Benedict in Berlin\textsuperscript{1}: The Mediatization of Religion

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1. Introduction

For a long time, it has been known that, when studying religion, one must consider the role of the media. In fact, one could argue that the science of religion started with the insight made into the difference between orality and literacy in the 19th century. As the science of religion and its literate objects have been more congruent, it took some time for the role of the electronic mass media to be accounted for. However, within the last decade, we have witnessed a rapid increase of studies in the media. Such studies include ‘electronic’ mass media but, recently, also consider ‘internet’ and digital media (Hoesgard, 2005; Krüger, 2012).

However, while most studies focus on the representation of religion in the media, on the use of media by religious organizations and on the interaction between religion and media as social systems, some even claiming a ‘religious quality’ of the media themselves, the mediatization of religion has only rarely become the subject of scientific inquiry. As the term ‘mediatization’ has only been coined in the last decade, it is subject to persistent debate, unsurprisingly, with regard to its definition in comparison with other terms. Given the current knowledge available regarding the relation between religion and media, focusing on the role of media may help to empirically define what is meant by mediatization.

There is no doubt that clarification and refinement of the notion of mediatization in theoretical terms is necessary. Though I will draw on a general notion of mediatization, as it is defined in international discussion and in a theoretical and conceptual frame I have sketched in another article (Knoblauch, 2013), I do not want to apply this notion to an empirical field in a deductive way. Instead, I want to start with an account of an empirical phenomenon: the visit of Benedict XVI to Germany, with a particular focus on the service that took place in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, where we undertook extensive data collection, including video recording, interviews and organizational ethnography. Undoubtedly, the
decisive role of the media in the Catholic Church has already been discussed during the reign of John Paul II, particularly during his journeys and services (Bergmann, Luckmann and Soeffner, 1993). The fact that these services have been documented on video, investigated ethnographically (also by the author) and subjected to analysis does not only allow us to compare both ‘styles’ of communication but, as I shall argue in this article, we can see that they demonstrate a substantial change in the role of the media, and an even more substantial change in the structure of communicative action which may be called religious. As this difference can be firmly understood by the notion of mediatization, a detailed analysis of video-recorded practices during the services allows us to refine what is meant by mediatization. Mediatization not only refers to a particular representation by media (medialization) or the technical mediation of action or social action, but to the mediation of communicative action. As mediatization is a basic feature of communicative action, the forms that this mediatization can take differ. I argue that the use of interactive and digital technology results in new structures of communicative action, which consequently transform religious communication and religion in toto. Elsewhere, I have tried to sketch this transformation towards ‘popular religion’ in an encompassing way. In this article I want to exemplify this transformation with respect to one specific event.

After having outlined the most relevant aspects of the discussion of media and religion, I then reference the most important aspect of the notion of ‘mediatization’ in order to provide a link to those few studies that focus on religion and ‘mediatization’. Then, I want to briefly outline the empirical basis and procedure of my analysis, before I turn to the event itself, the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Berlin in 2011. After having described the data and methods of analysis in the empirical part of the article, I shall then present some results drawn from video analysis of this visit, focusing on various aspects of mediatization. In the conclusion I want to summarize these aspects and indicate the transformation of the forms of communicative actions within one specific mediatized symbolic world: religion.

2. Media, religion and mediatization

As indicated above, the modern study of religion is connected to an understanding of the role of the media, particularly the difference between orality and literacy in Bible studies (as well as the study of the written documents of other religions). Although most studies focus on the way in which religion is represented in the media (Arthur, 1993), the role of the media as a way of shaping social action and experience in the field of religion has also been highlighted, for example, by Eisenstein (1979). She demonstrated that the ‘Gutenberg revolution’ of print was a prerequisite for the Protestant reformation, since it allowed access to individual (and silent) reading of the Holy Scripture, weakened the institutional (Catholic) monopoly of the transmission of knowledge, and accelerated the dissemination of these practices. Moore (1994) added the observation that, until the 18th century, the market for printed books (at least in the USA) was dominated by religious literature. The rise of new genres (science, literature, newspapers) was countered by the creation of huge religious non-profit organizations producing up to 300,000 bibles a year. Religious organizations in the USA were also among the first to adapt to the new ‘electronic’ media, such as radio and television. As Hoover (1988) stresses, since the 1940s we have witnessed the rise of an ‘electronic church’ that makes use of electronic communication, particularly of radio and television. This electronic church created new ‘media formats’ and a new organizational structure. While less developed in Europe, in the USA it comprised more than 220 television stations in 1987, with a regular audience of some 130 million people (claimed by the providers; critics refer to about 30 million). The electronic church then expanded, especially in areas with strong religious traditions. The Catholic Church in Brazil, for example, owns more than 122 radio stations. Increasingly, media also allowed global communication. By 1995, Billy Graham’s ‘World Mission’ was transmitted by satellite to 165 countries and some 10 million people.

