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X. Critical afterthought

Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt

31 Mediatization: an emerging paradigm for media and communication research?

Abstract: Mediatization research draws on the history of media and the history of mediation within diverse fields of society to develop a scholarly and empirically grounded account of the mediation of history. It is first argued that mediatization is characterized by two crucial features: it concerns the effects of the media on a field of society that is historically separate from the media, and it recognizes that these effects work in a complex manner over a considerable period of time. The chapter then contrasts three ideal typical accounts of mediatization, each with a different focus and timescale, namely: the many and varied roles of mediation throughout the *longue durée* of cultural evolution; the institutionalized forces of high modernity converging to produce a dominant corporate media sector in recent centuries; and the still-uncertain yet potentially radical socio-technological transformations in digital networks over recent decades. It is concluded, first, that the second, institutional perspective makes the strongest case for a theory of mediatization, but that all perspectives could be mutually compatible with further theoretical and empirical work. This latter should include questions of critique, should be developed in partnership with experts in the various fields being mediatized, and could usefully be collected together under a single hashtag to permit further synthesis.

Keywords: mediatization, mediation, history of mediation, mediation of history, field theory (Bourdieu), institutional power, “the media” (singular), the place of critique, modernity (high, late, post), publicity and rationalization (Habermas), mediatization as hashtag

1 Why a handbook on mediatization now?

In earlier societies, social institutions like family, school and church were the most important providers of information, tradition and moral orientation for the individual member of society. Today, these institutions have lost some of their former authority, and the media have to some extent taken over their role as providers of information and moral orientation, at the same time as the media have become society’s most important storyteller about society itself (Hjarvard 2008: 13).

In the past decade or two, an international group of researchers has sought to tell not simply the history of media or, even, the history of mediation within diverse fields of society, but, even more ambitiously, they have sought to investigate the mediation of history. It seems that the effort to understand the so-called new media

has stimulated media and communications researchers to think more deeply about history.¹ The seemingly unstoppable flow of “new media” is leading researchers to *look back* over the history of previously new media (Marvin 1988), embracing a longer timeframe than is common in a field that tends towards *presentism*. Equally, it seems that the study of new media is demanding that research becomes more interdisciplinary. Media and communications researchers increasingly *look across* the diverse fields of society in which these are proving significant, even influential, working with political scientists to examine the mediation of politics, with psychologists to understand the mediation of the family, with theologians to understand the mediation of religion, and so forth.

All this adds to our grasp of the history of “the media” and, more broadly, of processes of mediation. In telling these interlinked histories, we have long recognized that the societal shaping of media and mediation has been as strong if not stronger than any influence of the media on society. Indeed, we have often fought shy of theorizing, let alone articulating the latter process, preferring to accumulate detailed empirical accounts of the history of mediation in particular fields. We have learned from the critique of media effects, we are wary of accusations of technological determinism, and we do not wish to produce a crude and overly media-centric periodization of history that historians would not recognize or respect. But the difficulty of the task should not make us avoid it or leave it to those outside the field of media and communications. Mediatization research, we suggest, is precisely concerned to bring together our knowledge of the history of media and the history of mediation across diverse fields so as to attempt a distinct account of the changing role and significance of the media in society, even while recognizing that such an account will be far from simple, linear, or self-sufficient. Mediatization, we therefore suggest further, refers to the (hypothesized) processes by which social change in particular (or all) fields of society has been shaped by media (defined broadly). While this hypothesized mediation of history cannot be analysed separately from the histories of media and of mediation, the paucity of theoretical or empirical investigation of the former compared with the latter is surely worth rectifying; and this, as we see it, is the self-appointed task of mediatization research.²

As Couldry (this volume) notes, it is time to open up debates about media and communications to a wider, multidisciplinary lens, if we are collectively to

¹ Indeed, we have debated what’s new about the new media for a couple of decades, we have grasped the point that even old media were once new (Marvin 1988), and we have witnessed the emergence of so many media technologies, platforms, and services that it is no longer helpful to label each further arrival as “new”, especially as this obscures the fact that established media also continue to change (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006).

² This Handbook is one of several recent volumes – consider also Hjarvard (2013), Hepp (2013), works edited by Hepp and Krotz (in press), Esser and Strömbäck (in press) and Lundby (2009), a recent special issue of *Communication Theory* (Couldry and Hepp 2013) and doubtless more published or in the pipeline.

understand “the space of social action in an age when everyday life has become supersaturated with media flows”. While positioning the media within multidisciplinary analyses of modernity (Thompson 1995) promises that the insights of media and communications research could be more recognized across the academy, there are many views of how this can be done. To help clear the way for the realization of the promise of mediatization research, in this chapter we first clarify the object of mediatization, arguing that mediatization is best understood as the influence of media institutions and practices on other fields of social and institutional practice. We then contrast the three main themes underlying mediatization research, which focus on the institutional, technological, and cultural dimensions of societal change. Third and most importantly, we disentangle the often-confused timescales of mediatization research, arguing that, although each theme is relevant across the entirety of human history, each bears a particular relation to the analysis of social change.

