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The communicative figurations of mediatized worlds: Mediatization research in times of the 'mediation of everything'

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1.   Introduction

Conducting mediatization research is no easy task. Linked with this term is not only the idea that media have a certain 'specificity', which as such exerts an 'influence' on culture and society: the term also implies a process of change. But how can we find a practical approach to mediatization research when the time we live in is shaped by the 'mediation of everything'? How can we carry out this kind of analysis if the focus is not to be merely on any one single media – the television, the mobile phone, the social web – but all different kinds of media in their entirety?

These questions are the departure point of this article, which has the aim to develop a transmedial approach of mediatization research. I start with a short review of two of the main traditions of mediatization research. This builds the foundation for an understanding of mediatization that focuses on the "communicative figurations" through which we construct our "mediatized worlds". Such a conceptualisation makes it possible to re-theorise mediatization research from a diachronous and synchronous perspective.

In order to develop this kind of argument, it is necessary to clarify the underlying understanding of 'media'. When I use this term in the following, I don't mean "primary" media like, for example, language or acting theatre. Also I don't have "generalised" media in mind – like money, love or power. In contrast to this, all my arguments refer to technical communication media, i.e. the various kinds of media we use to extend our communication possibilities beyond the here and now: television, the (mobile) phone, the social web, and so forth.

2.   Mediatization research: Two traditions

Mediatization is not a new term of media and communication research but can be traced back to the early decades of the 20th century (Averbeck-Lietz 2013). One example is Ernst Manheim (1933) in his post-doctoral dissertation "The bearers of public opinion". In this book he writes about the "mediatization of direct human relationships" (p. 11). He uses this term in order to describe changes of social relations within modernity, changes that are marked by the emergence of so-called mass media. This early use already indicates the main difference between the concepts of "mediatization" and "mediation": Mediation is suitable for describing the general characteristics of any process of media communication. Martín-Barbero, for example, used the term to emphasize that (media) communication is a meeting point of quite diverse forces of conflict and integration (Martín-Barbero 1993: 187). With a comparable orientation, Roger Silverstone described "mediation" as

the "movement of meaning from one text to another, from one discourse to another, from one event to another" (1999: 13). However, Silverstone treats mediation as a much more extended process in which we "engage continuously and infinitely with media meanings" (1999: 17). Contrasting these examples with the very early use of "mediatization" by Ernst Manheim we can say that the two concepts describe something different: "mediation" is a concept to theorise the process of communication in total; "mediatization", in contrast, is a more specific term to theorise media related change.

With such an orientation, mediatization became a "key" (Lundby 2009a: 1) for media and communication research over the past twenty years. Reviewing this process, we can distinguish between two intertwined traditions that we might call "institutional" and "social-constructivist" traditions.[2] Both differ in their focus on how to theorise mediatization: While the "institutional tradition" has until recently mainly been interested in traditional mass media, whose influence is described as a "media logic", the "social-constructivist tradition" is more interested in everyday communication practices – especially related to digital media and personal communication – and focuses on the changing communicative construction of culture and society.

Originally the concept of a "media logic" goes back to David Altheide and Robert Snow. To understand the "role of media" they argued that it was necessary to ask how the media as a "form of communication" (Altheide/Snow 1979: 9) transform our perception and interpretation of the social. The conception of "media logic" is intended to capture this. Altheide and Snow establish that a "media logic" inheres not in media contents, but in the form of media communication. The latter should be understood as a "processual framework through which social action occurs" (Altheide/Snow 1979: 15, emphasis in original) – in this case, the social action of communication.

While Altheide and Snow themselves did not use the term mediatization but the more general concept of mediation, their arguments became an important reference point for developing the institutional tradition of mediatization research. Kent Asp (1990) was one of the first who related mediatization – or, as he wrote: "medialization" – to the assertion of a media logic. More precisely, he argues that in order to analyse the role of media in a society it is necessary to consider three "separate fields of influence" (Asp 1990: 48). This is first the field of the "market", second is the field of "ideology", and third the field of "systems of norms surrounding media production processes" (Asp 1990: 48). This third field – and here Asp explicitly refers to Altheide and Snow – can best be described as a field of "media logic". The latter is for him a "catch-all term" to summarise the dramaturgy, formats, routines and rationalities of the (mass) media.

