

**Literature, Culture and Media**  
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**Lecture – 51**  
**Approaches to Digital Forms of Media**

Dear participants, welcome to the 11th week of this module. We would begin today's module with a discussion of different approaches to digital media. Digital media as we all know has brought about massive as well as far reaching changes in our society and culture however, when we look at the critical framework behind it, we find that there is hardly any consensus within the social sciences when it comes to understanding these changes.

There are various critical perspectives to understand and appreciate these changes which have been brought about by the digital media and different specialisations view the issue in a different manner.

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- Digital media brought about massive and far-reaching changes in society. Little consensus in the Social Sciences when it comes to understanding these changes:
- Various critical perspectives to explicate and appreciate digital changes
- Different specializations view this issue differently
- Media and communication studies concentrate on specific areas such as the news or influencers on social media without analyzing what people do online.
- Political science focuses on questions like the role of media in election campaigns or for social movements
- Also, theories of mass media and interpersonal communication are not suited to digital media – since new media often have elements of both.



For example, within the folds of media and communication studies, we find that people concentrate on certain specific areas only, for example, the news or what influences the social media without analysing what people are actually doing in an online presence. People in political science prefer to focus on questions like the role of media in election campaigns or for generating a particular type of awareness for any social issue.

The theories of mass media and interpersonal communication are also somehow not suited to the digital media since new media often have elements of both and cannot be understood only from the perspective of one particular point of view.

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- Culture and Digital Media
- Frankfurt School: Theoretical legacy of analyzing social, economic, political and cultural implications of technological impact on media
- Increasing interest in looking at the digital through social, aesthetic and economic lenses
- Digital media is characterized by temporal decay, transversality and singularity
- There is an urgency to focus on the cultural unconscious now, i.e., the non-dominant translations as well as the edge of the cultural complex



When we look at the interface between culture and digital media, we find that the theoretical legacy of the Frankfurt School is important to understand it today. The Frankfurt School had started to analyse the social economic political and cultural implications of the impact of technologies on media and in a way we find that contemporary criticism is continuing this theoretical legacy.

There is an increasing interest in looking at the digital through social aesthetic as well as economic and cultural lenses. Digital media is also characterised by temporal decay, it is not permanent. It is also characterised by transversality as well as singularity. So in this context we find that there is an urgency to focus on the cultural unconscious now which includes for example, the non-dominant translations as well as those literary products or cultural products which lie on the edge of the cultural complex.

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Ralph Schroeder's *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization* (2018) sums up various contemporary theories which assess the role and impact of the social media today.\* Major theories he has reviewed are:

- Theory of network power by Castells
- Theory of mediatization by Hjarvard
- Actor-network theory
- Domestication theory by Haddon, Silverstone and Hirsch



\* (<https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/Book/Article/34/59/0>)

I would particularly review a book by Ralph Schroeder's, the title of this book is *Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology and Globalisation* which has been published very recently in the year 2018 only. It has summed of various contemporary theories which assess the role and impact of social media today. He has looked at various theories but I would take up only four major theories which he has reviewed. And these are theory of network power by Castell, theory of mediatisation by Hjarvard, actor-network theory and domestication theory by Haddon, Silverstone and Hirsch.

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Castells' theory of Network Power (2009) has two main elements:

- An ontology whereby all media are best understood as working via networks, and
- theory of power whereby power is increasingly concentrated in a few global transnational media conglomerates but which at the same time always generates resistance and subversion.
- Flaws or exceptions: In China, state party has more control over media rather than media conglomerates; in Sweden, public media continues to be a dominant player
  - National 'media systems' continue to outweigh the imperatives of global capitalist dynamics
  - Governments often mandate on media operations; public opinion and civil society often determine political agenda through media and vice versa

The theory of network power was propounded by Castells in 2009, it has two major elements; first is that an ontology whereby all media are best understood as working via networks and

secondly it's a theory of power whereby power is increasingly concentrated in a few global translational media conglomerates but which at the same time always generates resistance as well as subversion.

The second point particularly reminds us of the legacy of various Marxist thinkers. At the same time there are certain limitations in this theory as well as certain flaws which have been pointed out by other critics. For example, in China a state party has more control over media, then any media conglomerate and at the same time, in Sweden public media continues to be a dominant player.

So, this is factually incorrect to suggest that the power is increasingly concentrated in a few global translational media conglomerates only because there are certain exceptions. National media systems continue to outweigh the imperatives of global capitalist dynamics as well as governments often mandate on media operations, public opinion and civil society also determine political agenda through media and vice versa.

