Media Studies in Germany in the Context of Cultural Studies and Franco-German Cooperation

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Abstract

In this article[1] I describe the evolution of German media studies, and I do so with an awareness of the selection, exclusion, and canonization at work in this procedure. I explain the emergence of media studies in Germany from a cultural studies research desideratum. I do this with a concern for the establishment and institutionalization of media studies in Germany within the mainly German-national scientific community as well as German-language cultural studies. I focus primarily on the first two decades of the institutionalization of media studies as an academic discipline, with an attendant concern for the social and intellectual forces at work during that epoch. I then link all of this to more recent turns in media studies, with a concern for its central questions and methodological approaches. I conclude with a note regarding the outlook for German media studies. Though film studies has a certain place in media studies, and many scholars see film studies as the core discipline in media studies, I do not discuss film studies in this article. It deserves an article on its own. Neither do I address some of the crucial progenitors of media studies, including media theories of the 1920s or the relevant writings since Greek antiquity that reflect on textual media and cultural artifacts.

IN THIS ARTICLE I outline a history of German media studies. The structure of the encyclopedic knowledge presented here begins with a definition of the research area of media studies, and then considers the societal background of media studies. I survey the influence of two prominent cultural turns and then gauge the proximity of media studies to other academic formations. I evaluate how media studies differs from other disciplines. I chart the institutionalization of German media studies through attention to conferences, research centers, degree programs, chairs, and publication of journals, handbooks, and anthologies/readers. The second section is dedicated to examples and exemplary questions. In the third section, I detail the embeddedness of media studies in Germany within cultural studies research in the German-speaking world. In the fourth section, I shed light on Franco-German cooperation in media and communication studies. The fifth section I devote to consideration of the potential of media studies, criticism of media studies, and the outlook for media studies.

My own perspective here is informed by my engagement in the field of European collaborations, with a strong focus on German-French research, as well as by the research focus and institutional anchoring in the field of European media studies.

Definition of the Research Field of Media Studies

Media studies covers the subject area of the media (individual media and media systems) in its own media-theoretical line of thought, which considers the media in terms of the interdependence of media in the sense of apparatuses and their transmitted content, technology, and culture. The academic association *Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft* (GfM) formulates its scientific mission as follows:

> Media studies is based on the assumption that an engagement with media, with their technical and aesthetic, their symbolic and communicative characteristics makes an essential contribution to the understanding of history, culture and society. . . . Media studies aims at an analysis of individual media and complex media systems with their respective specific forms of representation, apparatuses, institutions; in doing so, it employs a variety of methods that break down modes of production, text structures, contents, cultural practices and contexts. At the same time, it aims at a theory of media that attempts to determine the characteristics of the media/mediality in general by drawing on research in other disciplines.[2]

The intrinsic interconnectedness of media or media systems with the technical and the cultural forms one unbreakable triad: technics/technologies, culture and humans (individually/collectively: the public(s)/society), and the media placed in the center of this threefold structure, built up by it and encompassing it. The other triad

[2] Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft [German Media Studies Association], "Selbstverständnis, Forschungsfragen, Wissenschaftspolitik" [Mission statement, research questions, science policy], GfM (website).

is that of any cultural studies: history, theory, and aesthetics, which make up the core areas.[3] According to the self-understanding of media studies, the areas of "society," "technology," and "culture" are subdivided into "media theories and their methods," "theories and methods of media history," and, thirdly, the "theories and methods of media aesthetics."[4] In addition to hyphenated sub-disciplines,[5] which form intersections with a multitude of cultural and social science disciplines, there are transversal fields of knowledge, which are determined partly by their thematic features, partly by their methodological inclinations.[6] There are also interdisciplinary "studies." The classical subject areas of media studies, the individual media in their historical succession, are only shown in the section dealing with media history, due to the broad understanding of media that exists. Not only is the subject area of media studies extremely inclusive, media studies is also open to diverse methods and approaches. Limitations and thereby the identity of the subject arise from thinking in terms of the media, which provides information about "the interactions of aesthetic, normative and social dynamics in societies. . . . This interrelation marks the epistemological location and the epistemological interest of general media studies, in which the various fields of media studies are integratively included."[7]

Media are technical in their basic conditions, always historically and culturally shaped. They organize sensory perception (apperception) and make perception possible in the first place. Media studies is based on a broad concept of media. Alongside mass media, individual media, digital, electronic, electric, and mechanical content-containing devices ('media'), there are other kinds of media (concepts), such as non-semantically decodable phenomena, e.g., the human voice (non-technical, bodily function) or choice-making (selection processes as cognitive operations with and without material/concrete manifestations). The broad concept of media also includes cultural techniques, such as the basic ones of reading, writing, calculating or, respectively, alphabet, image, number, and cultural manifestations such as dancing, for example. This conceptualization of media is neither necessarily bound to targeted publics, nor to apparatus/device, nor to content transmission. Media studies thinks of mediality fundamentally as a characteristic and as the basic functionality of apparatuses, artifacts and cultural techniques. Media are understood as entities conditioning perception and thinking[8] or as "apparatuses, institutions and functions, and the condition of processes of form formation."[9]

These introductory remarks may already give the reader an idea of the specificity of the German *Medienwissenschaft* (media studies). In the following, the split between the disciplines dedicated to media,

[3] Strategy Commission of the GfM, "Core Areas of Media Studies: Resolution of the General Assembly of the GfM," Mitgliederversammlung der GfM [GfM General Assembly], Bochum, April 10, 2008.

[4] Strategy Commission of the GfM, "Core Areas of Media Studies."

[5] These include media economics, media psychology, media policy, and media law. Unnamed by GfM: media sociology and media geography.

[6] For example, actor network theory, deconstruction, discourse analysis, gender theories, communication theories, constructivism, critical theory, semiotics, and systems theory.

[7] Strategy Commission of the GfM, "Core Areas of Media Studies."

[8] Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert, "Medienphilosophie," *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* 2 (2010).

[9] Joachim Paech, "Warum 'Medien'?" (lecture, University of Konstanz, Konstanz, Germany, 2006).

communication, and information will be described in detail, in order to explain the partial non-comparability of media studies as an umbrella term for *Medienwissenschaft* and *Kommunikationswissenschaft* in an international context.[10]

Differentiation of Media Studies from Communication Studies

Media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) is distinguished from social science communication studies (*Kommunikationswissenschaft*) primarily by their differing research methods, but also by epistemological interest and thus theoretical foundations. The common and divided history of these two strands has been of interest to scholars of both disciplines[11] in its particular and local history.[12]

Christian Filk points at the opposite evolution of international and German-language differentiation:

> While the *disciplinary dissolution of boundaries*, which is characteristic of the international development of media and communication studies, is sedimented in distinctly **intradisciplinary discourse formations**—here we should refer in particular to the Anglo-American academic context—such and similar transformations manifest themselves in other structures in this country.[13]

In the 1970s and 1980s, German-language scholars have seen (and actively participated in) the erection of disciplinary boundaries between media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) on the one hand and communication studies (*Kommunikationswissenschaft*) on the other hand, whereas intradisciplinary discourse formations had previously been strong, at least in media studies.

According to Knut Hickethier, media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) sees itself as a "text and cultural science," whereas journalism (*Publizistik*) and communication studies (*Kommunikationswissenschaft*), often referred to in this combination, sees itself "primarily as a social science." Both were created, not by "splitting off a new subject from the parent science," but by "internal differentiations within the disciplines," and in the 1980s and 1990s, "media studies has taken on a life of its own."[14] The

> disregard for qualitative methods compared to quantitative methods [in journalism/*Publizistikwissenschaft*] favoured the **emergence of media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*)**. . . . Media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) is predominantly concerned with the media film, television, radio and the internet, and here above all with the entertaining and fictional forms. Journalism (*Publizistikwissenschaft*) particularly addresses journalistic forms in the media press, television, radio and the internet. Media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) works exemplarily and analytically-interpretatively as well as theoretically and historically. Journalism

[10] The same claim, being an umbrella discipline for media, communication, and information studies that does not exist elsewhere, is made by French information and communication studies (*Sciences de l'information et de la communication* [SIC]). See Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz, Fabien Bonnet, Sarah Cordonnier, and Carsten Wilhelm, "Communication Studies in France: Looking for a 'Terre du milieu'?," *Publizistik* 64 (2019).

[11] Gudrun Schäfer, " 'Sie stehen Rücken an Rücken und schauen in unterschiedliche Richtungen': Zum Verhältnis von Medienwissenschaft und Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft," in *Über Bilder sprechen: Positionen und Perspektiven der Medienwissenschaft*, ed. Heinz-B. Heller (Marburg: Schüren, 2000); Werner Faulstich, "Einführung: Zur Entwicklung der Medienwissenschaft," in *Grundwissen Medien*, ed. Werner Faulstich (München: Fink, 1994); Reinhold Viehoff, "Von der Literaturwissenschaft zur Medienwissenschaft, Oder: vom Text über das Literatursystem zum Mediensystem," in *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft: Konzeptionen, Theorien, Methoden, Anwendungen*, ed. Gebhard Rusch (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002); Knut Hickethier, *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 6–7.

