

# Capturing editorial gatekeeping through the analysis of argumentation in editorial conference discussions

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Il presente articolo analizza le riunioni di redazione come attività argomentative, attraverso le quali si realizza la funzione di *gatekeeping* entro le organizzazioni mediatiche. Particolare attenzione viene devoluta alle diverse norme che regolano le decisioni editoriali, e al rapporto tra queste norme e il dispiegarsi delle argomentazioni nelle discussioni. Ci si ricollega qui a una svolta nella ricerca sul *gatekeeping*: lo studio di Clayman & Reisner (1998) che considera le riunioni di redazione come luogo in cui il *gatekeeping* viene esercitato nell'interazione verbale. Questo approccio apre un campo di intervento promettente per l'applicazione della teoria dell'argomentazione allo studio delle norme e dei processi di decisione delle organizzazioni mediatiche. L'analisi mostra che emergono tre tipi distinti di discussione argomentativa entro l'*activity type* della riunione. Accanto a discussioni deliberative legate a singole decisioni editoriali, troviamo infatti discussioni concernenti la valutazione di decisioni passate e delle norme vigenti in redazione.

## **Parole chiave:**

riunioni di redazione, argomentazione, *gatekeeping*, norme editoriali, processi decisionali.

## **1. Introduction**

Traditionally, news media have been considered institutions that perform a "gatekeeping" function (White 1964 [1950]), i.e. that filter informations concerning what happens in the world in order to make them available to the public. Early studies concerning gatekeeping focused either on purely individualistic frameworks (e.g. Gieber 1964; White 1964 [1950]) or on sociological frameworks, considering gatekeeping as dominated by social forces and abstract criteria (e.g., Brown 1979; Shoemaker 1991). These approaches, however, do not examine how this function is actually performed in the everyday life of news organizations. The present paper aims at filling this gap by taking an interactional approach to gatekeeping (following Clayman and Reisner 1998, cf. section 4), considering in particular the argumentative dimension of newsroom discussions. Looking at argumentation, i.e., at the practices of socialized reasoning and reason-giving, may shed light on the way in which news organizations select stories and decide about their placement and mode of presentation. Our focus lies on the norms regulating editorial decisions, and on the relation between these norms and the development of argumentation in the discussions. In the newsroom, such norms often concern *news values*, i.e., newsworthiness criteria used by the journalists to distinguish

what events should become news (cf. section 3). We claim that the analysis of argumentation is a promising method for capturing editorial gatekeeping and uncovering different types of journalistic norms applied in different types of newsroom discussions. Our data are three registered and transcribed editorial conferences from the newsrooms of a television news bulletin and of a newspaper (cf. section 5).<sup>1</sup> They will be analyzed by means of Pragma-Dialectics (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004), providing an overview of how argumentation unfolds in the discussion.

Our paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we define our understanding of argumentation and our approach to reconstructing the context in which argumentation emerges. In section 3, some traditional approaches to gatekeeping are illustrated. In section 4, we introduce the interactional approach we adopt in studying gatekeeping and further elaborate on the notion of news values. Corpus description follows in section 5. Section 6 presents three case studies, in which three types of norms regulating editorial decisions are identified, and the relation between these norms and the development of argumentation is discussed.

## **2. Modern and contemporary developments of argumentation theory**

In order to set out the main objective of the study, it is important to define what we mean by argumentative analysis.

We stage our research in the framework of the Amsterdam school of argumentation, which has originated an articulated and systematic research framework called Pragma-Dialectics (PD).

According to P-D, argumentation is a

verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the standpoint (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 1).

Within P-D, a model of the argumentative discussion has been elaborated that is based on the notion of reasonableness. P-D can be thus classified as

a normative approach, which aims not only at describing argumentative practices, but also at confronting them against a normative dialectical standard represented by the ideal model of a critical discussion, *i.e.* of a discussion where both parties (the protagonist and the antagonist) are committed to solve their difference of opinion by means of reasonable argumentation, *i.e.* by critically testing their arguments (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009: 34).

The model of a critical discussion comprehends four ideal stages, which are not ordered in a rigid chronological sequence, but rather identify the essential components of a reasonable problem-solving exchange. These are: defining

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<sup>1</sup> The present study is part of the Swiss National Science Foundation research project "Argumentation in newsmaking process and product" (SNF PDFMP1\_137181/1, 2012-2015).

what the divergence of opinion is about and what are the standpoints of the arguers (confrontation stage); establishing the relevant common ground of the discussants (opening stage); introducing arguments in favor of the standpoints and criticizing them (argumentation stage); verifying the outcome of the discussion (concluding stage) (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009).

Recently, studies in argumentation have extended their focus to the analysis of argumentative practices in real life interactions. This shift is necessary to put ideal models to the test and to better understand how actual practices deviate from them, which could eventually contribute to improving the model itself. In order to study argumentation in context, tools for reconstructing the context are needed. In this paper, we apply the model of communication context developed by Rigotti & Rocci (2006) to the characterization of media organizations. According to this model, the social context of communication has an institutionalized and an interpersonal dimension. The description of the institutionalized dimension is based on the key-notion of *activity type*, composed of an *interaction field* and of an *interaction scheme*. Interaction fields are the segment of social reality in which the interaction takes place and that is affected by the interaction. Interaction schemes are part of a virtual social reality, as they consist of culturally shared knowledge determining certain roles (Rigotti & Rocci 2006: 173). Examples of interaction schemes are *deliberation* and *advertising*. Both are "culturally shared recipes" (ibid.) suitable for a certain category of goals: deliberation for taking shared decisions on a common problem, advertising for persuading people to buy products.

### 3. The gatekeeping concept

Two main trends characterize the study of gatekeeping: the psychological and the sociological approach.

It is in the framework of the psychological approach that we find the first occurrence of the terms *gatekeeping* and *communication* together (Lewin 1947). Lewin's "theory of channels and gate keepers" was developed as a means of understanding how one could produce widespread social changes in a community, and his major examples involved changing food habits of a population (Shoemaker & Vos 2009). According to Lewin gatekeeping is a process of filtering, which involves various decision-making processes. In the case of food, he maintains that the gatekeeper, namely the decision-maker, determines if a certain food item enters through a channel or not.

However,

this situation holds not only for food channels but also for the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group, for movement of goods, and the social locomotion of individuals in many organizations (Lewin 1951: 187).

The psychological-individualistic research line illustrated by Lewin's approach, gave much weight to the gatekeeping process itself in individualistic and

psychological terms, even though Lewin viewed the societal impact of gatekeepers as a matter of "group dynamics" and hence as a basic problem for sociology:

this research is an example of a sociological investigation to determine who the gatekeeper is and therefore to determine whose psychology has to be studied, who has to be educated if a change is to be accomplished (Lewin 1947: 146).

Secondly, besides the psychological approach, there is a sociological approach to the study of news production, highlighting that gatekeeping can be studied in a variety of ways. For instance, Schramm noted that more attention should be paid to

the flow of the news through the organization, the points at which decisions are made, the pattern of authority and influence, the kind of values and standards that come into use in given places and under given conditions (Schramm 1963: 17).

