A concretization of mediatization: How mediatization works and why 'mediatized worlds' are a helpful concept for empirical mediatization research

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Abstract:

The aim of the article is to outline an understanding of mediatization that might be a reference point for empirical research in various fields and contexts of present media cultures and societies. Therefore, present ideas and approaches of theorizing mediatization like for example the concept of the media logic are discussed critically. Based on this, an understanding of mediatization is outlined that focuses on the media as modifiers of communication. Such a reflection makes it possible to substantiate mediatization research as the empirical investigation of mediatized worlds.

Keywords:

Mediatization, media change, media theory, communication theory, methodology, media research

Introduction

If we look back into history, the invention of writing had already changed the conditions of human life some thousands of years ago. This was when the Greeks, in the context of the invention of writing, also invented different forms of science, because the education of the elites changed as well as the organization of government, religion and other institutions. Thus power relations changed, at least in the long run. Similarly, the invention and the dissemination of the printing press and of printed matters in Europe since the fifteenth century is understood as one of the central developments in human history, that — following Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan — even marked a whole epoch of human existence.[1] McLuhan especially argued in such a direction by defining the media as an 'extension of man' (McLuhan 1964) and thus he created a rather general concept of what media should be. In the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, mechanical and electrical media came into existence — from the photographic camera to the moving image, from telegraph to the telephone used for interpersonal communication, from electric messages via cables to broadcasting and later television. These developments can be seen as an important step into the industrial and postindustrial society. This also was the area of the arising communication studies. Early definitions of 'the media' were generated, and in the first half of the twentieth century communication studies understood media as channels of information transport. This idea on the one hand refers to mathematical information theory following Shannon and Weaver, focussing on the transmission of information in the technical sense of the word.[2] On the other hand, and nevertheless, this model became the reference point for analyzing the organized distribution of information by newspapers, radio, television and other mass media in general. The so-

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[1] Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951); and Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994).

[2] Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, 'The Mathematical Theory of Communication', *The Bell System Technical Journal*, 27 (1959), 379–423; 623–56.

called Lasswell formula — 'who says what in which channel to whom with what effect' (p. 38) — describes this mass media based view of communication perfectly.[3]

Decades later, digital media were invented. For them, it is characteristic that data are represented digitally, as the name 'digital media' expresses. However, it seems even more important that digital media are based on the use of the 'universal machine' called Computer, the only machine that does not have a fixed purpose but with software can be used for quite different purposes: mobile phones and the Internet, virtual realities, location-based media with GPS, robots, computer games and more came into life, and each of these technologies changed its character at least every couple of years because computer hard- and software changes rapidly. Especially new technologies were invented with the purpose to build net-works of communication, to modify and store data, and to transport data as well as to control the access to and use of it (especially the work with and the transformation of data). In this area the computer demonstrates its power. *Today, it is evident that society and culture must be understood as a media society and media culture.*

If we look back in history, this means that without any doubt we can identify an ongoing long-term process of media development as a part of the whole social and cultural history of human existence, a process that we call the *metaprocess mediatiazation*.

Mediatization of course is much more differentiated than described above, and it evidently does not only consist of the coming into existence of new media that are used by people, such as books or digital gadgets. It is a *long-term metaprocess of changing forms of communicative action*, as communication in the course of mediatization relies more and more on media: people communicate about media and media content; they communicate in the presence of mediated messages; they communicate by media-like letters, mobile phones or

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[3] Harold Lasswell, 'The Structure and Function of Communication in Society', in *The Communication of Ideas*, ed. by Lyman Bryson (New York: Harper, 1948), pp. 37–51.

chat rooms; they communicate with media when reading newspapers, surfing the Internet or watching TV; and they communicate interactively with media if they play computer games, or make conversation with a robot or a GPS-system. *Thus, mediatization is not only a process of upcoming new media and the coming into existence of an increasingly complex individual media environment. It is not only a process of 'more and more' media used in communicative action, but also and especially it is a metaprocess that consists of a changing everyday life, of changing identity constructions and social relations, of a changing economy, democracy and leisure, of a changing culture and society as a whole.* As such, mediatization is similar to modernization, globalization and commercialization, but is of course at the same time a rather different development.[4]

As mediatization is also relevant for all academic disciplines with a social and cultural orientation, research on mediated communication, and the contribution to the ongoing discourse about (media) communication, is no longer confined to communication studies, media studies and even not to cultural studies.[5] Instead, it is also a topic of philosophy and political science, of psychology, anthropology, sociology and others. It is discussed in civil society and in the public sphere. It is relevant for education, medicine and other fields of practice. In a nutshell, questions of mediatization are relevant for our understanding of the present human condition and our understanding of the present social and cultural developments as well as any related normative objectives.

