

Mass media research

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Mass Media Research

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Mass Media Research

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Abstract

Mass media are defined as media which have their proper program and constitute their own audience. Mass media research, accordingly, deals with the production of programs and the consumption of the audience. For both perspectives, research topics are justified, data sources are introduced, and recommendations for the research infrastructure are given. As for media production, the establishment of a central media content archive is recommended where content analytic time series of public agencies as well as of individual researchers are collected. Furthermore, the development of a unified content analytical system and the promotion of cross-national comparisons are recommended. As for media consumption, the provision of privately funded data for the scientific community, the promotion of cross-national comparisons and the linkage of programs and audience data are recommended.

Keywords: mass media, data archive, content analysis, survey research

Media can be defined as technologies designed to store and distribute meanings. Among media in general, *mass* media can be singled out regarding the meanings produced and the audience receiving them. Regarding the meanings, mass media contents are produced by specialized agencies according to a pre-determined schedule of “(daily) actuality” within in a national or linguistic community (Reitze and Ridder 2006). Mass media have a program: They pre-package contents and distribute them according to some substantive regime and some time schedule – they are media for masses of meanings. Regarding the audience, the technical requirements and possibilities of mass media themselves together with the given language delineate the boundaries of their use so that in principle they are available for each member of a nation or language community, rather than for socially circumscribed groups only – they are media for masses of people.

Mass media, thus, can be distinguished from individual media, such as the book, the letter, the telephone and the internet. The meanings of individual media are produced by persons individually; they are received according to personal needs and have a small, socially restricted audience, such as friends, the family, and professional or intellectual peers which often can be named, e.g. as the “intellectuals” or the “*Bildungsbürgertum*”. Mass media are anchored in a national society; individual media are anchored in – as the internet jargon has it – “communities” which rest on personal, although not face-to-face, relations.

As mass media address nations, their development is a strand of the modernization of nations (Hallin and Mancini 2004, 261). Up to now, modern societies have only three mass media: (daily) newspapers (including periodicals), dating back to the 17th century; radio, originating in the 1920ies; and television, taking the lead in the 1950ies. These three will be dealt with in the following expertise. The internet, however, will not be dealt with as it is an individual rather than a mass medium. It is a technical platform, which is primarily used for personal communication and for personal services, but can also be used in order to distribute the three above mass media (Meulemann 2009). Therefore, it has been labelled a “converged medium” (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2007, 53).

If mass media have a program and constitute an audience, mass media research comprises the communicator oriented perspective on the production of programs and the recipient oriented perspective on the consumption of audiences. In the following, we describe the research topics of both perspectives in section 1, their data source in section 2, and give recommendations for the research infrastructure of both in section 3. For the sake of simplicity, we speak of media only although we refer to mass media throughout.

1. Research Topics and Research Questions

1.1 Production of Programs

The appropriate method to analyze the production of media programs is content analysis. Its topics can be broadly grouped, as a view in media science journals shows (Bonfadelli 2002, 33), into two classes: *analyses of information structure* and *analyses of social problem areas*. The former intend to examine whether the media fulfil their social function as a “fourth public authority” and satisfy the information needs of the audience. The latter intend to examine whether the media discriminate against social groups or represent them adequately.

Analyses of information structure

The core question treated here was whether and how the introduction of the dual broadcasting system in the middle of the 1980ies has marginalized public stations or assimilated them to the new private ones. The *marginalization hypothesis* contends that the public stations lose audience shares in the low social strata to the private stations (Krüger 1992). As a result of this loss, public broadcasting might suffer from a legitimacy crisis concerning their “public mandate of a basic provision” (Bomas 2005) or their “cultural mandate” (Rossen-Stadtfield 2005) as well as their mandatory dues system (Kleinsteuber et al. 1991). The *convergence hypothesis* contends that the public stations tend to neglect their “public mandate” in devoting an ever larger part of their program to mass-attractive entertainment (Brosius and Zubayr 1996, 186), and that the private stations improve their informational broadcasting in order to catch up in this sector with the public stations (Saxer 1980; Schatz et al. 1989).