Mapping themes onto timescales allows us to contrast three ideal typical accounts of mediatization: the *longue durée* of cultural evolution; the institutionalized forces of high modernity in recent centuries; and the socio-technological transformations of recent decades. From the present Handbook authors, and other research, we conclude that the strongest support mustered so far is for the second account, namely that during the period of high modernity, the institutional and practical logics of the mass media distinctively reshaped many fields of human activity. This is not to forget, as stated above, that these fields also shaped the histories of media and of mediation and, further, that each field has its own particularities that complicate the telling of a tidy, overarching story. More interestingly, one must also recognize that the institutional focus of mediatization research in high modernity is historically particular. On the one hand, we can discern the multiple and nonlinear processes of mediation that predate this period, whether just as pre-history or as a genuine extension of the timeline of mediatization (viz. mediatization as cultural evolution). On the other hand, the signs are accumulating that the dominance of mass media is unravelling in the emerging digital age, undermining or complicating the operation of the simultaneously unravelling forces of high modernity (viz. mediatization as socio-technological transformation).³

Let us unpack these arguments one by one. Along the way, we will pinpoint a series of challenges for future research, including the task of working with an ever-changing specification of “the media”, of working across multiple disciplines, and of ensuring a place for critique.

³ Analysed by Lash and Urry (1991), for instance, in terms of disorganized capitalism.

2 The mediatization of what?

The ambition of mediatization research is not, primarily, to understand the changing media in their own right, nor to chart forms of mediation in different places and times. Rather, as for globalization or urbanization or individualization – the claim is that something which always existed in one form or another (the world, towns, individuals – and media) has come to constitute an organizing principle for other spheres of life. Urbanization not only changes what a town is but it changes the countryside, the role of the state, the operation of commerce, the texture of the lifeworld. Individualization not only changes the role of the individual but also the nature of social groups, institutions, and the public sphere. And so with mediatization – the claim is that not only are the media changing but so too, in tandem, are their wider effects on institutions and practices across society.

While mediatization research is, therefore, media-centred, it need not be media-centric, because the main object of attention lies elsewhere, in domains such as politics or religion or education. But where, or on what? Can anything be mediatized? To clarify the terms of debate, we start from the position that mediatization is characterized by two crucial features: it concerns the effects of the media on a domain of society that is historically separate from the media, and it recognizes that these effects work in a complex manner over a considerable period of time, usually decades or centuries. Thus, to “count” as a study of mediatization, one should expect a focus on a particular domain of human action distinguishable from but potentially affected by the media, along with an analysis of historical change in both the media and the domain of interest over a defined timescale.⁴

In other words, we are most convinced by those in this Handbook who assert that mediatization works on domains of society, for these have their own institutional logics or cultural order, their own entrenched governance regimes, rules and norms, resources and expertise (Hjarvard this volume). Politics or religion or education or science are all, therefore, domains about which it may be claimed that they have been mediatized. But one cannot make the same claim of any object or concept – so it does not make sense to say that football, the royal birth, a political event, or a particular celebrity has been mediatized.⁵ To illustrate, when Hjarvard examines how Lego developed from wooden bricks into a multiplayer

⁴ To be sure, many studies of media institutions, texts, processes, and effects conducted by researchers who have never heard of “mediatization” may be useful for mediatization research. But if they are not concerned with a domain beyond the media or a timescale other than the present, they cannot be central to its project, however valuable or fascinating their research may be in its own right.

⁵ Indeed, if we talk too easily of anything being mediatized, the term is evacuated of interest, leaving behind just the shorthand implication that the media have affected this or that, with little insight into which the institutional, technological, and/or cultural dimensions of a domain are altered by the media in a long-term, complex, and contingent manner.

computer game over the 20th century, his claim is that this is one way in which children's play, rather than Lego in particular – has become mediatized, the logics of the media having affected the social domain of play as a whole.

Couldry (this volume) draws on Bourdieu's field theory (1993) to elaborate how and where mediatization has its effects. In contrast to social theories which analyse how complex modern societies encode power in terms of the institutionalized arrangements of social class (Durkheim 1984), Bourdieu emphasizes forms of association or order based upon the more informal or flexible workings of social status. His concept of the field captures how and where such informal orderings of society are constituted, as illustrated in the way that markets enable the development of power based on financial capital.⁶ However, the media are powerful insofar as they have transversal more than localized effects – they exercise power as a meta-process, through what Couldry calls their media meta-capital, and he likens them more to the State than to the school or the church, which are primarily powerful within their own fields of education and religion respectively.

In this Handbook, Rawolle and Lingard analyse how the media have influenced the field of education (Bourdieu and Passeron 2011). Any observer walking into a classroom today will observe the host of new educational technologies therein, from smart board to tablet computer to school information management system. Over time this has had profound effects, for the technologies afford “new means of organizing teaching and learning, and challenges to and effects on multiple practices in education, including pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment”. But the introduction of technologies is far from the simple or sole cause of such transformations. Rawolle and Lingard contextualize the evolution of the education field in a longer history of modernity, whose key processes include standardization (consider the growing internal competition over status, as evidenced in the rise of league tables, standard testing and metrics for external audits) and commercialization (witness the now-endemic language of consumerism within education, with schools as service providers and students as consumers).⁷ Rather than advocating

⁶ Fields, for Bourdieu, represent social arenas of struggle over capital, notably social capital (understood as elaborations of status emulation), cultural capital (understood as social status derived from claims to knowledge), and symbolic capital (the symbolic forms by which all varieties of capital are recognized). Power may be accrued by gaining a certain position in a field on the basis of one or more forms of capital; or it may accrue by exerting influence from one field to another.