Nevertheless, we cannot say that we understand the ongoing mediatization at present, as we cannot say that we control it. We do not know what it exactly means for us and for democracy. We even do not really understand how mediatization works and in which way cul-

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[4] Cf. Friedrich Krotz, *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2007); 'Mediatization: A concept with which to Grasp Media and Societal Change', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. By Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 21–40; and Knut Lundby, 'Media Logic: Looking for Social Interaction', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 85–100.
[5] Cf. Sonia Livingstone, 'On the Mediation of Everything', *Journal of Communication*, 59.1 (2009), 1–18.

ture and society exactly change their character to become a media culture and media society. It is also still open which academic concepts are suitable for communication, media, and cultural studies to grasp these developments and their conditions. But where do we start? What are the possible ways to proceed? These are the questions we want to discuss in the following article. For that, we will first shortly reflect on some frequently heard ideas on how mediatization might work, especially the idea of a itself influencing media logic. However, as this is not a convincing concept, this leads us to rethink what media are in order to understand what mediatization might be. This offers us the chance to think about an approach that investigates 'mediatized worlds' empirically.

Media Logic and other ideas to explain how mediatization works

One of the most influential concepts that tries to understand how mediatization 'works' is the concept of media logic. Here, two positions are possible: media logic can be understood either as technologically driven or as socially and culturally driven. Another popular position on how mediatization works is the analytic view that tends to dismantle mediatization into other processes. Finally, sometimes mediatization just captures the changing conditions for actors in a specific field. We think that all these four positions contain a bit of truth. But, as we will argue, all these positions are only able to grasp some moments of mediatization and not the process as a whole. Thus, in our view they are not helpful to construct a broad theory of mediatization. Let us now shortly sketch these four positions.

Firstly, a technologically-defined media logic is more or less implicitly part of the work of Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan. They argue that the media as technologies are 'extensions of man' which directly cause the changing modes of articulating society and cul-

ture (Cf. with an overview by Krotz).[6] From the perspective of McLuhan the invention of writing and later the printing press, for example, created visual media, as they must be read by the eyes. This he understood as a 'massage' of the eyes, and as a consequence of which human thinking, human experiences of reality and human actions changed — they acquired a specific character determined by the leading media of that time: books and newspapers. Following McLuhan, a similar process happened later again, when television as a medium based on electricity came into existence. In his perspective television functions similarly to the human brain, and as a consequence of electrical media we have a technologically-given augmentation of human conscience. Thus he concluded that culture and society again became totally different — and, compared with the 'Gutenberg galaxy', this might offer the chance of a much better world.

Secondly, a more socially and culturally defined media logic is introduced by David Altheide and Robert Snow.[7] Referring to the German sociologist Georg Simmel, who was the 'father' of formal sociology, and to the frame theory of Erving Goffman, they conceptualized the influence of a media logic by the formats of media content: By media logic they mean a certain 'form' of communication in the (mass) media that influences the social and cultural conditions in a given society. Altheide and Snow argued that the influence of media on culture and society comes into existence when these media related forms transform the ways that institutions or people in everyday life organize their own use of signs and symbolic representation. This concept evidently refers only to so-called mass media. Some researchers who work on mediatization like Stig Hjavard or Andrea Schrott refer to this concept, but of course in a more differentiated way.[8]

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[6] Friedrich Krotz, *Die Mediatisierung kommunikativen Handelns: Wie sich Alltag und soziale Beziehungen, Kultur und Gesellschaft durch die Medien wandeln* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001).

[7] David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow, *Media Logic* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1979).

[8] Stig Hjavard, 'Soft Individualism: Media and the Changing Social Character', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 159–78; Andrea Schrott,

Thirdly, Winfried Schulz, Gianpetro Mazzoleni, and both together (Mazzoleni and Schulz) analytically broke the mediatization process down into four parts: 'extension' (of media technologies), 'substitution' (of social activities by media use), 'amalgamation' (as a mash up of media-related and other activities) and 'accommodation' (as new rules given by media may become valid in specific fields).[9] Here we can see an integration of the two positions discussed up to this point, as the concept of extension more or less refers to the ideas of media as 'extensions of man' within medium theory, and 'accommodation' integrates the concept of 'media logic'.