In a certain sense, this idea is the initial spark of the institutional tradition of mediatization research, especially within political communication. This is dominated by the question of how various parts of culture and society (especially "politics") become orientated to a "media logic" (for an overview see Schrott 2009; Strömbäck 2011). Research within such a tradition mainly focused on the mediatization of politics (Donges 2008; Imhof 2006; Kepplinger 2002; Mazzoleni 2008; Vowe 2006), but also on other fields like religion (Hjarvard 2008), for example, or science (Weingart 1998; Rödder/Schäfer 2010).

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[2] Many thanks to Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz, Nick Couldry, Stig Hjarvard, Friedrich Krotz and Knut Lundby for their feedback on the distinction between these two traditions.

However, it was especially Stig Hjarvard who condensed this discourse into an "institutional perspective" (Hjarvard 2008: 110). He makes two points. First of all, he is concerned with the analysis of the relationships between media as institutions and other social institutions. Secondly, and following on from this, he seeks to use the concept of mediatization to refer only to a particular form of the institutionalization of the media: "autonomous" social institutionalization, which, he argues, is the precondition for media institutions as such exerting an influence over other social institutions. For Europe since the 1980s, he considers this condition to be given, as media became increasingly commercialized quite independently of "public steering" (Hjarvard 2008: 120). Only from this point can one speak meaningfully of "the mediatization of society […] [as] the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic" (Hjarvard 2008: 113). The term media logic then refers to the "institutional and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of informal rules" (Hjarvard 2008: 113).

The starting point of the social-constructivist tradition is more rooted in symbolic interactionism and the sociology of knowledge, but also integrates some fundamental considerations of medium theory. In a certain sense, we can treat this approach as a resumption of the classical sociological reflections as can be found in the work of Ernst Manheim. Beside others, it was Friedrich Krotz (2001) who developed an approach on mediatization that is more oriented towards a communication research based on action theory and cultural studies. He understands mediatization as a "meta process" of change, meant as a comprehensive frame used to describe the change of culture and society in a theoretically informed way. In such a long-term perspective, the history of humankind can be described as a process "during which communication media became increasingly developed and used in various ways" (Krotz 2001: 33). However, it is crucial not to take the media as isolated phenomena but to reflect the change of communicative forms that goes hand in hand with media change: "In consequence, more complex forms of mediatized communication developed, and communication takes place more often, longer, in more and more parts of life and in relation to more topics than media communication" (Krotz 2001: 33, original emphasis). This approach is linked with the argument that context-free definitions of mediatization cannot be appropriate. Therefore, we have to consider that we can distinguish between various mediatization processes in different times and for different groups of people. All of them have to be described in a concrete way.

This complexity of mediatization is also emphasised by other academics, even when they position themselves between an institutional and social-constructivist tradition. One example for this is the distinction drawn by Winfried Schulz' (2004), who refers to four different moments of mediatization. This is "extension" (of human communication possibilities), "substitution" (of former non-media related forms of action), "amalgamation" (of media-related and non-media-related action) and "accommodation" (to a media logic). These arguments about the complexity and contradictoriness of mediatization are substantiated by various empirical studies that focus less on the relation between mass media and politics but on the mediatization of the everyday. Here, for example, we can refer to the research by André Jansson (2002) on the mediatization of consumption, Hubert Knoblauch's (2009) investigation of the mediatization of popular religion, Knut Lundby's

(2011) analysis of the mediatization of faith in digital storytelling, or our own analysis of the mediatization of communitization (Hepp et al. 2011).

The aim of this kind of research is to investigate the interrelation between media-communicative and socio-cultural change as part of everyday communication practices, and how the change of these practices is related to a changing communicative construction of reality. Under consideration here are not only "classical" mass media but especially the so-called "new" media of the internet and mobile communication.

