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The social and societal change forces the communication theory to get developed from a simple operative (how-t-do-) theories to an universal one, from descriptive systematization to hermeneutic concepts (understanding consideration). The complexity of social phenomena demands complex methods of observation. Theories are intellectual interruptions of everyday observations. They observe everyday observations by (in the same time self reflected) observations. They are observations by understanding (explaining) intention. So they have to declare themselves as constructs by means of communication and of models of knowledge.

Premising that methodological condition it is not easy to reflect on future or on the signification of future in the context of social theories on communication, but it is more necessary then it ever was. An organized or self organizing society needs security of planning in every sector of social development. As communication is THE resource of organization, it is also a generating factor of future. This thesis has to be argued in a framework of communication theory – or better: in a framework of theorizing communication. It is first a problem of epistemology. Future has a strong position in societal communication – especially in an advanced organized society. The organizational interest of view tempts to conceptualize the society as an somehow materialized formation (structure) of relationships. The sociological terms follow this temptation quite far: the concepts of “role”, “relation”, “position” , “socialization”, etc. indicate stability and equilibrium, while terms like “crises”, “conflict” etc. indicate uncertainty.

As science has to be a reasonability of complexity, it has to be questioned – in the context of future studies - what is the communicative reason of future? Or what is the future reason of communication? What is the rationality of communicating the future?

### **Crisis as a factor of time**

Crisis and social change are phenomena, which challenge the communication science – maybe than it is developed until now. The epistemological interest of the theoretical concepts of communication still are more oriented in getting affirmed on (already proved and ruled) concepts of reality instead of getting confronted with aporia. Aporetical situations confront with fluidity of reality as it is a construction by communication. Fluidity itself is not to be understood as a linear flowing process, but better as a productive development of crisis. If there shall be sustainability of

what ever: nature, society, education, culture etc., it is only under conditions of crises. Crisis is the guarantee of change – and change the guarantee of evolution. Fluidity is a time-model of the intrinsic (endogen) diversity of social constructions: society, communication, culture, relationships etc. The fluidity of reality and experience can not be depicted in closed theories; it has to be conceptualized by fluid models of theory. Time is one of those concepts of fluidity.

Obviously time is - as space as well, and always connected to the concept of space – one of the most used referential concepts in interpreting social and individual existence. The experience teaches us that we gain knowledge over (surprising) experience, if we compare experience to experience in relation to overall concepts. Using them we become able to re-mind and to pre-mind, we become able to recollect and to pre-collect. Time is a concept, which allows giving a meaning to, what we experience now, for before and after. The concept of time gives us the possibility searching for reasons of what we experience now and the results, consequences – or even achievements. The concept of time is a culturally and evolutionarily developed model of knowledge in order to rationalize experience and it is a cultural program against the accidentality of events and in order to avoid pointlessness, better: to create sense and meaning.

Time is (as space as well) a communicative code, an agency model for connection and distinction. Time figures are models of rationality and concepts of construction of meaningful reality. So we come so far to say: Time structures communication and communication structures experience in the mode of time.

### **Future as a concept of time rationality**

That's why future is more than just a category of progress or improvement, Future is a concept of rationality of time-related experience or even more a concept of rationability of everyday acting.

Seen like that, future is a concept of sense, a conceptual program of making sense, an horizon of rationality of making experience, doing the practice on four levels.

- technical level: there is a casuistic relation between doing things now in order to achieve results then,
- organizational level: planning goals needs developing strategies,
- social / cultural relational level: future is a social / cultural category, insofar time is a resource of understanding (classifying) experience and reality,
- ethical / esthetical level: time (future) is a mental/social/cultural matrix of giving sense

As now, by this deduction, future is (besides a technical and organizational) a social and ethical (means also cultural) quality – it is an implicit and intrinsic dimension of communication, or orienting figure in constructing reality.