[12] See Christian Filk, *Episteme der Medienwissenschaft: Systemtheoretische Studien zur Wissenschaftsforschung eines transdisziplinären Feldes* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 23.

[13] Filk, *Episteme der Medienwissenschaft*, 23–24 (emphasis in italics by Filk, my translation and emphasis in bold).

[14] Hickethier, *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft*, 6–7.

(*Publizistikwissenschaft*) takes a more empirical approach in the sense of statistical procedures.[15]

Communication studies, which focuses on the question of society in the sense of the social reality of life and its expression through mass media, is distinguished from media studies, which deals with the interaction of media, technology, and culture and includes aesthetics and history.

The wide range of media conceptualizations in *Medienwissenschaft* is a paramount difference to *Kommunikationswissenschaft,* which finds its reason in the epistemological grounding of the speculative thinking of philosophy, which recognizes dialectics, in the inclusion of non-evidence-based or non-sensually-perceptible (intelligible) assumptions, in the recourse to, e.g., psychoanalysis, and in the methods of hermeneutics and deconstruction. Further references to the differences between media and communication studies often cite the interpretative methods of text studies, the methods of aesthetic analysis, whereas the quantitative and empirical—the social-scientific—are named as the core competences of communication studies.

The demarcation of German-language media studies from the independent disciplines of German-language communication studies on the one hand, and journalism or *Publizistik* on the other, formed a scientific configuration that is not found in other European/Western countries or languages.[16] In the following, only media studies in the sense of *Medienwissenschaft* is presented. Nevertheless, especially against the background of a European research cooperation related to media, which must necessarily go beyond the boundaries of scientific disciplines, it should be conceded that a "procedure fixated on disciplinary nominalisms [can] hardly contribute anything to the multi- and/or transdisciplinarity of the scientific complex 'media research' assumed here, if it does not—necessarily—end in aporia or apologetics anyway."[17]

Societal Reasons for the Emergence of Media Studies

Without a doubt, the social upheavals that led to the 1968 revolution and that then triggered the '68ers stands in the background (also biographically) of those who first turned to the analysis (and later theorization) of media, primarily film and television. A conscious turning away from the generation of fathers (who were suspected of denying their involvement in National Socialism) led to a disruption of continuity in society in general and at the universities in particular—a place of intensified social analysis, discursive comprehension of world conditions, and education in critical thinking. In addition to these general, well-known reasons, however, there are more specific,

socio-demographic and media-internal factors that contributed to the breakaway movement of the first generation of media scientists from their traditional academic disciplines.

The decade from 1961 to 1971 can be considered a period of university expansion,[18] as the percentage of an age cohort entering higher education increased from 4 percent in 1960 to 50 percent in 2014.[19] In the 1970s especially, the number of students grew sharply, and their percentage went up exponentially in the 1980s, more so for female students than for males, reaching just below 1.75 million in 1989.[20]

These socio-demographic changes led not only to an increase in the number of universities and teachers, but also to a massive differentiation of higher education into universities, universities of applied sciences (from 1970 onwards), universities of education, as well as art academies. Even within these institutions, a need for differentiation of the traditional canon of subjects was present and possible.

The development of the media itself contributed significantly to an increasing mediatization of society, which gradually reached the general consciousness: The filmmaking of the 1960s was marked by upheavals and radical rejections, and so the highly left-wing (Marxist) students and lecturers also adopted an attitude of rejection toward the traditional aim for a coherent object of scientific debate to be analyzed by the scientist.

Within the media system, there are further reasons internal to the media: for instance, the emergence of television in the 1950s[21] and its gradual establishment as the leading medium, replacing film and newsreels in the cinema as well as radio in the 1960s. The sixties are the decade in which television entered households and became the leading entertainment medium. The question of media socialization (in childhood) shaped the first media scholars' generation, which, in addition to television, also witnessed the emergence of cinema festivals[22] and art house cinemas[23] as well as the increasing media practice in the private sphere, such as the emergence of slides, 8mm film, and, later, video. The video apparatus, its technical possibility of pausing, fast-forwarding, and rewinding moving images was, according to the first media scholars,[24] the technical basis of an aesthetic analysis and led to a systematic theory formation, the step that distinguishes well-informed film criticism from scientific analysis. In the overall structure of the media, the emergence of new media may also bring about the ennoblement of the old. Thus, in addition to the development of auteur film,[25] which distinguished itself from the conventional entertainment fare, film became acceptable at universities, even beyond literature's film adaptations and writers' radio

nology for some time, a certain inevitability shows up that the epistemological core of (media) research, defined as an irreducible set of cognitive values and social practices, can neither be subsumed under general methodologies nor under scientific cultures of privileged provenance" (25, my translation).

[18] In 1960, there were 126 universities in Germany (West Germany only); in 1980, that number rose to 230 (West Germany only); and in 2000, it rose to 350 (West and East Germany). Ulrich Schreiterer, "Hochschulen im Wettbewerb: mehr Markt, mehr Freiheit, mehr Unübersichtlichkeit" [Universities in competition: more market, more freedom, more confusion], Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (blog), June 6, 2014, accessed February 25, 2023.

[19] Schreiterer, "Hochschulen im Wettbewerb."

[20] From under 500,000 in 1972 to 762,000 in 1973/1974. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Wachsender Studentenberg: Entwicklung der Studierendenzahlen in Deutschland; Studierende nach Geschlecht: WS 1947/48–WS 2013/14" [Rising student enrollment: A growing number of students in Germany; Students by gender: Winter semester 1947/48–Winter semester 2013/14], accessed February 25, 2023, https://www.bpb.de/themen/bildung/dossier-bildung/190350/wachsender-studentenberg-entwicklung-der-studierendenzahlen-in-deutschland/.

[21] The first public television station in West Germany, ARD, was founded in 1950, with the first broadcast in 1952. The second German television channel, ZDF, began broadcasting in 1963.

[22] E.g., Berlinale since 1951, Mannheimer Kultur- und Dokumentarfilmwoche since 1952 (now Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg), Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen since 1954, and Filmfestival Leipzig since 1955.

[23] In 1970 the first German art house cinema, Abaton, was opened in Hamburg.

[24] See Paech, "Warum 'Medien'?"

[25] Important representatives of the "New German Cinema" are Volker Schlöndorff (*Die Blechtrommel*, 1979), Alexander Kluge (*Abschied von gestern*, 1966), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*Liebe ist kälter als der Tod*, 1969; *Angst essen Seele auf*, 1973), and Werner Herzog (*Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes*, 1972).

plays, to be analyzed in a Germanic studies way. The historicization of film and film history also contributed to the need for trained expert knowledge that could no longer be imparted through traditional study programs alone.

Media studies as an addressable field of knowledge and academic discipline in Germany has only existed since the 1980s, very late compared to other countries and younger than many other disciplines. "Media" in the sense of the means of communication, storage, and information, and in the sense of " 'means of constructing objects,' "[26] as well as "media theory" itself, is a young academic field and an even younger academic discipline. A "specific complex of questions,"[27] or an aspectual approach, a knowledge perspectivization, has developed in academia out of the blind spots of other academic disciplines and "at the same time anchored itself in the consciousness of an interested public."[28] If media are as old as human history and so fundamental that they constitute the world, society, and human beings, the question arises as to why it took so long for this realization to be gained.

Only with the process of a profound mediatization of society, i.e., with the rise of the so-called mass media, has the universalization and generalization of the problem (of the inescapable constitutional power of media) become possible and necessary, which media theory wants to contribute to illuminating.[29]

The emergence of the subject can be explained by the blind spots and desiderata of cultural studies, whose obliviousness to media and technology was to be overcome, as emphasized by many media theorists, such as Joachim Paech, who thus pays tribute to Friedrich Kittler, who ended the "media oblivion of text theory."[30] This rhetorical trope of media studies, its repeatedly cited self-justification, is expressed particularly succinctly in a strategy paper by the GfM:

> The long-lived media obliviousness of traditional cultural studies, which only became apparent through media studies and has since been eliminated, not only concerned the medial conditions of culture and its appropriation, but also to a special degree the medial constitution of educational processes.[31]

Media studies thereby entered a paradigmatic break with cultural studies and formed its own epistemes.

When the media conditions of any production of cultural texts or artifacts became the starting point of scientific analysis, and the specific media properties—which were summarized in the concept of mediality—became central, the epistemic foundation of media studies were established. As Hickethier writes:

> In contrast to the concept of the media, which is more strongly connected to the objective form and the institutionalised structure, the

[26] Günter Helmes and Werner Köster, eds., *Texte zur Medientheorie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002).

[27] Helmes and Köster, 15.

[28] Helmes and Köster, 15.