Moreover, Brown (1979) highlights how gatekeeping may be affected by societal interests: he compares media coverage of population and family planning items with an index of business instability. The results show that population and family planning coverage correlated strongly with business instability. That is, the less stable business institutions are, the more the press publishes population and family planning stories. This led to the conclusion that

gatekeeping in the area, far from being a random process, faithfully mirrors the perceptions of society. The gatekeeper decisions, while made subjectively, are closely attuned to audience interests rather than being largely a product of random pressures of the publication process (Brown 1979: 679).

Brown shows the relationship between gatekeeping and values, but still avoids the issue of interaction. The gatekeeper is viewed as an individual who makes decisions on his own, even though taking into consideration the interests of the audience and the "perceptions of society".

Both approaches sketched conceive of gatekeeping as a matter of individual or social factors, not paying any attention to the processes leading gatekeepers to certain decisions. This view corresponds to a concept of communication as the transfer of an idea from a speaker to a hearer by means of language. Reddy (1979) has critically labeled this concept "the conduit metaphor". In line with this metaphor, news stories are viewed as filtered by "taps" localized at different nodes of the "pipelines" going through the organization. Values and standards regulate the "taps" functioning, and decisions are the results of what gets through the taps.

#### **4. The discursive turn: gatekeeping in interaction**

From the discussion reported above, it is clear that traditional approaches to gatekeeping focus primarily on the identification of selection criteria (sociological approaches) and on the identity of gatekeepers (psychological approaches).

An alternative to these perspectives is the interactional approach proposed by Clayman and Reisner (1998), who investigate gatekeeping practices in conference meetings, audio-recorded at eight American newspapers. In opposition to the mainstream of studies on journalism, which focus on news products, sources and "newsgathering routines" (Clayman & Reisner 1998: 178), they take a process-oriented approach to newsmaking. With regards to gatekeeping, they want to differentiate themselves from those sociological approaches that consider it an individual activity conducted by an editor in charge and ruled by "abstract criteria of newsworthiness" (ibid.: 180). As Clayman & Reisner demonstrate, such a perspective is contradicted by observing what happens in an actual newsroom, where it is evident that

this reasoning process does not take place exclusively within editors' minds; it is worked out publicly, through concrete speaking practices embedded in courses of interaction within conference meetings (ibid.: 180).

The interactional approach opens a path for the application of argumentation theory to the study of decision-making processes in media organizations, because it focuses on contextually situated discursive practices.

Let us now move to the mentioned criteria guiding newsroom gatekeeping: the news values. The term *news value* indicates a quite fuzzy concept in news discourse analysis and journalism, which stands, in turn, for the guidelines derived from the mandate of a media organization, value judgments by the journalists and characteristics of a story. What is generally acknowledged, though, is that they "determine what makes something newsworthy – worthy of being news" (Bednarek & Caple 2012: 103). Given the present limitations of space and the scope of this paper, we cannot dwell on the debate on this topic. It shall thus suffice to mention that some scholars (e.g. Galtung & Ruge 1965, the first to systematically approach the issue; Bell 1991; Cotter 2010) conceive of news values as criteria internalized by journalists that help them select events for becoming news and decide what importance should be given to them in a news product. Others, on the contrary, consider news values the audience's preferences as figured by journalists (e.g. Richardson 2007) or discursive values "established by language and image in use" (Bednarek & Caple 2012: 105).

In this paper, we embrace Bell's definition of news values as "values by which one 'fact' is judged more newsworthy than another" (Bell 1991: 155). We go a step further, however, by integrating in the definition the Aristotelian notion of *endoxa*, i.e. "opinions that are accepted by everyone or by the majority, or by the wise men, (all of them or the majority or by the most notable or illustrious of them)" (Aristotle, *Topics* 100b, 21). We believe that news values function as *endoxa* of newsmaking because, like *endoxa*, they belong to the common ground of the members of a community. For this reason, such values are usually not consciously applied by journalists. It is only when their endoxical status – their being actually known and accepted – becomes controversial that

news values are made explicit and discussed, e.g. when one of the participants to an editorial conference does not recognize the news value involved in a line of reasoning.

We thus redefine news values as endoxa of newsmaking, i.e. criteria shared and interiorized by a community of newsmakers that help them making choices concerning various issues of news production and function as premises in argumentative reasoning (on this issue, see Zampa, in preparation; Zampa & Perrin, under review; Rocci & Zampa, forthcoming; Zampa & Bletsas, under review).

## 5. Corpus and methodology

The corpus on which our investigation is based enables comparative and contrastive studies from a multilingual as well as a multimedia perspective, since data are gained from both TV-journalism and print-journalism in the three linguistic areas of Switzerland. Part of the corpus, collected during the *Idée Suisse*<sup>2</sup> project, was collected at the Swiss public service television (SRG SSR) in French and German. A more recent dataset was collected at *Corriere del Ticino* (CdT), the main Italian-language newspaper in the country, within the project "Argumentation in newsmaking process and product", mentioned in the introduction. Both datasets were collected with the same methodology (Progression Analysis, Perrin 2003, 2013), and comprise audio-visual recordings of various newsroom activities.

The present research analyzes data<sup>3</sup> from the German-language reportage program *10vor10* and from CdT as interaction fields that follow the same shared goals: producing and broadcasting quality news items, reporting newsworthy events, fulfilling the institutional mandate and satisfying audience demand.

According to our model of context, interaction schemes are activated within interaction fields. In the case of editorial conferences, the interaction scheme of *deliberation* is mapped onto the interaction field of a given newsroom, resulting in the activity type "editorial conference". In this activity type, questions, issues, disagreements or explicit confrontations emerge in the pursuit of shared goals.

In our argumentative reconstruction of the registered editorial conferences, we follow P-D principles, i.e. we identify the issue at stake, the related standpoints and the arguments supporting each standpoint. Our aim is to make a more in-

<sup>2</sup> "Idée Suisse: Language policy, norms and practice as exemplified by Swiss Radio and Television" (SNF NRP 56, 2005-2007).

<sup>3</sup> The original data from *10vor10* are in Swiss German, translated and subsequently transcribed in German by members of the research team (for more details on transcription norms see the appendix); those from *Corriere del Ticino* are in Italian. The English translation has been carried out by members of the research team for the scope of this or other publications.

depth analysis than Clayman and Reisner (1998), who simply state that journalists perform gatekeeping while discussing. Our fine-grained analysis goes one step further, focusing on the way in which journalists discuss, propose, defend and attack standpoints. It is in this scenario that we use the notion of dialogue game, which according to Rocci (2005: 97), can be defined as

a set of shared goals around which coherent dialogues are hierarchically structured, and as a sets of rules regulating participants behavior and constraining interpretation.

According to Walton, dialogue games can be defined as

an argument thought of as a set of locutions (including statements, questions, and perhaps other locutions). But each locution is indexed to a participant in the game, where the participant can advance a locution only according to certain rules of the dialogue (Walton 1984: 3).