⁷ Some of these mediatization effects have been unfolding over half a century or more, with the recent arrival of personal digital devices for students adding a further twist to the tale by introducing into the classroom new forms of student expertise in information access, textual creativity, and communication skills. These challenge teachers' authority and stimulate the development of new curricula and teaching methods for digital literacies. All these changes in the field of education are partly a response and adjustment to changes in other domains of society; together, they are sufficiently fundamental to affect how education, as a system and as it contributes to individuals lives, is valued in the broader society.

for a single linear process of historical change, Rawolle and Lingard conclude that “the solidity of meaning implied by the singular term mediatization collects together a plurality of overlapping processes, and suggests a complex interplay of media forces on and in education”.

Another case is that of sport. Frandsen (this volume) also eschews a technologically-determinist approach, taking from mediatization theory an insistence on recognizing the complexity of the interacting social processes and meta-processes of which media influence is but one. Although the fields of media and sport have long been intertwined, Frandsen focuses on the past half century to recognize how television has mediatized sport by taking over some of its authority (cf. Hjarvard 2008) and reshaping it to fit the demands of mediated spectatorship, transnational scheduling, celebrity players and, of course, the financial demands of corporate media ownership. How this has occurred has depended in part on developments within the media – such as the stimulation of a transnational market for broadcast content in the European Union in the late 20th century, along with efforts to deregulate media ownership rules. In all, this has been a process of co-evolution. On the one hand, the power of television has resulted in “countless adjustments and changes of rules in the games, league and tournament structures, and business models”. On the other hand, the coverage of sport has spurred some significant changes in the media: for instance, outside broadcasting facilities were first developed to cover sport and, more recently, the commercial development of media systems has been closely connected to the potential for sport to generate huge subscription revenues.

3 Mediatization when and how?

While mediatization research stops short of demanding that we all become historians, it does demand that we develop a more nuanced historical sensibility and adopt an explicitly comparative frame. There should be no more unexamined assumptions that “things are changing” or that the “new” is different from the “old”, and no more vague hand waving at how things were “before”, “in the past”. While there are many claims to historical change in this Handbook, there are few detailed histories and, as Bolin (this volume) rightly criticizes, the lack of clarity over timescales is frustrating for a theory defined by its historical vision. The field of politics is the most carefully examined in terms of the workings of mediatization (see Asp; Strömbäck and Esser, this volume), and it is no accident that the very term mediatization was introduced into media studies to understand historical transformations of politics over the past century or more (Altheide and Snow 1979; Schulz 2004; Strömbäck 2008).

We suggest that mediatization research makes claims on three distinct time scales – decades, centuries, and millennia. Usefully, Bolin (this volume) maps

these onto the three distinct perspectives on mediatization advocated within this Handbook – that concerned with the recent impact of digital networked technologies on society, that concerned with rising power of media as institutions in relation to the other societal institutions of modernity, and what he calls the media world perspective, concerned with a broader theorizing of the media’s role society throughout history. While of course, any and every period in history is characterized by technological, institutional, and cultural processes, it is plausible to map the perspectives onto the time scales in the sense that each perspective is particularly noteworthy or contested at particular times.

Most obviously, and most recently, technology has come into focus within media and communications research. Thus the technological perspective especially emphasizes the socio-technological innovations in recent decades associated with globalized, digital, networked, convergent media in late (or reflexive or post) modernity. Influenced by the medium theorists, theories of post-structuralism and of the knowledge of network society, this perspective is examining social, semiotic, and digital transformations in the wider media ecology to grasp how these are or may be shaping other societal fields (in this volume, see Auslander; Finneman; Bolin; Jansson; Madianou). Possibly because the complex and rapidly unfolding interplay between social, political, economic, and technological transformations is generating considerable public and policy interest, this perspective on mediatization is attracting much excitement. But while few scholars have devoted their attentions to unpacking the growing role of the media across society over past centuries, many are now exercised about the role of new digital technologies in the past few decades, and in the social sciences and humanities writ large, alternatives to mediatization theory abound (consider new media studies, actor network theory, social studies of science, and information studies, to name but a few).

Second, and coming through most strongly in this Handbook, the institutional perspective examines the growing concentration in media power across the Global North in high modernity – roughly, the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries, arguing that almost all fields of societal power have been gradually transformed by the presence of media institutions in their midst. Particularly, mass media organizations (print, cinema, broadcasting) have increasingly set agendas, normalized discourses, and disseminated ideas to shape publicity and the public sphere and, thereby, to influence politics, religion, science, education, and more. This influence is conceived as set of forceful, directional forces of change and theorized in terms of media logics or the “modus operandi of the media, i.e., their institutional, aesthetic, and technological affordances” (Hjarvard 2012: 30). But it also recognizes that mediatization depends upon the deeper processes of modernity (rationalization, specialization, institutionalization, urbanization, etc.) that, in combination, have brought into existence the very societal fields on which mediatization has had its effects (witness the centuries-long evolution of today’s taken-for-granted market economy, civil society, nuclear family, education system, labour relations, social class, and nation state).

Third, and simultaneously most broadly yet least clearly, the cultural perspective takes a social constructivist perspective on historical changes in all forms of mediation – implicitly across centuries, even millennia. Hepp and Krotz (in press) talk of mediatized worlds, Deuze (2012) of media life – or living in media. While the institutional and technological approaches perspectives to position media as separate from and thus an external influence on societal processes (hence concerns about technological determinism), the cultural perspective sees the media as fundamentally of society. There are resonances here to Williams' (1974) assertion that technology/media is a human invention created to serve human purposes, to Carey's (1989) emphasis on how ritual processes of communication construct identity and belonging, and to other foundational approaches to human communication.