Future studies in context of social science – and in this conception – is not

- futurology ( casuistic interpretation of the state of processes towards further linear development, scientific and realistic view of developments, based on a causal-linear understanding of evolution – assuming nature rules in social connections),
- futuristics (mythology of not yet realized states, fictions, utopias etc.),
- it is somehow the understanding (objective-hermeneutical) observation of (everyday-) observation, expressed in acting, acting plans and in communication (about it) : discourses), it is the epistemologically supported theory of realizing (anticipating) acting by communication and realizing (preforming) communication by (inter-)acting, it is a theoretical method of applied communication analyses, the epistemology of scientific intervention in societal development, the epistemology of anticipating evaluation of constructive understanding reality related to a social code of time, space and human existence.

Future is a concept of knowledge – and in that senses a model of discourse. It orders and classifies experience and gives sensuous or even rational meaning to change. Since communication science deals with communication of society and with society of communication, and since communication gives a future meaning to the experience of change, surprise or crises, it requires communication science competence to discover, to study to analyze and to interpret to concepts of future as concepts of appropriation of reality.

### **Future: signification or repetition?**

Within the framework of communication theory there are two levels of an hermeneutical approach, established in two terms: mimesis and semiosis. The mimetic concept says: reality is created by reproducing experience, which is not simply a re-modeling of practice, but a recreating of meaning and sense. In that conceptualization of understanding the power of future communication is the way to invent and to discover the new dimension of sense by reproduction of acts.

The semiotic concept says: reality is performed by signification, which is a result by symbolic interaction. In that conceptualization the power of future is the power of signs or of designing communication.

But both approaches demount to understand future as an ethical category of communication, as a category of responsibility and accountability in negatiation with time, which is (I repeat!) a code of communication in order to chronify experience and to gain a reference point for memory and oblivion.

### **The challenge of societal developments**

Over the last decades, the sphere of societal communication has become more complex by leaps and bounds. Politics and economics are no longer negotiable by means of ipsilateral strategies or strategic units of “accomplices” between the diverse (political, economic and communicative) power centers, and thereby can no longer create a certain dominant approach. Citizens who have come into their own are no

longer prepared to accept an aesthetic fare of trivial “canned” conversations. The demarcation lines between politics and entertainment are being blurred. These lines in turn have been presented to the recipients by program directors in tacit agreement with the dominant cultural rankings. All this has been done with the implicit intention of a friction-free acceptance of the social order created by the media. Politics is increasingly becoming a part of entertainment (e.g., war coverage); entertainment programs are increasingly recognizing their political impact (e.g., talk shows). The economical distribution of sociality and power agrees less and less with the established structures of distribution. Stable and immobile systems are set into motion. Within this motion (which also means on the condition of open communication) these systems are facing the challenge to safeguard their continued socially valid existence, which is generated culturally and outside the hierarchical order.

The structural development of the media plays a decisive role in this process. In turn, it serves as an instrument of the active and productive monitoring of society, and it represents society, that is to say the society’s communicative relationships and movements. In the media, culture (which is always inherently flexible) meets its structural manifestation. In the following, two of the many exemplary developments are dealt with, namely the (1) internet and (2) convergence.

- (1) The internet has developed unusual distribution and exchange patterns of individual world-views. In the light of mass media rankings these are often seen as arbitrary. These patterns have established societal connections, which run across the hitherto social, cultural or national boundaries. By this, historical reference areas, which run across homogenized societal concepts of order, have emerged. This has occurred without a great ritual display of energy (i.e., public symbolization of power) and without formal social costs (i.e., public declarations of belonging). These historical reference areas, moreover, can be exchanged without social costs, and, again without a display of ritual energy. The transformations and movements in this system are three-fold: (1) the sociality of time, (2) the sociality of space, (3) the sociality of thematic relationships.