Recently, the two traditions once again opened to each other: On the one hand, exponents of the institutionalist tradition re-think the concept of media logic; on the other hand exponents of the social-constructivist tradition emphasise the necessity to also investigate the institutional dimension of mediatization. Stig Hjarvard, for example, defined mediatization in a recent article as follows: "Mediatization generally refers to the process through which core elements of a social or cultural activity (e.g., politics, religion, and education) become influenced by and dependent on the media." (Hjarvard 2012: 30) The concept of media logic moves into the background within this definition. More important for theorising mediatization becomes the "institutional, aesthetic, and technological affordances" (Hjarvard 2012: 30) of the media (cf. also Hjarvard 2013: 17). Nick Couldry in his latest book criticised the concept of "media logic" because it unites a variety of "logics" under one "common 'logic'" (Couldry 2012: 135). On the other hand, he argues that the mediatization of politics "is arguably the clearest example of a sector where something like a 'media logic' is at work: in the day-to-day operations of policy generation, policy implementation and public deliberation." (Couldry 2012: 144). Therefore, in order to be able to understand the mediatization of politics it becomes necessary to carry out an analysis of political organisations and their relation to various media that work like a "meta capital" across different social fields. Furthermore, in a recent publication Friedrich Krotz and I argued as follows: "we should describe the ways how mediatization functions by what happens with communication when individuals, institutions, and organizations use media, and if society and culture as a whole depend on specific media." (Krotz/Hepp 2013). In so doing, we emphasise the necessity to reflect institutions and organisations also in a social-constructive perspective. One can treat arguments like these as an echo of something Knut Lundby already reminded us of four years ago: "it is not viable to speak of an overall media logic; it is necessary to specify how various media capabilities are applied in various patterns of social interactions" (Lundby 2009b: 115).

3.   Understanding mediatization transmedially: Institutionalisation, reification and mediatized worlds

If we take the arguments developed so far seriously, how can we then theorise mediatization by integrating the best of these two traditions? A first step in this direction might be to stretch a core definition of mediatization across the two. Taking the research discussed so far, we can define mediatization as a concept used to analyse the (longterm) interrelation between media-communicative and socio-cultural change in a critical manner. In such a general orientation, the term mediatization implies quantitative as well as qualitative aspects. With regard to quantitative aspects, mediatization refers to the increasing temporal, spatial and social spread of media communication. This means that over time we have become more and more used to communicating via media in various contexts. With

regard to qualitative aspects, mediatization refers to the role of the specificity of certain media in the process of socio-cultural change. This means that it does "matter" which kind of media is used for which kind of communication. The differences between the two traditions is how they define this media specificity – either as an institutionalised 'media logic' or more openly as a highly contextual moment of 'altering' communication.

One possibility for linking the two might be the concept of the "moulding forces" of the media. Following my argumentation outlined elsewhere (Hepp 2012b: 17ff.), the term "moulding force" is intended to capture the specificity of a medium in the process of communication. This metaphor is used to indicate that we cannot presume a general or context-free 'effect' of a certain media; however, different media shape communication in different ways. More in detail, the expression "moulding forces" captures two processes related with the media, i.e. their institutionalisation and their reification. The interesting point is that at the same time we can relate such a terming to the main interests of the two traditions of mediatization research, i.e. mass media and (digital) media of personal communication.

If we refer to social constructivism, the term institutionalisation means not only the habitualisation of social action, but additionally a reciprocal typification of habitualised actions on the part of particular types of actor (Berger/Luckmann 1967: 72). An institution is, for example, the family, which typifies particular forms of action in terms of types of actor ("father", "mother", "current partner", "child", "aunt" and so forth). In this sense, using "institution" when considering the media does not only mean media organisations (which are of course of high importance), but additionally also 'smaller' forms of institutionalisation, as they also mark the everyday practice of personal communication media. At stake are processes of institutionalisation that are more far-reaching, such as mobile communications, for example, which institutionalise a communicative triadic relationship (Höflich 2005): "caller", "the person called" and "bystanders". Beside that, we find other institutionalisations like certain forms of interaction in relation to a specific media. Examples of this would be the various communicative patterns of mobile phone interaction (opening the call, orientating about the present situative context of the person called, and so on) as well as the different formats of television. In a nutshell, we can say that each medium relies on a highly complex institutionalisation of human action – reaching from the individual up to complex organisations.