Confusing these perspectives and their different concepts and timescales has caused some misunderstandings in debates over mediatization. For example, the notion of media logics works particularly well in characterizing the societal influence of the dominant mass media of high modernity. But across the often unpredictable and non-linear paths of human history, the notion of figurations (Hepp and Hasebrink, this volume) may do better at capturing the diverse mediations of culture across different fields. Meanwhile, Veron (this volume) suggests that systems theory can account for the long history of differing mediated forms of interrelation between individuals and society. On the one hand, it would be misleading to extend the specific analysis of the former to the expanded timescale of the latter. On the other hand, it would be misleading to refuse to recognize what is particular about the converging, conglomerated power of the mass media in high modernity (or, indeed, what is specific about the affordances of digital networks in late modernity), even though mediation has worked differently at other times and in other places. Or again, the emphasis on media's ubiquity – bringing connectivity (for better and for worse) to every field of society is appropriately media-centric when applied to the digitalized network society of late modernity, but cannot be generalized to earlier times.

More generally, it is surely clear from this Handbook that considerable care is required in reading across perspectives, fields, and historical periods. It appears that the institutional approach has gathered the most theoretical and empirical support thus far. However, its key focus is historical, on the analysis of mass media power in high modernity. The technological perspective has an exciting new toolkit to examine the present, digital age of late modernity. But not only are the contours of "the digital age" as yet unclear; so too are the benefits of adopting a mediatization approach to their analysis. Given its unlimited span across space and time, the cultural perspective is the most ambitious yet also the weakest, for it is often unclear what is being said specifically about mediatization rather than, say, about the analysis of mediation or communication or culture more widely.

Equally challenging is the changing nature of what counts as "the media" in mediatization research. Many Handbook authors were trained at a time when a

particular medium dominated (the press or cinema or, most commonly, television); but the interesting challenges now centre on conceptualizing the wider media ecology, and this can be grasped not only for the present and the future but also for the past.⁸ Mediatization research gains strength from conceiving of the media holistically, eschewing the temptation to examine just one medium or form of mediation divorced from the wider media ecology. It is particularly attuned to the innovative or hybrid or cross-media or trans-media phenomena associated with digitalization and the network society, many of which are still to be researched and understood.⁹ Despite being dubbed the age of convergent media, the present is strongly characterized by divergence: “the media” – operating as a media system, defined by distinctive media logics, institutionalized through transnational corporations, employing equipment and expertise accessible to very few – are perhaps already past. As diverse fields become more publicity conscious, each developing communication strategies and norms, even establishing distinct media forms and technologies largely separate from the established mass media, the claim that “the media” operate with a degree of autonomy, with their own rules and resources, becomes harder to sustain.¹⁰ Even for the traditional mass media, their *modus operandi* is ever less coherent, with the main institutions in mutual tension, business models unsettled, distribution networks ever less predictable, and unintended consequences multiplying.

So is the story of mediatization, at core, centred on the institutional perspective above? The 20th century saw an extraordinary confluence of global mass audiences, dominant cultural narratives and the consolidation of media ownership

8 This includes the way in which changes in one medium has implications for, or remediates, others (Bolter and Grusin 1999), as well as the many lively discussions of cross-media or multi-media, or convergent media phenomena (e.g. Jenkins 2006; Evans 2011; Madianou and Miller 2012; Schröder and Larsen 2010). More radically, today’s media are no longer only or simply mass media – and the requirement on researchers to look across “the media” has forced a rapprochement between the long-separate study of mass communication and interpersonal communication, scooping up experts on many other once-fringe topics along the way (telecommunications, books, music), and, then, approaching if not, yet, successfully integrating with the cognate fields of information, library, and computer sciences. Such interdisciplinarity, a necessary consequence of our changing subject matter, has certainly led to a rethinking of terms. Mediatization research proffers one answer.

9 As Krotz (this volume) notes, the list of these is ever-expanding, from rolling news, cyberwar, blogs, data surveillance, mobile phones, flashmobs, multiplayer games, wikis, ubiquitous music to what might be termed e-everything (e-government, e-learning, e-health, etc.).

10 As Hartley (2009: 70) observes, “the emergent ‘creative industries’ are taking over in this century the position that ‘the media’ held in the last”. He points to the many organizations, large and small – including ordinary people – that are now or could be producers and distributors of messages. Relatedly, Blumler (in press) lists the abundant sources of political communication over and above those originating in “the media” – consider the public dissemination of reports and research, the campaigning materials of single issue groups and grassroots activism, and the array of messaging originating directly with politicians and associated experts or think tanks.

structures. “The media” were triumphant even though any closer look revealed the complexity, even the fragility of their seeming dominance – what Couldry (2009) called the “myth” of the mediated centre, a myth promulgated not least by the media themselves. Interestingly, Handbook authors who deal with fields (e.g. sport, politics, religion, financial markets, public bureaucracies, and corporations) whose histories are primarily located in the 20th century are uncertain about what the 21st will bring. Meanwhile, Handbook authors whose accounts of mediatization are primarily located in the 21st century tend not to offer a grounded history of how we got here (e.g. science, education, climate change, digitization). To link the two, mediatization research now needs to strengthen its media history. Especially, it needs to determine whether the media, however defined, continue to be sufficiently autonomous, or to have sufficiently coherent institutions and practices, to influence other fields.¹¹

