

Intermedial Passages in Time and Space

Contexts, Currents and Circuits of Media Consumption

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Media are tools for communicating across space and time. They are technologies of culture, socially organised machineries for constructing meanings, identities and forms of power. Media use is always spatially and temporally located, while simultaneously both representing and effectively shaping space and time. Each specific media use is also anchored in multiple networks of mediation, where single media are intrinsically interconnected and interdependent. A critical cultural studies perspective on mediated communication acknowledges its powerful social and spatial contexts, its shifting temporal processes and its open and heterogeneous internal structures.

Experiences from the large Swedish media ethnographic *Passages* project highlight some consequences of such a perspective for media and communication studies at large.¹ I will focus on three aspects that became central to this interdisciplinary project and that invite reworking key perspectives within current media studies in general, relating to some basic spatial, temporal and relational aspects of mediated communication. The project worked as a collective research team, combining multifarious methods and perspectives in a study of media use in everyday practices. The starting-point was a large shopping centre, where a wide range of media genres and media users were present. The rich results can be summarised along three main dimensions. (1) Starting in a specific place made it possible to develop an awareness of the *spatial* aspects of media use. (2) Following the *temporal* processes of media use from beginning to end acknowledged the processual character of encounters between media and people. (3) Looking for *intermedial relations* between media types and genres was a way to avoid isolating and reifying any of them. I will in turn discuss some preliminary conclusions for media studies at large that can be drawn in each of these directions, based on a selection of findings.

1. Spatial Contexts of Media Places

Cultural phenomena are defined by the communicative interplay between people and media in specific settings, as identities, meanings and power are produced in multiple and dynamic triplets of subjects, texts and contexts.² Much research in traditional media studies starts with one particular medium, media genre or even an individual text, investigating how it is structured, produced, distributed or used by different people in various cir-

cumstances. Thus, there are studies of genres, industries or uses of television, or of the press, of news, of docusoaps or even of some particular TV series. Research on reception has instead often chosen to focus on specific categories, groups or even individuals as media users, in order to see how they interact with some kinds of media in different places. There are thus studies of the media worlds of children, of immigrants and of families. The Passages project chose to instead let a specific physical place and social space define its research field. This made it possible to see other things and to acknowledge how a wide range of media and of people cross each other's passages and flows, instead of isolating them from each other.

Deciding to start in a specific *spatial setting*, rather than with one particular medium or genre, or one single category or group of media users, was not a totally unique decision. Growing efforts are made in social anthropology, interactionist sociology and cultural geography to use ethnographic methods to understand localised media practices in everyday life, and these efforts often tend to enter specific places and map out the media uses taking place there.³ Still, there are surprisingly few examples of competent media studies of complex communication processes in specific locations. This can partly be explained by a traditional division of work according to a habitual fixation to inherited media categories, so that scholars tend to reproduce the divisions between cultural industries (and their corresponding trade unions). But it may also be an effect of a general blindness to spatial contexts, and a tendency to treat media processes as if they took place in a placeless vacuum.

There are necessarily limitations to all approaches. Starting with a specific place where people meet media may well tend to reify that space and hide other kinds of surrounding or distant places through which these media and people also move. However, as a corrective to the research mainstream, a place-sensitive approach is definitely welcome. Also, certain places are extraordinarily open to and densely crossed by plural flows of media and people, thus inviting a problematisation of the very concepts of place and space as such. The *Passages* project chose one such kind of space – a shopping centre. First, shopping centres are made to attract wide sets of potential consumers, and thus are not monopolised by very specific social groups, in terms of age, gender, profession, class, ethnicity or cultural taste. Second, they also aim to trade a wide range of media commodities, while also being the setting for use (by visitors, customers, employees and management) of even further kinds of media within the walls of the centre. Third, shopping centres have inherited from the classical 19th century arcades the ambivalent characteristics of being “house no less than street”.⁴ Some visitors make themselves at home and experience centres as bounded spaces with a strong local identity, while others just pass through them, hardly noticing their walls and borders. And while some media are sold or used in ways that help constructing the centre as a delimited space, others do not respect its borders at all. For instance, ads in magazines and on posters will mediate the identifying slogans of the centre, and the photo shop may be filled with images of local celebrities that constantly remind customers of where they are in geography. On the other hand, media chain stores for records, pictures or computer games may not particularly mark out the peculiarities of a certain locality, and a mobile phone user may walk through a centre entrance without paying any notice of that threshold. Centres are thus at once places and non-places: local unities as well as crossroads for open-ended currents of commodities and people.

