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THE PROBLEM OF THE SCIENTIFIC STATUS THEORY OF MEDIATIZATION

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the scientific status of the theory of mediatization. Modern society is so permeated with media that it cannot be viewed independently of them. On the other hand, understanding the phenomenon of mediatization requires taking into account changes in social practices. The theory of mediatization claims to reveal the relationship between media and social and to explain the social changes that occur under the influence of media. Currently, several approaches to the theory of mediatization are presented. The theory of mediatization is considered in the framework of communication studies, in the framework of social studies or as a metatheory. Genetically linked to the communication Sciences, mediatization theory transcends their subject field of research (Couldry, Hepp). Many conclusions obtained in the framework of the theory of mediatization and social theories that study the mediatization of modern society, from different levels of abstraction confirm and complement each other. At the same time, when investigating social change under the influence of media, none of the versions of the theory of mediatization provides a satisfactory explanation of the relationship between media and social, as well as the role of media in social change. As shown by the results of the study, at the moment the theory of mediatization is a methodological setting in interdisciplinary studies of modern society, and not a theory of social change or metatheory.

1. Introduction

1.1. The problem of the status the theory of mediatization in modern studies of society

In the most General sense, mediatization theory studies the impact of media on changing the social world. Despite the relevance of the theory of mediatization in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, its scientific status is causing serious debate (Bekhmann, 2012; Kornienko, 2015; Gureeva, 2016; Chernenkaya, 2019). First, proponents and critics of the theory have defined the term "mediatization" and related "mediation", "logic of media", etc. differently for a long time (Couldry, 2007).

Secondly, the subject of scientific discussions is the correlation of the theory of mediatization with the classical theory of media, as well as social studies (Castells, 2000; Luhmann, 2004; Luhmann, 2016; Krotz, 2009). The ambiguity of the concepts used in the theory of mediatization, and disciplinary lack of clarity of the status of the theory makes it necessary to outline a General conceptual framework conceptualization of the phenomenon of mediatization and scientific status of the theory of mediatization.

2. Problem Statement

There are several approaches to the theory of mediatization.

1. the theory of mediatization should be considered in the framework of communication studies;

2. the theory of mediatization should be seen as a theory of social change;

3. the theory of mediatization should be considered as a metatheory.

Analysis of these approaches will, in our opinion, clarify the status of the theory. Of course, the theory of mediatization is genetically related to the Sciences of communication. But some principles distinguish it from traditional research approaches in media theory. First, in modern society, the study of mass communication is no longer possible to reduce to the scheme "production (author) - text-audience", the impact of media on society and society on the media is nonlinear (Couldry, 2007). Since the same influence of different media on society is impossible, it is necessary to investigate the different effects of different media. Second, while agreeing with media theorists (Innis, McLuhan, et al.) that media are not neutral "intermediaries" and that any message has a certain pattern of interpretation, media theorists focus on the transformation of society under the influence of mass media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). It is social change under the influence of media that constitutes the research field of the theory of mediatization. What is the heuristic potential of the theory in explaining and anticipating these changes in society?

3. Research Questions

3.1. The study of the heuristic potential of the theory in explaining and anticipating social changes

At the origins of the theory of mediatization are researchers engaged in political communication and offered independently a similar view of the media and their impact on society. The most significant authors here are Altheide and Snow (1979), Martin-Barbero (1993). Scientists drew attention to the fact that in politics with the growth of media content there are qualitative changes. Altheide and Snow (1979),

highlighting the term "logic of media", argued that the media, permeating modern society as a whole, and each of its individual areas (politics, law, education, etc.), impose their logic on them.

In the theory of mediatization, the main object of research is not the media, but the society changing under the influence of modern media. This shift in focus raises questions about the disciplinary and heuristic status of mediatization theory. Can the theory of mediatization be considered a theory of communication, or should it be attributed to the social Sciences, or is it a metatheory? Is the theory descriptive, because it relies on empirical material and describes, systematizes a huge body of empirical data, or its main function is to explain and predict social changes? Is it an empirical theory or a middle-level theory?