It is not only the distribution patterns that are being transformed. The changing societal distribution of social and cultural constructs, such as the concepts of time, space and relationships, also concerns the contents of social order itself. Time, space and relationships change their meanings by dealing with them in conventional (i.e., in relatively limited and in regulated order) and unconventional (i.e., in relatively unlimited and situational order) ways. Time relations become virtually; space relations become ubiquitous; social relations become reversible. Roles and role models turn out to be rather abstract constructs of a society obsessed with mental control. (Gebauer / Wulf 1989, 40 – 54)

Centers of power (political, economical, and cultural), which up to now have been taken for granted; see themselves in competition with the defocused epicenters of power. Hierarchies lose their addressees; situational and temporarily emerging communities are developing patterns of distribution and

participation, which are outside the hierarchical order, and in this manner, they develop civil societal models of corporation, subsidiary, and solidarity.

(2) The phenomenon of convergence

is not restricted technically and technologically (Latzer 1999, Maier 1999). The phenomenon that structures complement each others, and also substitute one another and further develop symbiotic and emergent models, is not only technically relevant, but also with regard to the contents. In this context, multimedia needs to be seen not only as a technical development, but also as a cultural form of creativity and productivity. Multimedia solutions (to whatever contents of usage) are at the same time multi-aesthetical constructs in a polysemous world. With an awareness of the constructive nature of the communicative world, it makes (creative) sense to deconstruct and also to converge content. Out of this, emerge not only critical reproductions of existing conditions, but also critical pointers for yet to be created and forgotten worlds. It is indeed the phenomenon of convergence which presents the real emancipative challenge for media literacy and media competence. All others and up to that point (convergence) produced “Aussagemodelle” (message models) required, within the framework of the dominant orders which produced them, at best the socio-technical compensation by practicing and repeating the socializing practice in order to critically understand them. The convergence processes called for more, they required the social practice, and the social usage of the media (Bauer 1979, Bauer 2000)

### **Crisis seen as a productive principle**

In this report on the accelerated development of society, which is only the barest of outline, two instances, which are in reflexive and autoconstitutive relation to each other, gain importance: communication and crisis. Those changes within society being addressed here are basically to be seen as obvious developments of communication. In as much as society is considered solely as a communicative perception of relationships, that is to say a (socio-cultural) sphere of relational sense and referenced meaning which is realized by the means of communication, communication is always relational, it is always meaningful and in turn is altered by the inherent meaning and in turn changes what it actually tries to convey. Meaning is as fluid as communication, by which in turn it is realized.

Because society is described as a relative clause of communication and communication is described as a relational social experience (the society), one variable (society) cannot be pinned down without the other (communication). At the same time, each conceptual or theoretical version of both variables is only a symbolic reconditioning of aporia and crisis. For this very reason, the willingness to create socially-integrative unions (society) and the willingness to achieve socially-integrative understanding should be seen as a cultural achievement of mankind and should not to be dismissed as a simple (nearly natural) requirement. Crises do not arise from of the resources of nature or natural evolution, but arise from interpretations of (natural) situations. Crises are caused by communication and

signification. Since communication and society are cultural achievements, they are only tenable in motion. This would not apply to a simple repetition of presumed nature, but solely in communication and society's continued regeneration (renovation as a principle of mimetic action). Communication as a disposition of society as such inherently cannot be regarded as anything else (or cannot be anything else), except the movement within the framework of relations (That means that it actually is a recognition of a crisis, which has no structural existence, except by its manifestation in the media). This is what we finally pin down as a structural society, which naturally can always be challenged by its principle of existence, the crisis.

In this context, it needs not to be said nor can one argue that the term crisis does not endeavor to deny the pain which is often connected with it, but it cannot be narrowed down to a concomitant to crisis. The term crisis describes the experience of the decisions, which are constantly required in a polysemous world. Each communication gives society a mimetically reproduced symbolic meaning; conversely, each socially conditioned experience calls for a mimetic reproduction of patterns of actions. In any case, there exists a cultural decision or its productive repetition.

