In our research on media policy we have started to investigate the rise of “interpretative journalism” – argumentative journalism with a lack of transparency (i.e., these items are not necessarily marked as containing opinion), a lack of proportion and sometimes even a lack of credibility (especially when they make predictions).

The research questions we asked were:
• Why is “interpretative journalism” increasing?
• What does it mean to public discourse and the quality of democracy?
• Is it reasonable to label this as “journalism”?

Between news and views
Journalism can be both informative and interpretative. Both information and interpretation are essential for citizens in a democracy. There are broadly accepted definitions of news journalism and opinion journalism; but few definitions of news analysis and news commentaries exist and these can appear with news information in one article.

The demand
This kind of journalism is on the rise because the 24-hour news cycle increases demand for copy and as a result the “news hole” gets bigger. The media environment is now very competitive and there are limited resources to meet this demand.

In explaining the rise in this kind of journalism two journalists gave these comments:

- News analysis is some kind of commentary; it is not a news article. There is often no intention to balance different views or actors. It is a kind of opinion piece and it should basically be an orientation map for the reader, according to a political journalist on the Swedish tabloid Aftonbladet.
- The purpose is above all to help people understand politics. Politics is perceived by the public to be boring and hard to understand. If you can use news analysis to simplify and explain what is happening and why, then people may realise that politics is not so difficult to understand, said a political journalist on the tabloid Expressen.

The problems are with an “interpretative journalism” that has a lack of transparency, proportion, and credibility, and especially when it feeds into the “argument culture”.

Avoiding pseudo-journalism
Opinion, interpretation and analysis should be carefully labelled and edited. There should be open declarations of policy by media houses. Journalists should admit their mistakes and false predictions. A more deliberative tone (rather than an argumentative tone) is needed in analysis and commentary.

Conclusion
Democracy needs both observers and oracles. Democracy needs accurate journalistic standards for journalists trying to be in both categories at the same time.