Numerous content analyses which are mostly concerned with television and only rarely with the radio (Marchal 2004, 704ff) have examined these two hypotheses (Maier 2002, 83; Brosius and Zubayr 1996). However, the results have remained contradictory. On the one hand, Krüger (Krüger and Zapf-Schramm 2008; Krüger 2005b; Krüger 1992; 2001; Krüger and Zapf-Schramm 2002) has compared genres, broadcasts and contents of public and private stations annually since 1985 and regularly detected differences between both groups of channels on each of the three levels (Weiß 2007; Trebbe 2004; Trebbe and Weiß 1994, 175; Meier 2003). On the other hand, assimilative tendencies between public and private stations in the program structure (Faul 1988; 1989; Schatz et al. 1989; Donsbach and Dupré 1995; Hallermann et al. 1998; Sutor 1999; Rossmann et al. 2003), in the presentation of newscasts (Kaase 1989; Pfetsch 1991; Greger 1998; Goertz 1996), and in the sport reporting (Scholz 1993) have been shown to exist.

Apart from this core question, content analyses have been used in a few stand-alone studies about daily papers only (Meier 2002, 192; Maurer and Reinemann 2006, 83). These

studies are hardly comparable, because they refer to different titles and use different content analytical categories. However, a few tendencies concerning the content areas politics, economics and sport can be summarized. Thus, in all newspapers examined - except the tabloid "Bild" (Schulz 1967) - politics and economics dominate since the 1950ies; and sports capture a considerable portion of the total supply of newspapers (Held and Simeon 1994; Hüther et al. 1973; Schulz 1970; Schwantag 1974; Hagemann 1958).

Analyses of social problem areas

The question here is whether social groups are reflected adequately in media contents. Most simply, this has been done by comparing the shares of groups represented in the media with their share in the population (Bonfadelli 2002, 33ff). In particular, the shares of foreigners (Bonfadelli 2007; Bonfadelli and Moser 2007; Ruhrmann 2002), of poor and old people (Burgert and Koch 2008; Davis / Kubey 1982; Bosch 1988), and of men and women have been compared (Gnändiger 2007; Petersen 2006; Hesse 2001; Jud-Krepper 1997; Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha 1995; Werner and Rindsdorf 1998; Weiderer 1992; Schmerl 1985; Ulze 1977; Küchenhoff 1975).

More demandingly, the media representation of specific social problems has been examined. Thus, the presentation of crimes and violence has been investigated with respect to their possibly detrimental effects on social integration (Kunczik 2008; Petzold 2008; Gerbner et al. 1979; 1980; Stein-Hilbers 1977; Groebel and Gleich 1993). In a similar vein, reports on racism (Handel 1998; Ruhrmann and Kollmer 1987), on conflicts and wars (Fröhlich et al. 2007; Kolmer 2004; Hallin 1997; Olien et al. 1989), on drug abuse (Fleming et al. 2004; Rose 1995), and on pornography (Scheufele 2005; Brosius and Rössler 1999; Amann and Wipplinger 1997) have been content analyzed.

1.2 Consumption of Audiences

In order to investigate the media audience in a country, nationally representative population samples have to be surveyed. They reveal on the *micro perspective* which persons use and do not use mass media and why (Lindner-Braun 2007; Meyen 2004; Schweiger 2007). If replicated, they also inform about the *macro perspective* on media systems and their development.

Micro Perspective

As research on media consumption is at first driven by the need of advertising research (*Werbeträgerforschung*), it starts off with (1) the *socio-demography* of media use which

allows producers to find their audiences and to calculate their advertising price. This very purpose, moreover, requires frequent replications of the surveys with the same question wording. The socio-demographic variables thus surveyed comprise basic opportunities and restrictions of media use, such as the resources of education, occupation, and income, and the obligations of being employed and having a family. Thus, their relative impact on media use can be studied. However, already advertising research has gone well beyond that in collecting information on (2) *time budgets* of work, leisure and media use, such that media use can be related to its most important resource, leisure time. Thus, it can be examined how all these resources determine media use; moreover, this impact can be followed up over time.

Nevertheless, media use – as all sorts of consumption – depends not only on resources, but on (3) *preferences* as well. They determine how time is allocated to work or leisure, to indoor or outdoor leisure activities, and to competing media. But preferences for information or entertainment or for political and fictional contents in the media, for active or passive leisure pastimes in general, or for leisure or work are never investigated in advertising research and only rarely in academic research.

Finally, media use depends on (4) *attachments* to and (5) *images* of specific media. Questions such as how much one would miss a specific medium, or how trustworthy a specific medium is assessed to be, have been repeatedly asked in advertising and in academic research (Reitze and Ridder 2006, 26-32, 80-95).