The crisis, which is the principle of mobility of communication and society, thematizes itself within a concrete general condition of structural and objectified mental orders, and, above all, where the mental order organizes the distribution of sociality in the interest of dominant groups. This means that the communication (monosemy) enclosed therein, constitutes a dramatic and traumatic problem. If the contexts of meanings established by society (culture) do not allow for interpretation, then crisis adopts a dramatic course. Such situations without an expedient challenge the dramatic, often panicky energy of crisis. The purpose of the freedom of the mobility of communications is to thematize difference. Whenever such faults (chaotic energy) are not admissible, one foregoes the legitimacy of existence by the (critical) questioning and, therefore, one has to take into account the possibility of facing a (then dramatic, respectively, problematic) crisis. The crisis is a factor of productive communication. Crisis provokes the will to find meaning; crises even makes one change one's mind.

### **Discourses as organizing instances of time and space**

As a matter of course, societal communication refers to symbolic, technical and organizational structures. They are a river bed formed by a network which distributes the flow of meaning and thereby form a social landscape. Models of communication can neither be followed nor analyzed without an infrastructure. They distribute sociality, because they themselves participate in and also allow others to share in the different interpretations of subjective experiences. At the same time, such networks establish "topologically" defined spaces. Limits within the comprehensible and controllable parameters of social and sensual complexity emerge. Within constructive limits, routes and routines of the levels of meanings emerge. In the course of their usage, these constitute orders which are nothing but a control of the controls. In this sense, all contexts of communication are comprehensible discourses.

Conversation creates a reality and this reality is to be understood and at the same time to be controlled. This process concerns at the very least the desire of power or sign literacy; it mostly concerns power in itself (Foucault 1978)

Seen in this light, discourses are social spaces with an internal structure for the distribution of power amongst each other, but also opposite the things (objects), which are realized by that discourse. The things (experiences) do not have the order (position, meaning, relations to other meanings) in themselves; it is assigned to them during and through the discourse. What the things then are or mean, is controlled within social procedures of designation in such a way that possible procedures of compression are thereby restricted in number (complexity) so that existing orders are confirmed, not irritated. The definition of the control procedures has been impressively interpreted by Michael Foucault in "The Order of Discourse." He describes how the discourses control themselves in order not to degenerate into randomness or arbitrariness. Classification, arrangement, distribution, and limitation are the procedures, which are made possible by means of commentary, authorization and penalty. By these, discourses are maintained within the limits of time and space in their importance.

As space, time is also a social definition of limitation. As space, time is also a rationalization in the search for orientation in a relational world of possible meanings. Space and time are relational figures (codes) for structuring the experience among ego and alter in the scheme of now and then or proximity and distance. The schemes of time and space appear within the discourses as orders of chronification in the form of stories and narrations (Schmidt 2003)

In this way of thinking, the future is nothing else than the designation of the unfinished, the untried experience of the not-yet-located self-realization expressed within the time scheme. In its meaning, it represents a relational construction of development, possibility and probability. Within the meaning of the constructive perception of time, the future can only be made possible by that which is feasible, past or present. The existence of the present depends on the possibility of a future. The past can only exist in connection with the present. The future is an organizing principle of meaning, just the same as the presence and the past. The future is not fictitious, even if it is a semantic and operative fiction (i.e., the model of future constructs connectivities of perception and of action) and it is also not coincidental, although the unexpected can always happen. It is not born by a body which is not accessible to mankind, although it represents an up to then not envision and not realized variable.

### **Discourse analysis as an interpretative topology of humanity**

The challenge of communication sciences is obvious: future is a topic that is always present and at the same time always historical. It is the expectation that turns experiences and achievements into history, and that also gives shape and meaning to the present. Experiences which are thought to be relevant to the future (i.e., consequences) have another signification of and in present time compared to those

