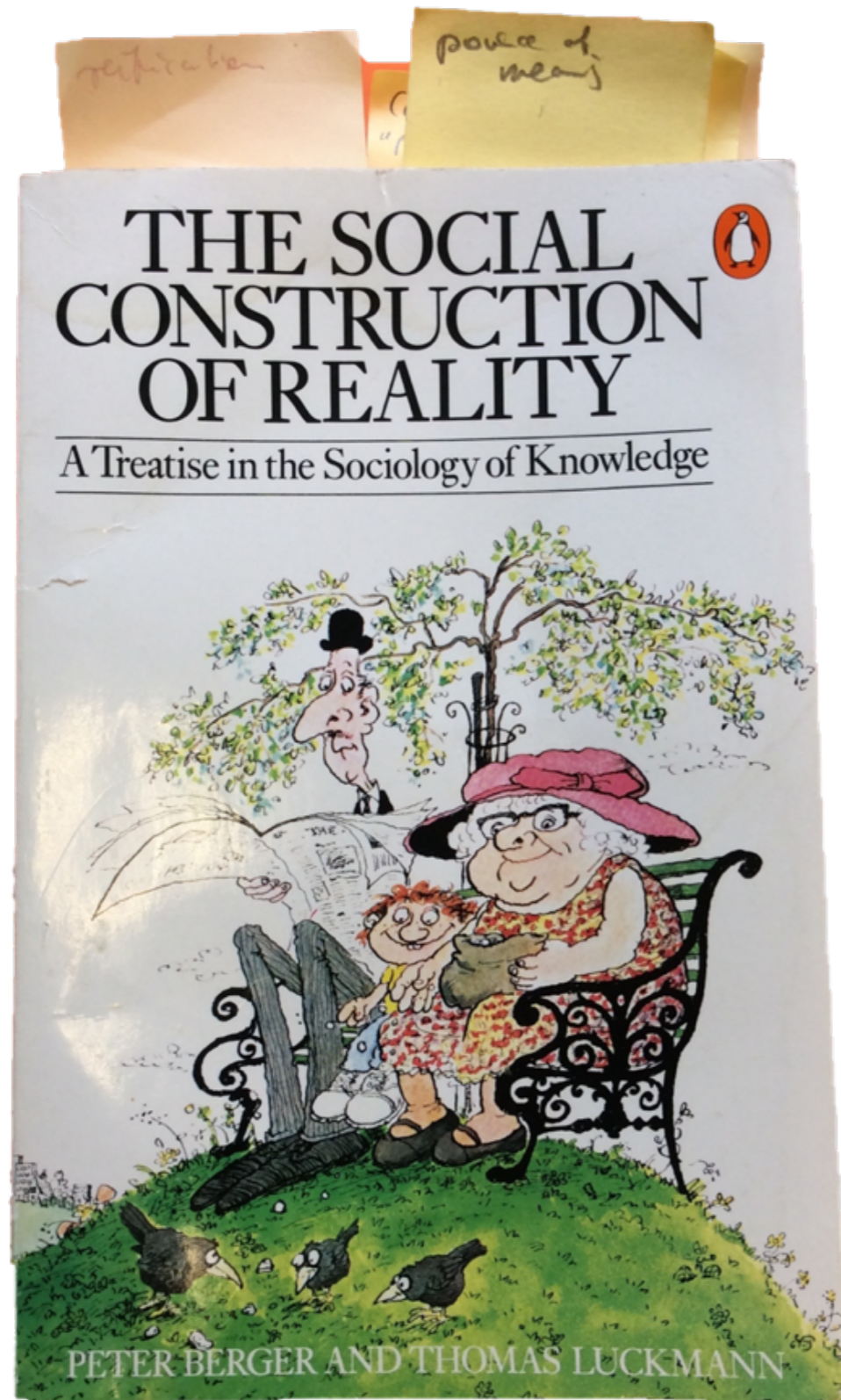