Reification captures the notion that besides constituting an institutionalisation, each medium is also a set of technical apparatuses. This is the point where we can learn much from Actor-Network-Theory (Clark 2011: 170). The core of Bruno Latour's argument is that implements like media are ultimately the 'congealed actions' of human actors. A handrail is in a certain sense nothing less than the guarding action of a human who wants to protect somebody else from falling. It is for this reason that objects are themselves to be conceived as acting objects in "association" – that is: in connection –with human action. As he writes: "implements, according to our definition, are actors, or more precisely, participants in the course of action waiting to be given a figuration" (Latour 2007: 71). Taking arguments like these, we can say that media are also a reification of communicative agency that itself becomes influential in human acting. Again we can discern this reification on various levels: It can be the reification of a certain mobile phone app and its interface. But we also find other complex forms of reification which are more linked to the media organisations as such: buildings, cable networks, transmitter masts etc. In this sense,

technologies, interfaces and infrastructures of communication are a second moment of the "moulding forces" of the media. Following the arguments of ANT, this is an important moment of how power becomes stabilised.

However, it is necessary to have in mind that the "moulding forces" of the media become concrete only in human action, i.e. the process of communication – a process in which media is appropriated in very different ways. As postulated within media and communication studies, they become "domesticated" (Silverstone/Hirsch 1992; Berker et al. 2006). Additionally, we have to consider that human history is not a process of shifting from one medium to another, as the narrative of first generation medium theory might imply (cf. Meyrowitz 1995). It is a cumulative process in which the variety of media with different institutionalisations and reifications increase over time. As a consequence we are confronted with the situation that not only one media "moulds" the communicative construction of reality, but a variety of different media do so at the same time.

This brings us to the problem that the institutionalisation and reification of a certain media has to be conceptualised in the horizon of other media. As Sonia Livingstone outlined, our present life is marked by the "mediation of everything" (Livingstone 2009: 5) that works across different media at the same time. Knut Lundby follows the same line when he postulates that "high modern societies are media-saturated societies" (Lundby 2009a: 2). Arguments like these highlight the fact that the present media change is not a change related to any one kind of media. Rather, the present mediatization is characterised by the fact that the various "fields" of culture and society are communicatively constructed across a variety of media at the same time. Politics, for example, is not only mediatized by television or print media but at the same time by digital media, as politics increasingly rely on political campaigning (and fundraising) in the social web. Moreover, face-to-face settings of political decision-making change when they become interfused by mobile communication. Therefore, we have to reflect mediatization in a wider frame.

One possibility for doing this is the concept of "mediatized worlds" (Hepp 2012a; Krotz/Hepp 2013). This perspective moves not just one single kind of media into the foreground, but certain fragments of life-worlds or social worlds. Basically, we can understand mediatized worlds as certain "small life-worlds" (Luckmann 1970) or "social worlds" (Shibutani 1955; Strauss 1978), which in their present form rely constitutionally on an articulation through media communication. As such, they are marked by a certain binding intersubjective knowledge inventory, specific social practices, and cultural thickenings. Mediatized worlds are the level at which mediatization becomes concrete and can be analysed empirically. For example, 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 dealings, of schools, of the private home, and so on. Analysing these "socially constructed part-time-realities" (Hitzler/Honer 1984: 67) as mediatized worlds means to empirically research the way in which their communicative construction is institutionalised and reified by various media, as well as how their communicative construction results in a change of the media themselves. For researching this, three aspects of "mediatized worlds" are striking:

The first point is that mediatized worlds have a "communication network" beyond the territorial. As early as the 1950s, Tamotsu Shibutani (1955) reflected on the characteristics of what he called "social worlds." One of his key arguments was that 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 1955: 566). When quoting Shibutani, my argument is not that questions of (re-) territorialization are of no account for the analysis of mediatized worlds; more specifically, the argument is that mediatized worlds are at least partly articulated by mediated communication networks and that with increasing mediatization these communication networks transgress the various territories. Drawing on one of the aforementioned examples, the mediatized world of stock exchange dealings is something that not only takes place in the stock exchange building itself, but at nearly every place where bankers as well as private persons can trade their stocks via desktop and laptop computers, smart phones or electronic tablets.