However, we apply this notion within the pragma-dialectical framework including rules of attack and defense of a certain standpoint, which relate to the argumentation at stake, so that sequences of moves in the dialogue game are interrelated to complex argumentation structures. The interweaving of dialogue game rules and of pragma-dialectical rules enables us to sketch a complete frame of the argumentative discussion under investigation. In the following section, we apply this analysis to three cases of argumentative discussions that differ as to the issue at stake and the type of standpoint.

## **6. Three types of argumentative discussion in the activity type editorial conference**

Three types of argumentative discussions take place in editorial conferences, which differ in terms of the kind of issue under discussion and of the type of proposition that forms the standpoint.<sup>4</sup>

1. Deliberative discussions aiming at making specific editorial decisions (e.g. publishing a story or giving a story front page placement), involving practical standpoints, i.e. standpoints in which the participants argue for the convenience of an action;
2. Evaluative discussions that assess past editorial decisions (e.g. was it a good decision to choose this story for the front page?), involving evaluative standpoints;
3. Evaluative discussions oriented at questioning existing norms governing editorial decisions, involving universally quantified evaluative standpoints about norms of editorial practice.

Three categories of endoxa are at play in these discussions. Discussions concerning the choice of an event to become a news item involve endoxa

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<sup>4</sup> See Rocci & Zampa (in preparation) and Zampa (2015) for a further development of this issue.

related to the newsworthiness of the event. In discussions that evaluate past editorial choices, endoxa concerning the decision-making process that have led to the production of this previous issue emerge. Lastly, discussions whose purpose is to optimize newsmaking practices by questioning general policies, practices and habits criticize endoxa related to keeping those practices. Often this last type of discussion arises from evaluations of concrete practices, thus a shift from the evaluation of concrete occurrences to norms evaluation can be observed.

The different types of standpoints and the discussions correlate with different phases and/or with subtypes of editorial conferences. More specifically, we observed that the evaluation of previous issues takes place during morning meetings at CdT, in a precise phase at the beginning of the discussion, devoted to remarks and comments. On the contrary, at television such discussions occur both in the morning and in the afternoon, and include a comparison with what competitors from the same or other channels did.

In the following part of the paper, we illustrate these three types of argumentative discussion by presenting three case studies.

### *6.1 The SNOW case: norms conceived as goal-oriented journalistic news values*

In order to illustrate the first type of discussion, we introduce an example recorded on January 23, 2007 at *10vor10*.<sup>5</sup> The argumentative discussion concerns the newsworthiness of a snowfall that is expected to hit the northern part of the country that night. The snowfall in question is an event that is not newsworthy in itself, being Switzerland an alpine country, but that acquires meaning if one considers the exceptionally warm weather of that winter.

In the initial argumentative confrontation the issue at stake is "should we broadcast an item on snow or not?". We are in front of a mixed difference of opinion,<sup>6</sup> where two protagonists, the producer (P) and a journalist (X2), argue in favor of the positive standpoint, "we should make an item on snow" (1) and an antagonist (journalist X3) argues in favor of the negative standpoint "we should not make an item on snow" (2).

The argumentative structure in support of standpoint 1 is multiple and subordinative,<sup>7</sup> as shown in Figure 1. P argues that *10vor10* should broadcast

<sup>5</sup> sf\_zvz\_070123\_1400\_redaktionskonferenz\_discourse.txt. We here consider only one of the issues that emerge in the discussion. For a broader analysis we refer the reader to Zampa (2014) and Zampa (2015).

<sup>6</sup> "In a mixed difference of opinion, opposing standpoints are adopted with respect to the same proposition. One party puts forward a positive standpoint and the other party rejects it" (van Eemeren et al. 2002: 9).

<sup>7</sup> "The arguments that form part of multiple argumentation all [independently] support the same standpoint" (van Eemeren et al. 2002: 70); "subordinative argumentation consists of a chain of arguments that are dependent on each other" (ibid. 2002: 71-72).

something on the snowfall because it will be heavy and will cover the whole Mittelland (1.1). This argument is supported by the fact that the channel's meteorologist has the same opinion (1.1.1). X2 in 1.2 justifies the newsworthiness of the snowfall on the basis of its unusualness (1.2), not in absolute terms (snow in January in Switzerland should be normal), but rather in relative terms (that year was exceptionally warm) (1.2.1).

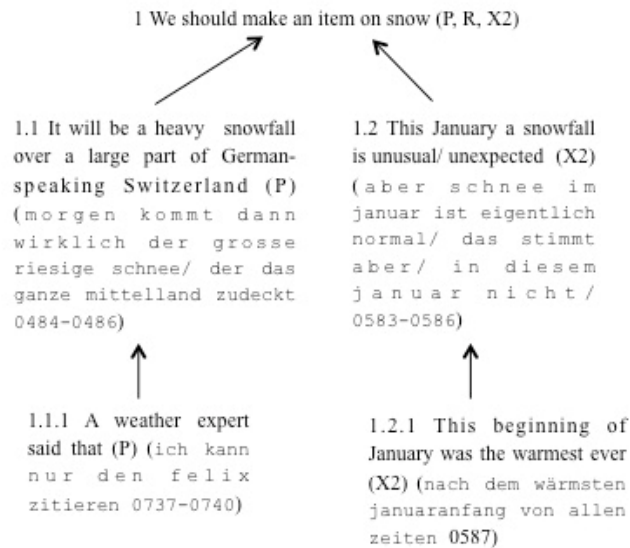


Fig. 1. Argumentation structure in support of the positive standpoint.

The persuasiveness of the two argumentative lines is guaranteed by two news values, which function as implicit premises securing the relation between the standpoint and the arguments supporting it (Figure 2).