[29] Helmes and Köster, 15–16.

[30] Joachim Paech, "Die Erfindung der Medienwissenschaft: Ein Erfahrungsbericht aus den 1970er Jahren," in *Was waren Medien?*, ed. Claus Pias (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2011), 51 (my translation).

[31] GfM, "Medienkultur und Bildung," Positionspapier der GfM, Strategiekommission und AG Medienkultur & Bildung der GfM 2013, 3, https://gfmedienwissenschaft.de/sites/default/files/pdf/2017-10/2013-GfM-Positionspapier.pdf.

concept of mediality means, on the one hand, a property that is determinative for all media in the same way. The mediality "in itself" is thus something that transcends media, something fundamental that determines media communication as a whole. On the other hand, the term refers to the set of characteristics assumed to be typical and regarded as constitutive for respective media. This is understood to mean the "film-specific" or "filmic" in the case of film, the "televisual" in the case of television, the radio-phone in the case of radio.[32]

Areas of knowledge of media studies, though later institutionalized, developed from the 1960s onwards in German studies, among others, which brought expertise in radio and more especially film into the institutes and teaching as Germanist media studies. These fields of knowledge found their way into universities in the 1970s as institute/seminar names via institutes dedicated to film studies, and later as film and television studies (although the latter also has a completely different theoretical canon).

The belated reception of the Frankfurt School (Adorno/Horkheimer's writings on media and Kracauer's writings on film) in Germany after the 1960s was an initial spark that dominated media studies until the 1980s and manifested itself in society as a whole as an object of media criticism. This dominance was replaced by a paradigm shift in popular culture and its reflection in cultural studies. The French poststructuralism that followed this phase and other varieties of postmodernism (rather, its academic disciplinary–configuring power of reception) had an enormous influence on media studies—as in cultural studies as a whole. In this phase, the study of popular culture (e.g., John Fiske, Stuart Hall) coexisted alongside Marshall McLuhan, the Toronto School of communication, and the orientation toward Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze/Felix Guattari as fields of knowledge that formed focal points. Media studies established itself institutionally on a broad basis in the 1980s and 1990s.

A break with the seamless connection to hermeneutically shaped cultural studies occurred with the expulsion of the spirit from the humanities,[33] i.e., the assertion of a media-based a priori that granted technology primacy.

The Turns

Various important turns have had an influence on the formation and development of media studies, including the spatial turn and the performative turn. The *performative turn*, which became dominant in all cultural studies subjects in the 1990s and 2000s, has brought together the media and the performative in media studies, especially in media philosophy, as well as in gender media studies, which constitute the

[32] Hickethier, *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft*, 26 (my translation).

[33] Friedrich A. Kittler, *Austreibung des Geistes aus den Geisteswissenschaften: Programme des Poststrukturalismus* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980).

interfaces of "gender and media" (as a fundamental renewal of feminist film theory, which illuminated "women and film"). Language was conceived as a medium of action, of mediating the production of the world, just as media became constitutive as performative actors, acting in their performance, producing the world. Performativity and mediality were assumed to be mutually constituting. Performativity as a concept in media studies[34] as well as performativity and mediality in popular culture media studies[35] shaped theory formation and media analyses.

The *spatial turn,* so important for cultural studies,[36] has produced, among other things, spatial theory,[37] spatial studies,[38] and works on topology[39] and topography[40] in the German-speaking world. The spatial turn reached its preliminary climax in cultural studies with cartography and in media studies with geo-media, media geosciences, and internet geographies. With the advent of *Media Geography: Theory—Analysis—Discussion,*[41] a plea was made for geo-media science and geo-media theory. In the field of visual geography, media studies emphasized its relevance to the history of culture and knowledge,[42] and it recognized the technicality of images as geo-medially significant.[43] Further on, it analyzed the geo-media impact in individual media and apparatuses,[44] explicated geo-media in terms of geo-browsing (in the phenomenal areas of GIS, navigation, Google Earth, flight simulation), and addressed the connection between media, globalization, and the social.[45] Mobile geo-media or locating media[46] has evolved as a new strand within geo-media.

Media Studies in Conjunction with Other Disciplines

Media studies, a young academic discipline in Germany, embedded in the canon of the humanities, is very close to cultural studies (in the sense of "*die Kulturwissenschaft,*" as a singular term, not "*die Kulturwissenschaften,*" the plural term),[47] and it has, in some respects, developed parallel to it.[48] Media studies has emerged to a large extent from literary studies and has close kinship relations to theater studies, with film studies and, later, television studies as additional predecessor disciplines. It has developed in further distinction from German studies and is particularly close to the history of knowledge and cultural studies (in the sense of the narrower canon of disciplines), because the "development of the media techniques of generating, storage, representation and transmission of perceptions, experiences and knowledge"[49] is one of the main aspects of media studies. The subject of media studies has its core identity in the media's logic or the entelechy of the media.

[34] See Andrea Seier, *Remediatisierung: Die performative Konstitution von Gender und Medien* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015).

[35] Sybille Krämer, *Technik als Kulturtechnik: Kleines Plädoyer für eine kulturanthropologische Erweiterung des Technikkonzeptes* (Ulm: Universität Ulm, 2004).

[36] See Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierung in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), 284–329; Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, eds., *Spatial Turn: Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008).

[37] See Jörg Dünne and Stephan Günzel, eds., *Raumtheorie: Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2006).

[38] See Stephan Günzel, *Handbuch Raum* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2009).

[39] See Stephan Günzel, *Topologie: Zur Raumbeschreibung in den Kultur- und Medienwissenschaften* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007).

[40] See Sigrid Weigel, "Zum 'topographical turn': Kartographie, Topographie und Raumkonzepte in den Kulturwissenschaften," *KulturPoetik* (2002).

[41] Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann, eds., *Mediengeographie: Theorie—Analyse—Diskussionen* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

[42] Erhard Schüttpelz, "Die medientechnische Überlegenheit des Westens: Zur Geographie und Geschichte von Bruno Latour's 'Immutable Mobiles,'" in *Mediengeographie: Theory, Analysis, Discussion,* ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009); Bruno Latour, "Die Logistik der *immutable mobiles,*" in *Mediengeographie: Theory, Analysis, Discussion,* ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

[43] Jens Schröter, "Das transplane Bild und der *spatial turn,*" in *Mediengeographie: Theory, Analysis, Discussion,* ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

Media as an object of study forms possible sub-disciplinary configurations far beyond cultural studies, as in the social sciences: e.g., media sociology, media law, media economics, and media psychology. And even in the natural sciences media are of disciplinary relevance, e.g., media informatics.

Media as a designated research subject, represented using corresponding expertise, is usually found in German studies; often in the form of expertise in film history, theory, and aesthetics, and very often in other philologies. Adaptations, genres, and formats, as well as fundamental narratological questions and aesthetic-analytical procedures and methods of interpretation, which are linked to general intellectual history, are common to these disciplines. Media studies grew out of pedagogy adjacent to German studies and established itself in the 1970s, in its early days, as critical social studies in the form of media studies. For this reason, in addition to German media studies, classical media pedagogy and renewed media education are strong areas of knowledge of a theoretical, practical, and praxeological nature, where scholars from their respective disciplines meet.

In theater studies and art, visual/electronic media are often included in seminars or institutes and represented in specializations of professorships, too. Media studies was able to connect to the research direction of cultural studies, which was dedicated to the materiality of communication.[50] Aesthetics is understood as a media science *avant la lettre* and is an integral part of the subject. Media studies does not make a clear distinction between methods and theories, and names in particular "philological-hermeneutic, art-scientific, philosophical, sociological and psychological theories and methods"[51] in its approach to theorizing, although the transformative power and enrichment of the repertoire of theories in cultural studies are emphasized.

Parts of media studies configured themselves as "media theory" and were later perceived as German media theory in their specific—internationally distinct—epistemic grounding. In this current, German media theory, media philosophy, and cultural technology research[52] became important from the beginning of the 2000s.

Institutionalization

The term *Medienwissenschaft* showed up in the 1950s, first used by Erich Feldmann.[53] In 1950, the Hans-Bredow-Institut in Hamburg was founded, directed by Egmont, with its most prominent researcher, Gerhard Maletzke. In 1961, followed the Institute for Language in the Technical Age (*Sprache im technischen Zeitalter*, SPRITZ) at the TU (University of Technology) Berlin, founded by

[44] Wolfgang Hagen, "Zellular—Parasozial—Ordal: Sketches for a Media Archaeology of the Mobile Phone," in *Mediengeographie: Theorie, Analyse, Diskussionen*, ed. Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

[45] Pablo Abend, *Geobrowsing: Google Earth und Co.; Nutzungspraktiken einer digitalen Erde* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013).

[46] Regine Buschauer and Katherine Willis, *Locative Media: Medialität und Räumlichkeit* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013).