Shopping centres certainly differ in their degree of social, medial and spatial openness. Some are rather narrow in scope, geared towards specialised population strata or

with a very limited range of media shops, or in architecture and design circumscribing that potential transient openness which big market places have historically always offered. Solna Centre near Stockholm was carefully selected for containing the widest possible range of media stores and visitor categories. It also turned out to be designed and used in highly open ways.

The interplay between people and media – including so-called new media – are always spatially contextualised, in spite of the inherent transgressivity of communication. Places frame and delimit media uses, which at the same time form spatialities as meaningful geographic places and social worlds.

First, all media use is *spatially located, framed and determined*. On one hand, there are material and technical limitations related to access of electricity, network coverage etc. Books and papers tend to dissolve under water and cannot be read in the dark. Before transistors, light-weight batteries, micro electronics and the establishment of far-reaching radiation nets, radio, television, records, telephones and computers were all strictly bound to fixed and mostly indoor stations for use, and there still are geographic or climate conditions where they normally do not work. On the other hand, there are functional and social limitations as well. It is hard to watch movies on the dance floor or the football arena – at least for the dancers and players in question. It is impolite to let your phone ring while holding a lecture or making love. Likewise, when media can be (and are) used, the place of use interferes with that use, affecting the interpretations made. The place of reading, listening or viewing is not neutral to the meaning or pleasure that media texts offer. Having read a text at home, at school, in the subway or on vacation makes a difference to how you experience it. For my own part, I can actually in my memory directly connect many books I have read to the exact places where I read them: on some train or beach which continues to be for me forever mentally bound to that particular text. And even when such links are not consciously remembered, they make a difference to interpretation that is too rarely acknowledged and explored in media studies.

Second, media *represent* places and spaces, and afford them meaning. In our project, we found many examples of mediated “place identities” – media texts representing a location and associating it with historical, cultural and social meanings. In fact, no place or space can ever be thought or experienced in a pure way, without such symbolic meanings attached. We may try to experience a building or a street in a raw, physical and “meaning-less” manner, but being human beings, we are doomed to culture, bound to always make interpretations, so that our experiences will always immediately be coloured by signifying associations. Not all is already language, but all tends continuously to be drawn into meaning-making. The centre itself was in one respect a nontextual structure of cement and glass, framing material movements of things and organisms, but it was always also more or less consciously understood and experienced as a kind of text – read by management and visitors alike to mean different things. And this faculty of making meaning was actively played with in all architecture and design. In the other direction, all media texts repeatedly refer to spatial forms and symbolically reconstruct them as *virtual spaces*.⁵ The spaces narrated, depicted or implicitly referred to in computer games, posters or film music interact with the spaces in which this media are used. This interaction is sometimes rather arbitrary, but at other times deliberately planned and utilised in order to modify spatial identification. The shopping centre used web pages, ads, signposts, placards and mural paintings to remind of historical events that located the centre as a unique place and invested it with intentionally positive meanings, in order to attract visitors and make them eager to consume there. Solna Centre identified itself by

referring to Solna's popular football team (AIK) and to its honourable history as the cradle of Swedish film production. Such references in and around the centre marked out its identity and its difference from competing centres. Some visitors were attracted to that local identity, identifying with the place and its history, while others might be repelled, for instance if they had another favourite team. There were also internal tensions in how the centre depicted itself in its marketing, for instance between the stress on "feeling at home" and the wish to create a sense of excitement with the alternate slogan that the centre was supposed to be a "centre of events".⁶