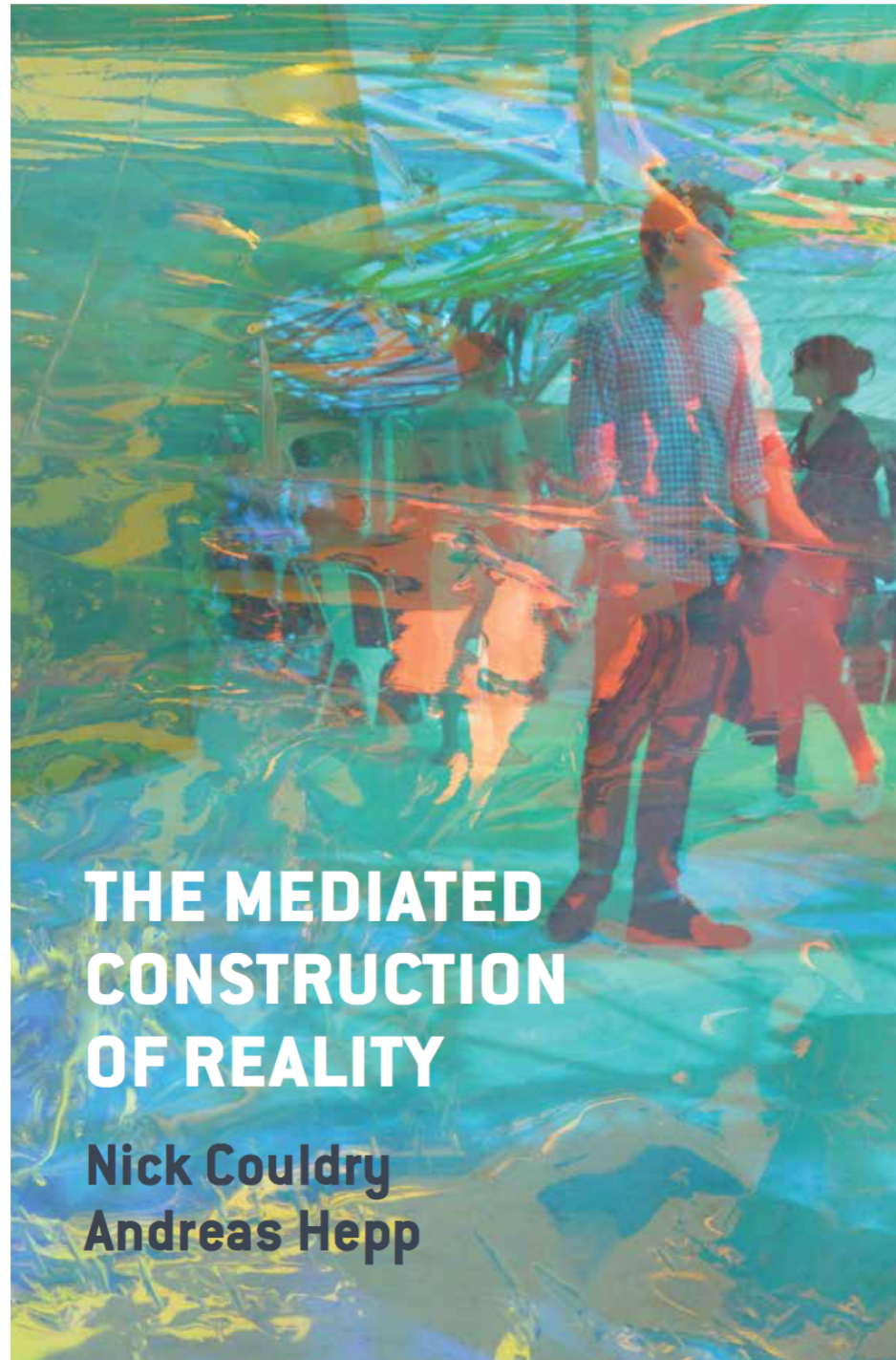