[47] The plural form "*die Kulturwissenschaften*" designates the humanities, whereas the singular form designates one specific academic discipline renewed in the eighties which seeks to investigate "the social and technical institutions created by human beings, the forms of action and conflict formed between people, and their horizons of values and norms, especially insofar as these require special levels of symbolic and media-based mediation for their constitution, transmission, and development." Hartmut Böhme, "Kulturwissenschaft," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. 2 (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2000), 356. However, with respect to proximity to cultural studies, cf. Friedrich Kittler, *Eine Kulturgeschichte der Kulturwissenschaft* (München: Fink, 2001).

[48] Independent developments took place in film and television studies. For investigation of parallels and differences, see "Kulturgeschichte als Mediengeschichte (oder vice versa)?," special issue, *Archiv für Mediengeschichte* (Bauhaus University Weimar) 6 (2006).

[49] Strategy Commission of the GfM, "Core Areas of Media Studies."

[50] Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, *Materialität der Kommunikation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988).

[51] Strategy Commission of the GfM, "Core Areas of Media Studies."

[52] Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert, "Medienphilosophie," *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* 2 (2010).

[53] Friedrich Knilli, "Wie aus den Medien eine Wissenschaft wurde: Exposé für eine soziobiographische Fachgeschichte," *Medienwissenschaft: Rezensionen/Reviews* 20, no. 1 (2003), 7.

Walter Höllerer, in which media studies as an autonomous discipline was established by Friedrich Knilli. Knilli was appointed Professor of General Literary Studies, with a focus on media studies, at the TU Berlin in 1972. In 1982, Knilli founded the study program "*Medienberatung*" (media advisory) at the TU Berlin, the first genuine media studies program, for which he was responsible, together with Siegfried Zielinski.[54] Later on, three of Knilli's students became appointed professors: Siegfried Zielinski (Salzburg, Köln), Knut Hickethier (Hamburg), and Joachim Paech (Konstanz).

As a sub-discipline of theater studies, there were professorships with a partial media studies specialization in the Institute for Theater Studies in Vienna from the beginning of the 1970s. Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht at the University of Siegen organized five interdisciplinary research colloquia on the epistemological reorientation of the humanities between 1981 and 1989. The initial spark, formative for the subject, was the media studies research association "Aesthetics, Pragmatics and History of Screen Media," which was a DFG Collaborative Research Centre at the University of Siegen from 1985 to 2000, directed by Helmut Kreuzer, and later by Helmut Schanze.[55] Knilli described the social and historical forces that united and divided early figures: "What unites the stubborn media scholars from the various West German universities in the fifties, sixties and seventies is media criticism, for most of them are children of two wars: the Second World War and the Cold War, which at the same time splits them into several camps again."[56] In 1987, Gumbrecht led the first DFG Research Training Group in the Humanities, entitled "Forms of Communication as Forms of Life." The Käthe Hamburger Kolleg IKKM (2008–2020)[57] and the International College for Cultural Techniques Research and Media Philosophy at the Bauhaus University Weimar have had a significant influence on media studies. Furthermore, the DFG Research Training Group "Locating Media" at the University of Siegen, which existed from 2009 to 2021, was of great influence.

An academic association for media studies was founded in 1985 as the Society for Film and Television Studies (*Gesellschaft für Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft,* GFF), later renamed the Society for Media Studies (*Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft,* GfM). The GfM currently has twenty-nine working groups. Between 2001 and 2007, the DFG research group "*Bild—Schrift—Zahl*" (Image—Writing—Number) worked at the Humboldt University of Berlin.[58]

In 2009, the first DFG symposium on media studies took place, marking another symbolic stage in the establishment of the subject.[59] The conference series "Hyperkult" has had a strong impact on media studies, especially media theory, since 1991.

[54] Siegfried Zielinski was a student of Knilli and was appointed professor of audio-visuals at the University of Salzburg in 1989.

[55] Werner Faulstich, Siegfried Schmidt, Irmela Schneider, Reinhold Viehoff, and Jutta Wermke participated and were later appointed professors.

[56] Knilli, "Wie aus den Medien eine Wissenschaft wurde," 19.

[57] IKKM website, accessed January 28, 2022, https://www.ikkm-weimar.de.

[58] Image, writing, and number are basic media of modern communication and have been studied in their historical genesis up to their current effectiveness in digital encoding, storage, and processing. See Helmholtz-Zentrum für Kulturtechnik, "Founding Project of the Helmholtz Centre for Cultural Technology: Theory and History of Cultural Techniques," Humboldt University of Berlin (website).

The beginnings of institutionalized German-language media studies are linked to research on literary adaptations (radio and film),[60] on the nexus of media and the Holocaust,[61] and on internationalization/Europeanization.[62] Before institutionalized media studies, "media studies," primarily linked with the name of Helmut Schanze,[63] was the term for a configuration of knowledge that theorized mediality "media-reflexively" or in "thinking the media." Since media studies expertise developed within other disciplines, including theater studies and German studies, and many media studies writings can be identified avant la lettre in cultural history, a few publications will be mentioned here by way of example, without making any claim to firstness or exclusivity.

First Publications

The first monographs in the discipline of media studies were published by Friedrich Knilli, who presented a work on radio plays in 1959.[64] Helmut Schanze published "*Medienkunde für Literaturwissenschaftler*" (Media Studies for Literary Scholars) in 1974, followed by "*Literaturgeschichte als Mediengeschichte*" (Literary History as Media History) in 1976–1977. In addition to German media studies, the first monographs and conference papers with "media analysis" in the title can be traced back to 1972. "Media analysis," one of the first main currents of media studies, which also gave its name to the study program, was related to television and audio-visual media and was supported by educational societies, among others. "Media knowledge" (*Medienkunde*) and "media criticism" are further pre-disciplinary or early configurations of knowledge, followed by "media work." In the second half of the 1980s, media effects research became a field of knowledge, mainly in communication studies, which attracted a lot of attention, as did media analysis as cultural and social criticism. During this period, titles mentioning "media theory," later a major paradigm of media studies, appeared for the first time. At the end of the 1990s, the first compendia[65] and handbooks appeared in renowned academic publishing houses. Moreover, in the second half of the 1990s, cultural studies (in conjunction with media analysis) moved into the core knowledge area of media studies.

Special Focus Areas

One important strand in media studies is the orientation toward the history of knowledge, and with it towards the history of science, in a constant effort to bring the two poles of tension, the technical and the social, to a point of intersection, that of the media constituted for

59 See Ulrike Bergermann, *Leere Fächer: Gründungsdiskurse in Kybernetik und Medienwissenschaft* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2015), 15.

60 See, e.g., Friedrich Knilli, Knut Hickethier, and Wolf-Dieter Lützen, eds., *Literatur in den Massenmedien: Demontage von Dichtung?* (München: Hanser, 1976); Franz-Josef Albersmeier, *Die Herausforderung des Films an die französische Literatur: Entwurf einer "Literaturgeschichte des Films"* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1985); Michael Schaudig, *Literatur im Medienwechsel: Gerhart Hauptmanns Tragikomödie "Die Ratten" und ihre Adaptionen für Kino, Hörfunk, Fernsehen; Prolegomena zu einer Medienkomparatistik* (München: Verlegergemeinschaft Schaudig, 1992).

61 See Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, *Holocaust zur Unterhaltung* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1982).

62 See, e.g., Siegfried Zielinski and Kurt Luger, eds., *Europäische Audiovisionen: Film und Fernsehen im Umbruch*, Neue Aspekte in Kultur- und Kommunikationswissenschaft, vol. 7 (Wien: Österreichischer Kunst- und Kulturverlag, 1993); Siegfried Zielinski, *Video: Apparat/Medium, Kunst, Kultur; Ein internationaler Reader* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992).

63 Helmut Schanze, *Medienkunde für Literaturwissenschaftler: Einführung und Bibliographie* (München: Fink, 1974).

64 Friedrich Knilli, *Das Hörspiel in der Vorstellung der Hörer: Eine experimentalpsychologische Untersuchung* (PhD diss., University of Graz, 1959).

65 See, e.g., Werner Faulstich, *Medientheorien: Einführung und Überblick* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Daniela Kloock and Angela Spahr, *Medientheorien: Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Fink, 1997).

reflection. It was precisely this basic disciplinary configuration that led almost inevitably to the study of Actor–Network Theory (ANT).

Due to the theoretical reflection of the fundamental role of technology for media in their social uses, German-language media studies is close to English-language Science and Technology Studies (STS), in particular to ANT, which emerged from it. ANT was strongly received[66] in media studies from the mid-2000s onwards and secured mainstream status until the mid-2010s, primarily through the International College for Cultural Techniques Research and Media Philosophy (IKKM, 2008–2020) at the Bauhaus University Weimar. ANT in media studies elaborates the agency of human and non-human actors in operative sign chains. Uncovering and conceptualizing the agency of media, artifacts, and inscriptions—as well as the media-bound nature of all technical and social processes[67] from which technical, scientific, and organizational operations emerge—has captured the profound interconnectedness of media, technology, and the social.