Fourthly, this accommodation process is taken over by many other researchers, especially those working in the field of political communication: the — rather simple — idea that the conditions of political communication are changed by mediatization. In an actor-specific approach for example, this means that media are understood as new and relevant actors in the field of political communication, and thus political actors must learn that they must take media into account and change their strategies.[10]

These approaches and perspectives evidently reflect the problem that communication studies do not have a clear concept of what media are: it is inappropriate to reduce communication to mass communication and media to mass media. Additionally there is the need to reflect the role of technology as part of what we call media. While this is obvious in an everyday perspective, technology has no clear position in communication studies. This should be overcome in the context of a mediatization approach. Of course, Walter Benjamin, Roland

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'Dimensions: Catch-All Label or Technical Term', in *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 41–62.

[9] Winfried Schulz, 'Reconstructing Mediatization as an Analytical Concept', *European Journal of Communication*, 19.1 (2004), 87–101; Gianpetro Mazzoleni (2008): 'Media Logic', in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, vol. VII, ed. by Wolfgang Donsbach (Malden, BA: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 2930–32; Gianpetro Mazzoleni and Winfried Schulz, '"Mediatization" of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy?', *Political Communication*, 16 (1999), 247–61.

[10] As an example for this position have a looke at <http://www.ecprnet.eu/joint_sessions/st_gallen/workshop_details.asp?workshopID=19> [accessed 13 June 2011].

Barthes, Raymond Williams, and others have discussed the status of technology in former times, but they have remained always marginal within the communication studies of their time. A more actual discussion can be found in the books of McQuail, Scannell, Rammert and especially van Loon.[11] The upcoming discussion about Actor Network Theory and the work of Bruno Latour is also a sign of a gap in social and communicational theory.[12]

In the meantime, on a more specific level and concerned with mediatization, there is a broad discussion of the implicit and explicit assumptions of these four positions. Knut Lundby gives an overview and discusses them critically. A clear critique with a lot of interesting relevant questions about media logic was given by Nick Couldry at the conference about mediatized worlds in Bremen (2011).[13] Further there was a so-called virtual panel on 'Media logic, media technology and mediatization: 'Theorising the interrelation between media, technological and cultural change' at the ICA conference 2011 in Boston, in which positions by Couldry; Hepp; Krotz; and van Loon had been discussed.[14]

Let us sum up some conclusions about that. Firstly, *it is easy to see that the positions outlined above are much too specific to grasp how media and especially mediatization work*,

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[11] Dennis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 6th edn (New Delhi: Sage, 2010); Paddy Scannell, *Media and Communication* (London: Sage, 2007); Werner Rammert, *Technik – Handeln – Wissen: Zu einer pragmatistischen Technik- und Sozialtheorie* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2007); Joost van Loon, *Media Technology: Critical Perspectives* (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill, 2008).

[12] See: Nick Couldry, 'Actor Network Theory and Media: Do they Connect and on What Terms?', in *Connectivity, Networks and Flows: Key Concepts for Contemporary Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Andreas Hepp et al. (Cresskill: Hampton Press, 2008), pp. 93–110; Andreas Hepp, *Cultures of Mediatization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), pp. 49–59.

[13] Nick Couldry, 'When Mediatization Hits the Ground', in *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*, 14–15 April (Haus der Wissenschaft, Germany: University of Bremen, 2011). See for this conference <http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/tagungen/mediatized-worlds/home/> [accessed 24 June 2011].

[14] Nick Couldry, 'Media and the Possibilities of Social Order', in *ICA Annual Conference*, 2011 <http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/fileadmin/mediapool/documents/Vortraege_ICA_Virtuelles_Panel/Couldry.pdf> [accessed 24 June 2011]; Andreas Hepp, Mediatization and the 'Moulding Force' of the Media, in: Communications 37(1), pp. 1–28.; Friedrich Krotz, 'Media as a Societal Structure and a Situational Frame for Communicative Action: How Meditization Develops as a Process', in *ICA Annual Conference*, 2011 <http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/fileadmin/mediapool/documents/Vortraege_ICA_Virtuelles_Panel/Krotz.pdf> [accessed 24 June 2011]; Joost van Loon, 'How to be Mediatized? An Invitation to Metaphysics in Defense of Actor Network Theory', in *ICA Annual Conference*, 2011 <http://www.mediatisiertewelten.de/fileadmin/mediapool/documents/Vortraege_ICA_Virtuelles_Panel/van_Loon.pdf> [accessed 24 June 2011].

as the arguments of Lundby and Couldry demonstrate. There is no overall media logic if texts are 'made' by a viewer, if media and mediated communication consist of technology *and* cultural forms, if the structure and the use of television in Saudi Arabia and in the suburbs of Los Angeles are radically different, and even if the reasons why a person buys a computer or a mobile phone fundamentally changes every decade, and so on.