Third, media uses *created* social spaces within the centre. A study of mobile phones showed how they formed talk spaces that intersected geographical space: bound physically distant places together while drawing circles around the talking individual, separating her or him from the surrounding others who could not hear the distant voice and were not expected to interfere in the dialogue. Persons reading papers on a bench likewise were surrounded by a kind of invisible and silent halo that socially prevented others from disturbing their reading. Social communicative rules for media use sometimes changed abruptly when crossing entrances to the centre and to various stores and other spaces. The library was for example full of little signs forbidding mobile phone talk, and the books and papers found there could be read and borrowed but not sold, in contrast to the bookshop offering. Places of and for media use (street, library, magazine shop etc.) were dialectically intertwined with places in media use – those virtual arenas constructed in media use and those distant places to which media connected. Talking in a phone or reading a paper you could connect to people and events far away, for instance in your old home town if you were immigrant from a foreign part of Sweden or another continent. Certain places in the centre were like doors that opened up for such transitional and often transnational connections, and echoes from those distant places sort of vibrated also in the various media shops, through sounds, images and memories reminding of somewhere else.

All these intersecting ways in which media use related to spatial localisation were also fields of *struggle for power over space*. There were continuous struggles between individual shops and chains, centre staff and management, producers and distributors, and visitors and customers of different kinds. The commercial interests of market agents intersected conflictually with public interests administered by state and municipality institutions and with private and public interests in civil society, defended by individuals, groups, associations and media. Not only did senior citizens and shop owners quarrel about the number of benches for resting; there were also contradictory views on the balance between public art and commercial ads in the cityscape of a centre that was simultaneously a town centre and a shopping centre. Another line of debate related to the amount of freedom of expression for political and other associations on the squares and streets that had been made indoor spaces with the adding of a glass roof in 1989. Issues of communication thus related to issues of public and communal versus private and commercial space.

The decision to start in a specific place, and specifically in a large and complex place like a shopping centre, had crucial *methodological implications* for the project. First, starting in a place made *participant observation* a main source of knowledge, mapping out the flows and structures at large, rather than beginning with individual ideas or media texts. Interviews and textual interpretation were also used intensely, but the observational aspects of ethnography had a certain priority. Second, the size and complexity of the place made group work necessary. *Collectivity* was developed into a conscious tool for knowledge production, demanding a high degree of careful planning and engineering of

the research team. The lessons from this large work have been reflected upon in the project's last Swedish volume, edited by social anthropologist Lena Gemzöe and dealing with media ethnography in relation to issues of reflexive anthropology.⁷ Some such issues are the concept of field in globalised late modern network society; the implication of a cultural studies perspective for media ethnography; hermeneutic ethnography versus methodological fetishism; agency and structure in fieldwork; role conflicts in fieldwork at home; uses of photography to visualise the field; historical sources in contemporary fieldwork; and administrative, social and scientific aspects of organising interdisciplinary project collectivity.

Starting in a specific space as open and ambiguous as a shopping centre not only dissolved some artificial boundaries between media types and between groups of media users, but also *problematized basic concepts* like space and place, border and movement, field and locality. This connected well to recent theory development in media anthropology and cultural geography, where the attention to mediatisation, migration, globalisation and transnational flows has questioned routine ways of conceiving fieldwork as a focused visit to one foreign and well defined location.⁸ The intensified flows of people, commodities and media across space make such assumptions obsolete, demanding new ways of defining the object as well as the methods of research. What is a field, if not a bounded area? How to ethnographically study cultural flows that seem to respect no geographical boundaries, while still remaining conscious of the continuing importance of spatial locations? The collective media ethnography of the *Passages* project came to grip with key issues in recent anthropology, but it also took part in the development of media studies, where there is also an ongoing discussion on the values and problems of ethnographic methods.⁹ The project highlighted neglected spatial aspects of media and communication processes, showing multifarious ways in which spaces and places frame and are formed by media use.

2. Temporal Currents of Media Consumption

Secondly, the decision to look at media use in the shopping centre environment drew attention to the specific use forms related to *consumption* of commodities.¹⁰ This hinted at a problematic of currents of media consumption, i.e., the *temporal processes* involved when people interact with media. Deciding not to freeze media use into still moments of reception, made it possible to investigate the shifting passages through which media and people encounter each other. This meant restoring the full arc of consumption acts that have been sadly bifurcated by the division between consumption research and media studies: from (selection and) purchase to use (and disposal). These two areas of research have developed with remarkably little mutual contact, and they start with completely different concepts of consumption. In most of research on shopping and consumption – whether marketing and economic or anthropological and cultural studies – consumption is understood mainly as the selection and acquisition of commodities or services, involving a transfer of money. However, in research on media use – whether in political economy or cultural studies kinds of reception studies – consumption is instead understood as the use of these goods. This means for instance buying or renting a video in the first case, watching it in the second. Daniel Miller's anthology *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies* (1995) is an interesting example, where all chapters treat consumption as acts of purchase, except the final one by David Morley on "Consumption theories in media studies", which only treats consumption as use. This total contrast

in the definition of consumption does not even seem to be noted by the editor or any of the authors involved.