Since the notion of the ‘electronic church’ was coined under the reign of mass media, one might ask whether the new digital media can be subsumed under this category. However, it can be claimed that the possibility of individual access and, simultaneously, interactivity offered by digital media distinguishes it from mass media (Knoblauch, 2009). It would, however, be misleading to assume that the difference is ‘caused’ or constituted by the medium of dissemination, as Luhmann (1997) seems to suggest. As, for example, Meyer and Moors show, the role of pre-digital media, such as radio, records or video in Ghana, Egypt or Nigeria, depends upon ‘what forms of mediation and communication [...] these more diversified audiences employ and what styles of communication [...] they use’ (Meyer and Moors, 2006, p. 12). Instead of focusing on the media solely as a structure for representation, the study of contemporary religion allows us to observe the use of media in action. The incorporation of media in action has been referred to as ‘mediatization’. Since the relevance of the media to the forms of social action and society in toto has been acknowledged by a range of authors (for example, Meyrowitz, 1994; Thompson, 1994), recent dramatic changes in digital and interactive media have prompted a new wave of debate on what is now called mediatization (Schulz 2004). Indeed, as Krotz (2001, p. 23) states, the ‘starting point [of the analysis of mediatization] must be communication or communicative action’. The relevance of mediatization for religion has already been emphasized by Hepp and Kröner (2009) and Hjarvard (2009). Hepp and Kröner, for example, convincingly demonstrate the transformation of religion by its mediatization, characterized by fragmentation, pluralization, deterritorialization and a new form of immediacy.
Just as Hepp and Krönert based their analysis on qualitative and quantitative data collected at the Catholic Pope Benedict’s visit in 2006 to the World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, this study will concern the 2011 visit to Berlin. In addition to the data used by Hepp and Krönert, this study is based on a large corpus of video data. By analyzing this data, I will not only attempt to define the notion of mediatization suggested by Hepp and Krönert but, in addition, I would also like to empirically ‘ground’ the notion of mediatization adumbrated in a theoretical article published elsewhere (Knoblauch, 2013). This notion differs substantially from what has been suggested by Hjarvard (2009). By mediatization I do not mean the subsumption of religion to the ‘logic of the media’ in terms of institutional regulation, symbolic content and individual practices. Rather, in accordance with Couldry (2012), I would suggest that the technical media are integrated into new forms of communicative action. These new forms of communicative action do not result in a ‘banal religion’ constituted by ‘banal religious representations’, such as figures from fantasy film, as Hjarvard claims. Rather, the new forms of communicative action constitute what I would call a popular religion. As I have elaborated the notion of popular religion in extenso elsewhere, I want to back my thesis with a study of a religious event par excellence: the pope’s mass. On this basis I want to show that mediatization does not only consist of the transformation of an event into the ‘centred performance’ of a ‘media event’, as Couldry (2012, p. 79) rightly suggests, but, in addition, mediatization consists of the integration of new media technologies into the communicative action of the participants in such a way as to transform their religious practice. The mediatization of religion, in this way, empirically supports the development towards ‘mediatization’ (Krotz, 2009); at the same time it demonstrates the heterogeneity of mediated worlds (Hepp, 2013), since the new forms of mediatization affect religion in a particular way by transforming the religious forms of religious action, that is, rituals.

3. The Pope in Berlin: Data

The visit of Pope Benedict to Berlin was a global media event. As opposed to the visit of John Paul II in Berlin 1996, this was a German pope visiting the German capital – an event which had not happened for centuries. In fact, while John Paul II met large numbers of Catholics from Poland who travelled across the border to Berlin, in 2011 the German audience dominated and the whole journey was framed as the pope visiting Germany. In addition to Berlin, he also went to a Catholic area in East Germany which had survived Socialism, and to one of the core regions of Catholicism, the city of Freiburg in the southwest of Germany. While being in Berlin for a day and a night, he visited a holocaust memorial, met with representatives of the Jewish community, gave a speech in the German parliament and celebrated a mass at the Olympic Stadium.