Secondly, the detailed arguments of Couldry and Lundby, quoted above, substantiate that *the idea of a 'media logic' is much more frequently quoted than explicitly explained and rarely supported by more than rhetorical evidence.* With respect to the importance of their arguments, we cannot imagine that these gaps can argumentatively be filled.

Thirdly, as for example the interesting empirical work of Hjavard shows, a researcher can find various developments and mechanisms in how mediatization works if he or she just empirically asks for changes in media communication, in media technology and in media use. This is also what is necessary to say of the approach of Mazzoleni and Schulz: the first three processes that they describe are processes that are arguments to understand mediatization as a long-term perspective that began already with the invention of communication by human beings — something we relate to the term 'meta process'. But this is not really a description of how mediatization works, as it is not clear how these 'extension', 'substitution' and 'amalgamation' processes are dependent on media and on communication. Fourthly, *all the above mentioned approaches more or less implicitly refer to a concept of media that are mass media* — McLuhan, but also Altheide and Snow, who developed their concept long before the invention of the Internet, mobile phones or computer games. Also Schulz and Mazzoleni refer to a traditional concept of mass media as long as they define mediatization (and they understand digital media as something that might work against mediatization as a 'media logic'). The same is true for the discussion about mediatization in political communication.

Thus, the concept of one or a lot of medial logics as well as the other ideas of how mediatization works, leads to a reduced theory. Instead, we should take into account what media are: modifiers of human communicative actions and practices — and thus *we should describe the ways that mediatization functions by what happens with communication if individuals, institutions and organizations use media, and if society and culture as a whole depend on specific media.* Having this in mind, we in the following pages will propose a broader approach, which will avoid these problems. To develop this, we will start with the question: what are media 'doing' with communication and how then does mediatization work across different levels and forms of media related communication? Our aim is to develop a basic concept for a full understanding of mediatization, that will include a broader concept of media and mediatization and refer to a certain concept of communication.

Media as modifiers of communication

If we speak about media and their role in culture and society today, we should not equate media with mass media. A definition of media should refer to the characteristics of all relevant types of media. At the same time such a definition should be independent of the specific way that people individually use certain forms of media.

Mass media, to begin with, are only one type of communicative media. Their characteristic as such is that they are 'used' by an activity that is called media reception, which consists of the 'reading' of given standardized messages addressed to everybody who is able and interested to receive and decode this message. This holds, for example, for a book, a television show, a radio program or a website on the Internet. We thus call this *communication with a standardized, generally addressed message*, if a person does so, or *media reception* in the

perspective of media use. This of course is a form of communication. But there are at least two further types of mediated communication.

There is the case of using a mobile phone to communicate with another person. The same can be done with a letter or an e-mail — this type of communication we call *mediated interpersonal communication.* This is obviously different from the kind of media described above, as here at least two persons are involved and constitutive for the communication process.

In addition, there is the case of *interactive communication* — if we listen to the 'voice' of a GPS System or have a 'conversation' with a hardware or software robot like Josef Weizenbaum's ELIZA, or if we play a computer game. This is different to interpersonal mediated communication, as there must not be another human person involved, but it is also not a case of communication with a standardized, generally addressed content, like reading a book or watching television.

Thus, today we have three different types of mediated communication — interactive, mediated interpersonal, and communication with a given content in a given format that is independent of whether a person decodes it or not. And we of course have a fourth form of communication, namely conversation in a common situation, without any technical media, which may be by using language, by communicating by gestures or with other specific signs.