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The Mediatization Theory of Hjarvard(2008)

- Takes into account the national differences, particularly differences in their political and power structures, into account and proposes that people's relationship to society, their attitudes, beliefs and worldviews are increasingly mediated.
- Mediatization is defined as 'the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic'; media become 'integrated into the operations of other social institutions' and are also 'social institutions in their own right', and 'as a consequence, social interaction – within the institutions, between institutions, and in society at large – take place via the media'



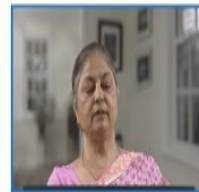
Another theory is the mediatization theory which was put forward by Hjarvard in 2008, this theory has taken into account the national differences which had been left out by the previous theories and particularly it notes the differences which exist in the political structures and in the power structures, it takes these differences into account and proposes that the people's

relationship to society as well as their attitudes, beliefs and worldviews are being increasingly mediated.

Mediatization has been defined by Hjarvard as the processes whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to or becomes dependent on the media and their logic. So media according to him becomes integrated into the operations of other social institutions and also become social institutions in their own right and as a consequence, social interaction within the institutions between institutions and in society at large takes place only via the media.

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- The theory suffers from lack of methodical accuracy regarding the specific domains of social life being mediatized
- Important to differentiate the operations of mediatization in social, economic and cultural spheres and the mechanisms of power in the respective domains
- New media contributes to the mediatization
- Opens the possibility for thwarting mediatization when people generate and consume content outside of institutional boundaries



This theory suffers from lack of methodical accuracy as far as social life being mediatized is concerned. It is important to differentiate the operations of mediatization in social economic and cultural spheres and the mechanisms of power in the respective domains. New media definitely contributes to the mediatization and it also opens the possibility for thwarting mediatization, when people generate as well as consume content out of institutional boundaries. So, we find that this theory also has certain limitations.

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Actor–Network theory has had a wide sway in media studies, though it is more about new technologies than about media specifically

- Influenced media theorists like Chadwick (2013); and Couldry (2012)
- This theory puts the emphasis either on the agency of individuals or of non-humans
- Yet individual ‘agency’ cannot account for structures, and the non-human physical environment does not engage in volitional acts.
- It is dominated by the idea that science and technology are shaped by specific local social contexts, thus making it impossible to generalize about the role of media or technology beyond individuated contexts of constructedness or shaping.



Another theory which has been taken up in this book is the actor network theory which has had a significant impact in media studies even though basically, this is a theory about the new technologies rather than media specifically. It has left its impression on two major media theorist particularly Chadwick and Couldry. This theory emphasises on the agency of individuals or of nonhumans.

Yet we find that individual agency cannot account for a structures and the nonhuman physical environment cannot engage in volitional acts. So it is dominated by the idea that science and technology are shaped by the specific local social context and thus it becomes impossible within the dimensions of this theory to generalise about the role of media or technology beyond individuated context of constructedness or shaping. This is a major drawback of the actor network theory.

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- Overlooks that structures are essential to uncovering asymmetries of power.
- In its study of the internet, it relies on the agency of non humans too, which is a type of back door technological determinism even though it is overtly rejected
- Simplification about the role of technology and media suppresses the theoretical capability of predicting in terms of broad generalizations
- Yet a theory must generate general patterns if it aims to guide research
- Formulation of general structures is fundamental in understanding irregularities in power relations



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The actor network theory also overlooks that structures are essential to understand the inbuilt asymmetries of power, formulation of general structures is fundamental in understanding irregularities in power structures. In its study of the Internet this theory relies on the agency of nonhumans too which is a type of a back door admission of technological determinism though overtly this theory has rejected any closeness or any proximity with the technological determinism.

Simplification about the role of technology and media also suppresses the theoretical capability of predicting in terms of broad generalisations because one cannot make universal generalisations yet a theory must generate general patterns, if it aims to guide research, so this particular theory also has certain limitations and drawbacks.

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Domestication Theory (Haddon 2004; 2011; Silverstone and Hirsch 1992).

- A 'bottom-up' approach to analyzing the role of the media
- The validity of theories of media rests on evidence about how new technologies are integrated into everyday life.
- Media should be gauged by how they are used, and with what effect in terms of social change
- This "understanding everyday life" must not exclude macro-dynamics, particularly politics and wider longer-term and cumulative changes and discontinuities.
- These macro-changes also include divergences and convergences between and across societies.



