The analysis of media dispositifs by means of narrative interviews - praxeological considerations -

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„Contexts" and „Technologies": Re-Emerging Questions

- **Concept of "Double Articulation"** (Silverstone 1994) within "Domestication Approach"
  - Media as material objects **and** symbolic resources
  - Audience members as socially embedded consumers **and** idiosyncratic readers

- Since turn of the century: Still **increasing mobility / variety / interactivity of media gadgets**
- And: "double-articulated research has proved surprisingly difficult" (Livingstone 2007: 18)

- Growing **concern with importance of contextual social and spatial factors** of media use:
    > "[in media use] people are constrained by their circumstances – that structured array of opportunities and constraints that is, in many ways, beyond their control." (Livingstone 2007: 20)

- Growing **concern with specific material affordances of different media technologies**:
    > "Affordances [Gibson 1979] are functional and relational [material] aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object." (Hutchby 2001: 444)

- Need for an **integrative meta-theoretical frame for approaching these challenges**

Rediscovery of the „Media Dispositif" Concept

- **Origins of the Dispositif concept:** (refering to a "functional assembly" in French)
  - J.-L. Baudry (1970), J.-L.Comolli (1985), G. Deleuze (1991), J.-F. Lyotard (1982)
  - M. Foucault (in several writings, but rather macro-level and not with respect to media technologies)

- **Classic Reading:** Technology features *determine* ways of reception & social consequences
  - Baudry (1970): Cinema 'apparatus' simulates not reality, but the condition of a subject
  - Implied subject = Ideological effect (e. g. "passive, male voyeuristic spectator")

- **Newer Readings (Zajc 1999, Hickethier 2002, Brauns 2003, Hartling & Wilke 2003):**
  - Reflecting translation problems: "le dispositif" refering to an assembly of elements, not to a "machine"
  - Conceive of technological affordances, socio-spatial contexts and media-related discourse formations as *framing constraints and opportunities* for actual ideosyncratic use and effects, *not as determinants*
    - "[Baudry's conception] pertains to both a hypothetical subject position and to the actual person (the one to whom the projection is addressed), or to the (imaginary) spectator and to the (real) viewer." (Zajc 1999: 13)
    - "people themselves form a part of the dispositif, by constituting an actively shaping factor within media reception" (Hickethier 2002, own translation)
    - „A dispositif is equally constituted by social practices and discursive formations that are not determined by technological causes" (Brauns, 2003: 59, own translation)