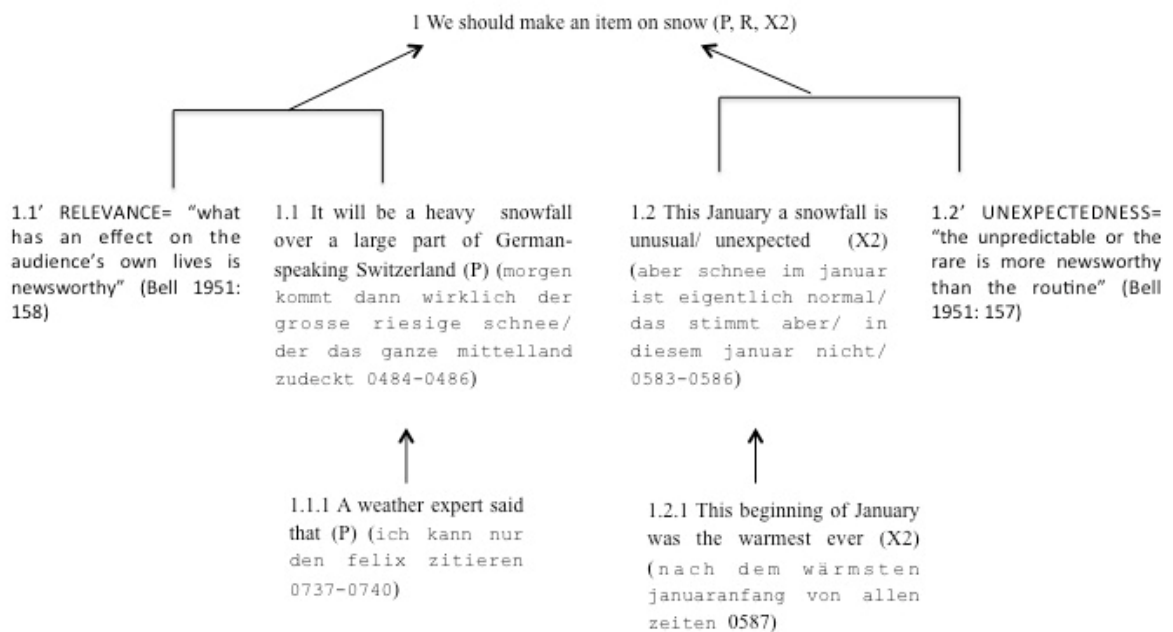


Fig. 2. Argumentative reconstruction in support of the positive standpoint showing implicit premises.

It becomes evident that the newsworthiness of the snowfall is due to its appeal to two news values: on the one hand from the fact that it directly (and very concretely) affects the audience (news value of *relevance*, Bell 1991), on the other hand from its rarity given the peculiar weather conditions of that winter (news value of *unexpectedness*, Bell 1991).

### **6.2 The MALI case study: norms conceived as models to imitate and anti-models to avoid**

The second case study is taken from a Monday morning editorial conference at *Corriere del Ticino*<sup>8</sup> and features the dialogue game of evaluating the latest issue of the newspaper. The dialogue game is initiated by the editor chairing the meeting (the vice-editor in chief) as follows:

**(1) 0235-0240**

oh right let's talk about today's issue/ we had a discussion yesterday/ a quite long and complex one about the splash/ for there was a strong candidate we have been discussing

(ah no giornale di oggi/ ieri c'è stata una discussione/ abbastanza lunga e articolata sulla sull'apertura/ perchè c'era una candidatura forte di cui abbiamo discusso)

The vice-editor in chief reports that the previous day the choice of the splash had been controversial. Eventually, they had decided to splash on the news about riots in Mali. A single mixed difference of opinion follows. The issue at stake is whether the splash chosen was good or not, *i.e.* whether it fulfilled CdT's institutional goals. We can identify the protagonist in the vice-editor in chief, who argues that splashing on Mali was the best choice, and the antagonist in the editor in chief, who advances counter-arguments in favor of the opposite standpoint, namely that "opening with Mali was not the best choice".

In Figure 3 we represent the multiple argumentation supporting the vice-editor in chief's standpoint.

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<sup>8</sup> cst\_cdt\_130114\_1030\_editorial\_discourse\_1.docx .The MALI case is analyzed by means of the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009, 2010, forthcoming) in Rocci & Zampa (in preparation) and Zampa (2015).

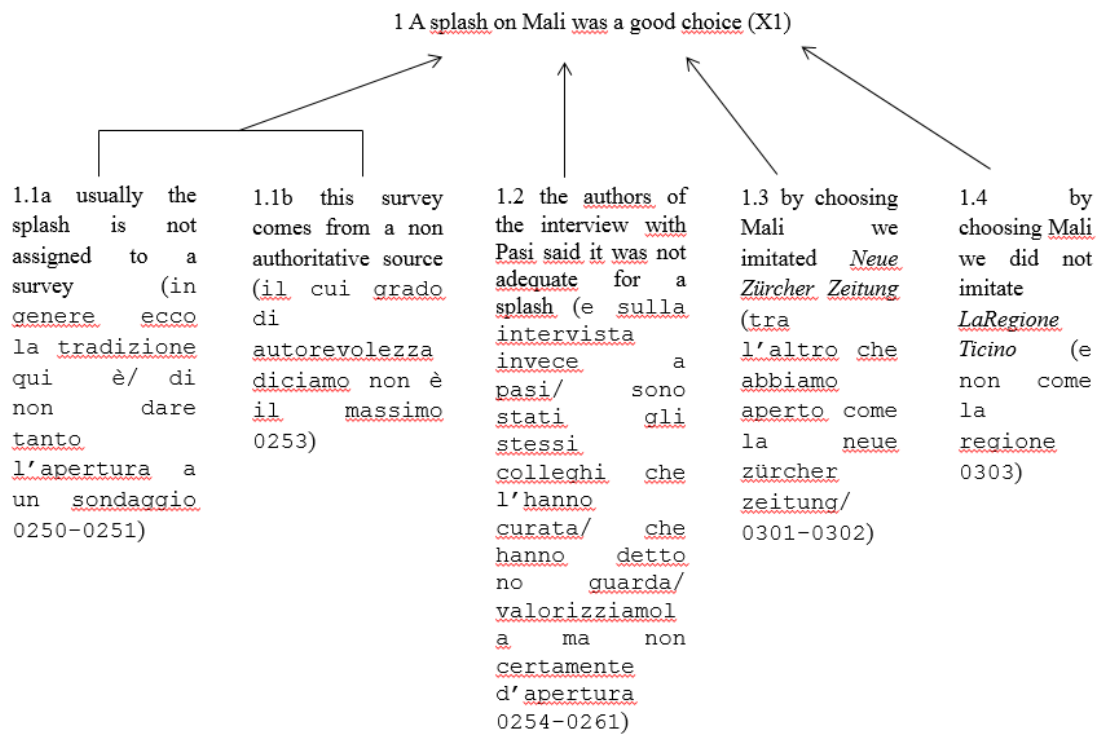


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the argumentation supporting the choice of the splash on Mali.

The vice-editor justifies the choice of the splash on the riots happened in Mali by means of two lines of argumentation, one supporting the adequateness of their choice, the other belittling the alternatives. On the one hand, he defends his decision (although he acknowledges it as debatable) by arguing that the other options available were no better. The choice was made among a limited number of alternatives, which according to him were all less desirable – journalistically speaking – such as a Sunday poll (cf. 1.1a, 1.1b) or an interview concerning the risk of racquet rate (1.2). By the way, he explicitly comments on excluding other alternatives referring to a "process of elimination":

**(2) 0262**

and we reached this choice by process of elimination  
(questo quindi sostanzialmente andando per esclusione)

On the other hand, he argues that CdT eventually opened like the prestigious German-language Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (1.3), and not like a minor competitor, *La Regione* (1.4). Here, the strong influence of models and anti-models of reference becomes clear. Indeed, in order to understand this argument, we have to presuppose an unexpressed premise like "NZZ is a prestigious newspaper and thus it is a good model for CdT", which corresponds to a news value of CdT.

On the contrary, the editor in chief questions both the criteria applied for rejecting other options and the imitation principle. He does not overtly attack the choices made, but just questions their appropriateness, putting forward three argumentative lines, as indicated in Figure 4.