This is again a polydimensional interface where media use is both framed by time limits and take actively part in representing time and in making time. Several kinds of temporal frames to media use were found, which simultaneously also created and recreated temporalities.

First, media use is always *located in time*, bound to time. It is organised in daily, weekly, annual, generational and life-span cycles, slightly different for each kind of medium – and for each individual. I read the paper for breakfast, start working at the computer in the morning, listen to radio news at lunch, make some afternoon phone calls, listen to a cd and watch evening television and then read a book at bedtime. Media correlate to my daily life rhythms, and even help organise them so that I am in phase with the surrounding world. Also, each act of media consumption takes its definite time. Watching a poster or postcard image may take just an instant, while reading a book, watching a movie or following a soap opera occupies a very different time span.

Media consumption acts are processual practices, and cannot be reduced to those focal acts of reception alone. They are prolonged and dispersed chains of encounters between people and media, comprising at least four consecutive phases of shifting length, character and location, and which might be broken off at any stage. First, there is the phase of *selection*, where you hear about a certain software or hardware product and start thinking about buying it. Then comes the actual act of *purchase*, exchanging money for the commodity in question. This is followed by the *use*, and the process ends with some kind of *disposal*, through destruction, sale or gift. Paying attention to these processes and phases of media consumption made it possible to discern important differences and relations between media uses.

Consumption processes are densely intertwined, as open sets of media and people cross each other's paths through various times and spaces. Through a shopping centre like that in Solna, a great number of media commodities and human beings pass in and out at all moments. These *passages* give rise to an immense number of different kinds of *meetings*, where people meet people (interaction, identification), media meet media (intermediality, intertextuality) and people meet media (consumption, interpretation, representation).¹¹ It is worth analysing for different sets of media and people in what pace and place each phase of consumption occurs. Some phases are fast, others slow, some are located in public places, others at home. Also, the forms of consumption differs. Media (texts as well as machines) can be bought, hired, borrowed, stolen, self-made or received as a gift. Some media are sold as commodities, others offered as common public goods (for instance as loans in a library), yet others transferred as interpersonal gifts. Those media commodities that are sold and used in discrete units may be called "*simple*": books, journals and printed pictures. Other media are "*double*" in that their use require a combination of software (texts) and hardware (decoding machines): radio, television, records, videos, telephones, computers. Sales may be organised *by the piece* (books) or through some kind of *subscription* (journals, television). Among double media, the software units may be packaged as *things* (materially separable units, like tapes or records) or as *flows* (as with broadcast media). Some such differentiations between single/double, piecemeal/subscription and thing/flow media are relatively fixed across time and space, but there is rarely a purely physical and thus universal determination here. The consumption forms of different media are always the result of historical processes where practical, technical, economic and social factors combine. They may also be variable

between countries and instances. Intricate social conventions regulate how media are supposed to circulate as various kinds of commodities, common goods, loans, private gifts and self-produced use values. All these variants can be further explored and systematised only with a careful attention to the temporal processes of intersecting consumption acts. Their significance is lost or misrepresented when consumption research is reduced to studies of shopping and media reception research focuses exclusively on the interpretations and uses of media texts.

The processes of media consumption that form multifarious temporal chains of acquisition and use also affect time at all levels, from present moments to historical memories that shape identities. Inspired by Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, the Passages project developed a historical perspective on how the past, present and future are combined when media structure modern daily life.¹² This was not only a matter of registering statistical trends in media consumption, but also of acknowledging and interpreting the ways in which historical traces are present and reconstructed within today's media world. Media *represent* and *recreate* different times: depict night and day, summer and winter, past and present, as *virtual times*. Nostalgia is only one obvious example of this mechanism whereby mediated and mediating texts colour and reconstruct memories, history and individual as well as collective identities.