Examples and Exemplary Questions

Media studies was expected to provide an answer to the question: "What is a medium?"[68] More precisely, the question was aimed at the concept of media in media studies, when the field—while aiming at the media (individual, mass media, and media system) and claiming to have expertise in them and their teaching—did not follow the vernacular concept of media.

Different definitions of media, each of them deriving from separate theories and schools, coexist peacefully, and many distinctions between media, such as those between storage and dissemination media, have attracted interest in media studies. The subject identity of media studies, which first distinguishes itself as a scientific discipline, was acquired in the struggle for the concept of media. This has been answered with the overarching, far more comprehensive category of mediality. The "autonomy of the media," the "media specific," the "thinking of the media property," and the "media logic" became the core identity of the discipline. A medium is thought of as an "actualization of the media potential,"[69] thus forcing an object construction through philosophical reflection, diametrically opposed to the everyday language concept of media, in which media are equated with transmission apparatuses (and their typified contents). The concept of "media" in the substantial and historical sense is rejected.[70] The demarcation of "media" from forms of representation, techniques, and symbolism as a sufficient justification or form of thinking and negotiation of media is rejected, with the understanding that media studies should instead find its legitimacy in the relationship of the

66 See, e.g., Gerd Kneer, Marcus Schroer, and Erhard Schüttpelz, eds., *Bruno Latours Kollektive: Kontroversen zur Entgrenzung des Sozialen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008); Tristan Thielmann and Erhard Schüttpelz, eds., *Akteur— Medien—Theorie* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013).

67 Thielmann and Schüttpelz, *Akteur— Medien—Theorie*, 15.

68 Stephan Münker and Alexander Rösler, eds., *Was ist ein Medium?* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008).

69 Lorenz Engell, "Tasten, Wählen, Denken: Genese und Funktion einer philosophischen Apparatur," in *Medienphilosophie: Beiträge zur Klärung eines Begriffs*, ed. Stefan Münker, Alexander Roesler, and Mike Sandbothe (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2003), 54–55.
70 Lorenz Engell and Joseph Vogl, "Zur Einführung," in *Kursbuch Medienkultur: Die maßgeblichen Theorien von Brecht bis Baudrillard*, ed. Claus Pias et al. (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999), 10.

elements mentioned. Ulrike Bergermann has raised the question of whether this is media studies "as form without subject or object," as "pure media."[71] The foundational discourse represents an attempt to legitimize media studies in the void. A media science without an object or subject can exist, or can only exist in this way, because media science finds its core in "placing a medium, a mediality, a translation, a blind spot, an empty centre at the centre of a discipline, which, after all, does not receive its legitimation as pure mediality research at all, but from the constantly new elaboration of references between individual media/artifacts and their mediality."[72]

In the many introductions to media studies during the first decade of the twenty-first century, the history of knowledge, mediality, and epistemology were conceptually intertwined—explicitly or implicitly in the context of the founding of a subject. To interrogate knowledge production in terms of mediality—in terms of its media constituents and legitimacy—has remained the mandate of media studies.

> The path of media cultural studies leads into and out of the media and their processes. It takes many branches via techniques and technologies, materials and constitutions, the tangible and the invisible, and it still often takes the (re)route via literature.[73]

The term "media cultural studies" is evidence of a foundation in literary and cultural studies, but this is accomplished in a theory formation that grasps the fundamental constitutional power of the media. This constitutional force of media goes beyond individual media as a dispositive that is at the same time (culturally) technically based, symbolically configured, and operating via various types of signs (image, number, etc.). A medium has an effect on the individual as a subject-constituting power or on society as a collective. Of course, the converse is also true, as media and technology are deposits of the social.

Cultural Studies Research in the German-Speaking World

Media studies, in its fundamental cultural-scientific self-understanding, can grasp any mediation that is based on a symbolic sign character as media-based and thus define writing, image, and number[74] as media. It can also identify the cultural techniques[75] of reading, writing, and arithmetic as media configurations. The cultural techniques perform embodied, culturally-configured mediations that are bound to symbolic signs. In this way, media studies not only reaches far into the historical realm (for example, the history of writing), but can also include any thematization[76] of image, writing, and number as a media-theoretical reflection in the canon of media studies, whereby texts

[71] Bergermann, *Leere Fächer*, 20.

[72] Bergermann, 20.

[73] Oliver Ruf, Patrick Rupert-Kruse, and Lars C. Grabbe, *Medienkulturwissenschaf* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2022), 25.

[74] Sybille Krämer and Horst Bredekamp, eds., *Bild, Schrift, Zahl* (Paderborn: Fink, 2003).

[75] For fundamental information on cultural techniques see Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

[76] See also the treatise by Günter Helmes on the Old Testament prohibition of images: Günter Helmes and Werner Köster, *Texte zur Medientheorie* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2002), 23.

from Greek and Roman antiquity also become parts of its foundation. The accompanying canonization, the establishment of reference texts, are reconfigurations of classical texts from history, aesthetics, literature, art, and philosophy under the new interest-guiding perspective of mediation, of being media-based as a condition sine qua non. Media also enable in the first place the more fundamental processes of perception, thinking, and feeling, thus tying media to the basic conditions of human existence. The physiological condition of perception, the five human senses, become mediated conditions by dint of their connection to perceiving and knowing as cognition and knowledge. Conceived as media configurations of knowledge, media and knowledge are short-circuited.

Media as an anthropological constant can then be thematized in evolutionary terms as historically conditioned conditions of expression that prove themselves socially, culturally, and politically in their collective dimension as well as psychologically and pedagogically in their individual dimension.

Under "media," mediations located on different levels can be described according to: a) the different sign natures (image, writing, number); b) the arts (drama, painting, poetry, song and dance) and media as intermedia aesthetic manifestations; and c) the specific configuration levels of formats and genres.

In addition to Kittler's media studies, intermediality was another major paradigm of media studies which was able to continuously differentiate itself into sub-disciplines after its successful founding while still maintaining an inner coherence in its identity core of media theory.[77]

Rainer Leschke describes how

intermediality analysis not only ensured a systematic networking of media studies within cultural studies, but as a science of the media system and media cultures, it virtually offers itself as an integration and anchor point of cultural studies. In this way, however, media studies has established itself as an independent system of knowledge with an object area that cannot be closed off in principle and an integral networking within cultural studies.[78]

As detailed, media studies considers any form of communication involving symbolic signs to be media-based, and "sign" here encompasses writing, images, and numbers. It also examines cultural techniques such as reading, writing, and arithmetic as forms of media configurations. The establishment of reference texts from various disciplines, reinterpreted under the perspective of mediation, contributes to the canonization of media studies.

[77] Rainer Leschke, "Medienwissenschaften und Geschichte: Morphologie einer Wissenschaft."

[78] Leschke, 14.

Franco-German Cooperation in Media and Communication Studies

Due to the above-mentioned division of the sciences dedicated to media and communication into cultural media studies and social communication studies (in Germany), cross-border cooperation poses a particular challenge. However, in many joint degree programs, and even more so in the bi-national research alliances (DFG-ANR, German Research Committee and French National Science Foundation), one finds examples of scholars who successfully negotiate this unusual terrain. Curricula are coordinated, if not developed jointly. Theses are jointly supervised. Advisory services, i.e., academic orientation of Bachelor's and Master's graduates, are coordinated. Even if this is not a transdisciplinary but an interdisciplinary cooperation, there must not only be openness to other methodological approaches, but these must also be appropriated in an integrative manner. Even if the other canon of theories could be handled additively, if linguistic and attention-economic obstacles were overcome, and if a number of theorists/theories could be identified that are read by both disciplines, this would turn out to be more difficult or even incompatible when it comes to the research design and the applied methodology or the form of argumentation.

Cooperation in German-French media studies requires cognizance of three different levels of academic operation: a) institutional formations; b) policies and politics of knowledge acquisition and of science; and c) contours of intellectual practice, including research topics and theoretical orientations. The institutional level concerns German-French media organizations, about media-specific institutions, and thus captures formalized relations of broadcasters, regulatory authorities, and the like. German-French cooperation as it develops through its infrastructure and through its technological standardizations is also at the center of media studies. In terms of knowledge policy, questions arise about continuities and discontinuities from analogue to digital, especially in their different configurations in France and Germany. The disciplinary configuration of those sciences dedicated to the media in the individual German-speaking and Francophone countries is also an important domain of inquiry, one that connects with issues pertaining to the configuration of interdisciplinary research between German studies/French studies, media studies, and socio-political fields of knowledge. The most important scientific organizations (university and research organizations, determined by laws, ministerial responsibilities, and financial support for research) whose work directly relates to the issue of German-French cooperation in media studies are the German-French University (DFH-UFA),

the bi-national research alliances (DFG-ANR, the German Research Committee and French National Science Foundation), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), as well as many EU-funded research institutions and projects. Strategies of cooperation play an important role in the common German-French study program *Europäische Medienkultur*.