- **Revised dispositif concept may theoretically integrate newer concerns in audience research**
- **Bührmann & Schneider's (2007) proposal: problem with linking actions & structures !!!**
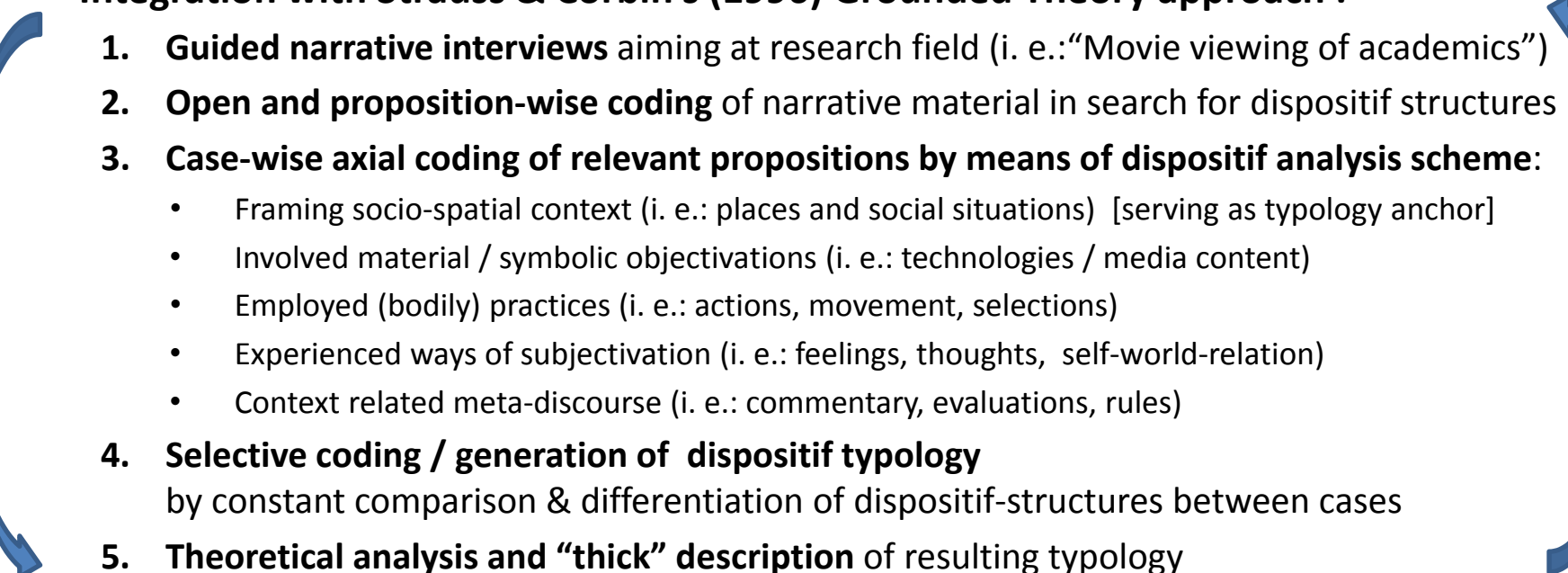
Media Dispositif Analysis: Praxeological Considerations

- Conceive of **media dispositifs as complex socio-technological configurations that serve as resources with specific properties** that may be employed for the **enactment of major habitual orientations** (e. g.: identity work, bodily satisfaction, education, etc..)

- Media dispositifs' **quasi-stable properties** (whether material, symbolic or discursive) may play a **constraining or enabling role for certain ways of habitus enactment** which leads to the experience-based assignment or theoretical anticipation of their respective **enactment potential** *from the perspective of specific agents* ("this works / doesn't work for *me*")

- If there is **ample enactment potential and likewise experience** with certain media dispositifs, **agents develop implicit routines / "situation-specific orientation patterns"** (Bohnsack 1989) that help them with habitually enacting their major orientations on a lower hierarchical level within media dispositifs (e. g.: LAN-Party, Living-Room TV, Newspaper-in-Café and respective related practices that enact a higher order habitus)

- These successfully enacted routines contemporaneously **stabilize the higher order habitus as well as the dispositif structure** by evoking experiences of 'natural **embeddedness**' and, resultantly, **affective contagion** (Schäffer 2007)

- Since most (but not all) dispositifs' **properties bear at least ontologically the potentiality for transformation by action** and are in this sense only quasi-stable, **a comprehensive view on their actual constraining and enabling power within society** has to **relate** the aggregated dispositifs' *affordances derived from media-related discourse* with their respective *enactment potential from the perspective of members of certain habitus*

Empirical Media Dispositif Analysis: Research Steps

1. **Identification of Relevant Media Dispositifs:**
   Which relevant (in terms of pervasiveness and repeated/ritual engagement) media dispositif structures do exist with regard to the field in focus?
   → Media usage statistics and/or focused narrative interviews (GT)

2. **Description of Media Dispositifs' Structures and Properties:**
   What are the media dispositifs' structural elements and affordance properties and how can their respective roles be qualified and comprehended as *potentialities* disentangled from the view of specific subjects?
   → focused narrative interviews (GT), experiments and discourse analysis

3. **Analysis of Habitual Practices and Experiences within Media Dispositifs:**
   Which different habitual orientations of users may successfully be enacted within identified media dispositifs and why and how?
   → biographical Interviews with focus on research field (documentary method)

