Prolegomena to the Study of Media and Communication in the Information Society

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Media like the Internet have become integral parts of everyday life, politics, and working life
WHAT IS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES?
What is Media/Communication Studies?

Media/communication studies

“seeks to understand the production, processing and effects of symbol and signal systems by developing testable theories, containing lawful generalizations, that explain phenomena associated with production, processing and effects” (Berger and Chaffee 1987, 17).

What is Media/Communication Studies?

Paul F. Lazarsfeld (1941):

administrative communication research VS.
critical communication research

Critical communication research is concerned with:

- society as context of communication
- discusses what the desirable and undesirable effects of communication in society are and how the desirable ones can be strengthened
What is Media/Communication Studies?

Vincent Mosco (2009, 66);

The task of Media and Communication Studies is to

“decenter the media of communication“ by “investigating its economic, political, and other material constituents. Decentering the media means viewing systems of communication as integral to fundamental economic, political, social, and cultural processes in society“

Media and Communication Studies analyzes the production, communication, diffusion, contexts, conditions, contents, actors, usages, effects, consequences, problems, power structures, and normative implications of information in society.
WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES TO INFORMATICS AND COMPUTER SCIENCE?
media/communication studies as a fragmented and highly specialized field that consists of relatively isolated subfields and is as a whole isolated from other disciplines

Karl Erik Rosengren (1993): “isolated frog ponds”

Robert McChesney (2007, 6) about communication studies: “little of the work commands much interest or attention outside narrow confines of the field“
Michael Pfau (2008):

introduction to JoC special issue: media/communication studies has interdisciplinary roots and connections.

Figure 1 Intersections.
Networked digital technologies like the Internet have become topics of many analyses in Media/Communication Studies.

Denis McQuail (2008, p. 18)
Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia (“WEB 2.0“, “SOCIAL MEDIA“)

=> mass communication is no longer only the realm of media companies, but **private users produce public information**

**Manuel Castells** (2009)

**web 2.0 = mass self-communication**

the divide between private/public-, personal/mass-communication vanishes
Media/Communication Studies & Informatics

Figure 2 *Shannon and Weaver’s model of communication*

Fiske (1990, p. 7)
Media/Communication Studies & Informatics

Facebook, YouTube, Twitter
(“WEB 2.0“)

=> consumers of information become producers of information = PROSUMERS (PRODUCER + CONSUMER)
Media/Communication Studies & Informatics

Informatics, Computer Science:

increasing acknowledgement that it needs to be studied
that **computing is inherently social**:

* Computing has implications for society (=> information society)
* The design and usage of computers are social processes
* Computer/software engineers need social skills
* Computer scientists have ethical responsibility for the tools they create

=> Social Informatics
Social Informatics (SI) is “the interdisciplinary study of the design, uses, and consequences of ICTs that takes into account their interaction with institutional and cultural contexts” (Rob Kling et al. 2005, 6).

Gunilla Bradley defines SI as the analysis of “the prerequisites, the applications and the impact of ICT on humans” (Bradley 2006, 72) and the analysis of the interaction of ”societal factors and information technology” (Bradley 2001, 34).
**Media/Communication Studies & Informatics**

Implications:

Computers and the Internet transform all realms of society, therefore Computer Science is connected to all other sciences

Media/Communication Studies is increasingly interested in Digital Media

=> **Studying the context of computing and the Internet is an intersection of Informatics/Computer Science and Media/Communication Studies**

=> Media/Communication Studies is a transdisciplinary science.
Study of Digital Media & Society
(Social Informatics, Digital Media Studies/Internet Studies)
WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES?
= CRITICAL INFORMATION SOCIETY STUDIES

Task:
To elaborate analyses of media and communication that help to advance the establishment of a **global sustainable, participatory information society**
HOW DOES ONE STUDY THE INFORMATION SOCIETY?
1) INFORMATION SOCIETY THEORY

knowledge economy, post-industrial society, postmodern society, knowledge-based society

Radical change, discontinuity
network society, Internet society, virtual society, cybersociety

Transnational Informational Capitalism

Technology
CONTEXT: CAPITALISM
Cognition, Communication

Subjective

immaterial labour, multitude vs. empire, cognitive capitalism, reflexive modernization

Objective

MP3 capitalism, virtual capitalism, informatic capitalism, high-tech capitalism, digital capitalism