The Mediated Construction of Reality

Andreas Hepp



‘The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual’s everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality.’ (Berger/Luckmann 1966: 172)



‘Suppose the social to be mediated – what? [...] So, how do we rethink the character of the social world (including ‘sociality’, ‘socialization’, ‘social order’, ‘society’), starting out from the principle that the social is constructed from, and through, technologically mediated processes and infrastructures of communication, that is, through what we have come to call ‘media’?’

Outline

1. Deep mediatization
2. A figural approach
3. Materialist phenomenology

1

Deep mediatization

i) What means 'mediatization'?

Mediatization as a concept to analyse in a critical manner the (longterm) interrelation between the change of media and communications on the one hand and culture and society of the other hand.



- **Quantitative aspects:** social, spacious and temporal spreading of technologically based media of communication
- **Qualitative aspects:** 'moulding' of the media (institutionalisation and materialisation)

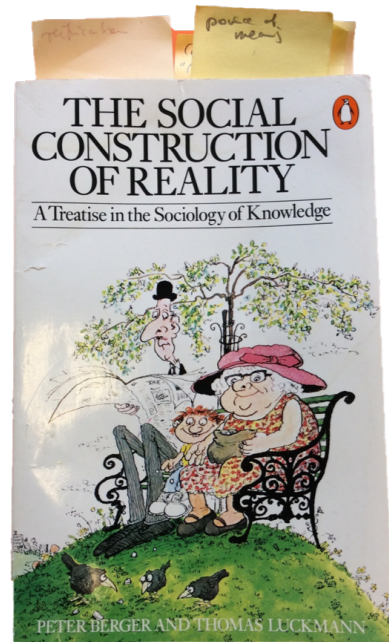
ii) What means 'deep mediatization'?



Deep mediatization is an advanced stage of mediatization in which the fundamentals of our social world are deeply related to media and their infrastructures.

- Differentiation
- Connectivity
- Omnipresence
- Pace of innovation
- Datafication

iii) How does deep mediatization relate to social construction?



Primacy of direct communication:

‘The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual’s everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality.’ (Berger/Luckmann 1966: 172)

The difference of the ‘media manifold’:

- Media as resources for direct communication
- Multiplicity of mediated communication
- Mediated parallel communication
- Datafied constructions of the social

2

A figurational approach

The challenge of bridging concepts

Macro:

Society as a mediatized construction



Micro:

(Communicative) action as social practice



- Differenzierung
- Konnektivität
- Omnipräsenz
- Innovationsdichte
- Datafizierung

The challenge of bridging concepts

Macro:

Society as a mediatized construction



Network Assemblage



- Differenzierung
- Konnektivität
- Omnipräsenz
- Innovationsdichte
- Datafizierung

Micro:

(Communicative) action as social practice

Figuration as a bridging concept



Point of reference:

- Elias (1978), various further developments in 'figurational thinking' (i.e. Baur/Ernst 2011, Dunn 2009, Dunning/Hughes 2013, Morrow 2009, Schnell 2006, Treibel 2008, Willems 2012)

Core idea:

- Figuration as structured 'interdependences' between humans with a shared orientation in action

Understanding of society:

- Society as a texture of various interrelated 'figurations' and 'figurations of figurations', bound with linking discourses (instead of 'symbolic universes')