There is no sharp limit between reproduction and production. Media not only represent "real" time and affords it specific meanings by reinforcing certain cultural associations. They clearly also *construct* and invent time, in particular through the collaboration between media time (the temporal processes of media use) and mediated time (temporalities represented in media texts). Let me just mention one such example: the way Solna Centre constructed the annual seasons. This indoor place was not strongly tied to the external seasons and weather conditions, but could at least well stretch the temporalities of the surrounding world within its own walls, with the aid of ventilation, light, decoration, ads and events. For instance, public communication from the centre constructed the seasons in such a way that winter hardly existed at all, while instead Christmas was treated as one long season of its own, from mid October to early February.¹³

There are also important *methodological consequences* of these temporal aspects. In *consumption research* – whether social-economic or cultural-ethnographic – only the act of acquisition through purchase (shopping) is usually noticed. In *media studies*, on the other hand – again, whether of the political economy or the cultural studies variety – it is instead only the acts of use that are paid attention to, and then only those uses that have to do with interpretation of texts through reading, viewing or listening (reception). That gap is really obvious and annoying. Key works in consumption studies, like Miller (1998) and Miller et al. (1998), completely avoid to integrate issues of media use in their concepts of consumption, whereas media reception studies notoriously neglect the acts of shopping that are the prerequisite for interpretative reception.¹⁴ By mending the problematic gap between media and consumption research, one can fruitfully restore the full chains of consumption and acknowledge the many shapes and forms they each (and in every phase) may take. For consumption research, the challenge is to fully integrate media commodities but also to extend the scope of study to the uses made of what people shop. For media studies, the challenge is instead to include the acquisition of media commodities – and the key forms and effects of the commodity form itself in relation to communication practices – but also to include historical aspects and the production of temporality through media uses. In this way, reception studies may be enriched and developed into a wider understanding of how people and media interact in many different

ways, of which the work of interpretation taking place in reading, viewing and listening is only one particular use form among others (such as presents for others, self-mirroring or status-rising collecting, etc.) – even though it may be a core and even defining use value of cultural artefacts and media products. The combination of *contemporary ethnographic fieldwork* and an *historical perspective* inspired by Walter Benjamin was another interdisciplinary effort in this context.

3. Relational Circuits of Media Types

Third, instead of at the outset fixating a definite and limited set of media, the project included all possible kinds of media and media use found within the centre. This posed questions about *what constitutes a communication medium*. Those questions were studied both analytically (through a conceptual reworking of basic categories in relation to key theories) and in the field (people's everyday understandings of the concept of media).

The very concept of “a medium” is surprisingly vague and commonly used in highly divergent senses. Some of the project's informants shared the rather limited idea of much media research, focusing on press, radio and television. But most had quite different definitions, not only including telephones, homepages, computers and computer games, cameras, movies, videos, ads, CDs and books, but also copper threads or “everything one sees or hears”. In fact, the manager of the centre even talked about the whole centre as one big medium, its 9 million annual visitors who pass its windows, signs and posters in some way being comparable to the readers of a daily newspaper.¹⁵

A close reading of classical and contemporary texts in media studies actually offers little clarification when it comes to offering a useful and consistent definition of media.¹⁶ So much research is still tied to the journalistic practices of producing information and news, while systematically neglecting mass-produced genres like entertainment, fiction and games as well as interpersonal communication through phone, post or computer networks, or interactive/productive media uses like in photography or web pages. There is generally no theoretical justification for this, only a conventional habit to mirror the conventions and interests of certain media industries. This sad fact makes more general studies of mediated communication to a large extent absent in media and communication studies, relegated to other disciplines and fields like sociology, ethnology, anthropology, literary “media history” or separate departments for digital media.¹⁷ There are of course individual media scholars who find such basic theoretical work inspiring, but among dominant voices in the Nordic disciplinary mainstream, this is depressingly rare. Instead, conservative arguments are repeated for keeping media and communication studies confined to political science approaches to news genres in press and broadcasting, and for marginalising broader perspectives inspired by cultural studies, cultural sociology, social anthropology, gender studies and Internet studies. This aggressive fencing-off may be seen as a defence against acknowledging a paradigmatic crisis in that disciplinary mainstream itself, but it has sad material results in effectively shutting dissidents out from any strong position in the field. Actually, a wider sense of media would offer a better chance to see how specific media – including those favoured by conventional media studies – function in a wider context in a late modern world where all media forms are in practice closely interrelated.