Macro Perspective

Taken together, replicated surveys delineate changes of media use and of the underlying social structure. To begin with, there are two ways to examine the relation between the two levels of change. At first, once social structural developments have been controlled for, the (1) *total and net change of media use* can be compared. For example, Fürtjes (2008) examined whether the changing composition of a German soccer fan magazine between 1954 and 2005 reflected concurrent changes among the media or of the social structure and demonstrated that the latter only was responsible for changes in the readership. The phenotypic change disappeared once changes in the population composition had been controlled for; there were no genuine media developments in this domain beyond social structural changes. Moreover, changes in the media use can be, at least partly, (2) *explained by cohort succession*. Thus, the cohort, which first experienced television, might become “the television cohort” and stick more than other cohorts to television viewing during their life-time – which was indeed examined and did not turn out to be true (Peiser 1996). Similarly, the cohorts, which first experienced private television, might stick more than others to private programs – which

indeed turned out to true, but did only partly explain the audience movements from public to private broadcasters (Meulemann et al. 2008).

Additionally, as Germany like all other European countries has switched during the 80ies from the monopoly of public broadcasting to a dual broadcasting system, (3) the *effects of organizational change on media use* can be examined within the total audience as well as specific segments.

Finally, as advertising research often contains information on the use of a whole range of media of a person, changes in the (4) *media repertory* as well as in the encompassing *consumer repertory* can be assessed. Is the increasing number of television broadcasters and the decreasing number of newspapers reflected in corresponding changes of the personal repertories? Similar questions can be treated on the aggregate level: Which media gain at the cost of which others? Which media compete within a specific market of – say – periodicals, which substitute each other?

If content analyses and population survey are combined, the perspective can be broadened from communication to social research in general – as will be shown for two topics: Leisure and politics. As for leisure, the combination of media content analyses with time budget surveys of the media use would allow to investigate more convincingly why people prefer the media to other leisure pastimes, and in particular why the preference for the media, as measured by their share of leisure time, has increased in Germany after the introduction of the dual system, although the supply for other leisure time activities, such as theaters and museums, clubs and associations, has risen simultaneously as well (Gilles et. al. 2008). As for politics, the combination of media content analyses with surveys on the perception of politics and politicians and on voting decision allows to investigate media effects on the political process (Petersen and Jandura 2006; Semetko 2009). The “political communication” (Schulz 2003) between citizens, media and politicians could be followed up, not only on the aggregate level, but also on the individual level.

2. Sources for Media Research

2.1 Production of Programs

Archiving institutions

In principle, all mass media can be archived continuously so that they can be content analysed even decades after they have been issued or broadcasted. Practically, however, print and electronic media are differently accessible.

As for *print media*, supra-regional and mostly also regional daily papers are archived in municipal libraries or city archives which want to track down their own history. In any case, a copy of each paper must be held by the *Deutsche Bibliothek* (German National Library) at Frankfurt. For some newspapers, even digital versions are provided by the internet software of the commercial info service LexisNexis (www.lexisnexis.de).

As for *electronic media*, broadcasting contents are less systematically archived and therefore less easily accessible. The public stations archive their program galleys in the *Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv* (German Broadcasting Archive) in Frankfurt and their self-produced broadcasts in archives of the ARD and ZDF stations. In analyzing these archives two content analytic strategies have been followed. Either current programs are video- or DVD-taped or the program structure published in program magazines is analyzed (Merten 1996, 156). The first strategy permits broad investigations of current programs, but allows no longitudinal designs. The second strategy permits longitudinal analyses, yet has some shortcomings as published programs are changed in the short run to give space for unforeseen events and do not allow deeper analyses with fine-tuned categories.

Using these archives, time series which refer to the program structure of television and radio in general and to news broadcasts of the television specifically have been constructed.