which are not thought to be relevant or significant to the future. Present is the unifying focus by which we distinguish past from future. Is there a meaningful difference, then (acting in) present time is meaningful as well. Therefore, it is not the task of future studies to organize the present discourses towards certain aims. Future studies are an observation of the “third order:” in a methodical (hermeneutical) manner, they observe those time inclusions which in turn have been observed by mankind. Those are the societal discourses in which they find themselves involved. When calling to mind the factor crisis, attention must be paid, above all, to how the discourses (as for example health, religion, environment, poverty, wealth, hunger, etc.) deal with such inclusions of time and meaning, which they themselves might have possibly falsified or left unmentioned. In that sense, discourses are endangered and dangerous, where dialogues fail, where contradictory findings as critical references fail, because they are declared to be nonsensical. In a media world, which, always endeavors to accommodate, this is a structurally implemented crisis factor. Discourses respectively media discourses do not only organize knowledge, but they also organize ignorance, refusal, blindness, the public and private silence, public stupidity. Discourses suppress, cover up, estrange, and deny. However, none of this should be considered as outside the human scope. Whatever the intentions of communication are, communication is the dealings of mankind with the certainty and with the aporia in relation to the presumed truth. The location of this experience is communication in the modes of dialogue and discourse. Insofar discourses describe the mirror image of mankind of itself and thereby reveal the human element, discourse analysis is the interpretative search for those (social) places, in which the human actions occur: mankind’s lost search for itself in the past, present and future.

In this context, again, it becomes apparent that communication sciences gamble away their critical and communicative competence, wherever it invests into the theoretical-pragmatic organization of (discourse-) structures as opposed to hermeneutical empathy of the mundane. The probability of sustained thinking is to be found in the implicit and mostly unincorporated (unordered) knowledge. This represents the everyday associations of meanings and interpretations not only in structural poses, but also in the form of timid sketches, hesitant gestures or silent signs. Discourses do not just impart explicit, but also implicit knowledge, that is to say those procedures through which hunches are dismissed, goals are lost or experiences are forgotten.

### **Future Studies in the context of communication sciences**

In light of the thoughts on the interweaving of crisis and discourse outlined above, it is obvious that future as a scholarly topic cannot be left to futurism (biological, evolutionary continuation of the observation of rules in the future) or futurology (phenomenological-based predictions of crisis phenomena in the context of technology, economics and society). The analysis of the future and future-related questions in the social and cultural-sciences is in need of an implicit and open complexity of the formation of socially-binding contexts of meanings (communication culture). Accordingly, this should be a complexly conceived theoretical model, which can picture - conceptually and methodologically - the

fluidity and dynamics of future as a matrix of meanings. This can only be achieved by a model centered on communication. Why? Because

- communication is considered to be the social way of unifying difference and distributing the sociality of (any) experience (Bauer 2002),
- communication is the social agency of building collective knowledge and the stage of constructing the universe of consciousness and
- communication is considered in contextual relation to identity, morality and a willingness of sense.

Once the internal as well as external complexity of the ratio's elements which determine the future subject (time, motion, experience, meaning and society), is emphasized and it is understood that, in this ratio, a creative and productive factor (i.e., crisis) is to be discovered, then it is a matter of course to concentrate the scholarly view upon this matter. It follows that the societal relevance as well as the competence of communication sciences with regards to contents in connection with an analysis of the societal conception of future is accomplished. A conception of future studies in the communication sciences should contain the following theoretical and methodological modules:

- A theoretical conception of the principle of crisis as a dispositive for the communicative productive practice
- Theoretical conceptions of the construction of experience: chaos theories, system theories, scientific models of strategy, evolution, development work (as outlines for the systematization and classification of theoretical and pragmatic conceptions of the future)
- Critical models interpreting societal crisis phenomena (as an explanation of problems of societal communication and of its possible solutions - discourse analysis)
- Practice of future-oriented actions (effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability) – as a model for the active intervention in critical states of society, as a form of therapeutic intervention
- Projective-interpretative and discourse methods of analysis (as a participatory means of procedures, in which those affected become participants)
- Qualitative models of preventive analysis of present discourses in order to create awareness for crises dramas (dramatized crises) in time.