Questions related to the identification of the status of the theory are significant in methodological terms. Shifting the theory of mediatization to an interdisciplinary field also requires research.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the disciplinary and heuristic status of the theory of mediatization. The objectives of the research in this context are:

- Analysis of existing approaches to the theory of mediatization;

- Explication of the basic concepts and principles of the theory: "mediation", "mediatization", "logic of media", the principle of nonlinearity, etc.;

- Comparative analysis of the study of the influence of media on society in the theory of mediatization and social theories (N. Luhmann et al.);

- Analysis of the ratio of explanatory and prognostic potential of the theory of mediatization.

5.   Research Methods

5.1. Methodological settings for this study

The study of the theory of mediatization is based on the General methodological principles of the theory analysis. The main principles of the developed theory are: 1) principal verifiability; 2) generality; 3) principal simplicity; 4) predictive power; 5) system.

Analysis of the structure of the theory involves the allocation of empirical basis, conceptual ideas and language of the theory.

5.2. Methods of research of the theory of mediatization

▪ Terminological and conceptual analysis allows us to identify the meanings that form the significations of the basic concepts of the theory of mediatization: "mediatization", "mediation", "mediatized world", etc.

▪ Comparative analysis allows to compare the process of studying the relationship between media changes and social changes in the framework of the theory of mediatization and social theories.

6. Findings

6.1.Basic concepts of mediatization theory

For the first time, the term "mediatization" is introduced into the scientific language by the English researcher J. Thompson (1995) to denote the role of media as an institution, not just broadcasting information, but forming General cultural, political and social values. According to Thompson, it is communication that determines the position of the individual in relation to political and social institutions. Analyzing the structure of communication action, he considers it simultaneously from several positions, highlighting the level of perception of the message, the methods of its transmission and the direction of this connection.

But in General, the term "mediation" was used in English literature. As defined by Silverstone (2002, p.762), the term describes "a fundamental but uneven dialectical process in which institutionalized media communications(press, radio, television, and increasingly the Internet) are involved in the General circulation of symbols in social life"(Couldry, 2008, p. 381). In Germany and the Scandinavian countries from the very beginning use the term "mediatization" (mediatisierung) to refer to the process of influence of media on social phenomena. According to the Danish researcher Hjarvard (2018) mediatization is a mutual process of influence of media and society, during which society is saturated with the media to such an extent that they can no longer be considered separately from other public institutions.

Currently, the terms are clearly separated. Under the "mediation" understand communication, which is influenced by media. "Mediatization" is understood as a process in which the main components of modern human life (work, education, leisure, etc.) acquire a media form (Hjarvard, 2018). Mediatization means that we become dependent on processes and events that are not directly under our control and physically inaccessible, about which we learn from the media. Often terms are used in conjunction, as complementary to each other (Couldry, & Hepp, 2017).

Critics of mediatization theory note that in many cases termin is not clearly defined. One can hardly agree with this. In our opinion, it is necessary to allocate a number of definitions of this concept. But it is worth agreeing that the concept of mediatization rather captures a certain aspect of the study of the relationships between social changes and changes in media technologies, rather than clarifies these relationships themselves.

Altheide and Snow (1979), single out the term "logic of media", arguing that the media, permeating modern society as a whole, and each of its individual areas (politics, law, education, etc.), impose their logic on them. Couldry and Hepp (2017) capture the nonlinear interaction of media and society. Therefore, the terms used in the analysis of the relationship between media and society ("logic of media", etc.) should be considered not constants, but variables. A number of authors consider it appropriate to speak not about the logic of media, but about the logics (plural) of media.

6.2.Scientific status of the theory of mediatization

Genetically, the theory of mediatization is related to the communication Sciences. However, the problem field of the theory of mediatization is social changes that occur under the influence of media. The shift of attention from media and communication to social change raises questions about the status of mediatization theory. Is it not a metatheory? What are the limits of theory?

As Hjarvard (2018) notes, the theory of mediatization is not normative, it does not speak about how the relationship between society and the media should be carried out, it does not build ideal models. It is also impossible to state unequivocally that the theory of mediatization is empirically descriptive in the strict sense, despite the fact that it is based on the facts of socio-cultural reality. Nor does it claim to be a middle-level theory.

As pointed out by most researchers (Couldry, 2007; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Hjarvard, 2018; Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, etc.), the theory of mediatization should be considered in the context of social theories, not the theory of communication. The theory of mediatization, Hepp writes, is not a concept about the causal influence of media on society, but an attempt to build a theoretical framework that allows, together with researchers from other fields of scientific knowledge, to consider the influence of media in various social and cultural spheres. Couldry (2007) describes multidirectional trends within media streams. He argues that the media, thanks to its legitimacy, open the masses "access to the social".