We assume that this direct communication in a common situation is the basic form of communication which human beings as a species have developed and which they learn while growing up. The ability and the dependency of such complex forms of communication, for example by language, was one of the most relevant steps from apes to humans. Also today it is part of every biography of a person that he or she must learn a language and learn to communicate in the society he or she has been born into. George Herbert Mead has shown — and

this makes his work central to any communication studies — that important qualities and features of the human being are consequences of the human practices of communication.[15] Following Mead, we for example developed a self-consciousness and a consciousness by communicating, as we must take over the role of the other if we want to understand and to answer him or her, and also our thinking is a version of an inner dialogue that we need to practice again and again. A further assumption is to say that the above mentioned forms of mediated communication — reception and appropriation of standardized messages, mediated interpersonal communication and interactive communication — are modifications of face-to-face interpersonal communication: for example, to be able to speak to a non-present person by telephone demands that a person is able to have an inner representation of this person, what a child, as it is well known, must learn by growing up, and the child learns that starting with face-to-face communication.

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[15] George Herbert Mead, *Geist, Identität und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); *Philosophie der Sozialität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969).

Figure 1: Forms of communication as modifications of direct communication.

reception/appropriation

mediated
interpersonal
communication

interactive
communication

the basic form:
face-to-face communication by
language and gestures
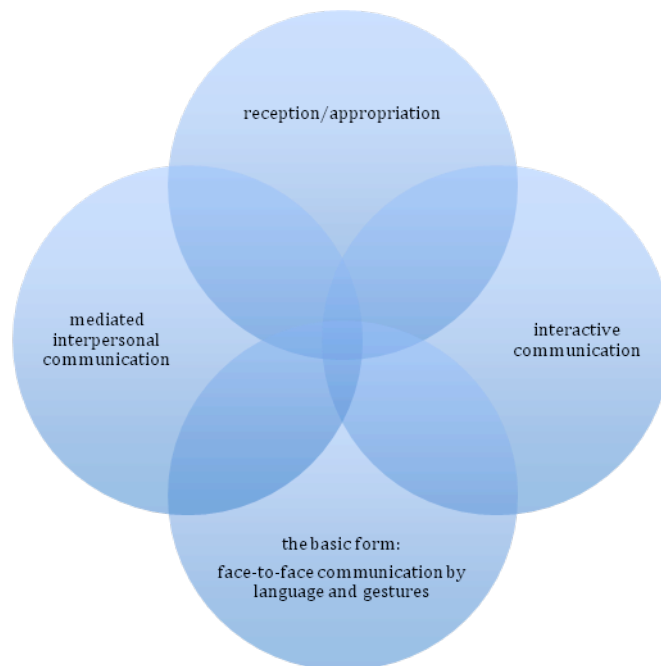
Now, following this description, *we can define media more generally as something that modifies and transforms communication.* Media give us the possibility to 'store' communication over time, to 'transfer' communication to other places and to introduce other social situations, but also to communicate in new forms, for example in pictures or interactively and so on. *Media augment thus in a fundamental and successful way what can be done by communication. Mediated communication is not a substitute of direct interpersonal communication, but an augmentation of communication, that always leads into augmented realities.*[16]

But again, this is only possible in complex ways and not only by the invention of a technology. To prove this, we can refer to Ferdinand de Saussure and Raymond Williams. From Saussure we learn that the reality of communication has a double structure: it is a social

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[16] Evidently, this perspective has different consequences for an understanding of media compared with McLuhan's ideas of media to be extensions of man. For McLuhan, every thing is a media as long as it is 'between' the human being and the rest of the world. In the perspective used here, a media is something that comes into existence by communicating as a social action of the human being, and the media as a result is much more complex than just a technology.

institution called language, and it is a situational practice called parole.[17] As language and gestures are the bases of our communication, every media as a modifier or a transformer of communication must keep this structure, as it transforms communication in communication: a media thus must exist as a structure and as a situational practice. In addition, Raymond Williams has demonstrated that media today consist on the one hand of technologies, and on the other hand function as social forms.[18] This means that we cannot reduce media to questions of technology or the social but must reflect on how both are interwoven. We thus define a medium as a fourfold structural and situational transformer of communication (see Figure 2):

Figure 2: The fourfold character of a media: the vertical structural character and the horizontal situational character.

