

1 MEDIOLGY: Understanding the Society through its Mediality

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1.1 Misconceptions to Overcome

Along the history of media literacy programs media education typically was understood as intervening education of, for, with or even against media, mostly driven as an instrumental workshop in order to “learn”, what media was, as it was done, how or for what it was used and to get warned how it could effect the personal and the social as well the individual or societal life. The institutional education mostly just reacted defending its hierarchical position, its elitist position and authority to technological developments of the media, to structural changes in media systems, and to the follow-up-phenomena in societal communication supposing (just as thinking of themselves as educational and moral institutions) media were a source of power, influence and intervention – in political as well as in educational context. This kind of media education concept is or was based on a functional-structural concept of media (cf. Luhmann 1987: 30 ff., Luhmann 2004: 169 ff.), moreover, conceptualized in a direct linear-causal understanding of media effects to individuals and to social/societal culture.

Consequently, media education in this tradition focuses on media or media systems as a subject to be learned (media knowledge), to be observed critically (media awareness, media consciousness), and to be used carefully (media habit) in order to get trained in a rational use of media or to avoid - what ever it meant aesthetically and ethically – the “negative effects” to the psychic structure of individuals or of the society. The interest of knowledge in such educational arrangements is or has been to affirm the hierarchical structure of society in frames of education, to prevent a - thus supposed - advance or prominence of media and its economic, political and cultural influence in individual or social execution of people’s everyday life, and finally – scientifically evaluated - induces (just) a compensative, or even more an affirmative understanding of media education: media thought as an ambivalent societal institution or organization, on the one hand promising maximization of power and influence beyond political administration or even potentially against it. On the other hand supposed to be an instrument of influence as it convenes to the really existing structures of distribution and allocation of power (cf. Adorno 1968, Bourdieu 1998, Habermas 1968, Horkheimer/ Adorno 1969/ Huxley 185, Marcuse 1968)

Media education then centred around the consumptive use of media, thus affirming the role-distribution of professionalized producers and consumers to be qualified for a rational use of means of (other’s) power and influence, using “the” media according to their technological mastermind as it is media-inherent: reduction of complexity of social and/or political discourse, rationality of functionality, usability of practicability, standardisation of social practice, repeatability of content, messages, and methods of maintaining influence, and broad circulation of information, knowledge, escape through entertainment and amusement from burdening feelings caused by the labour-dominated culture of everyday life, and - last not last – setting the agenda of opinion building through low-level (also means: trivial) accessibility (cf. Buckingham 2003, Postman 1985).

All those approaches, not questioning the given structures of societal practice, but rather affirming the given societal structures of circulation of power, the practically given dispartment of roles to be identified with as producer or as a consumer (even if later then in context of social media apostrophized as “prosumers”) consider media as an instrument of and for the societal arrangements of communication in forms of discourse or conversation, follow an essential and structural understanding of media, communication, and society, and because of that supposed

to be mutually competitive entities of doing the society (cf. Bauer 2014 : 141 ff.). The alternative is or would be (if not: has to be) a cultural-theoretical approach of interpreting the relationship of society, communication, media and culture, where not structures are in focus of consideration, but the meaning of them. So then the meaning of society is to be considered as communication, the meaning of communication as is its societal culture, the meaning of culture as its social practice of communication, and – last not least, related to the epistemology of media literacy – media as its environment (or reference) of doing the society as an arrangement of communication in a culture of public (societally and politically meant) exchange and sharing (cf. Bauer 2017). This approach tries to be aware of the fact that media characteristics (media code) engraves into the formats of cultural aesthetics of social practice, to be thought even much farther: there is no moment of societal life (means: organizing the sociability of human existence in any cosmological order of society) that would be media-free (cf. Hartmann 2003: 8) Exactly that is the logical approach of mediology in context of conceptualizing a theoretical frame of and for media literacy: considering, interpreting and understanding society – or here: societal arrangements of education – as connectivity of observation of rationality and reasonability of execution of individual and social life under the condition of its medicalization and mediatization. Exactly in that sense there is huge need of doing steps forward in media literacy studies as well as in media literacy education as a now so far understood challenge of and for social, cultural and media change. That is, what the MedLit- project's message tried to be: Media literacy as a program of competence for doing (participating, developing) the society by rational use of media (cf. MedLit 2018)

Based on this explicated criticism there is a lot to do in (for) media education in order to make it a theoretical reference of social/societal development, i.e. social change:

- To deepen the epistemological discourse: how to think the relationship of communication, media, culture and society really scientifically as a model of interdependency of constructs interpreting the meaning (sense) of sociability.
- To enrich the theoretical discourse on media education by cultural- and social-theory-based concepts (contextual theory) of media containing media in reference to its use: the use of media (technological infrastructure, aesthetical performance, ethical implications and system-related concepts of appropriation of reality) then is, what a cultural theory describes as media.
- Following such a theoretical concept of media gives a much broader and at the same time much deeper understanding of media education as a program of and for an education of social intelligence (Piaget 1966, Bourdieu 1997): not focused on media (learn the media), but focused on habitus of personality, sociability, and individuality in the interest and in frames of a media-modus of society (learning program of being a part/partner of/in media society – cf. Bauer 2017)
- Within the framework of such a more differentiated concept of media and media education the terms of literacy and/or competence get based by theoretically more reliable concepts of education, competence building and a sharper practical meaning: emancipation, sovereignty, responsibility
- This implies far reaching consequences of theoretical and educational understanding of digitalisation, digital society, digital education: the break of media-related social and societal communication changes the ontology of social culture (habit, rituals, rules) and, at the moment we are still in pioneer-status in terms of technology, sociability and society building. Media education thus should/could use the development getting an intervening and integrated factor of reflecting the social change in the interest of society performance management (democracy etc.).

1.2 Framing the Phenomena

Any society organizing itself and its development is structurally depending from its communication system and culturally from its communication quality. Or even better to say: a

society is, what its communication structure is like and means what its quality of sociability is like (Bauer 2011: 499). In a media-organized society the communication structure – that means at least attention, traffic, connections, topics etc. - follows the technical and aesthetical logics, the attractions, the facilities and possibilities but also the limitations of communication through its mediatized character. In any case, though it is often said that media reduces the complexity of societal communication (cf. Luhmann 2004), on the other hand also it also gets evident that in a media environment the society and its self-interpretation becomes more complex through this mode of communication- and interaction structure - in manifold perspectives: the increasing amount of information, the variety of aspects, evaluations, opinions and options coming up to public sphere overdrive the capacities of processing of social communication. In order to feel or to realize oneself responsibly as a relevant part or partner within a communication process, one must overlook its social space (frame), its relational structures, its options of meaning and relevance and last but not least its contingency of sense. The reference to a culturally defined social framework might help to come clear with orientation.

There is obviously a structural change ongoing in media. Especially since media technology has entered the “digital age”, not only the modes of production, but much more patterns and attitudes of consumption have changed the traditional ontology of media communication. The key character concerns the role of the consumer now becoming a user – often appealed as “prod-user”, what means: the industrial fragmentation of roles as a producer and a consumer has overcome, the interaction now happens not any more between producer and consumer, but between user and user. This phenomenon – social convergence - is the social dimension of the technical convergence. The former producer professionalism and the appropriate consumer skills have been fallen in one model of use: taking and giving within a generalized and socially shared model of competence, which is a mutually supposed expectation of trust. This convergence can be considered as a horizontalization of a formerly hierarchically ordered relation of trust. A model of dependence (for example: journalism quality – audience media competence) has changed into a model of interdependence of media literacy, which has (to) become the competence motif of a civil society.

The emergence of social-media-communication (many-to-many media interaction) might be seen as one of the areas of media change, enabling social networks or casual communities and giving them opportunity to establish and to structure open systems of publicity, which by far are not, what the concepts of “public sphere” think to observe, but portraying a new mode of system of communicative trust. If this, trust (Luhmann 1968) is taken as the core principle of what publicity (public sphere) is thought to be – which in any case is a normative concept for any structurally public social communication – and if the perception is right that social media configurations are a matter of (spontaneous and casual) trust, then social media communication is about figuring out new relations of trust beyond of any institutionalization of it. A relation of trust within a media environment of communication must on and must engage with the medial performance of communication. In this sense a theory of media obliged to a logical perspective of a metaphor of description must not be at first and not at all a theoretical abstraction of media seen as structures, systems or gadgetry, but could also – or even preferable – be created as a theoretically logical description of the cultural meaning of media (utility, aesthetics, ethics) expressed by usage in contexts of living and social practice, by which people is giving the media the meaning. That includes also the change of meaning by changes of usage.