A second important point is that mediatized worlds exist on "various scales." Several years after Tamotsu Shibutani's publication, Anselm Strauss (1978) further reflected on Shibutani's arguments; he sees one important aspect why the concept of social worlds (and therefore also our conceptualization of mediatized worlds) is a highly promising point of departure 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 1978: 126). The concept of mediatized worlds therefore offers an approach to empirically investigate mediatization by defining an investigation perspective – that is, the perspective of the thematic framing of a mediatized world. At the same time, the concept is not so narrow that it can only be conceived of as a micro-concept of the interaction at a certain place; we can use it on various levels or scales and can thus realize mediatization research across them.

The third point is that mediatized worlds are "intertwined" with each other. Again, we can refer here to Anselm Strauss' arguments. Discussing Shibutani's ideas, he remarks that "social worlds intersect, and do so under a variety of conditions" (Strauss 1978: 122). We are thus confronted with the "segmenting of social worlds" (Strauss 1978: 123), not only in the sense that they segment the totality of life-worlds, but also in the sense that they segment internally, producing specific sub-worlds. We can take the mediatized worlds of popular cultural scenes, such as hip-hop, heavy metal, or techno, as examples: The articulation of their mediatized worlds is a segmentation and (re-)invention process. Researching mediatized worlds therefore also implies investigating the transgression from one mediatized world to another, as well as the processes of demarcation.

At this point it is also important to have the subjective side of mediatized worlds in mind. Here the arguments made by Bernhard Lahire are substantive. Arguing against an understanding that each person would be marked by a homogeneous habitus, Lahire describes our present lives as an ongoing placement of a person "within a plurality of social worlds that are non-homogeneous, and sometimes even contradictory" (Lahire 2011: 25f.). The interesting point of this for theorising mediatized worlds is that Lahire reminds us to what extent this described heterogeneity also has something to do with the different ways of using media in various social worlds. Reading books, for example, might mean something fundamentally different in the mediatized world of a family than in that of the school – differences that result (together with others) in something that Lahire characterises as the "plural actor".

4.   Operationalising research: Communicative figurations in diachronous and synchronous perspectives

Following the arguments discussed so far, the main challenge is how to make such a kind of research practical. Especially such an agenda implies the necessity of an integrative concept that helps to analyse the (changing) communicative construction of certain mediatized worlds across the variety of different media. Here it is a great help to refer to the process sociology of Norbert Elias. The reason for this is that Elias tried to develop analytical tools that work across the levels of the micro, meso and macro and at the same time focus on the processes of constituting entities in-between the individual and society. As a part of his approach, Elias introduced the concept of "figuration". According to him, figurations are "networks of individuals" (Elias 1978: 15) which constitute a larger social entity through reciprocal interaction – through, for example, joining in a game, or a dance. This entity can be a family, a group, the state or society: in all of these cases these social entities can be described as different, complex networks of individuals. In adopting this approach, Elias seeks to avoid the idea "that society is made up of structures external to oneself, the individual, and that the individual is at one and the same time surrounded by society yet cut off from it by some invisible barrier." (Elias 1978: 15) Figuration is therefore a "simple conceptual tool" (Elias 1978: 130) to be used to understand social-cultural phenomena in terms of "models of processes of interweaving" (Elias 1978: 130).

Up to now, this concept of figuration has occasionally been used within media and communication research, for example for analysing the politics of reality television (cf. Couldry 2010). Nevertheless, it had not been integrated more deeply into mediatization research. If we do this, it becomes highly useful for analysing mediatized worlds. Transferring the fundamental reflections developed by Elias to questions of communication, we can speak of <u>communicative figurations as patterns of processes of communicative interweaving that exist across various media and have a 'thematic framing' that orients communicative action</u>. Hence, it can be said that a single communication network already constitutes a specific communicative figuration: this involves interwoven communicative action articulated in mediatized interaction by the use of media. It is, however, of far greater interest to relate the concept of communicative figuration to the communication networks of different mediatized worlds as a whole. And so, for instance, the mediatized world of a social scene, of politics or of the stock market can be grasped as being manifested in a particular communicative figuration.

