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Ludwig Jäger, Erika Linz, Irmela Schneider (eds.)

Media, Culture, and Mediality.
New Insights into the Current State of Research

[transcript]

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The Governmentality of Media: Television as 'Problem' and 'Instrument'[1]

Markus Stauff

The current constellation of media is in constant flux. New techniques, products, and forms are added to those already in existence, changing their significance. The idea that society is shaped by one dominant medium and its specific structures of perception and communication is thereby challenged. I would like to take this occasion in discussing a model that permits the understanding of media in general as strategic fields, arguing that a decisive reason for their social 'effectivity' lies—according to my thesis—in the fact that technology, institutions and 'contents' of media are continually up for discussion. The actual, but also the only possible, transformations of media are simultaneously linked with interventions in social and cultural fields. Therefore I suggest understanding media according to Michel Foucault's thoughts on governmentality in *Security, Territory, Population* as "technologies of government," i.e., as procedures that allow for strategic accesses to modes of conduct of individuals and population, but only insofar as they recognize and account for the 'nature' of these subject areas. This means that media are likewise formed by 'problematizing' social and cultural practices, in their turn conversely allowing for the manipulation of these practices.

So far the model of governmentality in media studies has mostly been used for describing the emergence of new formats whose common goals consist not in representing reality but in modifying it (cf. Bratich). Above all, so-called reality-formats present processes of transformation of individuals in such a way that at the same time the viewers are offered possible goals and methods for modifying their own conduct and their own individuality (cf. Oullette and Hay; Seier; McMurria). Additionally, however, such texts also exist (even though in some cases they are using a different terminology) which more fundamentally are centered on the 'problematizing' and the resulting strategic productivity of media "as a whole" (e.g., Oullette

1 This is a revised version of an article published in Gethmann, Daniel, and Markus Stauff, eds. *Politiken der Medien*. Berlin, 2005. Print.

and Hay; Seier; McCarthy 2008; McMurria). These studies are the background for my following considerations, asking which consequences it has for our ideas of media and for the analysis of their political relevance if we consider them as "technologies of government."

Governmentality: Problematizations/Technologies/Rationalities

Beyond *media policy* (in the sense of a governmental formation of media) and beyond the *propagation* or *mediation of politics* in media (in the sense of 'manipulation' or 'the public'), the 'politics of media' can also be located in that area where media contribute to the shaping and structuring of social relationships and modes of conduct, allowing this structuring to appear as necessary while simultaneously also as manageable. Such a perspective raises methodological and (media-)theoretical questions: To what extent do media contribute to the problematization and to the governance of modes of conduct? To what extent do the discourses and practices of governing contribute to the constitution of media—and their political effectivity?

Michel Foucault defines governmentality as the ensemble of reflections, strategies and technologies that are aimed at control and the processing of a subject area. There are mainly two aspects that differentiate the model of governmentality historically and theoretically from other forms of control, governance or regulation. For one, the subject area (to be regulated) is not considered as a preexisting or 'natural' one, not as a given 'problem' that demands a 'solution,' but as *problematization* that has to be located on the same level with the methods and goal-definitions of the regulation.[2] Those methods producing knowledge about specific operations and situations, the technologies permitting access to specific operations and situations, and the subject area with its specific 'interior' rules constitute each other reciprocally. Secondly, governmentality is characterized by a certain mode of using power that Foucault defines with the term government. In contrast to a regime that simply subordinates, governing aims at considering the peculiarities of each subject area and making them productive. Thus, the necessity arises to gather

2 "Problematization doesn't mean representation of a pre-existing object, nor the creation by discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the totality of discursive or non-discursive practices that introduces something into the play of true and false and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.)" (Foucault, *Concern* 257; see also Castel).

knowledge about the governed subject. In place of the general normative rules the question emerges how to adequately guide behaviors. This question, however, is rather an indirect one since it strengthens and structures the potentials of 'self-government' that can be found within the subject area. Governing others appears to be "guiding the possibility of conduct" ("Subject" 789) and insofar it is closely connected with the possibility of governing oneself, thereby obtaining incentives and being presented with certain options. *Governmental technologies* then are all those procedures, institutions, but also regulated practices and discourses that define a subject area, produce knowledge about it and link regulating approaches with the practices of self-government.