Another theory which has been analysed is the domestication theory which has been put forward from time to time by Haddon, Silverstone and Hirsch. This basically is a bottom-up approach to analyse the role of media and the validity of theories of media according to it, rest on evidence about how new technologies have been integrated in people's everyday life. So in this theory media should be caused by how they are used and with what effect in terms of social change.

So, this idea of understanding everyday life must not exclude macro dynamics particularly, the macro dynamics of politics and wider, longer term and cumulative changes and discontinuities which have occurred in any given society. According to the domestication theory, these macro changes also include divergences and convergences between as well as across societies.

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After evaluating these different theories, Schroeder suggests that:

- National differences matter for the implications of digital media just as they did for traditional media
- While new digital media add to and complement traditional media, old and new media must be encompassed within a single framework that enables an understanding of how, for example, the political agenda is shaped across both
- Third, this limited attention space – as well as the limits on individuals' connectedness to each other and to information – operates differently in relation to political communication, popular culture and online markets



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After having evaluated these four major theories as well as some other theories, Schroder has suggested that it is significant to take into account national differences because they matter for the implications of digital media just as they did for traditional media, so in his opinion while new digital media adds to and complements the traditional media, old and new media must be encompassed within a single framework. And the single framework should enable an understanding of how, for example, the political agenda is shaped across both. The third point which he has made is about the limited attention space as well as the limits on individual's connectedness to each other and to information and according to Schroder, it operates differently in relation to political communication, popular culture and online markets. So, according to him it is a folly to oversimplify it also and these three different areas have to be looked at independently.

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- Asymmetries of power or control can be unearthed by making comparisons
  - Both on the levels of everyday life and how they fit into macro-changes
  - And contrasting what has changed between traditional and new digital media.
- He has analyzed the case of four countries – Sweden, America, India and China – in order to ground the argument in specific evidence.
- However, the argument should be applicable beyond these four countries

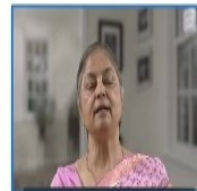



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Asymmetries of power or control can be unearthed by making comparisons in his opinion, both on the levels of everyday life and how they fit into macro changes as well as by contrasting what has changed between traditional and the new digital media forms. In order to pursue his ideas further, he has analysed the case of four countries namely Sweden, America, India and China, in order to ground the argument in specific evidence. However, the argument should be applicable beyond these four countries to be considered as a valid argument.

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- The internet is not responsible for a wholesale change in society, as Castells and others claim.
- There are other, deeper and more long-term transformations that confront society and which affect the political, economic and cultural systems.
- These include limits to expanding citizenship rights, climate change and financialization, and they have little or nothing to do with the internet
- The internet has brought about more specific changes in politics, culture and markets that are at best indirectly connected to these transformations.




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Some of the major trends which he has been able to sum up in this book can be listed here, the Internet alone is not responsible for a wholesale change in society as Castells and other theorists have claimed. There are other transformations also, transformations which are happening at a

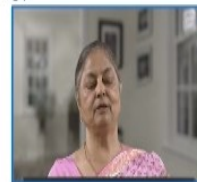
deeper level and which have to be understood in terms of a long term association and history that confront society and also affect the political economic and cultural systems of a given country.

These include limits to expanding citizenship rights, climate change, financialisation and they have little or nothing to do with the Internet. The Internet as you suggest has brought about more specific changes in politics culture in markets that are at best indirectly connected to these transformations. So this is a very interesting finding whereas, most of the critics suggest that Internet is responsible for bringing about fundamental changes in our society.

On the other hand, it is claimed in this book that Internet alone is not responsible rather it has only averted the changes which were already in the process which were already happening somewhere and it has to be understood in the context of other deeper and more long-term transformations that were taking place.

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- Still, social theory must take specific internet-related changes into account since together they amount to new and lasting ways in which we have become subject to more targeted political messages and ways to engage with them (politics), more tethered to each other and to information (culture) and to more online consumption (economy).
- In short, the internet has caged us and provides us with a more powerful exoskeleton, a mainly Weberian understanding of technology
- These are profound ways in which digital technology has shaped our life



Still he says, that the social theory must take specific Internet -related changes into account. Since it also has resulted into new and lasting ways in which we have become as he says subject to more targeted political messages and we have learnt new ways to engage with them that is related with the area of politics. Culturally, the Internet has affected us because we have become more tethered to each other as well as to information.