1.3 Mediology

Even if the theoretical observation is concentrated to the term of media, it is important to be aware of what concept of media is in use. A non-objectivizing theory understands media in relation to its meaning for individual or societal life. Society is a construct to be considered through a (normative, critical, empirical, and pragmatic) concept of communication, when assuming (supposing the noema) that society is, what its communication is (meaning) like. In

that sense a media society is one being constructed as a configuration of doing the society in the modus (habit, usage) of media. The scientific concept funding a theoretically well-based concept of literacy decides by epistemological purpose to shift the view from structural or functional metaphors, transport, transfer, instrument, tool) to cultural metaphors of description: media as a cultural, societal, political, economic, aesthetic environment that gets relevance by use of media, by doing the media.

This contextual view is the reason, why mediology (what means: the theoretical perspective of what ever: society, education, knowledge, politics, culture, religion etc...from a point of view characterizing its meaning in relation to its medialized and mediatized quality) is to be understood as a broad frame of scientification of the connectivity of media and society. In that specific sense mediology is not a structural theory, but is a contextual theory focusing on the cross-links of socially meant media usage as a cultural format of social and/or societal practice. As mediology focuses on the overlappings of mental, cognitive, intellectual, material, structural, social and actional use of media (Debrais 2003), it supposes the usage to be the relevant frame of social culture of a meaningful construction in the way of being related to societal construction of a socially mindful culture. Any use creates a culture or refers to culture. So a cultural theory of media defines the usage of media as media (cf. Bauer 2014: 102 ff.) Media literacy cultural studies and as well media literacy educational practice need a logical frame that is taken from the logics of usage of media in the interest (meaning) of communication, interaction, network-, community - and society building. To decide for a theoretical paradigm of media literacy means to invest complex thinking in a paradigmatic theory of media that frames media as the technical, organizational, aesthetical, ecological and cosmological environment of social practice (social communication). The theoretical concept should not be one that reduces the cultural, political and societal fantasy of an openly structured, multiplex and multi-optional media landscape and one - not theoretically and not practically – that fastens media just to technical skylines, to systematically perfected stages, to market-typical goods, and , of course, not at all to however decorative surfaces of societal interaction, but that is interested to know and to be amazed what phrases of sociability human being is able to and competent for (vgl. Bauer 2017b: 79 f.)

When talking about Media Literacy the question arises: what is the theoretical background of understanding media as a societal phenomenon, and what is or could be accepted as a theoretical legitimacy to build a concept of media education intervening to societal contexts of personal life. It is somehow self-evident that a structural theory of media just focusing to the technical or even aesthetical materiality of media can not be enough framing for an educationally relevant scientification. Media in such an ideological context must be taken as a meaningful term representing the contextual conditions and valuation of social practice (cf. Bauer 2003, Grossberg 1997, Hepp 2009,). When we are talking about media in such a context, we should – so the epistemologically well based advice of Cultural Studies – not just talk about the structurally given facts but rather about the contexts, in which it gets the significance it has, and which always is meant additionally, but hardly respected in analyses. Not to mention the worlds of construction in relation to them it makes logical sense to face up to the questions of value to be focused on in educational contexts. Media is becoming to what it is and how we understand it through the way as we use or we think we should use it as a reference of and for social interaction and communication as well for societal exchange. The culture of usage predominately is determined by the specific and personally relevant contexts of living of people.

The question to start with is: are there idle capacities, silent reservoirs or undisclosed sources of knowledge (models of thinking, ideas) to mobilize the potential of media for individually, socially, societally, and culturally relevant education (teaching-learning environments)? If so, then they must be discovered or even created in (through) the logics of media as we interpret and understand the relevance of media in relation to (the meaning of) communication, community building, individual identity, society and social or cultural change. But, the perspective (interest, experience, mentality, cultural conditions, programs and prescriptions etc.) as we are pleased, used and controlled to each other how to use media and how to take them as a factor off the construction of relevance and reality. There is a strong reason for:

Logics always is a culturally conditioned and a socially contextualized framing model of knowledge, by which we agree and control mutually the rationality of diverse perspectives.

1.4 Generative Learning

A cultural and social theory perspective of media communication focuses on the interrelation of observation and action and finds its theoretical paradigm in the concept of signification. (cf. Hall 1989, 1999) Both, observation and action – better to say: observation as an action and action as an observation – construct significations, which get generalized through and as symbolic interaction (cf. Blumer 2004, Mead 1934,). The exchange of signification realized in the way of relating action and observation to codes, within a cultural programming development creates generalized configurations of meaning. Culture then is the social interactive and communicative environment to archive those configurations of meaning construction in structures of symbolic and ritual interaction to be used as statement of commitment or as a reference of control for social compliance in case of need. Any style of life is observable as an habitual expression of such commitment and compliance, and that is the reason why it makes sense, when the concept of Cultural Studies observe culture as any “whole way of life” (Williams 1958)