Originally, this model has its historical points of reference in the tradition of the Christian pastoral power (the 'shepherd' who takes care of his 'flock' and therefore attempts to truly know his individual 'sheep'); through the secularization and dissemination affecting the most varied areas of the uses of this pastoral power, a "problematic of government in general" (Foucault, *Security* 89) finally emerged in the 16th century that established new forms of analyzing and judging behavior for such different areas as the administration of a state or the domestic budget. In the 18th and 19th centuries, governmentality gains precedence in comparison with the power-forms 'sovereignty' and 'discipline' since it discovers new subject areas (for example, 'the population' or 'the economy') which can be viewed equally as an "end and instrument of government" (Foucault, *Security* 105). The 20th century is characterized by an increasing dominance of a neo-liberal governmentality governing by orienting conduct in all areas of practice on the model of 'entrepreneurial activity' (cf. Lemke, Krasmann, and Bröckling; Rose and Miller, "Political").

The historically different forms of governmentality each contain a specific *rationality*—a series of strategies and goals as well as rules that make the different practices plausible and organize the subject area. Here as well, these rationalities also ensue from the specific interconnections of forms of knowledge, instruments and subject areas. With the help of access techniques it is possible to recognize and systematize peculiarities of a subject area that then characterize the strategic deployment of the instruments:

> "'Knowing' an object in such a way that it can be governed is more than a purely speculative activity: it requires the invention of procedures of notation, ways of collecting and presenting statistics, the transportation of these to centres where calculations and judgments can be made, and so forth." (Rose and Miller, *Governing* 30)

Thus, it is a characteristic of the workings of government to continue problematizing subject areas, strategies and goals; it is not the in-

stallation of a stable procedure of regulation but rather the continual modification, adaptation and questioning that characterizes governmental politics, which realize adequate forms of guidance precisely through these disputes.

If one regards media as technologies of government, then the question arises how media contribute to the problematization, to the production of knowledge, and to the control of subject areas. On the one hand, media can establish the appearance of new subject areas and problems to which one then—on the grounds of their media-structure—can attribute their own regularities. This, for example, is true in health and social politics for the procedures of computer-aided conversion into data that purely arithmetically identify 'problem groups' for which then specific strategies are designed, based on their calculated 'profiles.'[3]

In these cases, media become productive with regard to technologies of government especially by remaining unproblematic themselves. On the other hand, media can also appear as subject areas themselves for which an adequate access is wanted. In Foucault's perspective then it would be necessary to determine which forms of knowledge and techniques of access define this subject area—'the media'—providing them with a specific rationality. It seems to me that especially characteristic for the modern mass media is the fact that they appear *equally* "as end and instrument" (see above). They are themselves a subject area to which specific regularities are attributed and for which the adequate access is sought out, but they also constitute instrument—precisely, the technology of government —that is able to record, systematize and direct subject areas.

Therefore, below I suggest speaking specifically of a 'governmentality of media' especially at that point at which media contribute to the direction of behaviors and to the interconnection of other-directedness and self-directedness precisely by the fact that they become problematized themselves, are being discussed and thus become objects of concern and guidance. Such a perspective on the 'politics of media' relativizes the established dichotomization into a media policy that is concerned with the regulation of media and into politics of media that are a result of the effects of the 'contents,' or the

3 For the use of computers in health studies see Bauer 214: "Bio-mathematical methods change views of the world by letting 'diseases' visibly emerge on the population level only by comparative calculation and connecting it by way of risk calculation with optional influencing factors. [...] These standardized compilation practices determine the discursive and social mode of negotiation for the bio-medical talk about 'health' and 'disease.' As mediated technologies, their specific productivity takes a back seat in comparison to the efficacy of the facts stabilized in them." On the government's technological use of the computer in social policy see Henman.

'technology' of the media 'themselves.' The regulation of media—the measures that are aimed at the knowledge and the change of media—constitute media (their contents, their technologies, etc.) as a problematic complex that becomes strategically productive precisely because it is constantly being developed. Moreover, its problematization is always a double one: the considerations of the medium's apparent peculiarities are linked to the examination (and utilization, where applicable) of the media-users' peculiarities. The constitution of media as technologies of government therefore cannot be separated from a concept of media as self-technologies. Not least for this reason it is specifically the heterogeneity of media and the fact that they are interwoven with (other) practices and institutions that account for their governmental effectiveness.

Governing Public Spaces: The Museum

If one regards (modern mass-)media as governmental technologies, then some of its special features (for example, technical reproduction) are relativized; at the same time, similarities and reciprocities with other cultural institutions—the museum, the library and so on—become apparent. The example of the museum lends itself as point of reference because Tony Bennett has shown in detail in his studies *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) und *Culture: A Reformer's Science* (1998) how museums in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century (and thus parallel to the discovery of population and bio-power) became governmental technologies with specific rationalities and power effects. Consequently, they are there at the beginning of the media-cultural governing of public and private realms, of gender and generational relations. The museum also creates a theoretical backdrop that is supposed to make possible the working out of some specifics of modern mass media characterized less than the museum by the spatial structuring of 'use,' and more than the museum by problematizing everyday life.