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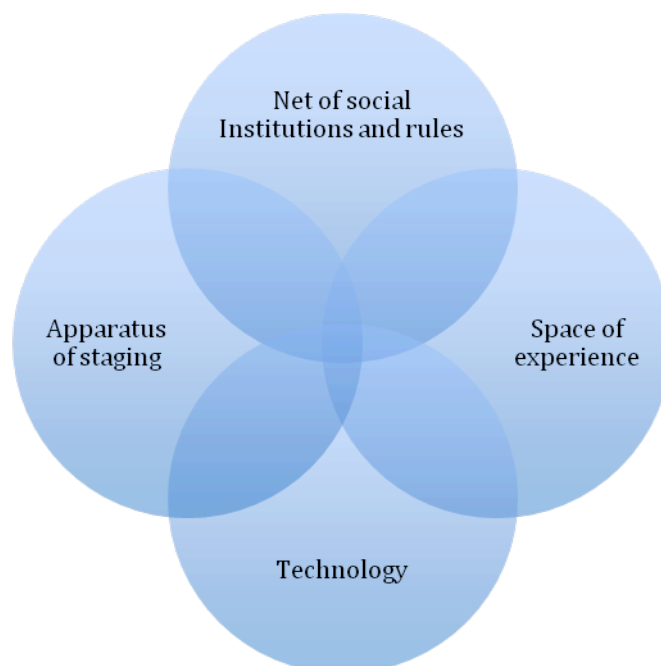
[17] Ferdinand de Saussure, 'Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft', in *Zeichen über Zeichen: Texte zur Semiotik von Peirce bis Eco und Derrida*, ed. by Dieter Mersch (München: DTV, 1998), pp. 193–215.
[18] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

This evidently is a semiotically based definition of media that holds for all media of today. And it is a definition that — as we will show in the next section — is helpful for describing and understanding how mediatization works. Of course, the four parts belong together, and each one is in strong relation to the other. Each is a 'Moment' in the sense of Georg Friedrich and Wilhelm Hegel, as each one is a part that at the same time includes the whole.

How mediatization works

With our definition of media as modifiers of communication we can now generalize or maybe better: integrate the diverging concepts of how mediatization comes into existence and how mediatization works on a higher level: *mediatization is a non-linear concept and consists of a colourful bouquet of mechanisms and possible influences, that include what media logic and the other positions mentioned above supposed.* Some of them we can already name.

Thus, a *media as a set of institutions* comes into existence in order to care, to control, to support or to exploit the medium as a technology, and the communication forms that belong to it. This is well known from the history of media. Rules, laws, control and public discussion, ideas of other media, and sometimes a huge group of institutions will be founded, for example in the case of the book, schools and teachers, ministries, and psychological or other correcting institutions care for reading and how to learn it, as every child is forced to learn this practice, and even the architecture of houses will be different in an alphabetized society, compared with a non-alphabetized one. In the case of visual media, it is not schools but museums and later cinemas and regulating institutions that are of importance, and visiting museums is a question of taste and distinction. The institutions act together in society and culture to care for the education of the people and control what they do with the media, and the media enterprises and related institutions create specific formats, , for example exploiting events by

reporting and commenting on them, as people are educated to expect relevant news. The cultural forms and the media-related institutions in the mediatized culture and society of today have a multiplicity of different expressions.

In the mediatized cultures and societies of today *media as technologies* are part of every household and even of every person, in the sense that, for example, the mobile phone becomes more and more a very personal device that may be used at every moment for a lot of different purposes. One could even say that this technology in the meantime became a special part of the identity, and the by that token the extended body of a person, and as such it serves for orientation, as a storage for social connections and events of the past, and as potential for the future.

So far, both of these perspectives together constitute *the structural character of media*. They show a lot of developments and possibilities that belong to a broadly understood mediatization process and that overreach singular situations. As institutionalizations and technological objectivations, media are 'moulding forces' of communication.[19]

Media as apparatus of staging define the 'frame' (Goffman) and some transformation possibilities of communication. This of course depends of the surrounding culture and the respective traditions and their value in a specific society. This is where we can say that the 'moulding forces' of the media become concrete in certain interaction settings, that is in relation to communication and the construction of reality, for content and interpretation of the world.

Finally, *media as a space of experience* of the single persons in culture and society is the condition *sine qua non;* a technology cannot be called a medium. Here, media are constructed, media become influential for the communicative construction of identity and every-

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[19] Andreas Hepp, 'Differentiation: Mediatization and Cultural Change', in *Mediatization. Concept, Changes, Consequences*, ed. by Knut Lundby (New York: Lang, 2009), pp. 139–58; and *Medienkultur*, pp. 55–68.

day life, for reality and democracy. Here, technologies are related to needs and interests in a basic way that decides about the sense of a media.