As Berlin is a Catholic diaspora, the location, as well as the dimension, of the mass had been quite uncertain for a long time. After it became clear that the numbers of participants interested would exceed 10,000–20,000 persons, the planners in the Vatican, the German bishops’ council and the local archdiocese accepted the suggestion to move into the Olympic Stadium. Although recently refurbished as a modern sports stadium, the location is quite controversial since it still retains traces of its fascist origins. While the events in the predominantly Catholic areas integrated open spaces, such as the main market place in Freiburg, the preference for the Olympic Stadium demonstrated the insular atmosphere of the Berlin visit, as opposed to John Paul II visiting Vienna or Benedict’s visit to the ‘Catholic cities’ of Freiburg and Cologne (or Madrid earlier). Benedict was appearing in public only in built spaces, triggering some of the most draconian security measures seen over the last few years, despite the city’s familiarity with state visits.

Together with a team of students and a team of documentary film-makers, we have collected data on various aspects of Benedict’s visit to Berlin. While one student, Sezgin Sönmez, collected data in the local organization team, another student collected data on the media coverage of the visit. Together with a number of students, we have also visited the Olympic Stadium, conducted interviews and recorded videos and film of the event. The multi-method procedure we pursued attempted to replicate an earlier study of Benedict’s visit to the Catholic World Youth Days in Cologne in 2006 (Forschungskonsortium WJ), 2007). In addition to the methods used there, we collected video recordings and photographs produced by ourselves, the documentary film team and the local television station (which was aired worldwide). Finally, we had access to video recordings of earlier public services by Pope Benedict (Cologne) as well as video recordings of John Paul II in Vienna 1998 and in Berlin 1996 (also in the Olympic Stadium).

As the title suggests, the focus here is not so much on the entirety of the papal visit to Berlin. Rather, I want to focus on one aspect: mediatization, particularly with respect to the public service in the Olympic Stadium. For this reason, the video recordings of the services provide the most important data. The data has been subjected to the now commonly used method of ‘videography’: that is, the analysis of video data collected as part of a focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2011; Knoblauch and Schnettler, 2012).

4. Mediatization and medialization: Silence

Media coverage of church services is a very common genre on television. Therefore, the pope’s services are typically televised. In fact, television coverage is a crucial issue not only for the local organizers but also for the national Catholic Episcopal conference. Since the service is often broadcast internationally, even the Vatican’s communication department is aware that, by televising events, Catholicism is presented globally and therefore presents
itself as a global player. For this reason, the forms of the service as well as the kind of televised presentation are the subject of heated debates between the Vatican, the national and the local organizers: not only Catholic institutions but also local event organizers and, of course, television stations. The latter are in charge of the production of the ‘global picture’ through control of what is aired by the television editor (as mentioned, the regional television station had produced a ‘live’ picture for simultaneous global transmission). The global relevance of this event to regional or national television stations is quite obvious: for example, when John Paul II visited Vienna in 1998, Austrian TV (ORF) put up the largest number of cameras ever in use for any local event, including cameras mounted on a huge special crane at the central ‘Heldenplatz’.

As with most televised events, the papal service features a live commentary by a TV host. In the following sequence, the event, the media coverage and the TV host have a role to play, rendering the relation between religion and media very explicit.

After the communion, a speaker announces on the stage that the audience may ‘venerate this great mystery for a moment’ by being silent for a minute. After five seconds, while the camera is fixed at the top of the stadium roof providing a view of the entire stadium, the TV host starts to talk and comments that silence is a crucial element of the service here, particularly desired by Pope Benedict XVI. During her first sentence, the automatic camera starts to move and, as is frequent in football stadiums, to ‘fly’ down from the stadium roof, zooming in on the ‘selected’ audience seated on the playing field. As the television presenter continues to discuss silence and its role in the service, the camera moves to about 20, then five and finally up to about two metres from the audience, revealing an incongruous reaction from audience members. The subjects of the camera start to smile and wave their hands and talk to one another. This reaction was not universal, but the pictures are rather dominated by people waving, looking and laughing into the camera (Figure 9.1).