4 Mediatization and modernity

We have distinguished the case for mediatization according to three overlapping timescales. Over the *longue durée* of human history, cultures have variously shaped and been shaped by the particular ways in which human communication is mediated, both symbolically and materially. No simple or single process of mediation can capture the diversity and complexity of communicative forms that the world has seen, and the processes of mutual influence have often been unpredictable and far from linear. But, with modernity’s particular intertwining of political, economic, and social rationalization (sustained by meta-processes of democratization, commercialization, individualization, and globalization), societies have been distinctively and deliberately reshaped by the institutional and cultural logics of the media. In this second narrative, mediatization is conceived not simply as a consequence of modernity but, rather, as a core meta-process that drives modernity (Krotz 2007). Third, in the past few decades a tipping point was reached whereby the unintended consequences and unpredictable counter-flows of modernity led to a radical break, a reflexive and recursive refashioning of traditional values and

¹¹ Notably, the signs are that while media companies will continue to dominate the 21st century, their individual success is more fragile (how long will Facebook last?), their business models more uncertain (consider the attack on Amazon’s tax strategy) and their effects more short-lived (online memes may travel the world in a flash but they are forgotten equally rapidly). The dominance of national or global media texts (from *The Times* of London to *Dallas*) or global media events (Dayan and Katz 1992), for which as Gitlin (1980) said, *The Whole World is Watching*, is waning. From the vantage point of the emerging digital network society of late, even post-modernity, we can now see how the media have profoundly shaped the institutions of high modernity, moulding the institutions and structures of state, politics, religion, family, education, etc. that are now unravelling, being reshaped in ways we cannot yet clearly grasp.

practices which first made possible and then became underpinned by the (ubiquitous, infrastructural) digital networked age in which we now live.

We have suggested that the first of these accounts – mediatization as cultural evolution through human history – offers a relatively weak history, primarily mapping historically and culturally diverse processes of mediation. Then, mediatization as socio-technological transformations in the digital age seems, at best, a history-in-the-making, being too recent to offer a reflective account of change or even to secure the claims of a radical break with the past. Unsurprisingly then, the strongest support for mediatization research comes from the analysis of mediatization as the exercise of institutional power in high modernity; this asserts a clear historical narrative of media in modernity – that mediatization is the “double-sided development in which media emerge as semi-autonomous institutions in society at the same time as they become integrated into the very fabric of human interaction in various social institutions like politics, business, or family” (Hjarvard 2012: 30). But must we choose one perspective over another? Might a general theory of mediatization embrace transformations in institutions, technologies, and culture simultaneously, over differing yet compatible timescales?

Social theorists argue that the relations between societal institutions, culture, and technology during modernity should be seen in terms of continual flux and tension, rather than in terms of periodic upheavals that disrupt otherwise stable social structures (Giddens 1991; see Averbeck-Lietz; Krotz, this volume). Thus, dynamism is characteristic of mediatization (and the other meta-processes of modernity¹²). Wittgenstein’s (1958) powerful image of the twisted rope is helpful: any moment in time is like a cut through the rope, revealing multiple strands of different lengths – some very long, some much shorter – stretching both into the past and the future. Working out what any particular cut through the rope represents, in terms of continuities and discontinuities, influences and consequences, challenges the study of the present as well as that of the past. So, while each meta-process has its own dynamics and historical trajectory, each intersects with the others, and any moment in history must be understood as a cross-sectional cut through the rope.¹³

12 While Krotz positions mediatization along with the meta-processes of globalization, individualization, and commercialization, Averbeck-Lietz reminds us of the broader range of dynamic and intersecting processes that, together, constitute what we understand as modernity: hence we may think also of industrialization, urbanization, secularization, rationalization, and democratization.

13 In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens (1991) cautions that when we cut the rope in a particular place, certain strands will be more salient than others. Just as commercialization was particularly salient for social theorists in the 1980s, as was globalization in the 1990s, it seems that “the digital age” makes mediatization particularly salient at the start of the 21st century. But we should not make the mistake of reifying any currently salient process as more fundamental than the others, and nor does the salience of certain changes justify claims of a radical break in modernity itself. Rather, discontinuities are part of the story of modernity (hence he describes the present as late or reflexive modernity rather than post-modernity).

However, if mediatization, as Krotz (2007) suggests, is to be added to the list of modernity's meta-processes, what shall we say are its distinctive features? We have already noted, with Couldry, that mediatization operates transversally, not so much within a single field but, instead, across all fields. We have also argued that while it may be claimed to operate across human history, the strongest case for the influence of the media field on other fields is to be found in high modernity, with the reshaping of core fields of power by the logics of dominant mass media organizations. One further strand of argumentation may be discerned – we will label this a concern with *publicity*. Consider Rawolle and Lingard's interest in how mediatization influenced the field of education through the effect of journalism on discourses of education policy. Or recall Frandsen's argument that the fields of sport and media co-evolved in part because, on any scale beyond that of the village cricket match, mass communication is vital to draw an audience. In one way or another, the different fields of societal activity must connect individuals and institutions (the polity to the government, the consumer to the market, the congregation to the church).

In complex, democratic societies, one important means of connecting individuals and institutions is through mediated (first mass, then also networked) communication. To enable this on any scale, publicity is required, and publicity can be read in two ways – democratizing or critical.¹⁴ In relation to the civic and political field, for instance (and parallel arguments may be made for other fields), the media underpin democratization by enabling public inclusion and citizen engagement, also enhancing public accountability on the part of institutions. Yet as the media's promotion of publicity brings with it public relations, lobbying, branding, and corporate management (Lunt and Livingstone 2012, 2013), thus the bureaucratic logics of the state and the market logic of the commercial world together threaten the autonomy of the public sphere and the lifeworld.