And at the same time in the field of economy, Internet has revolutionised our ideologies because there is more and more online consumption, in short he says that the Internet has caged us and provided us with a more powerful exoskeleton, a mainly Weberian understanding of technology and these are profound ways in which digital technology has shaped our life. So in his opinion we find that largely Internet has been a part of the deeper fundamental changes which were already taking place in a society in the areas of politics, culture and economy. But at the same time it itself is also responsible for bringing about lasting changes in our behaviour in these three specific arenas of our activity.

Digital media should also not be confused either with mass media or with interpersonal media.

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### Digital Media: Neither 'Mass' nor 'Interpersonal'

- Traditional media is not totally obsolete. Major differences from previous media. Use of 'mass' versus 'interpersonal' paradigm misleading when it comes to digital media
- Audience is no longer passive. Growth of user-generated content breaks down the dichotomies like 'active/passive audiences' and 'sender vs receiver'
- On social media, news/content shared among groups; neither solely accessed by groups nor broadcast one-to-many.
- Seeking news/information online is subject to new gatekeeping tools like search engines.
  - Mechanisms to provide verifiability of news etc. have changed from personal authentications by journalists/publishers or similar fact-checking norms



Even though we also have to acknowledge that traditional media is not absolutely obsolete. Even though there are major differences between the previous media forms and the new media but still the traditional media should not be considered as being absolutely redundant. The use of mass versus interpersonal paradigm is also misleading when we try to apply it to digital media. A particular way of looking at the limitations of calling the digital media either as mass or interpersonal is that the audience is no longer passive.

There is a growth in user generated content which is broken down the dichotomies and the differences between the active passive audiences as well as the differences between the sender

and receiver. On social media, at the same time we find that the news content is shared among groups, it is neither solely accessed by groups, it is also not exist individually as earlier we used to do through the medium of the print nor it is broadcast one to many.

Rather we find that we are seeking news and information online and the way we look at the news and information we seek it is subject to new gatekeeping tools like search engines. In the previous mediums also there were certain gatekeeping tools which used to verify the authenticity of a particular media content, there were mechanisms to provide verifiability of news etc., for example there were or there used to be personal authentications either by a journalist or by publishers or there were similar other fact checking norms.

But we find that in the newer media, the gatekeeping tools have now been shifted and this responsibility has been taken over by the search engines only.

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### Requirements in the age of digital media

- Theories of the internet and social change which transcend 'mass' and 'interpersonal' paradigm and manage disciplinary divide, study the new in the light of the fact that old media forms continue to dominate
- Supplanting of old media by digital media for news (even if they complement each other) among youth and countries like Sweden and America
- Contextualize the study of 'new' and 'old' historically
- Study 'hybrid' media to tackle the simultaneity of 'old' and 'new' (Chadwick 2013): co-existence of both forms
- 'Hybridity': theory of digital media required to understand the relationship between old and new; the difference in how they operate; the balance between the two



The requirements in the age of digital media have also changed, the theories of the Internet and social change which transcend mass and interpersonal paradigm and manage disciplinary divide also study the new media in the light of the fact that old media forms still continue to dominate certain aspects of our activity. For example, there is a supplanting of old media by digital media for news, even if they complement each other among youth and also in countries like Sweden and America.

It is also contextualise the study of new and old media in a historical perspective, it is also perhaps feasible to look at the word hybrid media, so that we can tackle the simultaneity of old and new media forms, so we can say that these forms are coexisting. So hybridity as the theory is also being accepted more and more by various media theorist, it is a theory of digital media required to understand the relationship between the old and the new media forms the differences in how they operate. And also the balance which should be there between the two and the balance they are trying to strike.

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### Other Research in Related Subfields

- Political communication: research on theoretical concepts like 'public sphere'
- Empirical media or communications research: theories of 'middle range' (below the level of 3 dominant media theories)— "agenda- setting, gatekeeping, framing, uses and gratifications, and rational choice or collective action" (Ralph Schroeder)
  - Assume that research doesn't always need a macro theory of social change
  - That research inherently aims to counter disproportionate control or bias
  - Implicitly assumes a pluralist view of ideologies (Neuman 2016)
- This kind of research emphasizes individual media
  - Difficult to grasp agenda-setting across old and new media
  - Typically focusses on national media and specific periods/domains



Similarly, we find that the latest developments in media have also influenced the research patterns in related subfields. In political communication we find that the research is being taken on theoretical concepts like public sphere as being redefined under the impact of new technologies. There is also an emphasis on empirical media or communications research that is below the level of three dominant media theories, agenda setting, gatekeeping, framing uses and gratifications and rational choice or collective action etc., are being taken up.