The editors appear to swiftly realize the incongruity, as the automatic camera suddenly moves up as if to look for a distant picture. Not very successfully, however, for even the bird’s eye perspective from about ten metres high shows first one, then two and finally several seating blocks (still on the sports field) in which many people visibly wave their hands. The editor seems quite aware that this does not fit with the sentiment of the TV host: ‘It is unusual for us here on First German Television to show pictures of silence.’ Consequently, the ‘global picture’ is cut and shows two men on the field, one with closed eyes while the second, just as he starts to close his eyes and lower his head, grins broadly. The presenter herself now falls silent and the picture shifts to show various clerical personnel. In fact, we see the profile of the local archbishop bowed and pensive, but in the focus of the camera we see a priest who, obviously aware of the camera, is smiling from ear to ear. Again the camera moves, now into a safe haven, focusing on the row of bishops who sit opposite the stage and successfully ‘concentrate’ without gazing into the camera or even smiling.

Leaving aside the ironic contrast between the speaker’s text and the pictures, the example neatly demonstrates the ‘effect’ that the camera has on the audience and, simultaneously, the reaction of the audience to the media. In quite an explicit way, the camera is transforming the situation from something which at least resembles ‘silence’ and ‘concentration’ to something akin to joy, liveliness and an almost Warholian lust for a few seconds of fame. Of course, this phenomenon is common, and it is not unseemly for audience members of a huge religious event to be sensitive and receptive to the media and their immediate ‘live’ global reach. As common as the phenomenon may seem to us now, however, in earlier papal services it is almost totally absent. By comparison, let us take a look at the Vienna service by John Paul II, which happened only 14 years earlier and was also extensively covered by the media. In our systematic comparison of both events, we find that, in the latter, the audience was very rarely visible: we could see faces only for 16 minutes per hour, as opposed to 48 minutes per hour in Berlin, close-ups rising from 17 per hour to 79 per hour. While the camera recorded only one audience reaction in Vienna, in Berlin we find 29, that is, 17 per hour. The media transformation is expressed in the ratio between representations of the audience as a whole and from a distance to the representation of individual audience members. From Vienna to Berlin, this ratio changed from 2:1 to 2:6.

As a result, the rather trivial fact that we see audience members reacting to the camera is, in fact, a demonstration of a transformation from the presentation of the mass in which the audience features only to frame the
action at the front. It is one of several justifications for the basic thesis that, in the interval between these case studies, the televised mass has changed from an event that is merely represented by audio-visual media to an event which is constructed through practical usages of audio-visual media. It also shows that television not only triggers reactions but also provides a way to showcase them. Although, in the case of silence, joyful reactions seem to contradict the meaning of the speech, in all other cases audience reactions are not cut. Instead, cameras and editors leave time for the audience members to show their reactions in such a way as to represent their interaction with the medium.

The changing role of the audience is even more conspicuous if one looks at the structure of the event. While the audience of John Paul II in Vienna in summer 1998 focused on the stage, the band and the choir as well as the pope and the altar, including the clerical personnel, in Berlin, the band, the choir and most clerical personnel formed part of the audience. While in Vienna the mass was performed by the front, including special songs with melodies unknown to the audience which mostly engendered applause, the Berlin mass was participative in a very intense way. It was a mass with the audience.

5. Two communicative styles and the marking-off of real religion

While many commentaries assume Pope Benedict somehow follows the popular pattern set by John Paul II, the Berlin service, much more than any other event before (such as the service in London or in Madrid), demonstrated the differences between the two. There is some evidence that Benedict gave personal instructions per ritual regulations in the capital of his home country. It seems that these regulations address the fundamentals of how the service should proceed and, as mentioned above, the service contained an interesting element. Shortly after the pope came onto the stage, which had been built in the western curve of the stadium, an official in suit and tie went to the microphone set at the front corner of the stage and, to a chorus of cheers from the audience, announced that this Eucharistic mass was the highlight of the event: The ‘holy mysteries in which we are included by coming here are commemorating the celebration of Easter by Our Lord and strongly linked to our heartfelt belief and our deep prayer. We are invited to participate in this gracious event and to make our devotions. Everything which could disrupt the focus on this “mystery” should therefore be avoided. We pray not to hold up banners and not to disrupt the proceedings by cheering’ (Figure 9.2).