The connection between German-French cooperation and media studies prompts questions about the form of institutionalization, the subject area, the content, and the structure. In order to sound out perspectives of German-French media studies, we must consider the practices of teaching media studies in Germany and France. In terms of research, we must identify overlaps, intersections, and crossing references in the media of Germany and France. The conceptualization of Franco-German media studies can start from the respective national academic disciplines and pose questions about the cross-border dimension in several respects. The main respects are:

1. the sociogenesis of the discipline (to be recorded via the founding of institutes and designation of chairs and courses of study),

2. the intellectual biographies of its bearers and their European intercultural experiences,

3. the disciplines from which they developed (history of knowledge or history of science),

4. the scientific organizations (university and research organizations, determined by laws, ministerial responsibilities, or financial support for research),

5. the intellectual currents (within the country, or more broadly, in Europe or around the world),

6. languages and language transfer (through translations, the phenomenon of reception, and waves), language barriers (independent parallelisms, opposites parallelisms, and national "special paths"), and

7. the cooperation of science, including transnational joint study programs as well as the cooperation between media actors (in the cultural, in the media-economic, and in the field of media technology).

The object of study takes its starting point in the national framework, and we can ask whether or not this national framework can be transcended to include the bi-/tri-/multi-national dimension. Firstly, the cross-border dimension of the sociogenesis of the disciplines,

which can be grasped through the founding of institutes and the appointment of professors and degree programs, shows that in France, as in Germany, the founding of institutions and the appointment of professors has so far taken place within a national framework. Anchoring in the national scientific community is indispensable, even when international networking is required.[79] The supposed internationality and universalizing tendency of media theories—which produces theory that does not address the linguistic and intellectual context of origin and its conditions and limitations—becomes particular when addressed and more closely specified culturally, or reveals itself as a geo-media-political negotiating space. The consideration of geographical, institutional, and national coordinates in the formation of media studies theory even leads Norm Friesen and Richard Cavell to speak of the "geography of media studies."[80] German-language pedagogy books on media studies show an account that disregards national frames and contexts of origin and traces lines of development purely from theory.[81] Intellectual biographies and the history of reception have their place in this, albeit very marginally, but these books rarely include the institutional, geographical, and national dimensions of the origins of media theory, unless these are addressed from the perspective of regional studies, as for example in studies of Russian media, where media theory is overlaid by a centuries-long cultural imprint.[82] The consideration of geographical, institutional, and national coordinates in the formation of media theory has so far been almost completely absent from the contributions of European media studies,[83] including Franco-German media studies.

The Franco-German degree programs, politically desired by the Franco-German Council of Ministers and promoted by the Franco-German University (DFH-UFA),[84] are offered at Bachelor's and Master's levels. There are six such degree programs where media/communication form the main focus of study. Being in charge of a German-French joint degree program in media studies, the author's French colleague Sarah Cordonnier and the author conducted an interview series on the intercultural literacy among the academic staff. They thematized being in charge of a French-German cooperation, in a study program as well as in a research project. Created in 1997 with support from the Franco-German University (UFA), the Franco-German joint degree program *Europäische Medienkultur* (EMK) is a long-term observation point of intercultural dynamics. The particularities of its history and the disciplines associated with it constitute relevant elements for the analysis or explanation of these dynamics. The content of the curricula themselves also has some interesting features. The courses offered by the EMK joint degree program are linked to the *Sciences de l'information et de la communication* (SIC) in

[79] Sarah Cordonnier and Hedwig Wagner, "Déployer l'interculturalité: les étudiants, un vecteur pour la réflexion académique sur l'interculturel: Le cas des sciences consacrées à la communication en France et en Allemagne," in *Interkulturelle Kompetenz in deutsch-französischen Studiengängen: Les compétences interculturelles dans les cursus franco-allemands* [Intercultural competency in German-French degree programs: Key competencies for higher education and employability], ed. Gundula Gwenn Hiller et al. (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2017), 232.

[80] Norm Friesen and Richard Cavell, "Introduction," in *Media Transatlantic: Developments in Media and Communication Studies between North American and German-Speaking Europe*, ed. Norm Friesen (Cham: Springer, 2016).

[81] Wagner, *Europäische Medienwissenschaft*.

[82] Ulrich Schmid, *Russische Medientheorien* (Bern: Haupt Verlag, 2005).

[83] An exception to this broad generalization can be found in my own book: Hedwig Wagner, *Europäische Medienwissenschaft*.

[84] Université franco-allemande/Deutsch-Französische Hochschule (website), accessed February 5, 2022, https://www.dfh-ufa.org/.

France and the *Medienwissenschaft* in Germany. In general, the subject matter (media and communication) may seem to fit together harmoniously, but there are important differences in the objects, methods, theories, and modes of conceiving what needs to be investigated and taught.

SIC was constituted as a section (the seventy-first) by the National Council of Universities in 1975. Some speak of it as an "interdiscipline," and there are many tensions within it, as much because of the initial juxtaposition between several fields (media content studies, library sciences, part of science studies, and museology—but not film studies) as well as the plurality of methods and theoretical resources that researchers solicit and import from other disciplines (sociology, language sciences, and semiotics).[85] *Medienwissenschaft* has been developing since the end of the 1980s and the 1990s, becoming independent of German studies and theatre studies, and then of film studies, which nevertheless remains an important subject; essentially based on speculative, hermeneutic reasoning, *Medienwissenschaft* is impregnated with French poststructuralist references. This discipline is separate from *Kommunikationswissenschaft*, a social and empirical science, whose objectives could, to a certain extent and in part, overlap with those of SIC.

In the case of SIC, *Medienwissenschaft*, and *Kommunikationswissenschaft*, the situation is even more singular. Indeed, these disciplines are of recent vintage (or profoundly reshaped recently, in the case of *Kommunikationswissenschaft*[86]), and they have been shaped in contexts quite different from those which saw the advent of sociology, geography, history, and demography at the end of the nineteenth century. They do not even share a disciplinary title, and have received little scientific attention, even in their own countries, although student interest in the themes they cover is leading to significant institutional and academic development.

The different disciplines in France and in Germany interact not as entangled history (*histoire croisée*)—i.e., not as a joint history of science—but rather as the history of knowledge in the sense of intellectual currents, which can of course also mean, as described above, the reception of individual theorists or schools, be it the Frankfurt School or French post-structuralism.[87] Thus languages, language transfer (through translations, the phenomenon of reception, and waves) and language barriers (independent parallelisms, opposite parallelisms, and national "special paths") are reflected and acted upon by the creation of publishing houses[88] and the translation policies of scientific journals.[89] Outside academia (but as a core domain of employability of such transnational commuters) are the following media institutions, mentioned by the German-French council for cul-

[85] Sarah Cordonnier, "Looking Back Together to Become 'Contemporaries in Discipline,'" *History of Media Studies* 1 (2021).

[86] Averbeck-Lietz, "Comparative History of Communication. Studies: France and Germany," *The Open Communication Journal* 2, no. 1 (2008).

[87] For an account of the different histories of knowledge or history of science, see Averbeck-Lietz, "Comparative History"; for mediology, see Birgit Mersmann and Thomas Weber, eds., *Mediologie als Methode* (Berlin: Avinus, 2008); and for the branching out of cybernetics in an international context, see Claus Pias, ed., *Cybernetics: the Macy Conferences 1946–1953: The Complete Transactions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016).

ture: ARTE, the German-French film academy Atelier Ludwigsburg-Paris, the Office of Film and Media of the Institut Français in Germany, and *ParisBerlin*, a German-French news magazine.[90]

The study of the academic disciplines *Medienwissenschaft* in Germany and *Sciences de l'information et de la communication* in France by Cordonnier and myself[91] derives from the intellectual biographies of the researchers and is informed by their German-French intercultural experiences. We carried out the interviews with German and French professors under the following headings: a) age in intercultural academic engagement, b) the role of intercultural academic institutions, and c) the strategic implementation of future academic work. The results showed that academic interculturality is anchored in: a) disciplinary contexts, which are national and institutional; b) academic internationalization; c) established forms and formats (in the sense of dispositives); and d) non-institutionalized encounters.