Evidently, the latter two perspectives create the *situational character of a media*. The situational (apparatuses of staging, spaces of experience) and structural character (institutions and technologies) together then capture the core moments of how mediatization works. This we described already above, for example by the observation that media may augment the ways that people can make experiences and create new forms of media-related communication. In addition, we want to emphasize as stated already, that mediatization cannot be reduced to the consequences of more and other forms of mediated communication between people: the case is much more complex, as for example emerging new media are also used as a resource for face-to-face communication, for example, as a guide to how to communicate, as a topic about which people communicate and so on). We are reminded in this dimension of the work of Angela Keppler, for example, who analyzed media references in family conversations, or Jürgen Habermas's concept of the 'public sphere', which includes not only mediated communication, but also encounters and face-to-face communication, if people participate.[20] That said, we might argue that mediated forms of communication and communication by media, together with communication about media and in the presence of media, are the starting point to describe how mediatization works, as this is the starting point to finding out how everyday life and human social relations, institutions, political parties and enterprises, democracy, economy, education, and culture and society as a whole are changing.

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[20] Angela Keppler, *Tischgespräche: Über Formen kommunikativer Vergemeinschaftung am Beispiel der Konversation in Familien* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

Mediatized worlds — or: How can we research mediatization empirically?

Within the frame of the outlined understanding of 'how mediatization works' it becomes evident to ask how can we investigate this empirically? In the last section we want to answer such a question by outlining the concept of 'mediatized worlds'. The starting argument is the evidence that we cannot research mediatization in total. However, it is possible to research the mediatization of certain 'life-worlds' — and this is where the concept of mediatized worlds comes in.

Within media and communication research the concept of 'media worlds' has a certain tradition. David L. Altheide and Robert P. Snow (1991) for example,[21] relate their understanding of 'media logic' to 'media worlds' when they use the latter to describe social worlds being marked by a 'media logic'. Elizabeth Bird describes the everyday use of (mass) media in an ethnographic perspective as the 'living in a media world'.[22] Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin characterize the cultural anthropology of the media as analyses of different 'media worlds'.[23] Leah A. Lievrouw sees a relation between the establishment of 'new' digital media and the pluralization of life-worlds.[24] Or David Morley reflects on questions of belonging in the 'present mediated world'.[25]

However, in a general sense 'media worlds' is no more than a metaphor for the fact that various contexts of present, everyday life are marked by media communication. That said, we use the concept of 'mediatized worlds' in a much more concrete sense when referring to social phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Hepp, *Cultures of mediatization*, pp.

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[21] David L. Altheide, Robert P. Snow, *Media worlds in the postjournalism era* (New York: Aldine, 1991).

[22] Elizabeth S. Bird, *The Audience in Everyday Life: Living in a Media World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

[23] Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin, 'Introduction', in *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, ed. by Faye D. Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin (Berkeley: California University Press, 2002), pp. 1–36.

[24] Leah A. Lievrouw, 'New Media and the "Pluralization of Life-Worlds": A Role for Information in Social Differentiation', *New Media & Society*, 3 (2001), 7–18.

[25] David Morley, 'Belongings: Place, Space and Identity as Mediated World', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4 (2001), 425–48 (p. 443).

75-83). Within social phenomenology Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann have described the everyday world as a very special part of the life-world of a human being: 'the everyday life-world is […] that province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted'.[26] The everyday life-world is accepted without question, not the 'private world' of individual(s), but intersubjectively: '[T]he fundamental structure of its reality is shared by us' (Vol. 1, p.4).As such the everyday world does not only include the nature but also the social and cultural world in which a person exists.

Very early Benita Luckmann emphasized the fragmentation of everyday life-worlds into various 'small life-worlds'.[27] For her these are the 'segments' (Luckmann, p. 81) of everyday life that exist as specificity within organizational as well as private contexts: 'The life round of modern man is not one piece. It does not unfold within one but within a variety of small "worlds" which are often unconnected with one another' (Luckmann, p. 587). Empirically, Benita Luckmann refers to 'worlds' of different jobs, of social clubs, of political parties, religious communities, subcultures and so on. Therefore, in present (post)modern societies we are confronted with a variety of 'socially constructed part-time-realities' which mark more and more the experience of men and women.[28]

It is within this frame of discussion that we want to use the concept of 'mediatized worlds'. Mediatized worlds are in our understanding mediatized, small life-worlds. As such, they are *structured fragments of life-worlds with a certain binding intersubjective knowledge inventory, with specific social practices and cultural thickenings*. Mediatized worlds are the everyday concretization of media societies and media cultures. They are the level where mediatization gets concrete and by this can be analyzed empirically. To give some examples:

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[26] Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, 2 vols (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989), vol. 1, p. 3.
[27] Benita Luckmann, 'The Small Life-Worlds of Modern Man', *Social Research*, 37 (1970), 580–96.
[28] Ronald Hitzler and Anne Honer, 'Lebenswelt – Milieu – Situation: Terminologische Vorschläge zur theoretischen Verständigung', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 36 (1984), 56–74 (p. 67).

while it is impossible to research the mediatization of a culture or society as a whole, we can investigate the mediatized world of stock exchange dealing, of schooling, of the private home and so on. Analyzing these 'socially constructed part-time-realities' as mediatized worlds means to research empirically in which way their communicative construction is shaped by various media, as well as how this communicative construction changes in the above outlined sense.

If we raise the question how this can be done practically, a further look at symbolic interactionism helps. Within symbolic interactionism the concept of 'social worlds' is well established and can be linked to our outlined understanding of mediatized worlds. Here especially three points are striking:

The first point is that *mediatized worlds have a 'communication network' beyond the territorial*. It was Tamotsu Shibutani who reflected already in the 1950s the characteristics of what he called 'social worlds'.[29] One of his key arguments is that already in these times media played an important role in the construction of social worlds. However, these mediated 'communication networks are no longer coterminous with territorial boundaries, cultural areas overlap and have lost their territorial bases' (Shibutani, p. 566). Quoting Shibutani our argument is not, that questions of (re-)territorialization will not matter for the analyses of mediatized worlds. More specifically the argument is that mediatized worlds are at least partly articulated by mediated communication networks and that these communication networks transgress various territories with increasing mediatization. To take one of our above mentioned examples: the mediatized world of stock exchange dealing is something that not only takes place at the stock exchange building itself but at nearly every place where bankers but also private persons can deal their stocks via desktops and laptop computers or smart phones.

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[29] Tamotsu Shibutani, 'Reference Groups as Perspectives', *American Journal of Sociology*, 60 (1955), 562–69.

It is the mediatized communication network by which this mediatized world gets constructed, not a territoriality.

A second important point is that *mediatized worlds exist on 'various scales'*. Some years later than the publication by Tamotsu Shibutani it was Anselm Strauss who reflected Shibutani's arguments somewhat further.[30] Doing this he sees one important aspect why the concept of social worlds (and therefore also our conceptualization of mediatized worlds) is a highly promising starting point for empirical research. Strauss argues that they 'can be studied at any scale, from the smallest (say a local world, a local space) to the very largest (in size or geographic spread)' (Strauss, p. 126). Therefore, the concept of mediatized worlds offers an approach to investigate mediatization empirically by defining an investigation perspective, that is the perspective of the thematic core of a mediatized world. At the same time the concept is not so narrow that it is a micro-concept of interaction at a certain place. We can use it on various levels or scales, and by that also realize mediatization research across them.

The third point is that *mediatized worlds are 'nested/interlaced' with each other*. Again we can refer here to the arguments by Anselm Strauss. Discussing Shibutani's ideas he remarks that 'social worlds *intersect*, and do so under a variety of conditions' (Strauss, p. 122). Also we are confronted with the '*segmenting* of social worlds' (Strauss, p. 123), not only in the sense that they segment the totality of life-worlds but also in the sense that they segment internally, producing 'specifiable subworlds'. We can take here the meditized worlds of popular cultural scenes like hip hop, black metal or techno as examples: the ongoing articulation of their mediatized worlds is a likewise ongoing segmentation and (re)invention process. That said, researching mediatized worlds also means investigating the transgression from one mediatized world to another as well as the processes of demarcation.

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[30] Anselm Strauss, 'A Social World Perspective', *Studies in Symbolic Interactionism*, 1.1 (1978), 119–28.

The analyses of various mediatized worlds and their change by becoming mediatized can of course be only one starting point for the enterprise of empirical mediatization research. However, the idea is to start at this concrete level to get different 'grounded theories' of how media communicative change and socio cultural change are interlaced with each other, and how this interplay can be theorized in an appropriate way as part of the meta-process of mediatization. The deployment of a good number of such grounded theories of mediatized worlds makes it possible to develop a more general theory of the present mediatization. At the moment we are in the beginning of such a process. Our hope is that this article might stimulate some further research on our joint way to such an empirically grounded but more general theory.

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