So, these researchers assume that it is not necessary to have a macro theory of social change always and that research inherently aims to counter disproportionate control or bias and they also implicitly assume a pluralist view of ideologies. These new types of researchers emphasise individual media, it is difficult to grasp agenda setting across old and new media and we find that



typically one can focus on national media and a specific periods and domains also but nonetheless we have to admit that the latest developments in media have also influenced the way in which the research is being taken on in related subfields.

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- Important to draw comparisons from longer trajectories and analysis of a wide range of media. (Esser and Pfetsch 2004)
- Important to identify organizational restraints in the struggle of ideologies in the political domain
- Research should study top down models of power to study the effects of asymmetrical power relations—at the local, national and global level



It is important to draw comparisons from larger trajectories and analysis of a wide range of media, it is also equally important to identify the restraints which exist in the very nature of organisation in the struggle of ideologies within the political domains, research should also take up the top down models of power to study the effects of a symmetrical power relations at different levels at the local national as well as global levels.

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### Schroeder's Alternative

Hinges on three starting points:

1. National differences are important for examining the consequences of digital media as much as they did for old media  
--'media systems' theory (Hallin and Mancini 2004) is a vital starting point
2. Digital media adds to and complements old media, however, both need to be incorporated within a single framework: to enable the understanding of phenomena across different forms of media
3. Limited attention space across media forms functions in a different way in political communication, popular culture and online markets.





The alternative Schroeder has suggested is worth taking note of. His alternative hinges on three starting points; the first point which is suggested is that national differences are important if we want to examine the consequences of digital media and they are as important as they were for the old media. In this context, the media systems theory propounded by Hallin and Mancini in 2004 can be a vital starting point.

So, when Schroeder suggests that national differences are important, he is saying it in the context of the political power structures which may be different in different countries. The second point which he takes up suggests that the digital media adds to and complements the old media. However, the old as well as the new need to be incorporated within a single framework, so that one can understand the phenomena across different forms of media in a more cohesive manner.

Thirdly, he talks about limited attention space across media forms which functions in a different way in different types of communication, for example, it is different in political communication in popular culture and in online markets, so one has to understand how the media forms function in different ways in these different fields.

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- Evidence about technological integration in everyday life determines the validity of digital media theories
  - 'bottom-up' approach to the role of media in domestication theory (Haddon 2004; 2011; Silverstone and Hirsch 1992)
- Media to be studied in terms of their effects on social change and how they are used
- Study of media's role in everyday life should be inclusive of macro concerns—impact in political domain, aggregate changes and inconsistencies over long term
- Take stock of differences and similarities across societies



The evidence about technological integration in everyday life also determines the validity of different digital media theories for example, the bottom up approach to the role of media in domestication theory is also understood on the basis of the evidence which can be gathered on

the basis of our everyday life, media is to be studied in terms of their effect on social change and how they are used.

A study of media's role in everyday life should also be inclusive of macro concerns for example, impact in political domain aggregate changes as well as inconsistencies over a long term, so one should take a stock of differences and similarities across societies.

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Examine the following:

- Role of internet in social change in contemporary society
- Rise of extremist populism as a consequence of circumventing traditional journalistic gatekeepers in the age of digital media
- Digital media's competition with established media and elite ideologies to capture attention space
- How digital media bounds people closely to each other and free-floating sources of information
- Creation of new digital divides within culture— reliable information, cultural diversity and social inclusion under duress



Schroeder also examines some of the other perspectives for example, he looks at the role of Internet in social change in contemporary society. He also views the rise of extremist populism as a consequence of circumventing traditional journalistic gatekeepers in the age of digital media. He also looks at digital media's competition with established media and elite ideologies to capture attention space.

He also looks at how digital media bounds people closely to each other as well as to free floating sources of information; he also says that new digital divides within culture exist. So we have to look for reliable information, cultural diversity as well as social inclusion under duress.