Thus, only the institutional inscription of the intercultural experience guarantees its durability, but it is then inscribed in multiple and often paradoxical ways. Indeed, interculturality understood as an encounter with researchers, students, theories, scientific practices, and especially interculturality understood as the "international circulation of ideas" with all the effects of inscription in national contexts that it presupposes, resonates with the policies of academic internationalization, where internationalization correlates with prestige but often by going toward the lowest common scientific and pedagogical denominator.[92] Nevertheless, the international is needed in order to write a "meaningful history" of media studies, as Cordonnier clarifies:

> Meaningful history implies not only theoretical reading and methodological compliance, but also clarification of irritating differences that turn out to be more "cultural" than "scientific" . . . the method of developing an argument, the writing style, the respective weight of the theory and the empirical material, the interest in remote domains or areas, and the acceptance that there is more than one, in the words of Donsbach, "right way to scientific knowledge." In sum, meaningful history relies upon the resolute creation of an international "milieu," where the delicate balance between methodological demand and political significance can be shaped afresh. [93]

Potential, Criticism and Outlook

The "new materialist turn" was a major development in the European Research Area (ERA). It continued the established strand of the materiality of communication in cultural studies and extended it to new academic disciplines (feminism, philosophy, science studies, history, and media studies), while expanding it from history (of technology) to the field of Theory of Knowledge (TOK). The focus

[88] Thomas Weber, a media scholar, runs the Avinus-Verlag, where mediology and other French theory texts are translated and published.

[89] Take, for example, the *Archiv für Mediengeschichte*, or the *Zeitschrift für Kultur- und Mediengeschichte*.

[90] Deutsch-Französischer Kulturrat (website), accessed February 11, 2022, http://www.dfkr.org/links/kultur-und-medien-allgemein/.

[91] Sarah Cordonnier and Hedwig Wagner, "L'interculturalité académique entre cadrages et interstices," in *France-Allemagne: Incommunications et convergences,* ed. Gilles Rouet and Michaël Oustinoff (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018); Cordonnier and Wagner, "Déployer l'interculturalité"; Sarah Cordonnier and Hedwig Wagner, "La discipline au prisme des activités internationales dans les trajectoires de chercheurs en France et en Allemagne (encadré)," in *Discipline, interdisciplinarité, indiscipline,* ed. Jean-Michel Besnier and Jacques Perriault (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2013); Sarah Cordonnier and Hedwig Wagner, "Academic Interculturality in Communication Studies" (paper presented at the European Communication Research and Education Association's 5th European Communication Conference, Lisbon, November 12–15, 2014).

[92] Cordonnier and Wagner, "Déployer l'interculturalité," 232–33.

[93] Cordonnier, "Looking Back Together," 2–3. This passage refers to Wolfgang Donsbach, "The Identity of Communication Research," *Journal of Communication* 56, no. 3 (2006): 437.

shifted from exclusively text-based objects of study to the study of objects. Apparatuses, artifacts, and all other objects of the means of communication and information are understood as object-based traces pertaining to the history of knowledge, the history of ideas, and the circulation of ideas and knowledge. The focus on objects and "boundary objects" has been particularly pronounced in Science and Technology Studies (STS) and especially in Actor–Network Theory (ANT). The focus on networks and networks within and beyond ANT created an interdisciplinary field of research: network studies. The core of this new approach is to explore the material level, the institutional level, and the discursive level as such, with cognizance of their interconnectedness and their manifold interdependencies. Their interconnectedness brings new insights and counterbalances the prevailing, purely institutional approach. This new strand of research has been particularly fruitful for European studies, first and foremost the *Tensions of Europe*[94] research network. The analysis of how superior information and communication technologies (ICTs)—along with their foundation, the international media-technical infrastructure—provide pan-European (cross-bloc) means of communication is crucial and innovative in an East-West European perspective. These new ICTs have had a strong impact on the importance of communication.

German-language media studies is not only very broad due to the wide range of individual media to which it devotes itself; the theoretical orientations are also very wide-ranging. In addition to the expected focus on individual media and media systems, media studies promotes a broad definition of media—since its understanding of "media" deviates from the term's everyday usage. A sprawling concept of media that can define objects and practices as media and at the same time refuses to be delimited by sufficient, verifiable determinants of the media is a concept of media that is ripe for criticism. However, the strong historical orientation of media studies in combination with the critical-analytical approach to history, culture, and society gives it a fundamental and generalist claim to interpretation in order to provide a foil for reflection on current and future media and social developments.[95]

The media-scientific thinking advocated by Friedrich Kittler[96] received great veneration[97] and harsh criticism within and outside the discipline. This school of thought, rejected by some scholars as technological determinism, developed into cultural techniques studies. Thinking about the technicality of the media was not, however, restricted to the history of technology, but rather pursued as a reconstruction of its conditions and effects in the history of the humanities and social history, like the philosophy of technology, which was also widely perceived and connected in media studies.

94 Tensions of Europe (website), accessed October 30, 2021, https://www.tensionsofeurope.eu/.

95 "Positionen der GfM," Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft (website), accessed September 9, 2021, https://gfmedienwissenschaft.de/positionen.

96 Friedrich Kittler (1943–2011) was a German literary scholar and media theorist. His research focused, among other things, on writing systems and the theory and history of the cultural techniques of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Kittler's media theory is characterized by a technological-materialist approach.

97 In the 1980s, Kittler's media theory gained increasing popularity among students, who were referred to as the "*Kittler-Jugend*" [Kittler Youth] (e.g., Bernhard Siegert and Wolfgang Ernst).

Rainer Leschke embarked on a critical self-questioning of media studies. He sees the focus on the media essence, the persistent question of mediality, as a perhaps-doomed attempt to lay an ontological foundation for the discipline. Jens Schröter provides a critical reflection on the emergence and evolution of media studies in Germany, as well as the limited works of German media theory that have been published in English. His chapter titled "Disciplining Media Studies: An Expanding Field and Its (Self-)Definition"[98] is framed by Norm Friesen's perspective in *Media Transatlantic: Developments in Media and Communication Studies between North American and German-Speaking Europe.*[99] Friesen insists that media and communication studies must be re-mediated with regard to geography, nation, and institutions. In the book's introductory[100] and comparative approach, Friesen writes entangled histories for media studies, thus providing proof that Friedrich Kittler, often falsely thought to be the founder of German media theory (not media studies in Germany!), was influenced by Marshall McLuhan and Harold Adams Innis.

Jens Schröter is aware of the pitfalls of a desired disciplinary unity[101] with respect to the dynamics of the field in research, the study object, or the evolution of media. For the dynamics while creating and evolving an academic discipline, Schröter refers to general findings pointing out that disciplinary unity is a desired goal but remains unattainable and has harmful homogenizing effects as well as idealizations outside reality. Given the lack of disciplinary unity and internal diversification, and the "openness" of media studies, he states three crucial points for the disciplinary configuration of media studies to which I add an easily overlooked fourth point:

> *Firstly*, there is the epistemic (theoretical, methodological) and institutional *development* of "media studies" as an independent subject – and the question of the feasibility or even desirability of this.
>
> *Secondly*, there is the internal *diversification* of media studies, and whether this diversification will at some point dissolve "media studies" into new sub-disciplines.
>
> *Thirdly*, there is the *changing relationship* between "media studies" and its neighbouring disciplines.[102]

I have to add:

> *Fourthly, Internationalisation.*[103] Recent evolutions have produced a changing relationship between media studies in Germany and its European outlets throughout numerous European collaborations in which a multifaceted relationship of national determining factors and international or European necessities are altering media studies. Furthermore, bi- or trinational study programs come into play here, as well as translations (or not!) of main sources, EU-funded research projects, and increasing Europeanisation accompanied by international conferences and English language international journals.

[98] Jens Schröter, "Disciplining Media Studies: An Expanding Field and Its (Self-)Definition," in *Media Transatlantic: Developments in Media and Communication Studies between North American and German-Speaking Europe,* ed. Norm Friesen (Cham: Springer, 2016).

[99] Friesen, *Media Transatlantic.*

[100] "Finally, and most importantly, this book introduces readers to the new field of *Medienwissenschaft* in German-speaking Europe—its debates, discourses and modes of self-legitimation." Friesen, *Media Transatlantic*, 6.

[101] Sarah Cordonnier is also aware of these pitfalls, in the context of the French SIC. See Cordonnier, "Looking Back Together," 4.

[102] Schröter, "Disciplining Media Studies," 32.

[103] Although Schröter quotes two sources referencing the international aspect of media studies: Hickethier, *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft*; and Tarmo Malmberg, "Nationalism and Internationalism in Media Studies: Europe and America since 1945" (paper presented at the First European Communication Research Conference, Amsterdam, November 25–26, 2005).

Center-periphery dynamics within the academic discipline of media studies is another aspect worth mentioning. Taking up Friesen's claim of geographically located media studies, I note the geographical differentiation within German-speaking media studies, whereby the dynamics of the discipline is characterized by a center-periphery exchange.

The academic association for media studies (*Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft*) has several hundred members,[104] but not many of them are based in the small number of major media studies centers in Germany.[105] They have organized the collaborative research centers (*Sonderforschungsbereiche*) and research training groups (*Graduiertenkollegien*) of the German Research Foundation,[106] programming concerning the history of media studies in Germany, and contributed greatly to the discourses of the self-understanding debate.[107] They have written most of the manuals in this area, without their taking into account the evolution of media studies outside of these centers. As a result, much of the existing history of media studies in Germany isn't represented.