The attitude of a communicative habit has to be seen as the cultural basis of a somehow generative competence (ability, capacity, responsibility, motivation) to produce communicatively meant action even in new or unusual contexts of social practice – similar to what Noam Chomsky has conceptualized with the term of a “generative grammar” (Chomsky 1980, Beckmann 1997). On that level all communication systems are addressed by the same general obligation. A society, in which a critical-reflexive usage of communication and media has become an integrative moment of education, is rich in terms of cultural reserves for every day challenges of a democratic configuration of its social and political development. In that overall context then any specified professional expertise as well gains - at least: functional - credibility.

More analytically and systematically, the term of competence embraces other ones related to what could be called the “communication sense” (cf. Bauer 1981): The sense of communication is the appropriate way (difference) or the appropriate habit (mindfulness) to appropriate (construct) the reality as a meaningful environment for ones own social life concept. Communication sense depends from understanding three factors: Me and myself, you and yourself, the content and its possible meaning. In order to realize communication as a challenge or chance of competence, it needs, as already mentioned, a set of habitual conditions

- Ability (to know what operations and how to do them in case of...)
- Capacity (to have the cognitive, affective and active means and preparedness: soft or hard skills)
- Responsibility (to be conscious of what it means for oneself and/or for others: consequences and possible effects)
- Morality (to be aware of the implicated values when making personal decisions)

The concept of competence, stressing so far those conditions habitually given, also is meant to meet different structural frames of acting (language, rhetoric performance, interaction behaviour, media use) build a gradually designed pyramidal model of competence development (cf. Baacke 1980):

- linguistic competence (syntactic and semantic use of language and symbols in order to understand and to make understandable / restricted vs. elaborated code)
- rhetorical competence (pragmatic use of language and behavioural language in order to persuade with believes and to convince with arguments)

- communicative competence (be aware of creating a symmetry of mutual participation exchanging meanings)
- media competence (be aware of – and reflect your own standards of ability, capacity, responsibility and morality using media as means of participation in public life).

Any engagement in media literacy education has to face the challenges and the chances for the benefit of an individual and as well for the society beyond the superficial media change - on different levels:

- The competence- goal in first line is not directed – as in conventional media literacy concepts often usual - to just a “better use of media”, often just argued morally, not just to a habit of media-awareness, but more to a use of media in the interest and in context of social and societal change, means: social change should not be something to which political, cultural and educational institutions react, but something, that should be driven pro-actively in context of a mindful management of use of media. For that it needs a broad enhancement of political literacy, of social or societal competence awareness and of socio-cultural capacities of use of media. Understanding the society as a more than ever media-made environment and considering that the traditional public institutions of politics, media, culture and education – across the societies - are losing credibility and authentic leadership, the concept of a civil society realizing and learning to be competent and responsible for itself, needs a wider and a more media-related concept of social change as well as of literacy (self-competence of individuals and civil communities).
- Any media literacy education program has to be dedicated to the idea of new, at least until now not yet enough societally anchored alliances and constellations of interest of societal learning. Across the countries and cultures media education was and is understood as an enhancement of individual competence of use of media, as well of an educational or pedagogical (public) compensation of media-ethical and media-cultural weaknesses of the traditional, classical and network- (digital) media systems – each by its and because of its own socio-esthetical character, but: not as an empowerment of societal learning, not as an enhancement and societal challenge of enlightenment and emancipation. The traditional media- and information literacy concepts all over are thought in frames of individualistic learning theories (competition as paradigm, not social attention or cooperation), are thought in frames of affirmative theories of use of media (socialized use, not social use of media) and are thought in frames of educational theories of qualification or professionalization, not in those of self-realization of individuals, communities or societies.
- Any media literacy education program has to seek by purpose the challenge of trans-cultural and trans-disciplinary responsibility for social and societal development: Under the umbrella of economically driven political, cultural and media globalization the issue of cultural and societal identity comes up with new question marks. It is also a somehow unique-selling-position-factor to concentrate on a trans-cultural, or cross-cultural dimension of media literacy, saying: living in a media made globalized world needs to be literate in handling diversity and variety as a treasure of culture and of all that is connected to meaning of culture: religion, every-day-way of life, societal rituals of social attention and social intelligence.