The difficulty in finding a term that integrates the benefits of democratization with the dangers of publicity reveals a further challenge for mediatization research, namely the place of critique. The prospects for individual autonomy and

14 To recognize the fundamental role of the media in modernity, one must give a positive as well as a critical reading to the growing importance of publicity (we might even suggest a meta-process of *publicization*). Habermas (1987a) himself would claim that the fundamental meta-process of modernity at stake is rationalization, meaning the spread of rationality. He argues that modernity has enabled the public to gain access to the benefits of science (partaking in truth), law (the foundation of ethics), and criticism (the foundation of critical thought and reflection). But since “rationalization” sounds oppressive in English, “democratization” might be a better term. Whichever terms are used, the value of Habermas' account is that he examines the interrelations among rationalization, marketization, and democratization in such a way that we can see how the media enable an environment in which publicity becomes a critical currency of modern life, either as the enlightened dispersal of knowledge that can be appropriated to human interests or the spread of instrumental logics to the lifeworld, doubtless depending on the composition of the rope in any given historical moment.

democratic politics have long been at the centre of thinking about modernity. Personal freedoms, along with the capacity of the people to govern or to affect those who govern them, are hard won and fragile. The media have been at the heart of these debates for many years, with scholars asking whether the media support autonomy and democratic engagement or, instead, adversely extend the power of commerce and the (neoliberal) state (e.g. Couldry 2008; Lunt and Livingstone 2012; Blumler, in press). Yet few Handbook authors – including, surprisingly, those who make the strongest claims about the growing dominance of media logics – offer an explicitly critical reading of mediatization or refer to its resonance with ideology critique in media studies (contrast Raymond Williams’ [1983] writings on mediation, for instance). This may reflect a deliberately neutral stance, on the part of mediatization researchers, or it may indicate the relative immaturity of the field.¹⁵

5 How does mediatization work?

Throughout this Handbook, there is a running debate about *how* mediatization works, and a clear desire to bring some order to the assorted processes of media influence generated by media and communications research, often although not only in relation to political communication. These include theories of diffusion, agenda setting, framing, priming, cultivation, personalization, source theories, media events, gate-keeping, two step flow, and more.

Two authors offer an integrative account. Strömbäck (2008) argues that, over the past two centuries, the relations between the systems of media and of politics shifted from one of the mere influence of mediated (compared with interpersonal) communication on politics, towards the growing autonomy of media institutions (as corporate actors but also as a cultural good) from politics. A subsequent phase saw the increasing imposition of media logics on politics (“the point of no return”, as Averbäck-Lietz puts it, this volume). And the third phase saw the thoroughgoing “internalization of media logic(s) by political actors” (Strömbäck and Esser, this volume). Independently, Schulz (2004) sets out four dimensions of mediatization (and these are put to work more heavily in this Handbook). As he defines it, mediatization extends human capacities for communication through time and space, it substitutes prior or direct social activities or experiences with mediated ones, it amalgamates primary and secondary (or interpersonal and mass mediated)

¹⁵ Hepp (2013: 143) concludes in favour of “a multiperspectival critique of today’s cultures of mediatization”, inviting critical attention to whatever is publicly hailed as “central” (the media, the nation, whatever is popular) and calling for a “transcultural comparative” approach to reveal inconsistencies in such powerful claims to cultural prominence. But this falls short of explicit social justice concerns regarding the role of the media in political struggle or oppression that has long occupied critical scholars.

activities; and it ensures the accommodation of social activities and institutions to the media logic.¹⁶

The resonances between the two are worth developing further. Assuming that before the existence of dominant mass media, the various fields of society relied primarily on interpersonal communication, the media would first have both extended the reach and altered the manner in which those fields operated. As mass media grew in significance, one may further suppose that they simultaneously grew in institutional autonomy and came more to substitute for (or at least supplement) previous forms of interaction. In proposing, next, the imposition of media logics followed by the internalization of those logics, Strömbäck gives a more negative reading of a development that, nonetheless, resembles Schulz's claim of amalgamation between and then accommodation to the media on the part of the field being mediatized. One can argue about the terms, but the homologies seem sufficient to work with. It would now be interesting to examine how such ideas might apply to other fields than that of politics.

But should one expect mediatization to work the same way in each field? Since the system world, civil society, and lifeworld operate with different logics, their relation to mediatization is likely to differ.¹⁷ Particularly, the above-discussed factor of publicity may make the difference, since each "world" bears a different relation to the populace and, therefore, makes differing calls on the media. For instance, the fields of law, science, art, and business, as revealed by Handbook authors, represent long-established and highly rationalized systems of specialist expertise with established institutions keen to protect their autonomy. However, the developments in high modernity for public-facing bodies that not only disseminate to but which are also accountable to an increasingly literate and educated public is one way in which the door was opened to mediatization. On the other hand, in these fields mediatization has generated considerable tension, with clashes of values and argumentation leading to a range of complex strategic actions on behalf of both media and other institutions, as the case studies in this volume indicate.

By contrast, civil society, sport, politics, religion, and education, as analysed by other Handbook authors, illustrate fields which, while protective of their profes-

16 Both accounts are intended to be examined historically, although this does not always occur. For example, Schafer (this volume) uses Schulz's processes of extension, substitution, amalgamation, and accommodation to uncover scientists' address to the public, revealing their concern with publicity and how they manage their professional interactions internally and externally. But his focus is more to reveal how science is mediated today, than to compare with how science was organized "before", in previous decades or centuries.