A communicative figuration is very seldom based upon only one medium; usually it is based upon several. Examples would be: for the communicative figuration of families, a figuration which is increasingly scattered translocally, the (mobile) telephone is just as important as the social web, (digital) photo albums, letters, postcards or watching TV together. If we take public spheres as communicative figurations, it is quite easy to see that these are constituted by a range of different media. That is not only a matter of the classical media of mass communication, but also of Wikileaks, Twitter, and blogs, together with the media of the social web. We also need to deal with the communicative figurations of social organisations; for instance, where social agencies, databanks, Internet portals as well as flyers and other PR media interrelate in seeking to reorganise and reorder different domains of the social – from pre-school education to post-retirement employ-

ment. Change in mediatized worlds becomes researchable by the changes of communicative figurations.

Heuristically we can argue that each communicative figuration consists of four instances:[3]

1. Firstly, each communicative figuration is characterised by a specific <u>constellation of actors</u>, which can be regarded as its structural basis.

2. Secondly, each communicative figuration has a <u>thematic framing</u> that serves as action-guiding topic.

3. Thirdly, we are dealing with their <u>forms of communication</u>. This concept refers to the concrete patterns of communicative practices that characterise communicative figurations and can include forms of reciprocal (media) communication, of produced media communication like mass communication or of virtualised media communication in computerised environments.

4. Fourthly, in relation to this form of communication, a specifically marked <u>media ensemble</u> can be identified for each communicative figuration. This describes the entirety of the media through which or in which a communicative figuration exists.

If at this point we come back to the argument that the so-called "moulding forces" of the media refer to processes of institutionalisation and reification, these four instances help to describe how the institutionalisation and reification of a certain kind of media unfolds an influence on the communicative construction of a mediatized world: This happens when the forms of communication, media ensemble, constellation of actors and maybe also the thematic framing of a communicative figuration changes with the institutionalisation and reification of existing or new media.

Such reflections imply a lot, as they indicate that mediatization research cannot mean to investigate changing media as such. As mediatization research is interested in the interrelation between media-communicative and socio-cultural change, a more appropriate point of departure is an analysis of changing communicative figurations. The reason for this is that such an analysis reflects both sides of the interesting interrelation. In principle, this kind of research can be undertaken both in a "diachronous" as well as in a "synchronous" way.