### **Study the future: future is not a thing to be invented**

Understanding the future as a scientific reliable matrix of meaning of societal actions is to interpret the matrix contextually and to mediate the results interdisciplinary. Nowhere else is meaning put to the test than in the case of crises. Crises are the communicative-productive location for decisions of models of meanings of human existence, expressed in mimetic action patterns. Actions become meaningful because they reproduce the culturally-mediated basic models of morality, aesthetics, and usefulness of a (internal as well as external) motion. The (individual) action itself conveys meaning by referring to the symbolic plane of the societal environment's

habitants of meaning. In this sense, crisis-driven actions convey decisional meaning and, by this, they draft a significant horizon for the future (future actions).

Insofar crisis is a dispositive of communication; it is aimed at the future. It calls for decisional meaning, productivity and creativity. In as much as crises are a reference to (non-perceived) alternatives and phenomena of the subsequent demand of critical moments for the construction of creative and productive meanings, they are aimed at the future. Crisis and crises are the experience's time-relational references of meaning. Present decisions or past decisions either save or promise changes in the future (changeover of attitudes).

The future is a category of discourse relevant to the purpose. It thematizes itself as a time-relation (concern, precaution, fear, hope, expectation, aporia) of meaning as well as a meaning and interpretation of time. By this, it is an object of future studies.

### **Future Studies: an intentional intervention of knowledge systems**

Future studies are not just a system to analyze (observe discourses) they are themselves an intentional discourse. Their aim is to open up future as a scholarly relevant and authorized field of study. The discourse, which future studies are to set into motion, cannot be so easily validated in academic theory. It stands in theory and methodology at the intersection of empiricism and intervention, truth and probability. On the one hand future, in the sense outlined above, is neither a simple mirroring nor a strategic repetition of the past. It is a symbolic codification of what is thought not yet to exist (pictures in former times have been made in order to invoke the appearance of what is absent or mythical). So, too, language is a mimetic construct of meaning relating to experience. In this sense, future contains a quality of probable action of the (still) improbable. On the other hand, future, according to the concept detailed above, is not completely fictitious, but is a decision born out of a crisis which is given meaning by actions. In this sense, future includes a quality of communicative truth, which, however, also includes utopias.

It is actually important to find which priorities are set for a concept of future studies in communication sciences, and also which limits are set and which critical categories are employed. In this context, it is not surprising, that here again we emphasize the fact that such a conceptual decision may not occur on the basis of trivial concepts of communication (operative theories, object theories of communication). Universal and culturally-conscious theories are required and the (already ritualized and thematized) contexts should be seen in the lights of these. Over and above, theories and methods should be applied which make the systems less similar, deconstruct routines, and subject the well-ordered conditions to the stress of deregulated thought. In the sense of this intentional discourse, future studies are a hypothetical sphere of intelligible rule breaking. The latter does not only intend a creative effect but also creates the feasibility (authorship) of a differing spirit.

The fields of action, in which such a concept can lead to the development of societal conditions is not only possible but also necessary and should in actual fact be

demanded. There are many of these, above all, such which have been formed and developed by communication: environment, health, religion, social cohabitation, work, education, sustained economics, intercultural and trans-cultural understandings and development work, the disabled, crime, and piece, war, terror etc. It is, above all, the cross sections topics, which have been neglected by communication sciences in theory, analysis and occupational training. The linear aim of the occupational fields of action of communication within the media (journalism, public relations, advertising, marketing, etc.) has neglected the fact that communication work may possibly mean a thematically transversal competence. In contrast, the professional aim is legitimized by the increasing adaptation to the media-process-logics. This in turn must necessarily lead to the strategy of occupationally optimized performance at the moment of selection (exclusion procedure) of those challenges to prove that these contradict such a (technical) logic. Focusing on the fields of action of a recognizable social meaning and on the question how these can be released within the passage of time so that human enterprises are conceived as an image of this meaningfulness, calls for a model of competence that has no justification other than within the social sphere of actual communication.

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