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- Big data: leading player in digital media
  - Generation of new knowledge about media operations
  - Global media conglomerates and political/policy campaigns use big data for exercising greater control over audiences—targeting and manipulation of public
  - Implications of big data analytics in economy: mainly used to target consumers
- Interconnections in politics, culture and everyday life within media landscape follow their own logic
  - Attributable to the internet; technology penetrates social life more deeply
- A common thread among all three – politics, culture and everyday life (including economy) - is that they are part of a larger process whereby technology penetrates more deeply into social life



Another prospect which becomes important in this context is big data which is a leading player in digital media. It is related with the generation of new knowledge about media operations and global media conglomerates and political and policy campaigns use big data for exercising greater control over audiences, the use it to target the audience and to manipulate the public. The implications of big data analytics and economics can also be felt particularly it is being used to target consumers.

At the same time, we find that the interconnections which exist in politics, in culture and in everyday life within media landscape followed their own logic and he attributes it to the Internet because it is with the help of the Internet that technology has penetrated individual as well as social life in a much deeper manner. A common thread among all three that is politics, culture and everyday life which also includes economy is that they are part of a larger process whereby technology penetrates more deeply into social life.

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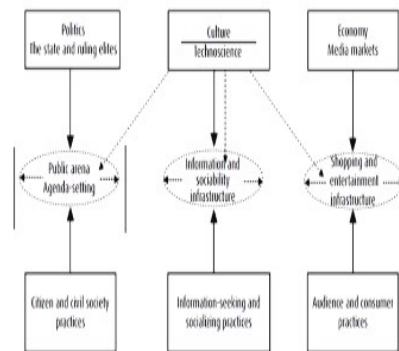


Fig. 1.1 Three spheres or powers (politics, culture, economy) and the increasing mediation between dominant institutions and people's everyday practices (dashed arrows).

## Mediatization in Politics, Culture and Economy

Courtesy:  
Ralph Schroeder's (2018)



In this particular chart, we find that mediatization in politics, culture and economy can be understood. This has been taken from Schroeder's work, in this particular figure we find that three spheres or power; politics, culture and economy and the increasing mediation between dominant institutions and people's everyday practices have been displayed using dashed arrows. In a nutshell it represents what we have already discussed so far.

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### Media and Autonomy

- Greater Mediatization in digital age—operates differently in society, culture and politics
- Is it yet another social source of power or a separate order?
- Media as autonomous; but media are only a subsystem
- Opposed to the total lack of autonomy of the media in Marxism: Capitalism and media
  - Position is misleading
  - Different functions: state control, public-service media
  - Ethos of impartiality and watchdog function



Another issue which comes up when we talk about media is related with autonomy. There is a greater mediatization in digital age which operates differently in society, culture and politics, so should we view it as another social source of power or should we view it as a separate order?

What is the role of autonomy? Is media autonomous but at the same time despite having autonomy we find that media are still only a subsystem.

It is opposed to the total lack of autonomy of the media in Marxism but at the same time, we have to consider that this position may be misleading and that there are different functions for which media is used for a state control it can be used, there can be a public service media also. So we also have to look for certain ethos of impartiality as well as we also have to take care of the watchdog function of media.

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- According to Hallin and Mancini (2004) they are autonomous because:
  - Institutions of journalistic profession
  - Professional education and associations
  - Norms of neutrality, objectivity and impartiality
- 'Vertical' autonomy in politics: political elites to people below
- 'Horizontal' autonomy in economy and culture: regulations about media ownership, media independence, regulations about media functions
- Different types of autonomy of media systems in different regions of the world
  - Market forces have weakened this autonomy
- What happens in the age of new media? Proliferation of news; distortion; difficult to regulate content



Media are autonomous and Hallin and Mancini in 2004 have put across a very interesting idea. They say that they are autonomous because they are institutions of journalistic profession and there are certain norms of neutrality, objectivity and impartiality which are normally followed. They also suggest that there is a vertical autonomy in politics and it functions from political elites to people below.

On the other hand, in economy and culture according to Hallin and Mancini, there is a 'horizontal autonomy'. so they talk about regulations about media ownership, media independence and regulations about media functions to illustrate this point of view, they also suggest that different types of autonomy of media systems exist in different regions of the world,

at the same time they put forward this idea that the market forces have weakened the autonomy of media.

So, what happens in the age of new media? So, it can be a proliferation of news and information and at the same time, it can be a distortion of information and news because it is difficult to regulate the content, it is difficult to establish watchdogs as they used to exist in the earlier media.