Media industries and research have conventional ways to define and differentiate media types. These boundaries – both the external ones around what may function as media and the internal ones between different media – are challenged by technical, social and cultural transformations, in particular by the *intermedial flows and hybrids* that

have been intensified by the development of digital and telecom technology. The *Pas-sages* studies made visible a series of such cooperative practices, border cases and fusions that highlighted limitations of traditional categories. There was a close connection between the need for theoretical reflection on basic media concepts, the demand for studying a much wider set of media and the importance of acknowledging various kinds of intermedial crossings.

The Danish book market expert Hans Hertel, among others, has found tendencies towards a *media symbiosis*, suggesting that cultural circuits are increasingly closely connected by a “*media lift*”, which transports specific works, characters, narratives and genres up or down across various borders and hierarchies that previously seemed relatively stable.¹⁸ Late modern tendencies toward media *convergence* are not limited to digital media, though these form a push factor in that process. Coding in digital form enables technical, institutional and textual fusions, creating new multimedia but also new intermedial connections.¹⁹ Some interplays between media are *intertextual*, others *extra-textual*, depending on whether two textual units or two material apparatuses are related to each other or not. A novel can tell about fateful phone calls or mention a specific film narrative, but it may also just happen to be placed beside a postcard in the bookshop window. Textual connections can in their turn relate to aspects of either *form* or *content*, in that either stylistic design or semantic levels are activated. A further distinction is between those intermedialities founded on (substantial or formal) *similarity* and those based on (spatial or functional) *proximity* between the two media. In practice however, real media relations are impure mixtures of these main types. For instance, similarity often makes proximity possible – and vice versa.

The interplay between media can occur with a varying degree of intensity and activity, from simple connection, over some kind of exchange, to a more thorough transformation of the media involved. Another distinction may be made according to how symmetric the relation is between the two. The multiplication of these two dimensions results in six main types of intermediality.

When two media or media texts are only passively compared to each other without being affected or transformed themselves, there is a relatively simple relation of *grouping*. Media and/or texts may be treated as similar or related in some way, based on their perceived similarity or proximity, or some mixture of them both. One example is when texts are combined into genres according to some principle of affinity, for instance on the shelves of a CD store, a library, or in the consumer’s home.

When both media are activated in a combined action or joint use practice, which still respects their distinct identities, there is, some form of multimedial *co-operation*. One example is when texts accompany and fuse with other texts, such as prefaces, commentaries and covers to videos or records, or when films, books, papers, radio and television programmes work as a joint ensemble to push each others in promoting a certain phenomenon, with Harry Potter and Disney film characters as well-known examples.

An even more radical (but still symmetric) combination of two previously separate media forms and practices fuses them into a single multimedial hybrid unit. Obvious examples of such *fusion* are of course offered by digital technologies (computers, web phones) in which several previously distinct forms may be seamlessly combined.

If fusion is an intense but symmetric combination of two media, *substitution* may be regarded as an equally radical but asymmetric one. CDs may not fully have replaced vinyls, but computers have almost superseded typewriters and who uses old kinds of duplicating machines when there is the photocopier?

Co-operation may be regarded as an active kind of grouping, where different media (texts) still remain relatively separate and unchanged as such. It may however also include some form of *transfer* where one medium or text more actively engages with, integrates and transforms forms and/or contents from another one. (a) This kind of intermediality may take the form of intertextual *references* – direct quotations, pastiche works or hidden allusions – to texts deriving from some other medium. (b) A second sub-type consists of *translations* of whole works, of specific narratives or of more general themes and genres between media: Dracula or the detective genre moving from novels to films to computer games, or images moving from photos to posters. (c) A third category is the *remediation* processes whereby new media forms imitate older ones, borrowing intratextual (formal) or extratextual (material) characteristics (rather than semantics or narratives) from an older medium.²⁰

Finally, *thematization* is a kind of asymmetric, hierarchic or reflexive transfer where the active medium explicitly thematizes another medium, based on a symbolic representation of that medium, rather than an imitation of its aspects. There is a range of genres here, from essays of cultural critique and book reviews in magazines to representations of phones and television in ads or literary fiction or as material artefacts (candy, key-chains).

