



## **Responsibility and Resistance: Ethics in Mediatized Worlds**

*International conference at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna  
December 10-11, 2015*

Organized by Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias Karmasin (Austrian Academy of Sciences/Alpen Adria University Klagenfurt), Prof. Dr. Friedrich Krotz (University of Bremen) & Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias Rath (University of Education Ludwigsburg)

In communication studies, mediatization is one of the most frequently used and discussed concepts to understand, to empirically study and theoretically reconstruct the social and cultural changes of today, in as far as they are a consequence of changes in media and communication. Terminologically, “mediatization” describes a process in which,

“by means of the coming into existence and the establishment of new media used by the people for specific purposes and the simultaneous transformations of the old media and the ways how they became used, human communication and therefore also the communicatively constructed realities, in other words culture and society, identity and everyday life, are changing” (Krotz 2005, 18).

However, this process does not simply serve to describe the upcoming of a specific historical “media society”. Instead, mediatization is constructed as a “meta-process”, i.e. a development that is broad in scope, covers a long time span of human development and is relevant in this or that way for most cultures and societies. From this perspective, mediatization serves as an integrating concept like globalization or individualization. Mediatization as a meta-process thus allows to reconstruct the transformation of communication forms and media practices as “longue durée” (Braudel), which comprises

“a variety of comprehensive developments, sometimes already lasting for centuries, that commenced even before the invention of writing and that are still not completed yet with the invention of the present-day media” (Krotz 2007, 12).

Thus, mediatization research also has an orientation function for empirical research and theory building. This is the case since it helps to create relations between the growing number of empirical studies which analyze the emergence and use of media in concrete social and cultural contexts (“*moyenne durée*”) and to put them into order. It thus helps to grasp them theoretically and may motivate further empirical studies. In this way, after its first systematic description in 2001 and followed up by various case studies, mediatization theory has become the basic concept of manifold socio-scientific analyses on the micro and meso as well as on the macro level, for example in the context of the DFG Priority Program “Mediatized Worlds”, and can now be considered as empirically helpful and theoretically fruitful.

Besides their *descriptive* function, “*longue durée*” reconstructions or meta-processes also imply the potential of a *normative* and *value-driven* analysis of media change, which is not media-centric, but asks for the specific changes in the lives of citizens and their social relations, institutions and organizations, as well as economy, education and other relevant areas of human life, e.g. with respect to democracy, justice and self-realization of the people.

Therefore, mediatization is not only a functional social process. It is a concept on a superordinate level which as well

- describes the appropriation of media by human beings, and at the same time
- understands this process of appropriation as a process of shaping human communication.

Thus, the analysis of mediatization also raises questions of practical orientation for *action* (micro-social aspect), of institutionally designed *options* and *limitations* for action (meso-social aspect), and of social as well as supranational *context factors* (macro-social aspect) of media and communication practice.

In relation to this point of view, mediatization theory also moves into the focus of a *normative approach* to media and communication research, which is typical for contemporary *media ethics* (see Karmasin, Rath & Thomaß 2013). Moreover, the consequentialistic perspective of media ethics as applied ethics points towards a *prospective impact assessment* of technical developments in media for the future of communicative action, in particular to develop civil societies.

Among the many normative topics, two aspects seem to be particularly relevant:

1. The term *responsibility*, which is constitutive for modern ethics. It needs to be understood as a normative multi-relational *claim* to the individual for its actions and the resulting consequences as well as the *active assumption* of responsibility by the moral subject in the face of a globalized media world, in which supranational bodies and legislators cannot secure this assignment institutionally.
2. The term *resistance*, which is constitutive for modern social philosophy and critical social science. It can be understood as an *act of refusal* or *active opposition* towards individual, institutional or structural phenomena of suppression and manipulation. In this sense, resistance is reasoned with reference to an understanding of individual sovereignty.

Both aspects relate to the context of *concrete life worlds* that are the result – not only today, but generally – of a specific historical mediatization of human communication.

The international experts conference “Responsibility and Resistance: Ethics in Mediatized Worlds” is supposed to bring together researchers that systematically illuminate mediatization in the above-mentioned sense from a *normative* perspective. Possible questions of this symposium are:

- What are the most problematic forms of mediatized communicative actions, communication technologies and communication structures from a moral point of view?
- How can we discuss responsibility for and resistance against these forms of mediatization?
- Which normative principles can be made plausible?

Participants are expected to prepare 30-minute presentations in which they theoretically explain and/or exemplify *responsibility* and *resistance* in the process of mediatization.

More concrete topics could be:

- the role of different social groups of people for the use and the development of media, which today is mainly determined by technological invention and economic interests;
- the role of academic research about media change and mediatization (for example, knowledge for whom?);
- the creation of new discourses in order to develop social norms on an ethical basis, following and also controlling media transformations;
- the importance of media and media change for the socialization of children and young people, e.g. by stressing the questions of digital divide, media-related education and also media misuse;
- the role of media and mediatization for the development of a “habitus” (Bourdieu) referring to the social class positions of the individual;

- the role of media and media development to support existing structures of power, to create new ones or to make power relations more transparent and support new forms of democratic participation;
- the question of who are the winning and who are the losing social groups of people in culture and society;
- the role of companies, political, social institutions and technical systems as „actors“ and „moral subjects“ in mediatized worlds;
- the role of social media and other media-related forms of communication to be used for subversive practices and grassroots movements of mediatized political participation;
- the necessary social and ethical rules for the government and its bureaucracy, economic enterprises, but also ordinary citizens about how to use the new potentials of an evolving media system;
- the changing conditions of privacy and the use of data to control and manipulate against the idea of serving the people with that;
- the support for the civil society to gain the control over media and media development;
- the role of mediatization for the change of everyday practices and their basic conditions;
- the boundaries of media sovereignty in the light of an Internet of Things.

### *Submission and selection of papers*

Conference languages will be English and German. Submissions for the conference, however, should be made in English only, in order to facilitate the international review process. Please send your proposal to the organizers ([cmc@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:cmc@oeaw.ac.at)) no later than June 1, 2015 (using a pdf or a doc file). The abstract must not be longer than 8000 characters (including blank spaces). Please add a title page to the abstract containing the name(s) and address(es) of the presenter(s) and the title of the presentation. All submissions will be subjected to anonymous review based on the criteria of originality, relevance, theoretical foundation, appropriateness of the methods used, clarity of language, and reference to the conference theme. Submitters will be informed by July 1, 2015, about the outcome of the selection process.

### *Local organization*

Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias Karmasin & Dr. Tobias Eberwein  
 Institute for Comparative Media and Communication Studies  
 Austrian Academy of Sciences | Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt  
 Postgasse 7/4/1 | A-1010 Vienna  
[cmc@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:cmc@oeaw.ac.at) | Tel. +43-1-51581-3110 | Fax +43-1-51581-3120