Data-driven journalism: Unlocking statistics through stories

EFGS Conference 2021
About me

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Data(-driven) journalism

Using techniques from statistics, (social) science and design to...

1) ... research information
2) ... analyze research findings
3) ... present stories

in order to connect stories to broader social, economic and political contexts.

(Spiller/Weihnacht 2014, p. 418, Data journalism Handbook 2, ch. 2)
1. how journalists use data
2. challenges
3. moving forward
England's most deprived areas

2010

1. East of the Jaywick area of Clacton-on-Sea Tendring District
2. West of the Grant Thorold area of Grimsby North East Lincolnshire
3. West of the Revoe area Blackpool
4. West of the Anfield area Liverpool
5. East of Grange Park/West of Normoss area Blackpool
6. Spelthorne and East of Hemel Hempstead Tring
7. West of Liverpool district
8. South of Blackpool
9. East of Royston
10. Crewe and Nantwich

Die wichtigsten Corona-Zahlen

Stand: 3. September

Sieben-Tage-Inzidenz

85,9

13.076 Fälle gestern
Wochenrend: +15%

Zum Beispiel:
Leipzig
Bayern
USA

13.076 Fälle gestern
4.002.645 gesamt

40 Todesfälle gestern
92.785 gesamt

1.258 Intensivpatienten

65,6% Geimpfte

Quellen: Kreis- und Landesbehörden, Robert Koch-Institut, Divi Intensivregister, Johns-Hopkins-Universität, Our World in Data

Images: The Guardian, From Florence to the machines: the evolution of data journalism – in pictures | zeit.de 4.9.21
Most newsrooms publish data stories

Share of surveyed newsrooms in Germany that have published data journalism projects in the past year, by number of projects

26%  31%  16%  14%  13%

N = 117, 105 daily newspapers and 12 public broadcasters
Source: Beiler, Irmer & Breda (2020) • Created with Datawrapper
Source: European Data Journalism Network
Data journalism education

1. **academic**: colleges, universities
2. **vocational**: journalism academies
3. **professional**: workshops by data journalists and education organizations
4. **civic**: open knowledge organizations, NGOs
CORSIA: World's biggest plan to make flying green 'too broken to fix'

A new UN-brokered deal for aviation will not require airlines to offset flight emissions for another six years and will cost them less than 1% of operating costs by 2035, a DW analysis has found.

No Place for Foreigners

Why Hanna is invited to view the apartment and Yilmaz is not

If you have a foreign name and you are looking for an apartment, you will significantly less likely to be contacted by landlords than a German applicant. In particular, people with Arab and Turkish names are severely discriminated against. This is shown by a large-scale experiment conducted by the data journalists of Bayerischer Rundfunk and SPIEGEL.

A German version of this test is available here.
Most data journalists use public data frequently

"What data sources have been used in the last twelve months? Please estimate how often they have been used."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>From time to time</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freely available public data</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data specifically requested (e.g. FoI)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collected yourself</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = 88, 78 daily newspapers and 10 public broadcasters in Germany that have published data journalism projects in the past year.

Source: Beiler, Irmer & Breda (2020) • Created with Datawrapper

1. foster evidence-based public debate
2. empower people to understand the world
What’s going well?

➔ Helpful experts and press officers
➔ Proactive contact with data journalists
➔ Exchange about needs and methods
What needs improvement?

- Refusing cooperation
- Long waiting periods
- No machine-readable data
- Inaccessible and/or ill-maintained data portals
- High licensing fees, esp. for geodata
Challenges

1

Institutional changes

➔ digitalization
➔ workflows and routines
➔ speed vs. quality
Challenges

2

Awareness

- journalists as users
- existence of data journalism
- skills and needs of data journalists
Challenges

Role perception
(Data) journalists...

→ ... provide independent information
→ ... keep authorities accountable
→ ... know what’s relevant to the public
Solutions

→ Make more data available to everyone
  ◆ according to open knowledge principles (see okfn.org/opendata)

→ Give journalists privileged access
  ◆ similar to e.g. scientists
What do you need?
What can we do?
Steps data providers are taking

- work to open data to the general public
- train press officers in supporting (data) journalists
- connect with data journalists
  - meetings, conferences, workshops, newsletters...
Steps data journalists are taking

- offer points of contact
- build professional networks
- discuss standards of quality
Thank you!