The six types are interrelated in that they combine two axes: symmetry and activity. Symmetrical combinations can be radical as in fusion, active but respecting distinctions as in co-operation, or rather passive as in grouping. Asymmetrical relations can likewise be radical substitutions, active transfers where both media remain distinct, or thematizations where what is transferred does not basically affect the other medium in which is incorporated. Fusion, co-operation and grouping are symmetrical combinations of media side by side. Substitution, transfer and thematization are asymmetrical relations, where one medium acts on another rather than the reverse.

	Symmetric combinations (A + B)	Asymmetric relations (A → B)
Transformation	Fusion	Substitution
Exchange	Co-operation	Transfer
Connection	Grouping	Thematization

These six intermedial forms – fusion, substitution, co-operation, transfer, grouping and thematization – are in practice often combined. A border case is when a medium is used to store or spread texts for another medium. When televised films are recorded on video, or when Internet or post services distribute all kinds of media texts – either as physical units (like books or records) or in digital form for use in various machines (mp3-files or e-books) – this is both an active co-operation and a transfer of one media content through another mediating channel. Remediating transfers may further include moments of explicit thematization. And when media texts are accompanied by follow-up stories, advertisements, and related commodities like toys or t-shirts, this supplementary circulation extends and intervenes in the reception process, thus affecting the meanings constructed around the primary text and implying a dialectical play of articulation where transfer and co-operation mingle. The boundaries between media are continuously crossed in everyday practices; but then, they are also continuously reinforced by more or less subtle demarcations of old or new differences between media circuits.

Media convergence and media lifts imply an intensified transfer and co-operation between media. When such co-operation is more or less permanently institutionalised, new “multimedia” arise out of a symbiosis of previously separate media. Since borders between media circuits are flexible and diffuse, all talk of intermediality is necessarily provisional and spatiotemporally situated. New media often are first perceived and used as hybrid combinations of their predecessors, until the new forms have gained independent status. And all such relations can either be general and typical for whole media groups or genres, or be particular characteristics of individually staged media encounters. The connection between television and video is for instance a much more general rule than a specific quotation of a poem in a particular computer game.

Media circuits thus notoriously leak into one another. Each medium is in itself intrinsically mixed, incorporating elements of others.²¹ Media also work closely together in all production and consumption phases, including shopping and use, as well as in their textual formats (CD covers including lyrics and photos etc.). And they are distributed, sold and used together in book shops, libraries etc. An *expanded media concept* let us scrutinize how media circuits are kept apart and but also interconnected in communicative practices of various kinds. By not taking received media types for granted, it is possible to see those mechanisms through which media circuits are produced as separate and then again *intermedially combined* at all stages and levels, from production to use and from single texts to whole industrial branches.

Methodologically, such insights demand increasing traffic between media research, aesthetic theory and research on digital media. There is a need for intensified conceptual work, but also for empirical research on neglected but socially important media forms like photography, books and phonograms, and on various kinds of intermedial relations.

Passages

In conclusion, our experiences from the *Passages* project call for a multidimensional renewal of media and communication studies. There is a need for *empirical expansion* into neglected but key phenomena, including non-journalistic media and hybrid forms as well as spatial and temporal dimensions of media use. It is time to acknowledge the spatial and temporal localisation of media uses, but also the ways in which media represent and produce spatialities and temporalities. It is time to stop marginalising media forms outside press and broadcasting, and to focus on cooperation, flows and mixtures between different media. There is also a need for *methodological innovation*, where collective and reflexive media ethnography is one option among many. A more brave and intense *theoretical updating* is also needed, exploring some heterodox directions that are sadly absent in today’s media and communication disciplines. Intensified interdisciplinary dialogues would be profitable with fields like cultural studies, postcolonial studies, gender and queer theory, science and literature studies, actor-network theory and consumption studies, as well as with disciplines like computer science, anthropology, geography, history, literature and other arts disciplines. Fencing oneself off from ongoing developments in these fields is damagingly counterproductive, in particular in a period when mediatisation are making them all increasingly aware of and interesting in understanding media-related phenomena. Instead of hiding away in a narrowly defined and petrified understanding of its own knowledge field, media and communication studies could have a key role to play in this emerging world of mediation.

