Mediatized Conditions. 
Sociocultural, Ethnographic, and Phenomenological Approaches to Mediatization of Communication.” **Workshop at UC Berkeley, December 5–6, 2013**

ABSTRACTS

**Introduction: Dimensions of Mediatization**

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The introduction, first, traces the intellectual background to this workshop between scholars from Europe and California. It, then, discusses the relation between the concepts of mediation and mediatization, focusing on mediatization as a concept to grasp long-term cultural and social change where mediated communication is deeply involved. The main part of the introduction draws up aspects or dimensions of contention in mediatization research, regarding history, agency, identity, literacy, technology, theory, as well as conceptualizations of mediatization.

**Towards Ethnographies of Mediatization: Rethinking Media and Mobility in the Midst of a Mysterious Epidemic**

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My paper reflects on how an anthropologist might be contribute to this rich interdisciplinary discussion of mediatization. I begin with a definition of mediatization offered by linguistic anthropologist Asif Agha (2011:163): “Mediatization is a very special case of mediation. To speak of mediatization is to speak of institutional practices that reflexively link processes of communication to processes of commoditization.” Placing Agha’s valuable semiotic perspective within a broader anthropological frame suggests the need for prior conceptual work that would rethink both of these notions, mediation and commodification, and the claim that mediatization requires an immanent connection between them. I draw here on Karl Marx, Stuart Hall, Jesús Martín Barbero, and other authors in rethinking these notions, how they might get connected, and other analytics that might be required in sorting out these issues. Here, I suggest, an anthropological perspective might be of value in looking in situ at how phenomena that we analyze as mediatization are produced and circulate, thus trying to keep the concept close to specific referents as we seek to build analytic capacity.

Rather than gesturing in the direction of “ethnography,” I turn to what I will call biomediatization, where the objects produced are projected as biological-cum-media entities. I am interested in a site in which mediatization was connected to the commercial as well as state-based media in Venezuela but also to an indigenous social movement. The case involves the production of a mediatized object, “38 Warao Indians died from rabies transmitted by vampire bats in 2007 and 2008,” that circulated globally in traditional and social media.

Phenomenological Approaches to Mediatization: Communicative Figurations and the Communicative Construction of Reality

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The aim of my presentation is to discuss mediatization research in the light of a ‘phenomenology of the social’. Phenomenology was originally a term to name the philosophical study of the structures of subjective experience and consciousness, especially rooted in Edmund Husserl’s philosophical work on the ‘life-world’. The ‘phenomenology of the social’ is a tradition in social sciences that refers to this philosophy, but extends it with ‘action theory’ and a ‘constructivist perspective’ (Schütz/Luckmann 1973; Berger/Luckmann 1967). Since the 1970s, an approach of ‘communicative constructivism’ developed within this tradition which is – as I want to argue – highly helpful for practical mediatization research that moves interaction into the centre of analysis (Lundby 2009).

In detail, I want to present a four-step argument. First, I want to reflect on the two traditions of mediatization research and demonstrate their implicit and explicit reference to social constructivism. In the second part of my presentation, I will explain more in detail an approach of ‘communicative constructivism’ and why this is a helpful fundament for mediatization research. This forms the basis for the third part of my presentation, in which I will use the concept of ‘communicative figurations’ (Hepp 2013) to integrate both, communicative constructivism and mediatization theory, into a helpful frame for an empirical analysis of the transformation of ‘mediatized conditions’. Finally, I want to conclude with some more general arguments.

References:
Hepp, Andreas (2013): The communicative figurations of mediatized worlds: Mediatization research in times of the ‘mediation of everything’. In: European Journal of Communication, 28 (6),
http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/08/28/0267323113501148.abstract
Schütz, Alfred/Luckmann, Thomas (1973): The structures of the life-world. 2 Volumes. Evanston:

Sociocultural approaches to mediatization

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The presentation consists of three steps. Firstly, I am going to present the concept of
Mediatization in the view of the priority program “Mediatized worlds”. Here, mediatization research is concerned with the change of everyday life and identity, culture and society in the context of media change. This development is understood to be a long term meta process which includes e.g. the becoming literal of nations, the upcoming of visual culture or the growing importance of computer directed media of today, to name some examples. It is an open development created by human action, especially by communicative action on a micro level, but – as a consequence – also takes place on mezzo and macro level, as a change by institutions, technologies, aesthetics, sense making processes and so on. And it has to be understood as an open process which may develop into different directions, as the concrete way in which media are used and become institutions, is a result of negotiations, discourse, and power, in the given societal and cultural frames. As a meta process, we can learn about this development also from other meta processes like individualization, globalization and so on – today, they all together are relevant for the ongoing developments. As a consequence, we must learn to think in processes and developments if we want to describe and grasp theoretically what is happening; in addition, if we want to understand the meaning and relevance of media change, we should not mainly study the medium itself, but understand it as a developing part of a media environment of the people and thus analyze it in the perspective of the communicating subject and her or his media environment.

Secondly, we are going to describe the basic concepts which in the meantime have been developed and used in order to analyze Mediatization – concepts of media adequate for mediatization research, the upcoming of different forms of human communication and social action, the difference between mediated, media related and mediatized communication. Further, we refer to the social world perspective of Anselm Strauss in order to describe the ongoing development of culture and society with reference to media development, as these developments start and take place in such single social worlds of the communicating individuals, unsimultaneously and with different results, and we also take into consideration that the individuals are changing in their habits, habitus and so on.

Thirdly, we are going to report some results of the common work in that priority program - e.g. those to describe Mediatization by the concept of synthetic situations (Knorr-Cetina), reflexive and recursive processes or with changing entities of traditional communication and cultural studies.

**Selfhood, Moral Agency, and the Good Life in Mediatized Worlds? Perspectives from Medium Theory and philosophy**

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I use virtue ethics to pose the question, what is the good life in mediatized societies? I show that the good life in high modernity entails the cultivation of strongly *individual* notions of selfhood as rational autonomies, as inextricably entwined with democratic polities. Medium Theory emphasizes that such selves are fostered by the technologies of *literacy-print*. By contrast, both primary *orality* and the secondary orality of electric media correlate with more *relational* and emotional selves. Historically, however, such selves are more dependent upon direction and domination by others in frankly hierarchical social structures. The rise of secondary orality thus threatens to undermine the sort of individual selfhood required for democratic societies and
their core norms of individual privacy, equality, gender equality, justice, and fairness – and thereby threatens high modern notions of the good life. Internet Studies provides empirical findings that confirm the shift towards more relational selves and away from modern core norms. These findings argue, finally, that to sustain a good life in a mediatized age will require the guidance of a virtue ethics focused on cultivating both individual and relational selves through informed and careful use of the technologies of literacy-print and secondary orality.

The Mediatization of the Book

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The book is one of the oldest and still most important media, but during most of the twentieth century it has developed partly independent of the wider media culture and media industry. The publishing and reading of books have to some extent been considered outside the circuit of popular media like film, television, magazines and internet. Influenced by the literary institution (defining the book as art or high culture) and the educational institution (defining the book as the preferred medium for learning) the book has been a symbol of civilization and enlightenment. With the growing technological, institutional and aesthetic convergence between the media, the book is finally becoming integrated in a digital media culture. In this presentation I will discuss the mediatization of the book culture in view of both the rise of the e-book and the broader media convergence.

Mediatization and the Future of Field Theory

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This presentation reviews mediatization research’s recent history from the perspective of its potential contribution to social theory. The starting-point is to conceive mediatization not as a logic internal to media contents (as for example in the pioneering work of Altheide and Snow), but as a meta-process that emerges from many simultaneous transformations in specific settings. Only if mediatization is understood this way can it address the differentiated account of social space found in field theory and elsewhere in social theory. But mediatization research also helps us see the need to refine field theory to take account of transversal effects of media across all social space: these are explored through the concept of media meta-capital. This intersection between mediatization research and social theory is placed alongside other possible intersections, for example through notions of institutional logics or figurations. The contribution of each approach is then developed briefly in relation to the challenge of understanding how government is mediatized. In these multiple ways the chapter explores how mediatization research can contribute flexibly to understanding how the possibilities of order within social space are changing through media, particularly digital media.