In General, the study of mediatization has different theoretical bases. There are two main versions of this theory: institutional and social constructivist. Sometimes there is also a technological approach in the study of mediatization associated with the analysis of the material characteristics of media and their role in the production of social space. Let's focus on the first two versions of the theory of mediatization.

Institutional research tradition tends to analyze traditional media, using the concepts of "media logic", "media format". The social constructivist variant explores everyday practices of mediated communication and their relationship to social change. The most striking representative of the first, institutional, approach is Hjarvard (2018), social constructivist. Krotz (2007, 2009), Couldry and Hepp (2017). According to Hjarvard (2018), modern society becomes increasingly dependent on the logic of the media. Different social spheres or systems (e.g. religion, politics, education) adapt to the rules of media. The logic of media includes a certain way of organizing the material, the style of its presentation, the practice of interpretation and understanding. Relying on the British sociologist Giddens and Hjarvard (2018), points to two characteristic features of modern media: the presence of its own rules and power over the distribution of resources, which he divides into two types: material resources and authorities. He distinguishes two forms of mediatization: direct and indirect. As part of direct mediatization, previously non-mediated activities become mediated (e.g. online education). Indirect mediatization refers to a situation where a certain type of activity is influenced by "media symbols".

Krotz (2007) considers mediatization as one of the meta-processes that have formed and are shaping modern society, along with globalization, individualization, industrialization and commercialization. According to Krotz, mediatization is a continuous process of transformation of relations at all levels of social reality. For supporters of this approach, modern society is a society of media.

Krotz (2007) believes that instead of studying the mediatization of society "as a whole", it is necessary to study how this process occurs in individual spheres of social life. They introduce the concept of "mediatized worlds", understood as "small life worlds". Each mediatized world-family, religious community, sports club, etc. is characterized by a certain volume and content of intersubjective knowledge and related social practices. Their changes in modern culture should be the object of study in the study of mediatization.

As media researchers emphasize, three points are important for understanding the nature of mediatized worlds.

First, the" communication network " of mediatized worlds is not limited to a specific territory. The process of mediatization loosens the binding to a specific physical place (for example, online courses that allow the student to communicate and interact with the teacher outside the University through media technologies).

Secondly, mediatized worlds exist at different levels of social reality: families, organizations, communities, social institutions, etc.

Third, mediatized worlds intersect with each other (in different social worlds, the same media can be used in different ways).

According to Hepp and Hasebrink (2018), empirical analysis of the" mediatized world " requires the identification of:

1) the factors forming its " structural basis»;

2) the main types of mediated communication (interpersonal, mass media, virtualized), which can develop into more complex models of communicative practices;

3) "media ensembles" - that is, the totality of different media supporting communication;

4) thematic framing - the semantic framework that defines each communicative figuration as a social and cultural "essence".

It should be noted that the phenomenon of mediatization of modern society has become the focus of attention of philosophers, sociologists, economists (Harman, 2016; Evseeva, Bashkarev, Pozdeeva, & Tarakanova, 2018; Palmas, 2019). In the works of Luhmann (2016), Castells (2000) and others, mediatization was conceived as a consequence of the information revolution. Luhmann (2004, 2016), Castells (2000), as well as the classic of media theory McLuhan (1964), emphasized the inseparable link between the evolution of society and the evolution of communication. Thus, considering the socio-historical process from the point of view of the development of social communication, they noted the decline in the role of space and the growing importance of the temporal dimension in modern society. If, stated Luhmann (2004), in the historical development prevails smoothness and continuity, the evolution of forms of communication is rather abrupt. Defining modern society as a communicative network, he stressed that if the means and practices of communication, the means of encoding messages change, if the power of preserving and reproducing information changes, then there is an opportunity for the emergence of new social structures. According to Luhmann (2004), communication in modern society is not just a message transfer from the addressee to the addressee, but an operation that allows to redistribute knowledge depending on the social context. Communication always takes place within society, and never between subjects.