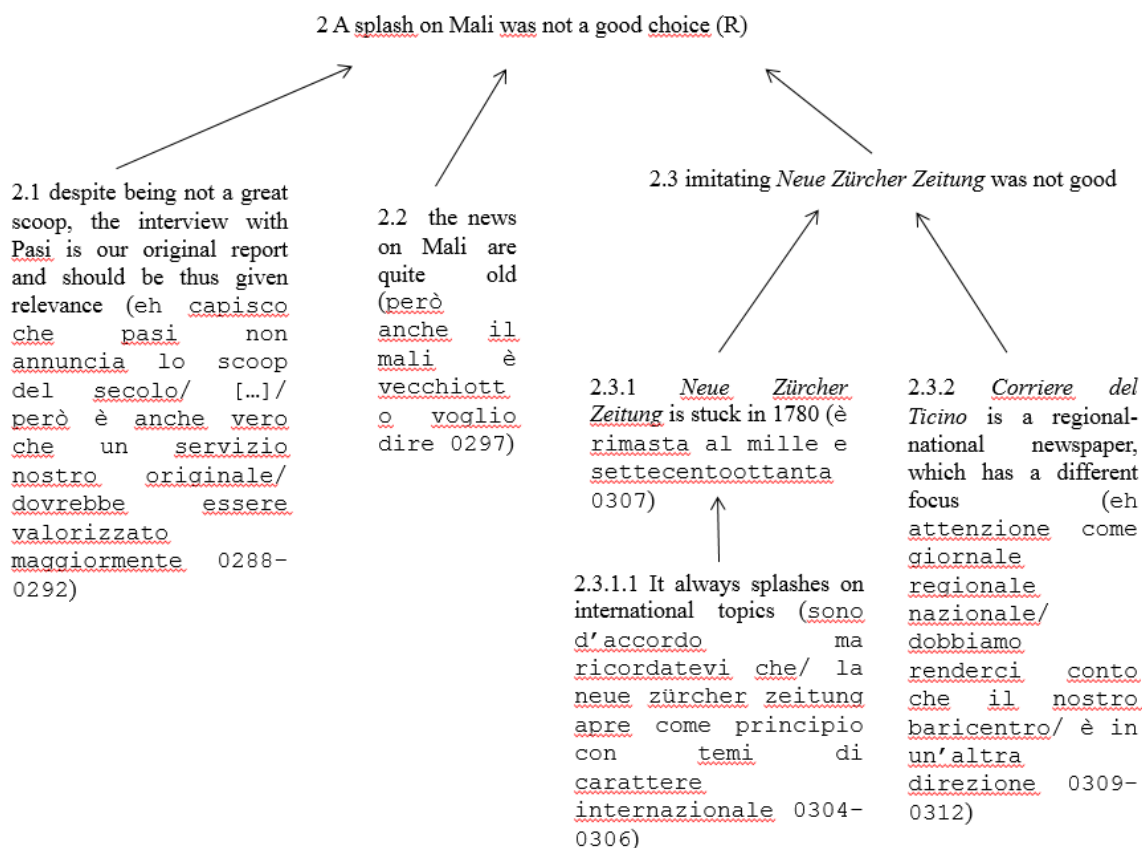


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of argumentation against choosing the splash on Mali.

In his third argumentative line, the editor in chief questions the normativity of the model of reference represented by NZZ from a twofold perspective. Firstly in absolute terms ("it is stuck in 1780" due to the fact that "NZZ always splashes on international topics") and secondly with reference to the relevance of this normativity to the choices of a "regional national newspaper" like CdT, which differ from those of NZZ, which on the contrary is a national newspaper.

### 6.3 The FORM Case: an example of normativity derived by usual practices concerning news production, accepted recipes and templates

The third case study we illustrate can be staged in the same activity type of the previous example, namely during a Monday morning editorial conference at CdT.<sup>9</sup> The dialogue game begins with a question about possible remarks on the current issue of the newspaper asked by the vice-editor in chief, who

<sup>9</sup> cst\_cdt\_130128\_1030\_editorial\_discourse\_1.docx. The FORM case is analyzed by means of the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009, 2010, forthcoming) in Rocci & Zampa (in preparation) and Zampa (2015).

chairs the meeting. The vice-editor in chief (X1) immediately takes the floor again:

**(3) 0232**

wanted to present an item of discussion  
(no ma volevo porre un elemento di discussione)

The argumentative confrontation consists *prima facie* in a single mixed difference of opinion about a layout template used for an interview in the Culture section. The issue can be summarized by the question "is the layout solution adopted in the interview OK?". Participants put forward two contrary standpoints with regard to this question. While not directly contradictory, the two standpoints appear each to entail the negation of the other. In fact, as we will see later on, the discussion turns out to have an imperfect confrontation stage, as the standpoints advanced do not refer to the same interpretation of the issue.

On the one hand, the protagonist of the discussion, X1, puts forward the following standpoint "the layout template adopted for the interview is not effective/ expedient". On the other hand, the antagonist, X2 (the culture desk editor), argues in favor of the standpoint that "the layout template adopted for the interview is ok/ not a problem".

# SPETTACOLI

Di ritorno dal Sundance, parla del cinema indipendente USA, dei film italiani, di quelli svizzeri e dell'imminente «Primavera locarnese»

Ottimo riscontro di pubblico e molti applausi per le numerose produzioni o coproduzioni ticinesi recenti (*La tua casa è la mia città*, *Il comandante e la cicogna*, *Tutto parla di te*, *Hannes* - *Passy* - *Schmidhauser*, *Tutti giù*, per citare solo le principali) presentate tra venerdì e ieri alle 48. Giornate di Soletta. Manifestazione che - come di consueto - è coincisa con il primo appuntamento con i responsabili del Festival internazionale del Film di Locarno. Ecco cosa ci ha raccontato il neodirettore artistico Carlo Chatrian.

ANTONIO MARIOTTI

**II SOLETTA** Lei è appena sbarcato dal Sundance Festival di Park City, che impressione le ha fatto?

«Per quel che riguarda i film che potrebbero interessarci, è ancora troppo presto per parlarne. Sundance sta evolvendo in modo molto interessante: è nato come strumento di promozione per il cinema indipendente, ma negli ultimi dieci anni il cinema indipendente è diventato il cinema americano *tout court* e quindi il Sundance ha dovuto differenziarsi. Nel concorso internazionale oggi si vedono film che vent'anni fa nemmeno sarebbero stati considerati indipendenti ma si trovano ancora produzioni realizzate con piccoli budget e senza star in modo veramente indipendente. Rimane quindi un sismografo dell'annata americana, anche se non c'erano ovviamente i grossi nomi come Taranino o Kathryn Bigelow che fanno un altro percorso».



Alle grandi rassegne ci sono sempre meno produzioni delle major statunitensi



Un festival importante il Sundance perché Locarno punta a farsi conoscere ancora di più proprio negli USA? «Sì, è un percorso che è già stato intrapreso negli ultimi dieci anni e ci sono

66°  
Festival del film  
Locarno  
7-17 | 8 | 2013



«LA BELLA E LA BESTIA 3» il manifesto del 66. Festival di Locarno, opera dello studio Januzzi Smith di Londra/Lugano, presentato sabato a Soletta.