Figuration as a bridging concept

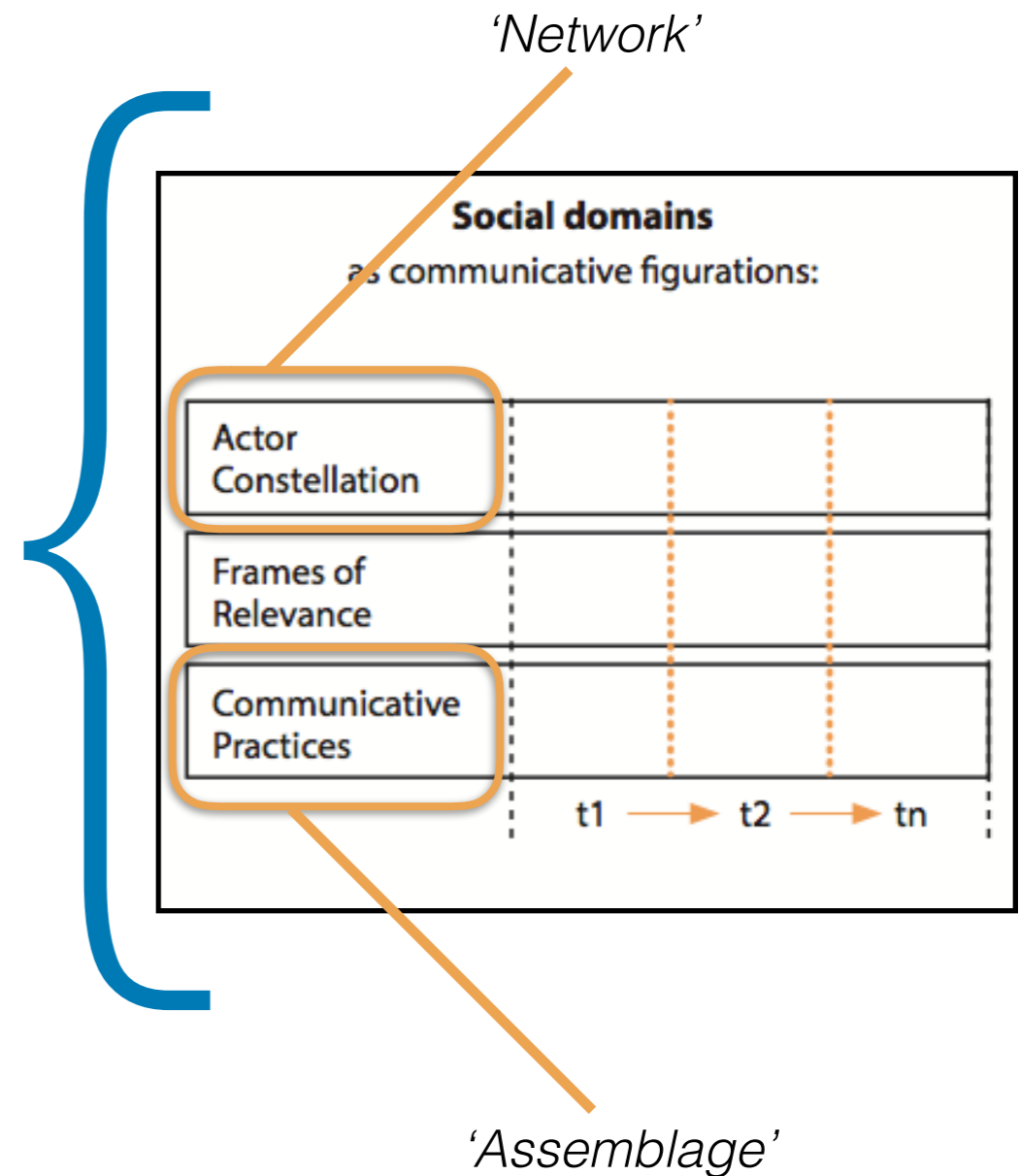
Trends of deep mediatization

- Differentiation
- Connectivity
- Omnipresence
- Pace of innovation
- Datafication

Society:
media environment

Social domains:
media ensemble

.....
Individuals:
media repertoire



3

Materialist phenomenology

A materialist phenomenology to understand the *mediated* construction of reality

Materialist:

We need a *materialist* phenomenology of the social world, because we need to consider media both as technologies including infrastructures and as processes of sense-making, if we want to understand how today's social world comes into being.

Phenomenology:

We need a materialist *phenomenology* of the social world, because we believe that, whatever its appearance of complexity, even of opacity, the social world remains something accessible to interpretation and understanding by human actors, indeed a structure built up, in part, through those interpretations and understandings.

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For today's life-worlds media communication is essential: work, leisure, socialization, the political public sphere, public engagement, etc. are articulated by different types of mediated communication. Even from a historical point of view it is impossible for us to imagine the modern European state beyond modern print media. In this sense, we live in mediatized cultures and societies. The aim of the research network of the Universities of Bremen and Hamburg is to investigate by which "communicative figurations" mediatized cultures and societies in Europe are characterized and how these "communicative figurations" change at the present time and have done so historically. Which challenges have thus emerged for individuals, as well as for various organizations, cultures and societies as a whole?

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