

ScienceComm'14

Science coverage in daily newspapers in German-speaking Switzerland

Institutionalisation – Quality assurance

ScienceComm, 19. September 2014, Beromünster

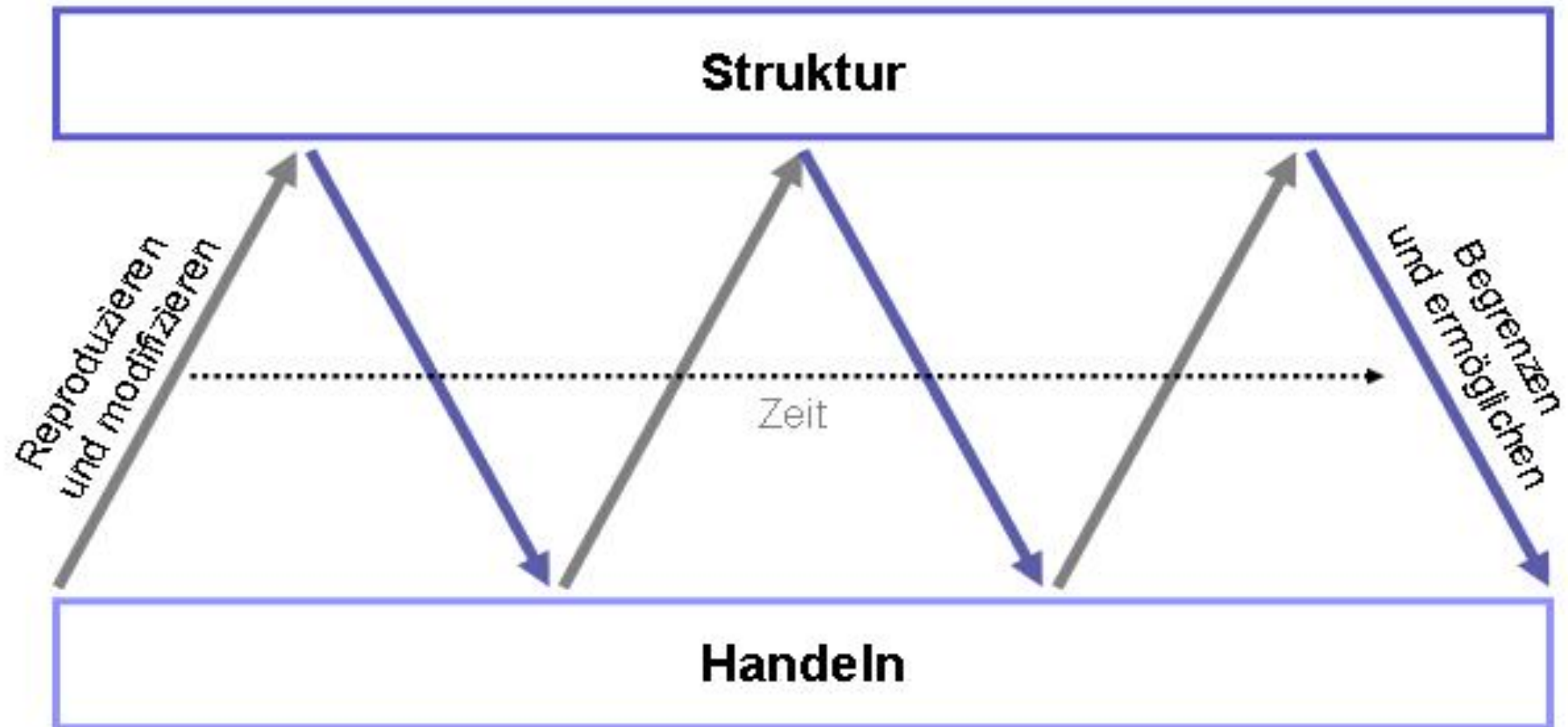
Mirco Saner, MA

IAM Institut für Angewandte Medienwissenschaft

Empirical starting position

- very few broad empirical surveys regarding the status quo of science journalism in Switzerland (especially in daily newspapers)
«...mangelnde Konstanz und Kontinuität...»
(cf. Russ-Mohl 2009: 60; Dahinden/Schanne 2009: 84)
- *survey among 693 Swiss journalists: → 1/3 deals «often» or «very often» with scientific topics, but only 4% possess institut. structures*
(cf. Keel 2011: 146).
- institutionalisation leads to more science coverage
(cf. Hüsler/Schanne 2010: 5 using the example of SDA)
- degree of institutionalisation in daily newspapers shows a distinct structural weakness (cf. Schanne 1986: 30ff./82)

Quality as a consequence of Structuration



Method

- quantitative survey (on the phone) of 23 daily newspapers in German-speaking Switzerland (editorial leaders)
(Mantelblätter, Kopfblätter / local and national)

- content analysis of 103 articles
(topics: astronomy and space flight)

Results: Institutionalisation I

- in 5 of 23 editorial boards science coverage is institutionalised (22%).
- 11 editorial boards possess a section or column, of which 10 are **«externally institutionalised»**
 - more sections than specialists present → PR / SDA / personal contribution?
- *Kopfblätter* often possess only «externally institutionalised» science coverage

Results: Institutionalisation II

- all 7 Mantelredaktionen offer science coverage for their Kopfblätter, but not all Mantelredaktionen possess a institutionalised science coverage
- no daily newspaper plans to change the status quo of science journalism within the next twelve months

Results: Quality assurance (recursiveness & textualisation)

- daily editorial meetings are recorded in writing (7 x yes)
 - feedbacks are recorded in writing (9 x yes)
 - message wish is recorded in writing (3 x yes)
- interaction between textualisation and recursiveness as precondition for a sustainable editorial quality assurance is not yet established in many places. **No correlation between institut. and non-institut. editorial boards.**

Results on coverage about astronomy and space flight

- 103 articles in 10 of the 23 sample media analysed
- mainly episodical (Olympic torch and Thanksgiving on ISS)
→ topic as general framework for human interest or celebrity coverage
- insufficient as far as credibility, relevance, entertainment, and watchdog is concerned

Measured effects of institutionalisation on science coverage

significant relation found between institutionalisation and...

- method of a particular survey is mentioned

- topic's background information are mentioned