Time series: Program structure of television and radio in general

As for the structure of the *television* programs, national¹ time series are regularly constructed by four research groups. (1) The *Institut für empirische Medienforschung* (Institute for empirical media research, IFEM) follows up the genre profiles of the public stations *ARD* and *ZDF* and the private stations *RTL*, *SAT.1* and *Prosieben* since 1985 annually on the basis of four broadcasting weeks (Krüger 2005, 302; Krüger and Zapf-Schramm 2008). These analyses aim at examining whether there is a convergence between public and private programs or not. (2) *GöfaK Medienforschung* (GöfaK media research) analyzes most of television programs since 1998 on behalf of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesmedienanstalten* (ALM, Association of State Media Authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany). One broadcasting week of the public stations *ARD* and *ZDF* and of the private stations *RTL*, *RTL II*, *Vox*, *Sat.1*, *Prosieben* and *kabel 1* are videotaped each spring and each autumn (Weiß 2007; Trebbe 2004; Weiß and Trebbe 2000; Weiß 1999). These analyses aim at giving the private stations some feedback about their success within the dual

¹ Furthermore, there are stand-alone studies of regional television programs, e.g., in Thüringen 1999, 2002 and 2006 (tlm.de 2000; Moses and Heyen 2003; Giewald and Heyen 2007).

broadcasting system. (3) The most elaborate analysis is commissioned by *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Fernsehforschung* (Consortium television research). Since 1963, the telemetric data - at that time still of *ARD* and *ZDF* only - are linked with program data such that social profiles of the program use can be established. Since 1985 these measurements, which as of today cost 17 million € per year, are accomplished by the *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung* (GfK, Society for consumer research; Hagenah and Meulemann 2007, 157f). The data are collected to calculate the advertisement prices in specific program areas. (4) Using a different source, namely the program magazine *Hörzu* from 1980 to 1993, Merten (1994; 1996) has, commissioned by the *Verband Privater Rundfunk und Telekommunikation* (Federation of private radio and telecommunications), analyzed the contents of 18 public and private television stations. The analyses aimed at showing that private full programs provided information in a manner comparable to the public stations.

As for the structure of the *radio* programs, time series which compare several federal states² are regularly constructed by three research groups. (1) The yearbooks of the *ARD* report the percentages of word and music broadcasts of all *ARD* stations since 1969 (Gleich 1995, 555). Using this source, each of the *ARD* stations has extensively content analysed its program; unfortunately, they have changed their analytical categories between time points. (2) Wichert (2008; 1997) has examined the content profiles of the private radio programs in comparison with a public program in *Berlin-Brandenburg* for the *Landesmedienanstalt Berlin-Brandenburg* (State Media Authority Berlin-Brandenburg) since 1994. (3) Heyen (2001) has examined the program structure of *Antenne Thüringen*, *Landeswelle Thüringen*, *Jump* and *MDR 1 Radio Thüringen* on behalf the *Landesmedienanstalt Thüringen* (State Media Authority Thüringen) since 1996.

Time series: News broadcasts of television

As for the structure of the *news broadcast*, time series have been constructed by four research groups. (1) The *InfoMonitor* of the IFEM institute examine all main newscasts of *ARD*, *ZDF*, *RTL* and *Sat.1* according to the structure of their topics on behalf of these public stations since 2005 (Krüger 2008; 2005). (2) Maier, Ruhrmann and Klietsch (2006) have analyzed the structure of the topics of the main newscasts of *ARD*, *ZDF*, *RTL*, *RTL II*, *ProSieben*, *Vox*, and *kabel 1* on behalf of the *Landesmedienanstalt Nordrhein-Westfalen* (State Media Authority

2 Furthermore, there are stand-alone studies of regional radio broadcasting programs which have been commissioned by the Landesmedienanstalten (media authority of the federal states), e.g. in Schleswig-Holstein (Hasebrink 2006), Niedersachsen (Volpers 2009), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Rager et al 2005), Nordrhein-Westfalen (Volpers and Schnier 1996), Hessen (Brosius and Weiler 2000/3?), Rheinland Pfalz (Rager and Siebers 2006), Saarland (Bauer 2003), Baden-Württemberg (Schönbach et al. 1993), and Bayern (Stuiber 1990).

North Rhine-Westphalia) at five time points between 1992 and 2004. (3) The *Institut für Medienforschung* (IMGÖ, Institute for media research) examines the regional news about West German federal states broadcasted by *RTL* and *Sat.1* on behalf of the ALM annually since 2005 (Volpers et al. 2006).

(4) The private institute *Media Tenor* constructs the most encompassing content analyses since 1993. It has no commissioning agency, but sells its analyses to enterprises, who want to get some knowledge about their representation in the media. It scans approx. 700 media every day world-wide - among them the most important German television and radio stations, all supra-regional and the most important regional newspapers, the news magazines and the most important news-sites and news-blogs in the internet (mediatenor.de 2009).