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[3] The following distinction is based on reflections being carried out together with Uwe Hasebrink and the research network "Communicative Figurations". Cf. for this Hepp/Hasebrink 2013.
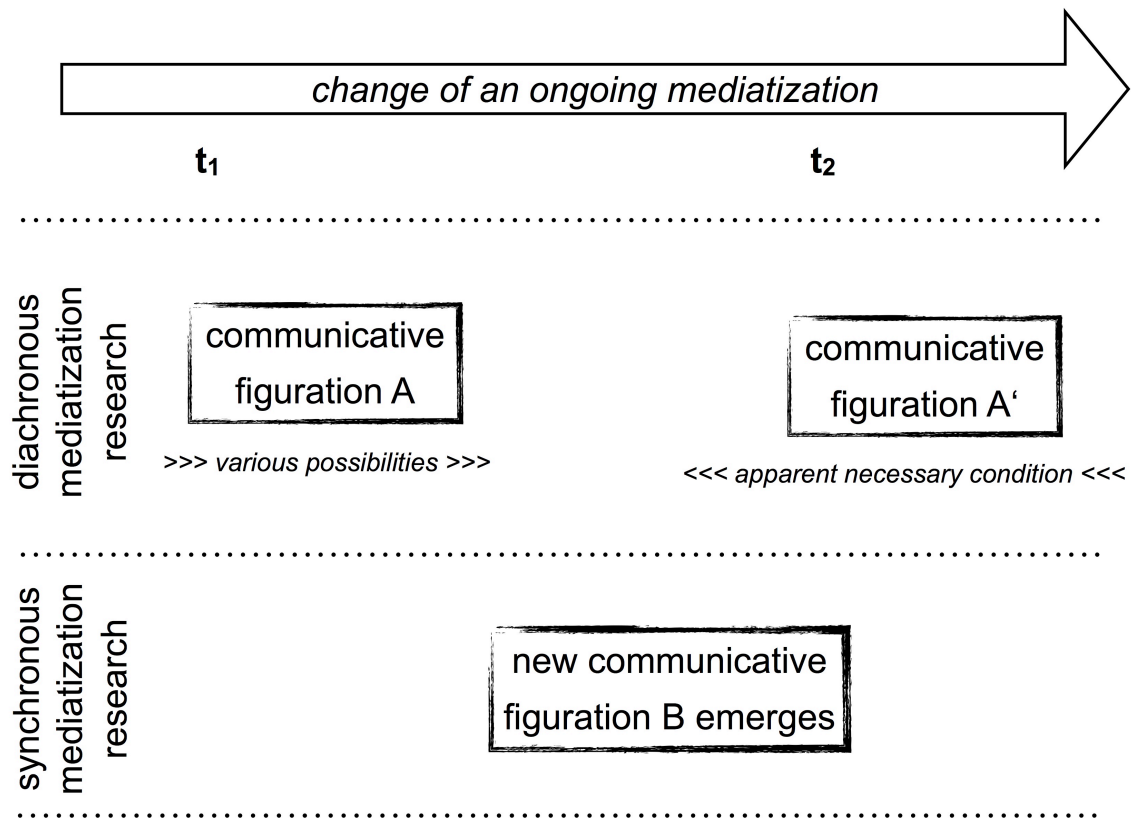
Figure 1: Diachronous and synchronous mediatization research

Clearly <u>diachronous mediatization research</u> is the more obvious way, entailing a comparison over time: We investigate the communicative figurations of certain mediatized worlds at different points in time and compare the results of this. By such a comparison, we can on the one hand capture how this mediatized world itself changed in the course of time together with the underlying processes of communicative construction – and, on the other hand, how these changes are interwoven with the change of various media, their institutionalisation and reification. Just to take one very simple example: We can investigate the communicative figuration of the mediatized worlds of families of the 1950s, do the same in the 1980s and 2010s, and then compare the results. For sure, the mediatized worlds of the family have changed, and this is interwoven with media communicative change. But to give a more detailed answer to how this change takes place in its relation to media communication we must turn to an analysis of the changing communicative figurations over the period of time in question.

This simple example demonstrates important aspects of diachronous mediatization research. So we can see that this kind of research either has to be historising in the sense that it looks for possibilities to reconstruct the communicative figuration of a certain mediatized world in a former time – here is where historical communication research comes in. Or it has to be projective in the sense that it starts in the present and develops a kind of (qualitative or quantitative) panel or long-term design to investigate the future change of a certain communicative figuration. In both cases, such a form of mediatization research does not mean researching the "diffusion of innovations" (Rogers 2003), as the

specificity of certain media changes in the course of time and in the context of other media: the Internet-based television of present times shares only the name "television" with the much more radio-like moving image of the 1950s (Krotz 2007: 279-282). Therefore, conducting diachronous mediatization research also entails being open enough to investigate the change of the "moulding" moments of certain media themselves.

But not only for practical reasons – diachronous research of this kind is enormously elaborate and mostly also expensive – is there also the need for synchronous mediatization research. The main reason for this is that the mediatization process is not linear but has certain 'erruptive' moments we might call "mediatization waves". This term indicates that certain media developments might result in a qualitatively different media environment that makes completely new communicative figurations possible. We can understand the recent phenomenon of digitalisation as such a "mediatization wave", which is at the same time related to a far-reaching transformation of formerly non-digital media – television becomes internet television, cinema becomes digital cinema and so forth. Another "mediatization wave" was the emergence of reading printed material, as with the transformation of the various ways of communicating this is fundamentally linked to a "secondary orality" (Ong 2002). Especially (but not only) in relation to such "mediatization waves", it might make sense to investigate a single mediatized world only at a certain point of time. To give an example: A very specific mediatized world of poker gaming emerged when poker became a digitally mediatized phenomena (Hitzler/Möll 2012). Here it makes sense to "zoom into" this mediatized world of poker gaming at a certain moment of time in order to carry out a deep analysis of its specific communicative figuration. In this case, such an analysis demonstrates, for example, that online poker is linked to new forms of communication and a specific media ensemble. In these virtualised forms and ensembles the missing vis-à-vis and the related interpretation of its "poker face" becomes replaced by an automated software data collection and the representation of player statistics during the online game. This example already indicates the reference point of comparison within this kind of synchronous mediatization research, i.e. research on previous forms of gambling, in that case face-to-face poker.