4. **Triangulation of Findings in Terms of Social Inequalities in Realizing Affordances:**
   Which of the dispositif structural properties identified within media-related discourse play an enabling/constraining role for the actual enactment practices of certain user collectives sharing a common habitus? → triangulation of results from step 2 and 3

Step 1+2: Identification & Description of Dispositifs

- **Proposal of a meta-theoretical scheme /„coding paradigm"**
  for axial coding of narrative interview material on media use within a research field

- **Integration with Strauss & Corbin's (1996) Grounded Theory approach :**
    1. **Guided narrative interviews** aiming at research field (i. e.:"Movie viewing of academics")
    2. **Open and proposition-wise coding** of narrative material in search for dispositif structures
    3. **Case-wise axial coding of relevant propositions by means of dispositif analysis scheme**:
        - Framing socio-spatial context (i. e.: places and social situations) [serving as typology anchor]
        - Involved material / symbolic objectivations (i. e.: technologies / media content)
        - Employed (bodily) practices (i. e.: actions, movement, selections)
        - Experienced ways of subjectivation (i. e.: feelings, thoughts, self-world-relation)
        - Context related meta-discourse (i. e.: commentary, evaluations, rules)
    4. **Selective coding / generation of dispositif typology**
       by constant comparison & differentiation of dispositif-structures between cases
    5. **Theoretical analysis and "thick" description** of resulting typology

Analysis of Habitual Practices and Experiences within Media Dispositifs

- **Documentary Analysis of biographical Interviews (Nohl 2010) is a methodology able to discriminate different types of knowledge stocks within narrative material:**
    - Communicative Knowledge → Referencing Common Sense Discourse
    - Conjunctive Knowledge → Referencing Habitual Orientiation Patterns

- **This is practically accomplished by**
    - Sequential case-wise analysis in search for densely, anecdotal narrations
    - Case specific reconstruction of orientation patterns via identification of homologies
    - Comparison of extracted passages with those of other informants to identify heterologies in orientations

- **This way, Documentary Method helps in the third step of media dispositif analysis to**
    - Discriminate common discoursive knowledge about dispositifs affordances from actual habitual practices and intensive affective experiences of specific user collectives
    - Identify and describe habitual enactments within certain media dispositifs that manifest themselves in implicit situation-specific routines and trace these back to common higher order habitual orientations
    - Identify biographical user experiences that help to explain the specific enactment potential of certain media dispositifs from the perspective of the respective identified orientation

Empirical Example: Enactement Potential of Music Related Dispositifs (Lydia, 29, high formal education)

- ‚Same' song in two different dispositifs
  - „Every breath you take" in parents' car → „blasting her ear drums off"
  - „I'll be missing you" in club with boyfriend during holidays at the age of 16 → enactment of autonomy orientations and orientations towards intimate relationships with peers

- *I: Well, tell me... L: Yes, after holidays, well in holidays get to know somebody, at the age of 16 I was out with a girlfriend without parents and so on, a lot of freedom, get to know somebody, and what I kept in mind, such a love story and at the same time we were every evening out somehow, and in nearly every club a song was played. Well, and this song is somehow strongly associated with this memory of getting to know this boy and at that time a very sad song, well "I'll be missing you" by Puff Daddy, which was reissued, yes, from a remake I: Ok. I know.. L: This song I still have on some cassettes, sometimes I find it again, that is to say I still have some cassettes and I got it on my PC, because from to time I listen to it. [...] Well, then you know at least, if you have time to engage with it, I know for sure, in which club we have been, there happened a lot of other things in this holidays [...] but especially with such a song there are 5,8 memories of this holiday connected und if you get in a memory by means of the music, all the other come up und partly such which you have not been thinking of for 5,6 years. And that works with that song. I can remember no other song from that holiday.* 00:13:46-0

Thank you for your patience!