Notes

1. After an initiating conference in 1996 and a full-scale project start in 1998, with funding from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond), the interdisciplinary research team has for five years empirically investigated interacting processes of communication and consumption in a specific shopping centre. The handful of senior researchers in the core group had a basis in media and communication studies but also each a foot in other disciplines like gender studies, sociology, musicology, literature and the arts. A shifting set of co-researchers – in all a dozen scholars from anthropology, ethnology, economic history, communication and media studies – joined the group for certain periods in order to add specific studies to the prismatically evolving project body. Results are reported in four Swedish books (Bjurström et al. 2000, Becker et al. 2001 and 2002, Gemzöe 2004) and one English volume (Becker et al. forthcoming) plus an interactive/hypertextual cd-rom disk, distributed with the last two volumes.
2. The spatial terms like “space”, “place”, “room” and “locality” are notoriously vague and polysemic, partly due to the dense superposition of metaphorical uses of them (Fornäs 1995: 49ff; also Becker et al. 2002: 381f). I will here roughly stick to the widespread practice to let “space” denote a more abstract extension while “place” indicates a more specific and precisely located geographical position.
3. For examples and overviews, see Askew & Wilk (2002) and Ginsburg et al. (2002).
4. Benjamin (1982/1999: 10; see also 406: “Arcades are houses or passages having no outside – like the dream”).
5. Langer (1953) offers a fascinating theory of virtuality as the basis for cultural imagination (virtual space, time, powers, life, memory, history, etc.), long before the cybercultural inflation of the word; see Fornäs et al. (2002: 29ff).
6. These issues were thoroughly discussed by Hillevi Ganetz, Karin Becker, Erling Bjurström and myself in Becker et al. (2001, 2002 and forthcoming). See also Goss (1993).
7. Gemzöe (2004).
8. Hannerz (1996 and 2001), Clifford (1997), Gupta & Ferguson (1997), Ortner (1999), Thrift (1999), Ang (2001), Askew & Wilk (2002) and Ginsburg et al. (2002). See also the discussion on the production of locality in Hardt & Negri (2000: 44ff).
9. Moores (1993), Ang (1996), Drotner (2000), McCarthy (2001) and Couldry (2002).
10. On the crucial distinction between media use and consumption, see Bjurström et al. (2000: 143ff and 158ff), Becker et al. (2002: 304ff), but also Williams (1976/1988: 78f).
11. This is developed in much greater detail in Bjurström et al. (2000: 42ff and 143ff) and Becker et al. (2001: 311ff, 2002: 302ff and forthcoming).
12. Benjamin (1982/1999). Our perspectives on time, history, narrative and mediation were also inspired by Ricoeur (1983/1984, 1984/1985, 1985/1988) and Wertsch (2002). Media-relevant historical studies of consumption are found in Williams (1982/1991), Stallybrass & White (1986) and Nava (1992 and 1996).
13. This was analysed by Hillevi Ganetz in Becker et al. (2001: 229ff).
14. Rare exceptions may be found in some studies of advertising, such as Nava et al. (1997), or in studies of cultural aspects of for instance book markets, such as Hertel (1996/1997), Radway (1997), Furuland & Svedjedal (1997) or Svedjedal (2000).
15. Interviews with centre visitors were made and analysed by Martina Ladendorf in Becker et al. (2001: 354ff). The manager’s ideas were interpreted in my own contributions (Becker et al. 2001: 159 och 326).
16. See Bjurström et al. (2000: 65ff). See also Thompson (1995).
17. Kittler (1997 and 2002), Aarseth (1997), Peters (1999), Hörisch (2001) and Hayles (2002) have presented fascinating analyses of media history and of the material aspects of communication and culture, developing ideas from McLuhan, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and others.
18. Hertel (1996/1997: 212f). For further elaborations on intermediality, see Lehtonen (2000) and Fornäs (2002a and b).
19. Compare also the ideas of intertextuality developed by Julia Kristeva (1969/1986) and the forms of transtextuality proposed by Gérard Genette (1982/1997).
20. Bolter & Grusin (1999).
21. See Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) on multimodality and Bolter & Grusin (1999) on remediation.

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