L'INTERVISTA ■ CARLO CHATRIAN

## «L'America è ancora da esplorare»

Il direttore artistico del Festival di Locarno era alle Giornate di Soletta

**Da Sundance a... Soletta: quali sono i suoi rapporti con il cinema svizzero?**

«Mi incuriosisce molto. È un cinema che conosco meglio in alcune sue parti, come il documentario, mentre conosco meno il cinema di finzione e mi aspetto di avere delle risposte interessanti proprio dall'area germanofona». Altro territorio ostico per Locarno, l'Italia...

«Sull'Italia ci sono due ragionamenti da fare: il primo è legato al periodo in cui si svolge Locarno, che non si può cambiare e che ci rende la vita molto complicata riguardo a molti film italiani, non tanto per la concorrenza di Venezia ma

perché agosto è un periodo oggettivamente di chiusura totale in Italia. Anche qui però si è sviluppato un cinema indipendente che ha delle carte da giocare e che può interessarci. Da parte mia ci sono quindi un'attenzione e una sensibilità molto forti, ma non voglio certo ritrovarmi a prendere un film italiano tanto per prenderlo, senza che abbia le qualità e le caratteristiche di tutti gli altri selezionati».

**Piazza Grande: croce o delizia?**

«La vedo come uno spazio molto interessante. Per ciò che riguarda la programmazione mi piacerebbe avere una grande varietà di film, ma i film della

Piazza devono soprattutto far bene al pubblico della Piazza più che al festival: riprendere due o tre film già passati altrove non sarà un dramma per me».

**Ora siete impegnati anche nell'organizzazione de «L'immagine e la parola», il capitolo cinematografico della «Primavera Locarnese», in programma dal 21 al 27 marzo. Come procede?**

«Mi pare nella giusta direzione, partendo dai due elementi dati - l'immagine e la parola - abbiamo pensato di svilupparli in senso didattico, da una parte con l'importante collaborazione di Castellinaria e dall'altra coinvolgendo allievi di scuole di cinema svizzere

che parteciperanno a due atelier con altrettanti registi (Paolo Benvenuti e Richard Dindo) che presenteranno i loro nuovi film, che sono già scritti ma non ancora filmati, tra parola e immagine. Una fase molto interessante dove tutto è ancora possibile. Ci saranno poi degli eventi pomeridiani, legati a scrittori o a film che hanno a che fare con la scrittura, e tre serate dedicate ad anteprime svizzere con una tavola rotonda finale al Monte Verità. Sarà un evento mirato soprattutto al territorio ma penso che, da come vanno le cose, ci sarà un interesse anche da parte della stampa svizzera e italiana».

Fig. 5. Newspaper page under scrutiny, featuring the layout elements criticized by X1.

In the highlight, reference is made to a speech event:

### Example (4)

Di ritorno dal Sundance parla del cinema indipendente USA dei film italiani di quelli svizzeri e dell'imminente "primavera locarnese". [Coming back from Sundance Festival he speaks of independent USA cinema, of Italian and of Swiss movies, and of the upcoming "Locarnese spring"].

X1's main criticism (Figure 6) of the layout concerns the fact that the highlight precedes (in the expected reading order) the title, and that thus the identity of the cited person is not clear from the outset. Indeed, the person cited in the highlight ("he speaks of...") can be identified only at a later stage in the reading process, assuming that the expected reading order proceeds from top to bottom and from left to right.

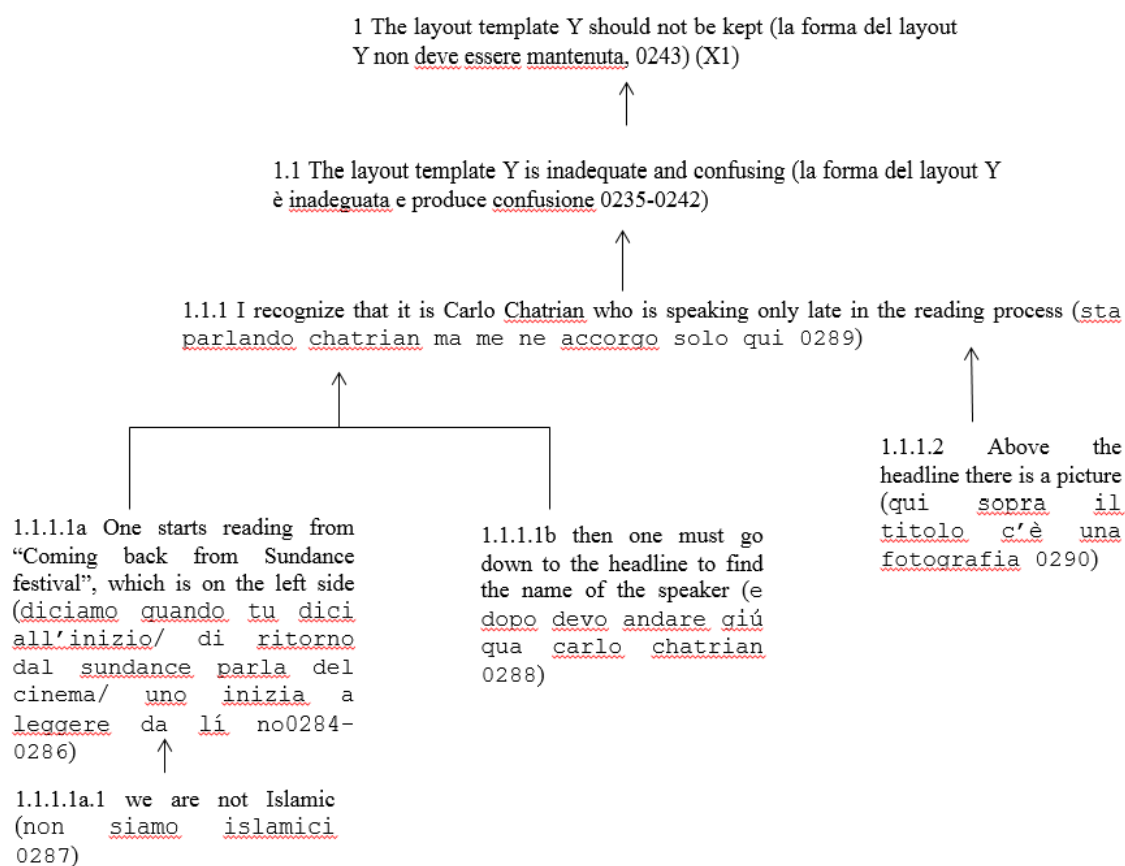


Fig. 6. Argumentative reconstruction of X1's criticism

Observing the analytical reconstruction, it becomes evident that X1 focuses his critique on the opposition between effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the layout solution, implicitly adopting readability as the evaluation criterion. From the outset, X1 makes it clear that he knows that the layout he criticizes is one of the standard templates used by the newspaper:

**(5) 0256-0258**

but clearly this is a form allowed by our templates/ a layout that is really prestigious of course  
(ma evidentemente invece/ è una forma ammessa dai nostri schemi/ un'impaginazione peraltro così prestigiosa)

More specifically he reiterates this framing of the issue when he offers the argumentative line reconstructed above, namely

**(6) 0291-0293**

but anyway I repeat I know it's allowed/ I don't put into question the fact that it's allowed/ I wonder whether is expedient  
(ma comunque ripeto lo so che è ammessa/ non metto in dubbio che sia ammessa/ mi chiedo l'opportunità ecco).