Beside this deep analysis of the comparative bases of previous research, there is also another possibility for reflecting change in synchronous mediatization research. This is by a comparison across generations. If we treat generations not just as cohorts of people but as being marked by typical shared experiences (Mannheim 1952), we can speak also of different "media generations" that share typical forms of media socialisation and therefore certain forms of appropriating media (cf. for example Buckingham/Willet 2008; Volkmer 2006). This said, it becomes possible to consider change in synchronous mediatization research by comparing different generations at a certain moment in time. Such an undertaking becomes an additional evidence if the generational comparison also includes data on the historical experience of change, as we can gather from media biographical interviews, for example: We can include in the data we collect other reconstructive moments, for example by asking for the media biography of people and relating this back to present perceptions of a mediatized world and their communicative figurations.

Taking examples like these, it is self-evident that diachronous and synchronous mediatization research are not exclusive, but rather supplemental. It depends on the mediatized worlds and the communicative figurations under consideration, which approach to mediatization research seems to be more appropriate – including the combination of both.

This said, in both ways of researching change we should be careful not to presume simple causalities. Here, it is once again helpful to refer back to the ideas of Norbert Elias. When discussing the "problem of the 'inevitability' of social developments" (Elias 1978: 158), Elias reminded us that "in studying flow of figurations there are two possible perspectives on the connection between one figuration chosen from the continuing flow and another, later figuration" (Elias 1978: 160). This is first the viewpoint of the earlier figuration, in which the latter is one possibility of change. Second, this is the viewpoint of the later figuration, in which "the earlier one is usually a necessary condition of the formation of the latter" (Elias 1978: 160). Therefore, Norbert Elias argues that the (yet to be empirically proved) fact of one figuration arising out of certain earlier figurations "does not assert that the earlier figurations necessarily had to change into the latter ones (Elias 1978: 161). If we transfer these arguments to mediatization research, this again reminds us to be very cautious: Describing the change of communicative figurations, and by this the change of the communicative construction of mediatized worlds, means to explain the variety as well as the specificity of present mediatized worlds against the background of the multiplicity of possible changes of communicative figurations.

5.   Conclusion

The starting point of this article was a description of the "institutionalist" and "social-constructivist" tradition of mediatization research. The main consideration was that these traditions increasingly cumulate in an analysis that combines both: an analysis of the institutional dimension of the media as it is originally linked with the concept of "media logic", as well as the more situative focus on the communicative construction of sociocultural reality.

Taking this as a foundation, I have developed an approach of researching mediatization as a process of analysing the changing communicative figurations of mediatized worlds. Admittedly, such an approach is only one possibility for developing a kind of mediatization research that integrates core results of both traditions. However, this approach seems to be promising in the sense that it offers a practical foundation to research mediatization by not only focusing on one kind of media but on the mediatization of social worlds in a transmedial perspective. As mediatization research is interested in change, the core challenge remains the operationalisation of the latter. While "diachronous" research on communicative figurations – their comparison over time – is one obvious way for operationalisation, "synchronous" research offers a second possibility: a deep analysis of certain communicative figurations, especially in moments of sustainable change. Comparison comes in here indirectly, for example, either by comparing this analysis to previous research on the investigated mediatised worlds, or by comparing different generations.

Indeed, there are also other ways to elaborate mediatization research. However, fundamental to such a further development of the mediatization approach is a transmedial perspective. In times of the increasing "mediation of everything", different media are in their entirety involved in our changing communicative construction of culture and society. This is the point we should focus on.

6. References

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