The bulk of teaching (staff and module contents) within the more than fifty study programs in media studies mentioned above is integrated into a wide variety of institutional contexts. In some programs, the disciplinary boundaries of *Kommunikationswissenschaft* and *Medienwissenschaft* are imploding, whereas in others, media studies is becoming part of a more encompassing cultural studies perspective. Media scholars are often the only representatives of this diverse discipline, which highlights their research areas as being at the center of media studies.

Conclusion

According to the German Media Studies Association,[108] media studies is a research field that focuses on the study of media, including individual media and media systems. It examines the interdependence of media through the lens of apparatuses, content transmission, technology, and culture. The field aims to understand history, culture, and society by engaging with the technical, aesthetic, symbolic, and communicative characteristics of media.

Media studies recognizes that media are fundamentally technical and culturally conditioned. They shape sensory perception and make perception possible. The field considers media in a broad sense, including mass media, individual media, digital and electronic devices, as well as non-semantically decodable phenomena and cultural techniques. Media are viewed as entities that condition perception and thinking, encompassing apparatuses, institutions, functions, and pro-

[104] After the 2007 reform, GfM grew from about three hundred fifty members to about fifteen hundred members within five years, and it has maintained this level for the past ten years.

[105] Major media studies centers that are not, it should be noted, based in the largest cities in Germany!

[106] Indeed, they are important for the development of the discipline, as pointed out by Schröter, "Disciplining Media Studies," 37–38.

[107] See Rainer Bohn, Eggo Müller, and Rainer Ruppert, eds., *Ansichten einer künftigen Medienwissenschaft* (Berlin: Sigma, 1988); and Schröter, "Disciplining Media Studies."

[108] Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft, "Selbstverständnis."

cesses of cultural formation. Media studies is characterized by its focus on the interactions between aesthetic, normative, and social dynamics in societies. These factors define its epistemological location and interest.

The specificity of German media studies, known as *Medienwissenschaft*, becomes apparent through its conceptualization of media as encompassing various forms and functions with mediality as core concept. The field differentiates itself from other disciplines dedicated to media and communication.

Here I have asserted that media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) and communication studies (*Kommunikationswissenschaft*) differ primarily in their research methods, epistemological interests, and theoretical perspectives. While international media and communication studies have seen a dissolution of disciplinary boundaries, particularly in the Anglo-American context, German-language scholars have actively established boundaries between media studies and communication studies. Media studies is often viewed as a "text and cultural science"[109] with a focus on film, television, radio, and the internet, emphasizing entertainment and fictional forms. It employs exemplary, analytical-interpretive, theoretical, and historical approaches. On the other hand, communication studies primarily addresses the social reality expressed through mass media and focuses on society. It employs interpretative methods, aesthetic analysis, and quantitative and empirical approaches.

The distinction between German-language media studies and communication studies, as well as journalism (*Publizistik*), is unique to the German context. The wide range of media conceptualizations in media studies (*Medienwissenschaft*) is attributed to its epistemological grounding in speculative thinking, including dialectics, non-evidence-based assumptions, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. In contrast, communication studies is often associated with qualitative and quantitative empirical approaches. This differentiation has resulted in a scientific configuration specific to the German-language context, not commonly found in other European or Western countries. However, for European research cooperation in media studies, it is important to transcend disciplinary boundaries and embrace multi- and/or transdisciplinarity.

Here I have also considered how far the emergence of media studies in Germany can be understood to be the outcome of certain social forces. Firstly, the social upheavals of the 1968 revolution and the subsequent rejection of the previous generation led to a disruption of continuity, particularly in universities. This created a space for critical analysis, including the study of media as a means of understanding the world and fostering critical thinking. Additionally, the expan-

[109] Hickethier, *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft*, 6.

sion of universities during the 1960s and 1970s, with a significant increase in the number of students, including a higher percentage of female students, led to a need for differentiation and new academic disciplines.

The development of the media itself also played a role in the emergence of media studies. The rise of television as the leading medium, along with the availability of new media technologies such as video, shaped the first generation of media scholars. These changes in media consumption and practices influenced the formation of aesthetic analysis and the need for expert knowledge in understanding film, television, and other media forms. The belated reception of the Frankfurt School's writings on media and the influence of French post-structuralism and postmodernism further contributed to the establishment of media studies as an academic discipline in the 1980s and 1990s.

Overall, the societal reasons for the emergence of media studies in Germany include the social and generational disruptions of the 1960s, the expansion of universities and the need for differentiation, the transformation of media technologies, and the influence of critical theories and cultural shifts. These factors led to a paradigmatic break with traditional cultural studies and the formation of media studies as a distinct field of knowledge and academic discipline.

I have also tried to provide a clear understanding of the connections between media studies and other disciplines in Germany. Media studies in Germany is closely related to cultural studies and has developed parallel to it. It has emerged from literary studies and has connections with theatre studies, film studies, and television studies. Media studies is particularly aligned with the history of knowledge and cultural studies, focusing on the development and implications of media techniques in generating, storing, representing, and transmitting perceptions, experiences, and knowledge.

Media studies extends beyond cultural studies and is relevant in other disciplines such as media sociology, media law, media economics, media psychology, and media informatics. In German studies, media are often studied in the context of film history, theory, and aesthetics. Media studies originated as critical social studies within pedagogy and German studies, which led to the strong presence of media pedagogy and media education as areas of knowledge. Visual/electronic media are also studied within theater studies and art.

Aesthetics is considered an integral part of media studies, and the discipline encompasses various methods and theories, including philological-hermeneutic, art-scientific, philosophical, sociological, and psychological approaches. Media studies in Germany has also

developed as "media theory" and gained recognition as German media theory, contributing to media philosophy and cultural technology research since the 2000s.

Overall, the institutionalization of media studies in Germany involved the establishment of research institutes, the formation of dedicated study programs, the establishment of new scholarly organizations, and the interdisciplinary exploration of media's cultural and historical significance. Media studies in the German context has a special focus on the history of knowledge and the intersection of technology and society. This has led to a close connection with Science and Technology Studies (STS), and with Actor–Network Theory (ANT). ANT gained prominence in media studies from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s, and the concept of mediality became central to the discipline, emphasizing the autonomy and specific logic of media. Media studies grapples with the concept of a medium, rejecting the everyday language understanding that equates it with transmission apparatuses, and instead focusing on the broader notions of mediality and media potential. The discipline explores the relationship between individual media/artifacts and their mediality and seeks to understand knowledge production in terms of media constituents and legitimacy. Media cultural studies, rooted in literary and cultural studies, recognizes the constitutional power of media as a dispositive that operates through various signs and influences individuals and society.

In *Cultural Studies Research in the German-Speaking World*, there is a broad understanding of media as encompassing any form of communication involving symbolic signs, including writing, images, and numbers. It also recognizes cultural techniques such as reading, writing, and arithmetic as media configurations. The discipline draws from historical contexts, including the history of writing, and incorporates texts from Greek and Roman antiquity. Media studies considers media as fundamental to human existence, shaping perception, cognition, and knowledge. It explores media as conditions of expression with social, cultural, political, individual, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions. The concept of media encompasses different sign natures, artistic forms, intermedia manifestations, and specific configuration levels of formats and genres. Intermediality is another major paradigm in media studies, providing systematic networking within cultural studies and serving as an integration point for various disciplines. Media studies has established itself as an independent field of knowledge with an open-ended object area and integral connections to cultural studies.

The cooperation between Germany and France in media and communication studies faces challenges due to the disciplinary division

between cultural media studies and social communication studies. However, joint degree programs and research alliances have promoted collaboration. The coordination of curricula, joint supervision of theses, and advisory services demonstrate the effects of this cooperation. The three levels that need to be considered in Franco-German cooperation concern: 1) institutions, 2) knowledge acquisition and science policy, and 3) content-related research topics and theories. The sociogenesis of the disciplines, intellectual biographies, institutional and national factors, and cooperation among scientific organizations play a role in shaping media studies. The disciplines of *Sciences de l'information et de la communication* (SIC) and *Medienwissenschaft* have distinct characteristics and theoretical resources. The history of knowledge, including language transfer and barriers, influences the formation of media theory. Institutionalization, subject area, content, and structure are important considerations for Franco-German cooperation in media studies. The international dimension is necessary for a meaningful history of media studies, requiring understanding and integration of different approaches and contexts.

Finally, in this article I described the "new materialist turn" in academic disciplines, particularly in the social sciences and humanities within the European Research Area. The materialist turn emphasizes the study of objects, apparatuses, and artifacts as they trace the history of knowledge and ideas. The focus on objects and boundary objects, especially in Science & Technology Studies and Actor–Network Theory, led to the emergence of network studies and interdisciplinary research. This approach gained importance in European studies, particularly in analyzing the impact of information and communication technologies on pan-European communication. Internationalization is a crucial aspect of this project, with European collaborations, bi- or tri-national study programs, and increasing Europeanization shaping the field.

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