On the contrary, the other participant, X2, defends his standpoint using three argumentative lines as illustrated in the figure below:

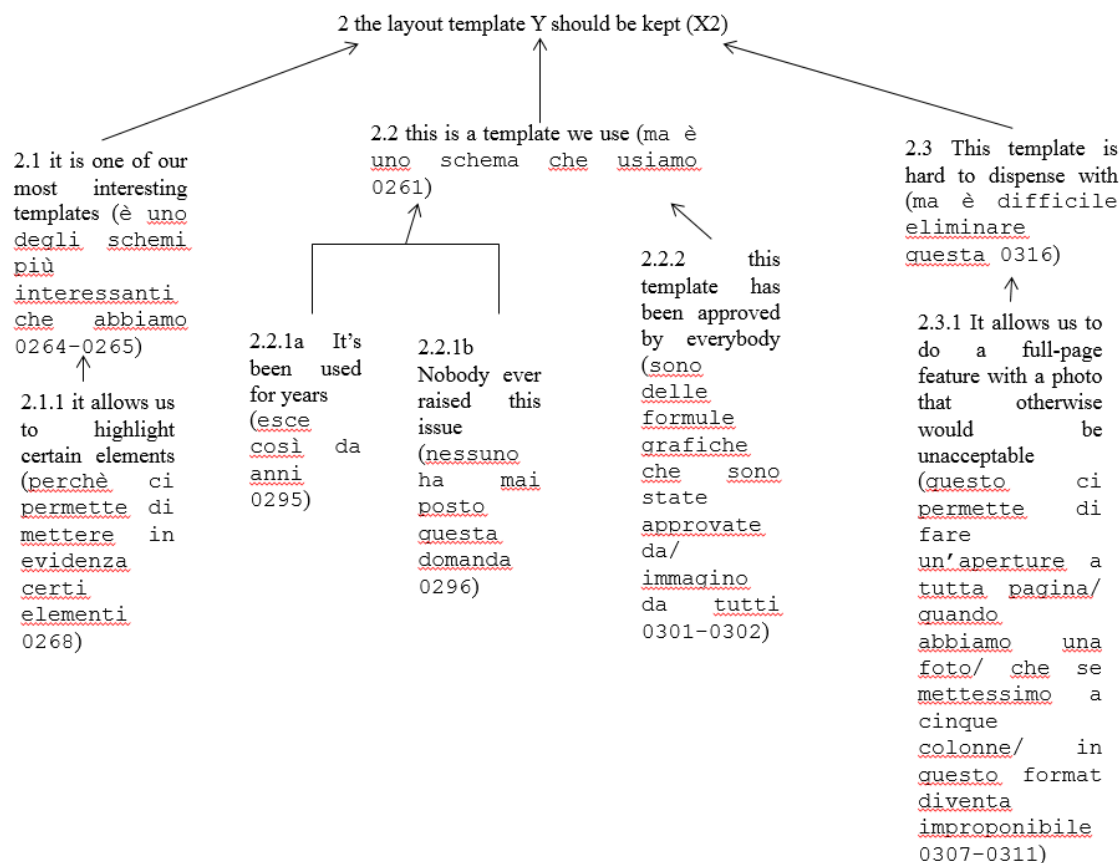


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of argumentation supporting the effectiveness of the layout.

Firstly, X2 puts forward an argument concerning the usefulness of the adopted template, which

**(7) 0268-0269**

allows to highlight various elements/ that you often cannot put into headlines

(perché ci permette di mettere in evidenza diversi elementi/ che nei titoli spesso non si riesce a mettere.

Furthermore, he adds an argument – repeated and specified in three moments of the interaction – concerning the fact that the template refers to an established norm,

**(8) 0261**

this is a template we use  
(ma è uno schema che usiamo)

This argumentative line is entirely based on supporting the normative possibility to admit the template because it has always been considered acceptable and has always remained unquestioned. Thirdly, X2 insists on the convenience of the template with reference to the productive process (2.3), seen from the perspective of the journalist as a sender of the message to the audience. On the contrary, X1 had adopted the perspective the newspaper reader as a receiver of a message, focusing on readability.

The argumentative line 2.2 is subject to criticism by X1 from a twofold perspective. On the one hand we observe a confutation (Figure 8) and on the other hand a more narrow conception of the issue, which disregards a purely normative interpretation of the acceptability of the template.

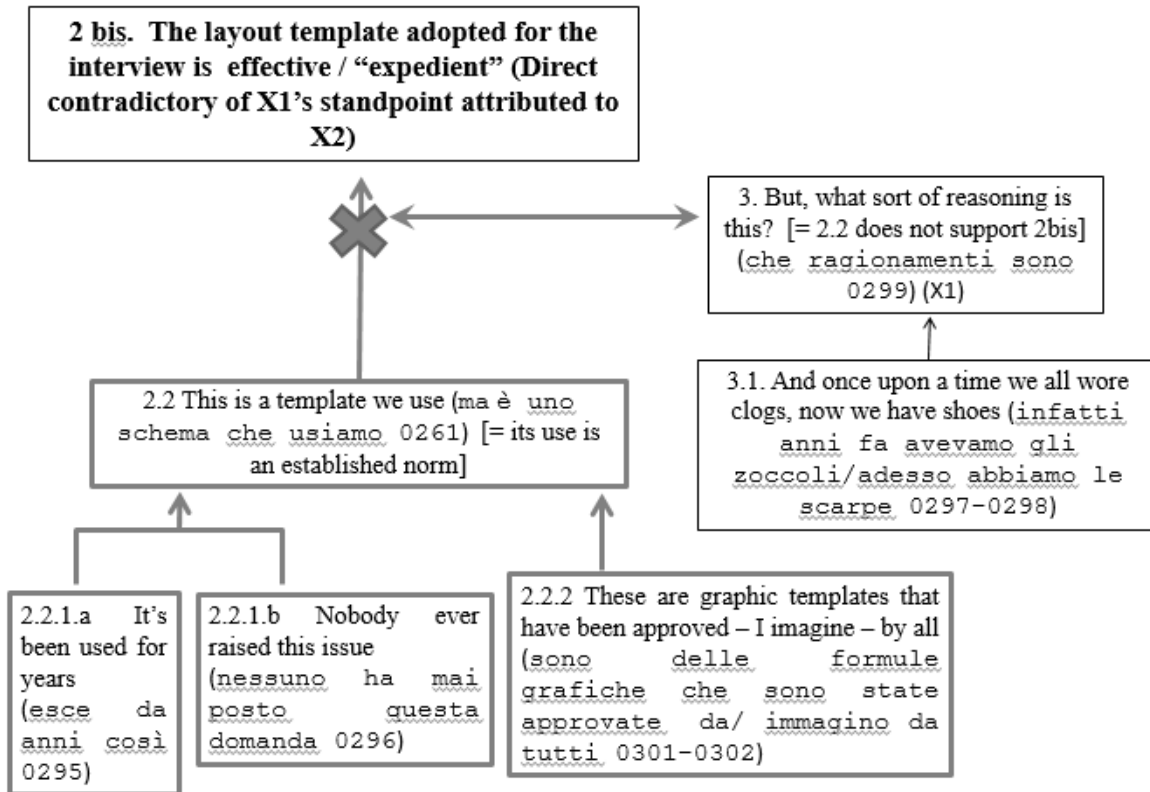


Fig. 8. Argumentative reconstruction of the refutation of the effectiveness of the adopted layout.