2.2 Consumption of Audiences

Surveys commissioned by broadcasting agencies

Three large scale sources provide answers to the questions of section 1.2. (1) The *ARD-Werbung Sales&Services* has commissioned from 1964 to 2005 every half decade the so-called *Langzeitstudie Massenkommunikation* (Longterm Study Mass Communication) which surveys the use of the daily media (newspapers, radio and television) and the internet, the time budgets of media use, the audience attachment and the images of the media (Reitze and Ridder 2006). This source contains answers to nearly all the questions in the micro perspective. In the macro perspective, its cumulative data sets describe the often dramatic change of media use (Schweiger 2007, 42-48) such that it can be explained by cohort succession (Peiser 1996; Engel and Best 2001; Reitze and Ridder 2006, 134-165).

(2) The *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Media-Analyse* (Consortium Media Analyses; AG-MA) has commissioned since 1954 the so-called *Leser-Analyse* (Reader analysis, LA), since 1972 called *Media-Analyse* (Media analysis, MA). They survey the use of many print media titles and electronic media stations minutely in series of question modules in order to establish the “advertising currency” of each; since 1987, they also administer a time budget question module (Hagenah and Meulemann 2009a; b). In order to do this for specific titles, samples have to be very large (more than 60 000). To detect general developments of media use, however, titles and programs have to be regrouped into genres. For examples, periodicals have to be grouped into political, sports etc. titles; and radio programs into informative and accompanying ones (*Einschalt- und Begleitprogramme*). The *Medienwissenschaftliches Lehr- und Forschungszentrum* (centre for teaching and research in media science) has accomplished this sometimes extensive work, together with the technical preparation of the data sets. Moreover, it has constructed time series of the use of all kinds of media and of social

structures from the MA data sets which are available on its website <http://www.mlfz.uni-koeln.de/index.php?id=106>. Thus, the LA and MA contain many potentials to describe the change of media use within the change of social structure in a macro perspective. As quite a few of the MA even contain a question on party preference, they also can be used for political analyses.

(3) The MA have discontinued to survey the use of specific television stations in 1997, and continue to report the total television time only. Since then, only telemetric information is available for specific stations. Telemetric research started in Germany already in 1963 on behalf of the public stations. As of today, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Fernsehforschung* (Consortium television research) has commissioned the *Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung* (Society for consumer research AGF/GfK) to measure for every second the television use of each member of a panel of households telemetrically so that results are ready the day after broadcasting (Lindner-Braun 2007, 127-139). These data – as well as their predecessors – are not available for the public. However, the AGF on request delivers the reaches and the market participation of several age brackets of each broadcasting of each station, immediately in the following week.

Apart from these studies of the media use in general, there are three further kinds of studies partly or completely commissioned by broadcasting agencies which either put media use in the broader perspective of consumption and survey the total population (4-6) or which put media use in the deeper perspective of the evaluation of programs and survey restricted populations, either regionally (7) or according to age (8).

(4) The *Verbrauchs- und Medienanalyse* (Consumer and media use analysis, VUMA, www.vuma.de) research media use in the context of general consumer behavior in order to detect complementarities and substitutions within each and between both. The samples are nationally representative and somewhat smaller as those of the MA (about 24 000). VUMA started in 1995 and is replicated annually since 2000. The same aim is served by (5) the *Allensbacher Markt- und Werbeträger Analyse* (Allensbach market and advertising media analysis, AWA, www.aw-online.de) and by (6) the survey *Typologie der Wünsche* (Typology of needs, TDW, www.tdw.com). AWA started in 1959 and is replicated annually with samples of about 20 000. TDW started in 1974 and has been replicated annually since 1986 with samples of about 20 000.

(7) For quite a few of the German federal states, *state specific MA studies* on the use of radio and television have been administered. They have their own names, e.g. *Funkanalyse Bayern* (broadcasting analysis Bayern, www.funkanalyse.tns-infratest.com) which started in

1989, is replicated annually, and comprises samples of about 23 000 for radio use and a further 16 000 for television use. These studies aim at two goals. First, they provide data on small and local stations. Second and more interestingly for academic purposes, they survey the evaluation of specific programs. Depending on the state, some of these surveys are replicated annually, some less often.