17 Averbeck-Lietz maps the German terms medialization and mediatization onto the media's influence on the institutions of established power (Habermas' [1987b] system world) and the processes or cultures of everyday life (the lifeworld) respectively, and others would further distinguish civil society (Cohen and Arato 1992).

sional norms and values, have always depended on establishing a close relation to the public – as consumers, as voting citizens, as a congregation, as students – and thus the door to mediatization could hardly be closed, publicity being core to their success. Here, however, we see some of the most strongly contested clashes between the values of the public or civil society and the logics of mediatization. Then, other Handbook authors have examined the lifeworld – for example, phenomena of popular culture, memory, domestic space, gender, migration, and death. In these, the role of media varies, but insofar as the media of representation, communication, and distribution have changed (increasingly commercial, global, individualized), mediatization can be seen as also rewriting the history of the lifeworld. In these, mediatization has resulted in fewer outright clashes, since the lifeworld has fewer organizations speaking for its interests, but strong tensions are discernible in the many public anxieties about how everyday life is increasingly embedded in media (or lived in media; Deuze 2012). In short, we suggest both that mediatization might work differently in different fields, and it might also work in multiple ways within any one field: this is an interesting agenda for future research.

6 Everything is mediated but not mediatized

This volume abounds with definitions, with a common concern being the at-times contested relation between mediation and mediatization. As we have argued, mediatization research claims the media play an increasing role in societal change across multiple fields, instilling their logics in those other fields even while they are also shaped by them. We see this fundamentally-historical claim as different from the analysis of mediation as the situated dynamics of structure and agency playing out in particular symbolic and material contexts (Silverstone 2005).¹⁸ In other words, while all forms of human interaction are mediated in one way or another, not all interaction involves communication, and nor is all communication mediated by institutionally-organized, technologically-enabled forms of media. Moreover, not everything that is mediated by institutionally-organized, technologically-enabled forms of media is changing in significant ways over time. In short, everything is mediated but not everything is (yet) mediatized (Livingstone 2009).

18 Fornas puts it well when he says, in this volume: “media are socially organized technologies for communication, ... mediated communication is that kind of intercourse that makes use of such institutionalized tools that are primarily intended for communication [and] mediatization is ... an historical process whereby communication media become in some respect more ‘important’ in expanding areas of life and society [and, specifically, ...] how institutionalized technologies of communication expand in extension and power”.

On the other hand, not all forms of mediation are of direct interest to media and communications research, but all forms of mediatization certainly are.¹⁹

Mediation research, then, is very broad in its scope, encompassing all the ways in which human interaction is mediated by the cultural forms and practices of human beings (the conciliators, diplomats, and wise women of a society), tools and machines (the technologies to manage time, space, and the environment – for example, transport, timekeeping, maps, telecommunications, or weaponry), all forms of language (verbal, nonverbal, and visual), diverse modes of exchange (including trade, distribution and, especially money) and, not least, the media of human communication (from cave paintings and rune stones to the Internet). By comparison with mediatization research, mediation research's focus on what is "in-between" makes for detailed contextual research more than grand narratives of modernity; it also makes for more critical research, recognizing that mediation matters most at the sites in which power is exercised, struggled over, or conciliated.

In his analysis of popular culture, Fornas (this volume) reveals the distinct but complementary relations between mediation and mediatization. His chapter outlines a periodization of European popular culture as follows: (1) Graphic mediatization – in which the development of early human tools for recording speech (writing), image (drawing), and music (notation) permitted the transmission of meanings across time and space. Access to these tools and associated literacies was highly restricted, creating a break between the elite culture, which saw "a de- and re-contextualizing distanciation between the artefact and the original author, audience, and context" and the popular arts (e.g. singing, dance, storytelling), which remained relatively unmarked by the developing tools and literacies to which they had little access. (2) Print mediatization (from the mid-16th century) – in which the elites increasingly withdrew from the common culture, developing printed works (often religious) which, gradually, and from a low starting point, came to influence, and be incorporated in, the plays, performances, and other practices of popular (now, low) culture. (3) Audiovisual mediatization (from the early 19th century) – in which the rise of capitalist, industrialized society gave rise to a commercialized popular culture for the bourgeois middle classes and upper

19 At the most fundamental level, this Handbook is concerned with human interaction, all of which is mediated – at a minimum, by the human body and the material context. However, a (large) subset of human interaction is mediated by language or other communicative forms and so constitutes communication of one kind or another. Then, a (growing) subset of communication is mediated by institutionally-organized, technologically-enabled forms of media. Mediatization, we suggest, is the claim that these institutionally-organized, technologically-enabled forms of media are increasing in the scope or scale of their influence (a simple, quantitative claim) and/or in the nature of their influence (a more complex, qualitative claim). Note that this influence is not conceived in terms of the direct causal effects long studied by media effects research but, rather, in terms of environmental or ecological influences working in interaction with many other sources of influence.

working class (drawing on the technological innovations of audiovisual media – photography, cinema, phonography, telegraphy, then broadcasting). (4) Digital mediatization (late 20th century) – which has accelerated and intensified the convergence and divergence of social and cultural forms and practices, complicating the relations between production and consumption, releasing and yet commodifying the democratic potential of popular culture and, in a historical reversal, drawing the cultural elites back into engaging with popular culture by “making omnivorous diversity and combinatory capacities (rather than any pure and exclusive taste for the high arts) the most important marks of distinction”.²⁰

In terms of our three narratives, his period of graphic mediatization illustrates the multi-located, non-linear shifts in cultural mediations that ebb and flow over millennia. His period of print mediatization and, especially that of audiovisual mediatization traces the centuries-long process of establishing media institutions whose rising dominance drove forward the imposition of a capitalist logic on hitherto messy and diverse cultural practices. His period of digital mediatization sketches the shifting contours of popular culture over recent decades, simultaneously intensifying yet undoing the capitalist logic as subaltern and alternative processes of mediation gain some purchase. In this integrative approach – which may, of course, work differently in different fields, Fornas allows for diverse processes of mediatization at different times, neither claiming a single overarching process or a cumulative linear effect. To achieve such breadth, he draws on what is already known, from decades of in-depth empirical work on mediation, rather than hazarding a new story yet to be tested against the evidence. We will end this chapter by suggesting that mediatization research might usefully re-interpret the many existing findings of mediation research by re-locating and integrating them within a historical frame.