The confutation in the third argumentative line shows, by means of an absurd analogy, that an established norm of use is not sufficient to justify the opportunity of a certain decision

**(9) 0297-0298**

once upon a time we all wore clogs/ now we have shoes  
(infatti anni fa avevamo gli zoccoli/ adesso abbiamo le scarpe)

This confutation, which rejects the antagonist’s standpoint concerning the idea that the template should be adopted because it is established, is consistent only assuming that the standpoint concerns the effectiveness given by the usage of the template, and not the general acceptability of the template. Indeed, the vice-editor’s explicit (re-)framing of the issue makes the appeal to established norms irrelevant. In the previously quoted lines 0330-0345 (section 6.3), X1 reiterates his framing of the argumentative confrontation specifying that his standpoint does not refer to an established norm,

**(10) 0334**

I didn't say it is not allowed  
(non ho detto che non è ammessa)

In the same passage, X1 explicitly refers to the goals of the activity type:

**(11) 0336-0337**

because if we cannot do this in these meetings/ you have to explain me what we are supposed to do here  
(cioè se non possiamo fare questo in queste riunioni/ mi devi spiegare che cosa siamo qui a fare)

We can conclude that the culture desk editor and the vice-editor in chief construe both the goal of the activity type and the logical structure of the standpoints involved in the argumentative confrontation in a different way. Firstly, the understanding of the activity type appears askew, since X2 conceives the editorial conference as an occasion to evaluate if anything went wrong in the current issue considering the established norms of practice, whereas X1 conceives it as an occasion to evaluate singular deliberations as well as norms of practice, considering common professional and institutional goals (e.g. to ensure that the editorial product is understandable). Subsequently, in line of their divergent understanding of the activity type, the issue and the logical-semantic structure of relevant standpoints that define the confrontation are understood differently. In line with the two divergent issues, we can identify two logical-semantic structures supporting the standpoints, as we show below.

a) Confrontation according to X2:

- The decision of adopting layout template t for the interview is
  - permissible (X2's standpoint)
  - not permissible (X1's standpoint)

in view of the established norms of practice

b) Confrontation according to X1:

- The general decision of adopting layout template t is
  - consistent (X2's standpoint)
  - inconsistent (X1's standpoint)

with the professional goals of the newsroom of CdT,

In other words, for X2 the issue being discussed is about the deontic (norm based) possibility of a singular proposition denoting a course of action, while for X1 the confrontation hinges on an issue of practical possibility (goal based) of a universally quantified proposition denoting a class of courses of action. This is to trace back to the fact that the culture desk editor feels threatened by the vice-editor in chief, because he perceives the issue of the latter as an evaluation of his decision. Each participant to the discussion interprets the confrontation in the most favorable way for himself. The culture desk editor insists saying that they had always used that template, whereas the vice-editor invites him to verify what is the most effective solution for the newspaper.

## 7. Conclusions and future work

The argumentative analysis we have conducted lends support to Clayman and Reisner's (1998) claim that gatekeeping in editorial offices is played out in meetings. Here, not only discussions concerning an item's selection and production take place, but also the highly situated rules of newsmaking are contested and redefined. It is in this scenario that we have highlighted how news values stand behind decisions, guiding the choice of standpoints and arguments supporting them.

In the first case study, we have considered a discussion about a singular editorial decision, while in the second and the third we have observed a shift from the discussion of the evaluation of singular decisions to norms evaluation. The argumentative analysis has illustrated three types of norms, which play a role in argumentative discussions of editorial conferences, namely norms conceived as goal-oriented journalistic news values, norms conceived as models or anti-models to imitate or avoid, and norms derived by usual practices. While constituting the premises that justify a decision, these norms can also become the target of criticism within an evaluative standpoint. This sheds light on the twofold relation between gatekeeping and argumentation: on the one hand, norms function as premises in argumentation, and on the other norms' redefinition is played out argumentatively. Therefore, we can conclude that an argumentative analysis of newsroom interaction is a sound methodology for capturing editorial gatekeeping and for uncovering the types of journalistic norms at stake in making decisions about the news to publish.

However, much remains to be done and the analysis poses further challenges. It would be interesting, for instance, to investigate the way in which participants take stock of the "concluding stage" of argumentative exchanges and transform their results in decisions, either via consensus or thanks to hierarchy in the organization. More in general, it should be considered how roles and status affect argumentative practices in the media organization and, complementarily, how facework and interpersonal relationships intertwine with argumentative discussions. In order to achieve these aims, we should integrate the argumentative reconstructions with the analysis of dialogue and polylogue by two components. The first component has been realized in a more explicit and in-depth reconstruction of the activity types and social roles that they presuppose in Zampa's PhD Dissertation (2015), and the second component is the natural continuation of a speech-act and dialogue-game based analysis of dialogue and polylogue as illustrated by Rocci (2005) and Lewinski (2014), in an attempt to integrate dialogue structures and inferential structures of argumentation such as that proposed by Budzyniska and Reed within Inference Anchoring Theory (2011).

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## APPENDIX

### Transcription norms

The orthographic transcription carried out aims at recording and standardizing the course and the wording of a discourse. It does not include prosodic features. Here below we list the main rules of transcription:

- a) Every line comprises at least a syntactical unit, and sometimes also smaller units. In occasional cases a syntactical unit can comprise more than one line.
- b) Neither punctuation nor capital letters are used, except for abbreviations and comments.
- c) Delay and uptake signals are transcribed.
- d) In case of parallel talk the discourse is written one below the other.
- e) Pauses are not signaled.
- f) Word and structures truncation is signaled with a hyphen: "er wollte- also dieser mann wollte".
- g) Notes and explanations of the person who transcribes are put in square brackets on another line. In these notes upper and lower case is observed.
- h) Para- and nonverbal behaviour of the speaker is transcribed in double brackets when considered relevant for the discourse situation.
- i) Incomprehensible parts of discourse are marked in the following way: (xxx).
- j) Non fully comprehensible parts are included in round brackets.
- k) When so many people speak that what is said is not comprehensible anymore, this is signaled in square brackets.