(8) As the MA survey the population from 14 years onwards only, the surveys KIM und JIM commissioned by the *Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest* (Research consortium on media pedagogy, www.mpfs.de) specifically analyze the media use of kids between 6 and 13, and between 12 and 19. KIM started in 1999, and JIM in 1998; both are replicated annually and have sample sizes of about 1200. KIM additionally surveys for each kid a person entitled to educate (*Erziehungsberechtigte*) so that pairs of respondents can be analyzed. The topics of KIM and JIM are media use, leisure interests, sources of information, and – uniquely for media studies – also *preferences* of television use. KIM additionally surveys the media use in the context of the family.

Results of most of the above studies are published in the monthly journal edited by *ARD-Werbung Sales& Services*, called *Media-Perspektiven* which even academically is regarded to be one of “the three leading periodicals in communications science” (Hanitzsch and Altmeppen 2007). Thus, the *Media-Perspektiven* continuously provide the most recent trend reports on the use of periodicals (Vogel 2006), radio (Klingler and Müller 2008) and television (Zubayr and Gerhard 2008). Additionally, results are compiled in a yearly brochure *Media-Perspektiven-Basisdaten* the content of which can be seen at http://www.media-perspektiven.de/fileadmin/downloads/media_perspektiven where this brochure can also be ordered.

Surveys commissioned by the Statistical Office and Academic Agencies

Four sources answer to the questions of section 1.2. All of them are multi-purpose surveys such that they allow to investigate attitudinal and behavioural correlates of media use. The first two allow a comparison between European countries. (1) The *Eurobarometer* (EB), which is commissioned by the EU every year, informs in 1999 on the media use of the then 15 member states. As these surveys also secured information on environmental behaviour and on social capital (Schulz 2003; Wilke and Breßler 2005) the impact of media use on these domains could also be assessed. That the EB 1999 will be replicated in future years is highly desirable. (2) The European Social Survey (ESS), which is financed by the European Science Foundation and the European national science funding agencies, is administered since 2002 every second year in about 25 countries of East and West Europe. Its core module, that is, the

questions to be replicated in each wave, survey the frequency of the use of newspapers, radio, television, and the internet for general and political purposes as well as voting behaviour and some political, social, and religious attitudes. Thus, the ESS provides an opportunity to compare changes of media use in a macro perspective between European countries. More importantly, it allows to assess the attitudinal and behavioural correlates of media use in the domains of politics, civil society, and religion.

Furthermore, two German sources provide time series on media use and on attitudes to the media. (3) The *Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften* (General German Social Survey, ALLBUS) has surveyed the use of and the interest in many media in 1998 (Weiß 2001) and 2004. Furthermore, it has surveyed trust in media in 1984, 1994, 2000, and 2002 (Schweiger 2007, 259). (4) The *Time-Budget Study of the Statistisches Bundesamt* (German National Census Bureau) administered 1991 and 2001 describes the development of media use within the development of leisure time (Ehling 2004; Jäckel and Wollscheid 2004).

If one compares both kinds of resources, both are underused up today. But the survey commissioned by broadcasting agencies seem to contain a higher potential to analyze media change while the surveys commissioned by the statistical office and academic agencies provide more opportunities to look at attitudinal and behavioural correlates of media use.

3 Recommendations for the Research Infrastructure

3.1 Production of Programs

1. *Establishing a central media content archive.* In this archive, the contents of all media should be stored in digital form, so that primary computer-aided content analyses (Maurer and Reinemann 2003, 62f) become feasible and available for secondary analyses. The following substantive orientations are proposed for this archive:

- It should in the first place archive current productions, but simultaneously it should also gather all materials already now available in private or semi-private archives.
- It should be concerned with electronic media more urgently than with print media, given the current status of media content archiving.
- It should archive video-typed broadcasts as well as content analytic data sets constructed for their analysis, that is, code plans, results of coder reliability tests with different category systems and other materials which are required for replications and longitudinal analyses.
- It should prompt calls for content analytical longitudinal research projects, specifically

in social problem areas where stand alone studies up to now have prevailed. Moreover, it should support such projects while they are under way.

Formally, the archive should consist of at least two permanent positions devoted to data service, funded by scientific agencies. It should rest on the open source principle, but it could – after it has been successfully established – require a fee for its services. As up to now there are only a few regional archives such as the data archive of the *Institut für Publizistik* (institute for journalism science) at the University of Mainz, these may form the core of the planned central archive.