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### Technological Determinism in Contemporary Society

- How internet has changed society: age of 'network/information society'
- Internet changed the political domain:
  - Circumvention of traditional gate-keepers and
  - Dwindling of media autonomy as an arbiter of neutrality
- Transnational effects of new media technology: bounds people closely
- In culture: large macro-social implications—need for information to be open, varied, trustworthy; connect those who are marginal or isolated
- Digital media: management of high-choice environment, targeted marketing; ties consumers more closely via media to online markets

This discussion also brings us towards the discussion of technological determinism in contemporary society. The Internet has changed our society into a networked information society, it has changed also the political domain, so there is a circumvention of traditional gatekeepers as well as the dwindling of media autonomy as an arbiter of neutrality, so these two effects are also linked with the development of the Internet based technologies.

Transnational effects of new media technology are also there. They bound people closely and the national boundaries have also become porous as far as the communication of messages and infiltration of news and information is concerned. In culture also we find that there are large macro social implications of the latest media technologies, there is a need for information to be open to be varied to be trustworthy as well as to connect with those who are marginalised and isolated.

So, when we talk about digital media we have to look at the management of high choice environment, targeted marketing which ties consumers more closely via media to online marketing, so these are certain issues which according to certain philosophers and media theorist encourage a particular type of technological determinism in our contemporary society which cannot be challenged anymore. Because technology as well as media has seeped into our everyday behaviours.

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- Global changes attributable to new media technology: modulated in different societies, different socio-economic orders and power mechanisms
- Debate about 'technological determinism versus social shaping' is deceptive:
  - Should be called 'technological shaping versus social determinism'
  - Determinism isn't favored as it designates inevitability of forces
  - But social factors shape and determine—both enables and constrains actors within structures
- Central argument: new media technology shapes society – it includes the social orders or powers



Global changes have been attributed to new media technology, these changes are modulated in different societies, different socio economic orders and power mechanisms but irrespective of the differences, we find that the new media technology has brought about irreversible changes in our behaviour.

The debate about technological determinism versus social shaping also seems rather deceptive, so should not we call technological shaping versus social determinism and at the same time, we find that the word determinism is not a favourable word because it designates an inevitability of forces. And at the same time, we find that social factors shape and define actors within structures, so overall we have to see how the new media technologies have shaped society.



And when we say that it has shaped society automatically, it includes various social orders of different hierarchies as well as those structures where power is vested.

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- Technologies move out of labs, penetrate the everyday world and turn into consumer tools
  - Based on Weber's idea of rationalization—transformation of technoscience into social change, 'disenchanted the world' and creating an 'iron cage' (Ralph Schroeder 2007; 2013)
  - Gellner: In a consumer society, we have a 'rubber cage' of user-friendly technologies (1987, 152– 65).
  - Digital Media, unlike traditional media targets and engages us more powerfully
- Technoscience enables more effective control or mastery of the social



Now, technologies have moved out of the labs, they have penetrated the everyday world and they have been turned into consumer tools. Based on Weber's idea of rationalisation, we find that there is a transformation of techno-science into social change, this enchanting the world and creating what has been termed as an iron cage. Gellner suggest that in a consumer society, we do not have an iron cage as such. He suggests that in a consumer society, we have a rubber cage of user friendly technologies. Digital media unlike traditional media targets and engages us more powerfully and therefore it is very difficult to shun it. Techno-sciences have enabled a more effective control or mastery of the social in comparison to previous media forms.

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- Political parties and leaders, civil society organizations and the public have a new power outside of institutional/established media
  - Again both enabling and constraining
  - Big data analytics: pros and cons
  - Facilitates global capitalist imperatives
  - Consumers also assume some control: enables them to use negative publicity to challenge services and demand greater accountability
  - Enhances greater mediation between groups—threat of surveillance
  - Metaphor of cage or exoskeleton



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The political parties and leaders of the civil society organisations and public have now a new power outside of institutional and established media, the big data analytics also has certain pros and cons as we have discussed earlier, it may facilitate global capitalist imperatives and at the same time, it allows consumers to assume some control because it enables them to use negative publicity to challenge services and demand greater accountability from others.

It also enhances a greater mediation between groups even though, the threat of surveillance is there but let us say ultimately it is the metaphor of cage or exoskeleton which remains to be a very powerful metaphor in this age. It has changed our culture, it has changed the way we communicate, interact and live our lives and these changes are here to stay, thank you.