In quite an explicit way, this announcement introduced what Hochschild (1979) calls a ‘feeling rule’. As the example of ‘silence’ shows, this rule could be seen to extend to an ‘emotional regime’ in which concentration, devotion and solemnity predominate, as opposed to cheering and banner-waving. The emotional regime is related to a communicative style (Herbik, 2012; Knoblauch, 2009) which is, at least on the negative side, explicit: cheering, clapping and waving banners was a pattern of audience action when the pope entered the stadium and drove the ‘papamobile’ on the track. This style of communication is quite common at other popular events, for example, when celebrities of other kinds, such as film stars, sports celebrities or pop musicians, meet appreciative audiences.

The solemn style of the mass, which seems in accordance with the ‘mysterium fidelium’ emphasized by Benedict XVI as the core of Catholicism, is also represented in forms of communication. As in typical Catholic masses, it demands that the audience participate in various activities, such as singing the hymns, praying in unison and moving their bodies (sitting, kneeling down, standing up) according to the ceremonial patterns of the particular service. As in many Catholic masses, the audience had been provided with a leaflet which not only contained the songs to be sung, which are normally also provided by the church as service books, but also the text of prayers (such as the Credo). Given the clear announcement, the participants distinguish between two styles of communication, one which may be called the ‘popular’ style and a solemn ‘high church’ style.

The distinction between the two styles of communication delineates quite an important boundary. While the popular style may be seen to correspond to the ‘celebrity’, the solemn style of high church allows us to ‘mark’ a difference between this and what, in a narrower sense, can be considered religious communication.3 Note, however, that this strategy does not claim to define
the essential difference between the two forms of communication. Rather, it helps the actors to draw a line. The distinction between the two styles, for example, corresponds strongly to Benedict’s theology: Catholic ‘mystery’ is embedded in, represented by and enacted in the authentically performed rituals of the congregation. In this respect, he differs theologically from his predecessor, and, for that matter, from popular forms of Protestantism. At the Vienna mass of John Paul II, for example, the role of the audience was quite different. As mentioned above, the audience was not only facing the pope and his stage, the artistic performers, a band, an orchestra, a choir and various singers, but the mass drew on less-known songs from the service book. The artists performed in such a way that the audience was only a spectator and listener, and even the ‘Credo’ was sung (by an opera singer) in a high art version unknown to the audience, who only listened to the event. Their major form of reaction, therefore, was clapping – a form which seemed to be suppressed by the verdict of the Berlin mass.

One should, however, not mistake the theology of Benedict XVI as an imposition of behavioural rules for the audience. Leaving aside the huge variety of ritual participation, at any given moment even the core audience exhibited quite diverse ritual actions at the same time, such as kneeling down, sitting, standing up during consecration; the distinction between the two styles was empirically not as rigid as theory claims. Clapping and cheering occurred at various points and was even initiated by Benedict XVI when he departed from the stage at the end of the mass. Moreover, the mass was not strictly kept in the ‘solemn’ style, particularly during the many rituals that did not feature speech or music sung by the audience (supported by a huge choir) that occur in the Catholic mass, which were filled by a singer and a pop band. Despite these concessions to the ‘popular style’, the audience seems to have kept the original rule. This orientation became particularly salient when the pope had left the stage (and was no longer visible in the stadium), as the ‘prohibited’ forms of communication started immediately, such as cheering, waving banners and shouting (‘Benedetto’) – forms which were continued by some Catholic groups intensively outside the stadium until after the mass.