In brief, it is proposed to catch up with what has been accomplished in survey research since 1950ies: a central infrastructure for content analyses - as the *Gesellschaft für Sozialwissenschaftliche Infrastruktur* (GESIS) already is for survey research.

2. *Archiving content analytic time series of public agencies.* One of the tasks of the *Landesmedienanstalten* and often also one of the voluntary endeavours of public broadcasting stations is to establish longitudinal data. They should be asked to extend their current research programs and to hand over to this archive the following data:

- The biennial longitudinal content analyses of the radio program structure of the private radio stations financed by the Landesmedienanstalten of some of the federal states. In the future, moreover, this research should be expanded to all federal states and to public radio stations as well. Possibly, the ARD could take over a part of the financing.
- Up to today, the structure and quality of print media contents is not systematically evaluated. For this purpose, a research department should be established at the central institute.

3. *Archiving content analyses of individual researchers.* In contrast to public agencies individual researchers are interested in specific theoretical questions rather than in long-term description. Consequently, the content analyses of their stand-alone projects use different category systems. Nevertheless, these analyses should be gathered and prepared for secondary analyses in the archive as well. For, these systems are helpful for the construction of more integrated and enduring category systems in future research.

4. *Developing a unified content analytical category system.* The German professional societies of social and communication science should advocate the development of such a system which contains the most general categories for the measurement of the program

structure and quality of all media and which forms a guideline for more specific researches. The research funding agencies should support such an endeavour.

5. *Furthering cross-national comparisons.* The national professional societies in Europe should prepare a common core of content analytical categories. The European Science Foundation and the national science funding agencies could finance pilot content analyses with the same category system in all European countries.

3.2 Consumption of audiences

1. *Providing privately funded data for the scientific community.* The German professional societies of social and communication science should secure the access to important surveys funded by media stations for scientific uses. In particular, these are:

- the AGF/GfK data. As the competing stations may understandably have some provisos against a premature release, a waiting period of some years should be contracted. Furthermore, as the AGF/GfK data are much richer and much more complicated than the MA data, a research project devoted to their transformation into meaningful indicators and, ultimately, time series which continue the ones constructed from the MA is proposed.
- the latest two editions of the Langzeitstudie Massenkommunikation, 2000 and 2005.
- consumer studies, regional studies, and studies of specific audiences, as mentioned in section 2.2.

2. *Enhancing the analytical potential of the privately funded data.* Understandably, privately funded media surveys have been rarely concerned with more general social and political attitudes – the occasional questioning of party preferences in the MA being one of the rare exceptions. Yet, adding such questions can strongly enhance the public visibility of these studies and their funding agencies, once analyses are publicized. Therefore, the national professional association should urge funders to include at least three very brief, and therefore not expensive, more general questions which have been widely used in academic research: on party preference, church attendance, and union membership. If private funders cannot be motivated by appealing to their self-interest in public attention for future results, some financing through national academic funding agencies should be considered as well.

3. *Data linkage of programs and audience data.* Although the MA data, for example, contain exact information about the time someone uses a specific medium, content analysis and survey date are rarely linked, and programs and audiences are rarely analyzed simultaneously.

Therefore, research projects which link content analyses and survey analyses should be supported.

4. *Feasibility project on comparisons of national data between countries.* As similar consortia as the AG.MA which commission market research on the “advertising currency” and the quota of stations and broadcastings exist in other countries as well, a feasibility project which explores the possibilities of comparisons should be launched. As the national broadcasting stations will increasingly cooperate, their genuine commercial interests should be appealed to in order to support such an endeavour.

5. *Promoting cross-national comparisons.* Admittedly, cross-national comparisons are rare in media research (Kleinstauber 2002, 56). Moreover, the cross-national comparison of media uses and media effects is on the bottom rather than on the top of the agenda of the German media research community (Wilke 2002, 18-31). There are two reasons for this

- on the macro level: a lack of systematic research of media systems backed by quantitative indicators (Hallin and Mancini 2004). A European media indicator data bank which collects indicators from the various sources mentioned e.g. in Thomaß (2007) would stimulate comparative research.
- on the micro level: a lack of knowledge within the research community about the existing cross-nationally comparative data sets (Livingstone 2003, Hanitzsch and Altmeyen 2007).

Therefore, the EU should be asked to replicate the EB 1999 on media uses. Moreover, cross-national research using the above mentioned EB and ESS data should be encouraged.

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