Continuity
2) INFORMATION SOCIETY MEASUREMENTS

1990s:

Göran Therborn (1995, 76):

“Sweden is the only country in the world which has gone from being an industrial society, in the sense defined above, to a ‘knowledge and information society’, i.e. to having [...] more ‘professional, technical, and related workers’ than ‘production and related workers, transport equipment and labourers’“.
Distribution of Value Added in Sweden (in % of total value added at current prices, data source: OECD STAN)

- **C01T05 AGRICULTURE, HUNTING, FORESTRY AND FISHING**
  - 1970: 5.86
  - 1975: 5.96
  - 1980: 4.52
  - 1985: 4.55
  - 1990: 3.54
  - 1995: 2.89
  - 2000: 1.99
  - 2006: 1.43

- **C45 CONSTRUCTION**
  - 1970: 6.72
  - 1975: 6.68
  - 1980: 5.78
  - 1985: 6.75
  - 1990: 4.47
  - 1995: 4.02
  - 2000: 4.74
  - 2006: 6.65

- **C10T41 INDUSTRY INCLUDING ENERGY**
  - 1970: 7.58
  - 1975: 6.72
  - 1980: 6.68
  - 1985: 5.78
  - 1990: 6.75
  - 1995: 4.47
  - 2000: 4.02
  - 2006: 4.74

- **C50T99 TOTAL SERVICES**
  - 1970: 57.31
  - 1975: 57.56
  - 1980: 63.46
  - 1985: 63.58
  - 1990: 65.87
  - 1995: 66.55
  - 2000: 69.37
  - 2006: 70.65
3) INFORMATION SOCIETY ETHICS

Discussing principles of how to achieve a sustainable, participatory information society for all
3) INFORMATION SOCIETY ETHICS

FACEBOOK

42.9% of all Swedes use Facebook (Facebakers, 26-10-2010)
2nd most accessed website in Sweden (after google.se, data source: Alexa, 26-10-2010)

PROBLEMS

- Complex and long privacy policy
- Intransparent data collection and usage
- Lack of user involvement in decisions
- Surveillance and selling of user data for advertising purposes
3) INFORMATION SOCIETY ETHICS

Solutions?

Alternative Internet platforms

Diaspora

http://www.joinindiaspora.com

“the privacy aware, personally controlled, do-it-all distributed open source social network”
How does one analyze communication power in the information society?
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

Pirate Bay:

BitTorrent indexing and file sharing search site,
Launched in 2003
Charged for copyright infringement in 2009 in
Stockholm, charges were supported by the International
Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) with a civic
law claim.

94th most accessed website in the world, 20th most

Peter Sunde, Fredrik Neij, Gottfrid Svartholm and Carl
Lundström were sentenced to a fine of 30 million SEK and
one year of prison for assistance to copyright
infringement on April 17th, 2009
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

1) Identification and Analysis of Conflicts and Contradictions

The Internet is a technology of co-operation and sharing.

Information is an intangible good that can be endlessly copied and thereby has multiple ownership.
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

In the Pirate Bay conflict, there are two opposing interests:

* **Media companies** wanting to make money from digital content and arguing for intellectual property rights.

* **Media activists** who argue that it is a question of democracy that cultural products should be free for all.
20% of all Swedes are filesharers

data source: WII Report 2010
72% of all male Internet users aged 16-25 are filesharers

data source: WII Report 2009
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

30% of young males and 20% of young females do not buy CDs, but download music instead.
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

Are 72% of young male Internet users and 20% of the Swedish population criminal intellectual property rights infringers that should be punished?

Or do old property rights legislations not match the Internet age?
MEDIA/COMMUNICATION AND POWER

2) Make policy conclusions of analyses

- Legalization of filesharing
- Cultural flat rate
- Bit tax

And what about the artists?

- Basic income guarantee for cultural producers
- Donation models (e.g. Radiohead)
- Royalty payments
CONCLUSION

Media/Communication Studies in the Internet and information age:

It critically analyzes the role of media and communication in the information society,

It employs theory, empirical research methods, and ethical reasoning.

It wants to contribute to the establishment of a sustainable participatory information society for all.
Critical social science questions “the false identification of that which ought to be with what has been achieved“ and makes a “contribution to keep society open in order to avoid Huxley‘s nightmare and the Orwellian horror“ (Jürgen Habermas, Theorie und Praxis, p. 303)