6. Veneration and mediatization: Entering the stadium

The triumphant entry of the pope into the Olympic Stadium was met with an ecstatic reaction by the audience. It began with loud cheering, clapping and, wherever the ‘papamobile’ passed by, standing ovolations. Given that the stadium was mainly filled with Catholics, one could ascribe these audience reactions to the pope’s charisma and the ‘charisma of the office’, as Weber (1978 [1921]) calls it. Yet a series of interviews conducted with participants yields the information that charisma is, at best, ascribed to the office of the pope, rather than to the person of Benedict XVI. If one were to compare the observed audience reactions with a vocabulary of typical reactions, one might find a striking correspondence to the typical form of a celebrity encounter (Turner, 2004). As we analyze our data regarding audience reaction, we must not be limited to conjecture but may scrutinize what can be called their ‘communicative actions’. In the face of the magnitude of the audience here, there is, of course, a huge variety of such actions to be observed. Those audiences that are active and share some common knowledge among themselves are able to easily coordinate their actions in such a way as to establish themselves as members of an audience. This does not only relate to the official ceremony of the Catholic mass, such as the songs sung by the congregation, kneeling down, standing up, praying and responding – or keeping quiet – all of which occur in quite some variety during the mass observed, but also relates to those kinds of actions which are more spontaneous and dependent on the situation. As an example, we have scrutinized the entry of the pope into the stadium, an event which many Catholics may experience as unique, exceptional and extraordinary. In fact, in film material of ‘masses’ confronting John XXIII on his visits, one can discern that many bow, make the sign of the cross or perform other actions of reverence, presenting themselves as ‘believers’. Therefore we have achieved a greater insight into the ways in which the audience ‘reacted’ to the pope’s entrance. Since the ‘travelling pope’ John Paul II may have already had effects on the habits of believers, it seemed to us especially interesting to watch the conduct of clerical personnel. This focus is supported by the fact that most of the ‘core’ members of the church and the clerical personnel were based on the stadium’s ground floor on, or close to, the field. As the ‘papamobile’ enters the stadium and starts to drive around the track, we watch many audience members moving to create a cordon of onlookers well before the pope comes close. As soon as the security officials, behind the pope’s personal photographer, enter into sight, the onlookers become excited. Many get their digital cameras out, many others the Vatican’s white and yellow flag. The two nuns who are standing on the right side of the still below do the same: one carrying a Polish red and white flag, holding the camera, the other holding the white and yellow flag in her hands (Figure 9.3).

Note that, at the moment captured here, the nun to the right, after having shown her joy with a broad smile and bouncing impatiently, turns her gaze upwards to the left – this is where one of the big screens is located and where the pope can be seen. Shortly after, however, she realizes that the papamobile is coming so close that she can see it herself. When the pope is almost in front of them, the former keeps her camera, which she holds in front of her face, on the pope while the second nun starts to wave one hand. As the pope passes from the right side in front of them both, the camera is also moved into the field of view of the waving nun. This movement is continued so that the first nun now shows the camera to the second one.
who, joyfully, acknowledges what she is watching — at the very moment that the pope himself is passing by (Figure 9.4).

Although this sequence was chosen at random, it almost perfectly exemplifies what may be called mediatization. Mediatization here not only refers to the fact that the mass medium, represented by the stadium screen, forms part of the event so as to turn it into a medially reflected event, but also refers to the fact that the medium becomes part and parcel of the very action performed by the actors on the scene. It is clear that the two actors here consider the scene exceptional — it may be that they will never get closer to the pope than now. The camera is, therefore, not only an additional element in the veneration of the pope. While the pope is welcomed by one of the two nuns, through gesture, the second nun turns this bodily appreciation into a technical recording procedure in such a way that the very moment of the experience of the pope’s presence becomes a moment in which both concurrently experience a technical record of the moment. The situation, however, does not turn into a simulation of the moment, as Baudrillard (1978) so far-sightedly admonished. To the nuns (as to us observers) it is, rather, a real world situation which is, however, characterized by the fact that the media, their technology and the representations produced by these technologies form an integrated part of the action performed by the two nuns. They do not have any doubt that the action is addressed to a venerated person but, simultaneously, they demonstrate that veneration takes a form which differs significantly from those performed by believers who knelt before John XXIII.

7. Conclusion: On mediatization and popular religion

Mediatization does not mean the substitution of an action by the media. It refers, instead, to the transformation of the forms and structures of actions or rituals (as actions defined by religious legitimation are called). In his way, mediatization resembles what Knorr Cetina (2009) calls a scopic situation. While in her view ‘scopic’ means to visualize what is invisible in a face-to-face situation, here it means the integration of the absent world — full of people, images, sounds and things — into situations. In this sense, mediatization, I would argue, does not lead to the dissolution of the social. Rather, it intensifies the social world (Knoblauch, 2013). Although, in the empirical data presented, mediation, mediatization and mediatization are difficult to disentangle, analytically they refer to different aspects of communicative action: while mediation refers to what may be considered the instrumental aspects of action, mediatization refers to the representations involved (which, I would argue, are always also part of instrumental action).