7 Hashtag mediatization

A considerable, and at times problematically diverse, body of work has been brought together under the banner of “mediatization research”. Some have under-

²⁰ Thus his analysis of the mediatization of popular culture in the 20th century (the audiovisual phase) centres on the gradual standardization of formats, the emergence of systems of reproduction and distribution, and the management of required forms of expertise (for production and consumption). Specifically, as media institutions gained autonomy and power in their own right, popular culture was transformed from common lived culture into modern mass media culture. But he then concludes that, since popular culture was already transformed into mass media culture by the late 20th century, there was, strictly speaking, little popular culture left to be further mediatized through the digital, networked media of the 21st. We would disagree, for surely the advent of social media marks a new phase in the mediatization of popular culture, as all kinds of interpersonal practices not yet incorporated into mass culture (think of chat, jokes, rumour, photo-sharing, bullying even) are being mediatized in new ways yet to be understood.

taken detailed empirical studies of institutions or practices as they were influenced by the media in particular cultural contexts or historical periods. Some have hailed the study of mediatization as the integrating concept needed to guide media and communication research in the future. The diverse chapters of this Handbook represent a response to the “call to develop an empirically founded theorization of the manner in which our cultures are changing with the advance of mediatization” (Hepp 2013: 14). Yet they also testify to the many and lively debates about concepts, methods, and claims surrounding mediatization research. Since the contributors to this Handbook take various positions on these debates, we as discussants and you as readers have been faced with the task of drawing overall conclusions.

Clark (in press) likens mediatization research to that of the medium theorists half a century before (e.g. McLuhan and Fiore 1967), when television seemingly wrought dramatic changes to society in the mid-20th century. Today, the rapid introduction of the Internet – again reaching most western homes in just a decade or so – is generating widespread analysis and re-evaluation of societal institutions and practices. But to capture the *zeitgeist*, as she puts it, McLuhan and his colleagues wrote for a popular audience, offering not only an analysis but also a diagnosis of the society being transformed. A parallel diagnosis of mediatized society today would undoubtedly be welcomed by many, and plenty of media studies scholars are stepping forward for this purpose. But this is not the path taken by contributors to this Handbook.

Rather than combining a synthetic account of what is happening with a prediction of the future and a judgement of what is good or bad, what is to be hoped for or feared – even some recommendations for what should be done, they aim for the intellectual prize of establishing the role of the media (and hence the potential of media and communications research) for the academic disciplines that study the different fields that constitute society. In other words, given the rise of mediatization as a meta-process of modernity, media and communication research might have a theory of value to the other social scientists seeking to explain politics, religion, education, sport, science, culture, and more. We are therefore tempted to refer to Thomas Kuhn’s tests for a new paradigm (1962). To paraphrase, one might ask: does mediatization answer unsolved puzzles? Does it support a community of practice with a new vision of researchable questions? Does it embrace a wider array of empirical phenomena in a more parsimonious manner than competing concepts or theories? We are inclined to answer “yes” to the first two questions but suggest that more research is needed before concluding that mediatization improves on the explanatory power of its rivals, for which a short list would include the media ecology tradition, actor network theory, mediation theory, media/digital anthropology, critical theory of technology, and digital culture studies.

Our proposal, therefore, is to conceive of mediatization research as a second-order investigation. Media and communication researchers, as well as those in

other disciplines, will continue to examine media texts, practices, influences, institutions, and flows. To be grist to the mill of mediatization research, such work must occur across multiple fields, and on multiple timescales, and this means that media scholars must collaborate with a range of disciplinary expertise regarding the different fields under investigation, while also combining present and historical methods of analysis. The mediatization researcher can then collate what are, typically, snapshots in time and place so as to map the dynamics that reveal the relations between the history of media, the mediation of society, and the analysis of social change.

Thus, without in the least meaning to denigrate mediatization research, we would reframe it in terms of the hashtag (#) – in other words, as a way of tagging, collating, and comparing ideas, claims, and evidence so that those specifically interested in what can be learned by grouping such phenomena together can more easily do so. Studies can be tagged whether or not they were explicitly intended to advance the cause of mediatization.

As this volume attests, there is already a rapidly growing and fascinating body of research to be found at #mediatization. What it will become, however, we wait to see. This chapter has argued that, to understand the mediation of history, we must not only understand the history of media and the histories of mediation within diverse societal fields, but we must also grasp whether, when, and how these have distinctively influenced society in and across fields. To progress this task, three directions have been developed thus far – mediatization as socio-technological transformations in the digital age, mediatization as the exercise of institutional power in high modernity, and mediatization as cultural evolution through human history. Each invites further research, but only by unravelling their interrelations can a truly compelling case be made for mediatization as a meta-process in modernity.

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