One of the means of analyzing the phenomenon of collective behavior in modern society under the influence of media is the concept of "scheme". Schemes act as a kind of intermediary between the mass media system and the outside world. The introduction of this concept into philosophical circulation is associated with the name of I. Kant (Although some considerations about the schemes can be found already in B. Spinoza). Luhmann (2004) refers to the concept of "schema" in order to explain how the media construct the objects of our attention (messages, stories, topics for discussion, etc.). For example,

he demonstrates the functioning of schemes in the media on the example of the events of September 11, 2001. Schemes in N. Luhmann act as a theoretical tool describing the process of reproduction of social memory. According to N. Luhmann, they form a recognizable background, thanks to which communication is possible. There is an effect of inclusion of new elements (N. Luhmann calls it recursion) in already formed series. Thus, the new must in one way or another refer to past messages. Luhmann identifies three areas of "schema formation" - news and commentary, advertising and entertainment, focusing mainly on the functioning of schemas in the first area.

Summarizing the conclusions of the theorists of mediatization, the following provisions can be distinguished:

1. Theorists of mediatization, exploring the changing form of attitudes in society under the influence of media tend to interdisciplinary dialogue with philosophers, sociologists, legal theorists, etc., studying these changes in the framework of their own disciplinary research; According to their position, the development of media can be caused not only by internal factors, but also external processes, and be the result of a combination of technological, economic, political and cultural factors, including the structure of media.

2. Representatives of the theory of mediatization distinguish, as a rule, non-linear and multidirectional influence of media and society, within which individuals construct their social world; they note that the meditatization of culture has led not only to qualitative changes in space-time relations, but also the relations "center/periphery", "local/global", etc.

3. Within the framework of the theory of mediatization itself, it has not yet been possible to conceptualize the relationship between media and social changes; the attitude to the study of social changes under the influence of media is rather a methodological attitude for theorists of mediatization.

4. In the theory of mediatization at a more specific level, the same phenomena are investigated as in a number of social theories (N. Luhmann et al.). Many conclusions obtained in the framework of the theory of mediatization and social theories that study the mediatization of modern society, confirm each other, but from different levels of abstraction.

5. The evolution of the theory of mediatization in the direction of social Sciences is largely due to the close interdisciplinary interaction of social Sciences, characteristic of the second half of the XX century.

6. It can be argued that changes in the methodology of the study of fenomen mediatization (the transition from highlight the linear structure of interaction between the media and society to multi-level, identifying the social context of a creative nature interpretation and transmission of messages, etc.) is largely dependent on interdisciplinary collaboration and treatment theorists of publicity to new methods of media studies (both empirical and theoretical: the hermeneutic approach, system etc.).

7. Theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of mediatization involves the creation of a new conceptual language. New approaches and interventions appear, and already known theories are problematized. Traditional, established in the scientific language concepts - "scheme", "media logic", etc. - are given a new meaning.

7. Conclusion

In this article it was shown that the theory of mediatization, which arose within the framework of communication Sciences and explores the changes taking place in society under the influence of media, in its development evolves in the direction of social Sciences. This logic of theory development is due to changes in the methodology of studying the phenomenon of mediatization.

The heuristic status of the theory is currently not clearly defined, since it is only being formed. However, a number of methodological positions within the framework of the theory are highlighted and recognized by both its representatives and critics: a) interdependence of social changes and media changes; b) nonlinearity and multidirectional interaction between media and society; c) change in the perception of social experience under the influence of media; d) the need for interdisciplinary research of the phenomenon of mediatization. Proponents of the theory of mediatization identify a relatively uniform number of key characteristics of the process of mediatization (duration, universality, totality, etc.), but their interpretations may differ. It is obvious that the theory of mediatization has heuristic potential. Very promising, for example, is the idea of empirical studies of life-worlds through the prism of the media, highlighting interdisciplinary study of the phenomenon of publicity.

More precise definitions of a number of key concepts have been given and areas of research have been identified to review specific interactions between media, communication and society. Many conclusions obtained in the framework of the theory of mediatization and social theories that study the mediatization of modern society, confirm and complement each other, but from different levels of abstraction.

At the same time, media researchers often do not adhere to a holistic theory, but consider a set of solutions to specific problems, from which General conclusions are drawn. Often these conclusions are made not even supporters of the theory of mediatization, and their critics. Thus, the results of the study showed that at the moment the theory of mediatization acts as a methodological installation in interdisciplinary studies of modern society, since none of its versions does not provide a satisfactory explanation of the relationship between media and social, as well as the role of media in social change.

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