As mediatization forms part of any communicative action, its transformation also affects institutions such as churches, and, in our case, Catholicism with respect to papal visits and masses. As Bergmann, Luckmann and Soeffner (1993) rightly stress, earlier mass services in Rome could subject the camera to their requirements and demands, while the travelling pope, John Paul II, has been subjugated under the camera. ‘Media logic’ prevails in John Paul’s service in Vienna in 1998. However, Benedict’s Berlin service exhibits yet another striking difference. While in Vienna the mass was an event performed in front of an audience and shown in front of TV cameras, the Berlin service casts the audience in the role of actors. The audience was not only shown on television; it was also made to participate in ways which
are not only medialized as an audio-visual motive. The audience actively participated in the very essence of the service. Although the participation of the audience is a feature of the Catholic mass and a concern of Benedict's theology, it fosters the mediaization of the event as highlighted by Hepp and Kröner (2009): audience members do not only participate and are not only shown, but are shown participating, and thus provide what may be understood as a mediated ‘model’ for the media audience. ‘Model’ should not be understood in a cognitivist sense. As our preliminary analysis of the use of photos and videos by participants of the mass shows, it is the audience's action, much more than the staged event, which is taken to represent the specific ‘emotions’: the ‘awe’ or ‘turmoil’ of the situation. 6

In changing communicative action, mediaization changes religious rituals and what used to be called ‘religious participation’, this being controlled and selected by mediated action, and, thence, ‘religious membership’. It turns religious services into increasingly mediatized events. However, it does not turn religion into ‘banal’ religion, as Hjarvard (2009) claims, or into a ‘common culture’ only ‘represented by the media’, as Hoover (2006, p. 284) suggests. Since it allows lay members, even in Catholicism, to become part and parcel of the event, mediatization supports a transformation into ‘popular religion’, allowing both access to the marked forms and transgression of these marks.

Notes

1. I am grateful to Regine Herbnik for her comments on this text, as well as for her contributions at the sessions on the video data, in which Meike Hellmuth, Seggin Sönmez and Rene Tuma have also been participating.

2. I am grateful here to Seggin Sönmez for his research contribution.

3. As to the role of such marks of religious communication, cf. Knoblauch (2009).

4. The ground for this difference had been prepared when Benedict XVI chose a new ‘master of ceremonies’ in 2007 (cf. Schott, 2008).

5. I am grateful to Iris Eckhardt for the interviews and their analysis.

6. I am grateful to Mathias Blanc, who accompanied some French pilgrims to Benedict's mass at Freiburg and visited them at home afterwards. ‘Turmoil’ above has been called ‘Ergriffenheit’ by one participant, a notion which resonates with mystical experiences.

References


Technology, Place and Mediatized Cosmopolitanism

Miyase Christensen

1. Introduction

The past two decades of media and communication studies have been dominated by a research agenda marked by an overwhelming attention paid to two phenomena: technological change and globalization. The study of digitalization and personalization of technology, particularly in its earlier phase, focused primarily on the emancipatory potential of information and communication technologies, or ICTs (e.g., Plant, 1997; Splender, 1995). While later research incorporated a more down-to-earth appreciation of technology, technological determinism continues to be reinvoked by way of casting new media tools as powerful agents of social change. This leads to the production of reductionist visions, particularly during times of perceived technological breakthrough (such as the Arab Spring and the case of Wikileaks), and a narrow conception of the mediatized worlds, which we find ourselves in today. Likewise, earlier theories of globalization foregrounded mediated and imagined dimensions (e.g., Appadurai, 1996; Beck, 2004; Castells, 2012; Rantanen, 2005) as well as cultural fusion and flows, with material aspects and complexities of ‘the everyday’ often overlooked or underplayed. One reason for this is cookie-cutter approaches to both globalization and technological change. Another is lack of empirical studies to support grand theoretical claims.

Over the past ten years, attempts have been made to counter-balance deterministic or single-logic-based considerations of both globalization and media penetration with more context-specific paradigmatic interventions such as transnationalism (Khagram and Levitt, 2008; Vertovec, 1999; 2009) and mediatization (Hepp, 2010; Krotz, 2007), highlighting the meta-character of both processes. In various fields of the humanities and social sciences, the volume of research that addresses how socio-political and personal life are continuously transformed due to media saturation has been expanding.
Mediatized Worlds
Culture and Society in a Media Age

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