conscious neglect of available information. Although the latter situation will more forcefully place direct responsibility on Cheminova, both situations can be used to argue that Cheminova is implicated in the death and illness of workers in developing countries. The journalistic use of this tension is a central point in both Gottschau's and Heinemann's descriptions of the journalistic process. This is so because it relieves the journalists of making personally driven moral judgments. The discrepancy between the ambitious goals

and the empirical data is a fact that, provided the information is accurate and credible, is not created by the journalist, but simply uncovered and exposed by him. The political activity of blame, in other words, is detached from any concrete claims-maker; the blaming is done by the facts and, in a way, by the corporation itself.

Balance is a central journalistic standard and part of the ritual of objectivity. To avoid accusations of bias, the journalist needs to allow all parties to express their view. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, both documentaries stress how they offered Cheminova a chance to take part in the documentary and how this was declined. This helps to cover the journalist's back and avoid the documentary being perceived as partisan. Such statements also have another function. By highlighting Cheminova's disinclination to partake, they inevitably cast a shadow of suspicion over them. It leaves the viewer with the impression that something is hidden. This time blaming is not so much accomplished by the facts, but by the corporation itself. Again, the journalist can appear personally detached.

In the process of placing blame and responsibility both CSOs and investigative journalists often make use of innocent victims. Innocence on the part of victims more easily makes the alleged perpetrator stand out as morally indefensible. Both documentaries involve innocent victims. In 1997 we see several interviews with local workers exposed to pesticide poisoning. At one point a young mother is interviewed, telling us how her infant child was also poisoned through the breast milk. Adults can be constructed as innocent, but children are inherently so. In the 2006 documentary we are also confronted with several persons affected in various ways. One of these also involves a child who, the narrator tells us, is dying from brain cancer, apparently as a result of exposure to pesticides.

The documentaries make extensive use of audio-visual effects. Both documentaries conclude their introductions with images of a skull and other visual effects that borrow from the imagery of poison barrels and chemical warning signs. Throughout the documentaries we repetitiously see images of workers hand-spraying fields without protection. In the 1997 documentary, for example, there is a sequence where the camera focuses on bare feet in sandals and images of pesticides in contact with bare hands. In 2006 we see close-ups of serious rashes. Another recurring visual element is images of pesticide containers and barrels with Cheminova's name on them. The images are often accompanied by music chosen to create an atmosphere of sadness and seriousness. This is probably most marked in the 1997 documentary where several sequences are accompanied by melancholic and ceremonious music of Latin American origin. The 2006 documentary also uses slightly melancholic music, only this time of oriental origin to fit the geographical location.

Conclusions

In the interviews both Gottschau and Heinemann underline how investigative journalism is increasingly sidelined and media space taken over by entertainment and infotainment. Such a development is lamentable, at least if one believes that CSOs and investigative journalism contributes positively to democratic publicity. The motivation of CSOs and investigative journalists to uncover injustices and wrongdoings helps to keep alive the critical zeal that is the lifeblood of a vibrant public sphere. From this position the activist element in investigative journalism is not a problem, but a contribution to keeping the social and political conversation alive. Not everyone sees it that way, however. As

noted in Tables 3 and 4 several actors felt that the documentaries studied here crossed the line between journalism and campaigning. The debate that followed the documentaries consequently came to include a general discussion of the role of investigative journalism. The criticisms took at least two forms. The first one, coming from a pro-business point of view and expressed for example by communication analyst Brinkmann, worried about the blurring of the boundary between the market and morality/politics. The second, voiced by the University of Aarhus and Cheminova, lamented how the documentaries painted a black and white picture of realities. By focusing only on the negative effects of pesticides, the documentaries failed to discuss what the situation would be like without the use of pesticides. Yields would significantly decrease and people in developing countries would generally be worse off. Especially the latter argument represents a powerful critique and underlines that we should be careful to think of documentaries as representing the "pure" truth about an issue. And this is precisely the point I have tried to make. Investigative journalists do frame their material in a critical and activist-like manner. However, this only becomes a democratic problem under two conditions: if counter-arguments are excluded or drowned out in the debate that follows and/or if the documentaries do not strictly adhere to getting the facts right and keeping their arguments logical and sound. The last point indicates a particularly delicate balance and it should always be open to debate whether concrete acts of investigative journalism succeed in keeping it.

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NOTE

1. *Politiken* is a centre-left newspaper with a nation-wide week-day circulation of 121,571. *Jyllands-Posten* is a liberal-right newspaper with a national week-day circulation of 143,723, making it the largest newspaper in Denmark (*Politiken* comes in at number three).

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Thomas Olesen, Department of Political Science, University of Aarhus, Bartholins Alle, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark. E-mail: tho@ps.au.dk