1.5 Mediality – the paradigmatic signature of context of living

There is a logical demand on a theoretically wide and open concept of media in order to bridge media, society and culture – not by its structures, but – by the cultural and social meaning of communication as the paradigm model of society and culture, following the idea discussed throughout the project: it is not the media as a structural phenomenon, but the mediality as a cultural character of society, communication and culture that has to be questioned when observing that ‘the media always is doing the society’ and ‘doing the society is always doing the media’.

Indeed, that dictum is related to the idea of the dialectic vicinity of media and society. That means: what we call a society is the observation of a social/societal connection realized by and through its communication. A society is, what its communication is like. And communication is nothing else than what we observe as a connectivity of social practice of society. Since communication is understood as the display of sociability in formations of discourse and dialogue (V. Flusser), the society is understood as the dispositive (M. Foucault) of communication. That says: theorizing media (as an environment of communication) means theorizing society and its culture of managing the resource of sociability as well as theorizing society means theorizing communication as a source of society and of its inherent energy of change. That approach makes society (the social practice) understanding as an (communication, media-) environment of social change. Doing social change means doing communication and vice versa.

For media studies as a program of science it is definitely of general interest to build scientific knowledge (theoretical validity, reliability, credibility) on epistemological legitimation. What counts, is the interests of knowledge in communicological and mediological concepts, especially of media- educational side steps of them: Analysing the history and the development of frames and concepts theorizing communication and media there are too many cases of epistemological carelessness, even logical heedlessness, resuming sociological, psychological or semiotic (semiological) theorems just like as ontologically evidenced structures, not distinguishing models of knowledge from objects (entities) of knowledge or objects (entities) of observation from observation of objects (connections). So for example, the partnership of communication is not a naturally determined format of communication, it is a concept, a model of knowledge of communication, in order to explain the normative implication of what we (in our cultures) consider as a socially well-done communication. It is with concepts like transfer, exchange, effect, function etc. The approach is: communication is an interpretative concept of social existence and for that it needs a hermeneutically based theorization. What communication is, we know – (ideally and practically) from everyday – culturally based – cognition. It is not: what we do. It is: as we do. And: that sense it is a quality of social habit. We do not need a communication science explaining (again, even if in a different taxonomy), what communication is. We need a communication (media) science explaining, why we think (interpret) about communication as we do, why we think (understand) about society as we do, why we think about the connection of media and communication as we do – and: how we could change the models of thinking in order to be able (capable) to change the models of (social) practice.

As long as we think media being a tool, we think in interest of effects or in interests to. Even when concentrated to media, it is important to be aware of what concept of media is in use. Such a scientific concept tries to shift the view from structural or functional metaphors, transport, transfer, instrument, tool) to cultural metaphors of description: media as a cultural, societal, political, economic, aesthetic environment that gets relevance by use of media, by doing the media media for creating effects (cf. Bauer 2003). Behind such an approach of thinking there is the interest of using power in order to effect influence. With such an interest of knowledge we would not be able to make the concept of media literacy credible as an educational concept of / for social change.

Social change is a category of observation - observing our existence (maybe: identity concept) in relation to the environment we are living with: the natural, social, cultural and symbolic environment, is not an event outside of what we observe as we observe ourselves. It happens along the observation of social, cultural and symbolic environment. That means: the social and the societal context of living all over the global society is characterized by increasing impact of technology (mediatization of and in modes of networks) as well as the way how people, communities and societies get understood to each other increasingly is overlaid, designed and determined by media-made models of performance (medialization) (cf. Bauer 2014: 319 ff.)

What we experience, especially in context of the increasing presence of internet- and network media environment in all arenas of social and societal life, is that the social life in all areas over the world gets more and more structures, infected and interpreted by media and use of media. That means: the everyday communication context is (technically) mediatized and (culturally)

medialized. Nothing of what happens in every life is media-free. Even our personal conversations are not just infiltrated, but also mostly dominated by what we know from use of media.

That means for the concept of media literacy: we need to learn (to teach), how to use media selectively. We need to distinguish between, what is true, important and necessary and what is abdicable. Having so many options (information flood) we need to learn an ecology of use of media, thinking what could be the long-term effect not knowing or not considering for what options we vote for. Any life, natural, social and cultural life always is confronted with the need of being aware of priorities. To set them or to respect them depends from ability (knowledge, skills) capacity (awareness), motivation (seeing the sense) and responsibility (evaluation of consequences). Media programs, related to the use of anybody at any time for any topic and for any purpose, are exactly because of that so far standardized (reduced the complexity of life), so that it needs the selective intervention by and through a conscious use of it. Exactly there is the place of media literacy and/or media competence.

1.6 References

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