Political strategies that by no means took their starting point only from the state but obtained a dynamics of their own in the cultural institutions and practices changed the museum into complex instruments of governing individuals and population. If until the end of the 18th century museums still had the function to represent the power of the sovereign, now they were assigned the task of extending a 'reforming' and 'civilizing' influence on the modes of conduct and morals of the visitors. This transformation of the museum presupposed the reflection on its ends and means just as much as the production of a differentiated knowledge about the characteristic features of the museum, its exhibits and its visitors. The spatial

and temporal order of museums—the architecture, circulation, presentation and choice of exhibits, but also the guiding and teaching of the visitors—were up for negotiation with regard to its most effective use. The museum was transformed into a complex machine whose individual elements were isolated, classified, and thus examined in terms of their specific contribution for the guidance of modes of conduct.

"[...] culture is thought of as something that might be parcelled into different quantities, broken down into units of different values, in such a way that the utility, the civilising effect, to be derived from making available large amounts of relatively low-quality art to the masses might be weighed and balanced against the value to be derived from reserving the very best art for more exclusive forms of consumption by the educated classes." (Bennett, *Culture* 115)

Significantly, the practices and social profiles of the visitors also became part of this machinery as productive elements. Initially they appeared as 'problems,' for example when the question of the adequate choice and arrangement of the exhibits for the socially differentiated visitors was discussed. However, at the same time the visitors in many respects also represented 'instruments' for the working out of the 'problems.' On the one hand, particularly their own activity—within a pre-structured frame—was supposed to heighten the effect of the exhibits. On the other, the differences (defined outside of the medium) between classes and genders were used as effective instruments in the spatial organization of the museum.[4] The working class was not only supposed to view the exhibits in the museum, but also the conduct of the bourgeoisie and practice—under the stress of being observed by the public of whom they themselves were a part—taking over these types of behavior. Accordingly, the mere presence of women (also those of the working class) was considered a controlling and moderating measure for male conduct.

"[...] there was a common pattern in which women, in being welcomed out of the 'separate sphere' of domesticity to which their naturalization had earlier confined them, were accorded a role in which the attributes associated with that sphere were enlisted for reformatory purposes—as culture's instruments rather than its targets." (Bennett, *Birth* 33)

And so the visitors were not conceived of as empty shells that were imprinted in the museum; rather, the politics of the museum were

4 The museum additionally enabled further knowledge about social differences when, for example, it was observed and counted which paintings were viewed by representatives of the 'lower' classes; subsequently the 'taste' of a social class could be identified (cf. Bennett, *Culture* 133ff).

based on existing classifications that obtained a new significance in the museum, thus contributing to its productivity. Also some further aspects important for the governmentality of media outside of the museum can already be recognized here, especially with regard to the status of 'technology' and 'contents:' the rationality of the museum is a result of a flexible connectability of spaces, techniques, practices and discourses. Initially, the museum as a material arrangement (in the sense of the architectonically realized structure 'in stone') is only a realm of possibility for the realization of flexible strategies and constellations. The stone architecture specifies neither unequivocal procedures nor goals. And the exhibits constitute just as little a center or a point of departure for effects of power; far more also they obtain their status from the relational fabric into which, as I have shown, factors are entering that 'the museum' does not possess. The 'problems' identified and worked on in the museum are in no way more original than the 'solutions;' they are jointly produced by way of the arrangement of spaces, the discursivation of the elements and the formation of specific government technologies.

Despite this "tactical polyvalence" (Foucault, *History* 100) of the spaces and exhibits there is a tendency—not only in Bennett's argumentation but also in many publications in media studies following him—to consider the given spatial structure as a decisive source for the effects of power. Clive Barnett has pointed out that this, with a reductionist reference, can be traced back not least of all to Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon postulating that the architecture of the prison *alone* guarantees the automatization and internalization of the effects of power. This model is used in a wide variety of forms when discussing the conditions of visibility of modern mass media (cf. Elmer). However, the decisive point of radio and television —namely, the spatial decoupling of not only production/reception (i.e., of the subjects and objects of governing), but also that of the widely spread viewers—is thereby masked. It is specifically this decoupling that forms the basis of the proliferation of indirect forms of conduct (cf. Barnett 385). Therefore, mass media should be less regarded analogously to the Panopticon and more so to Foucault's analysis of sexuality (cf. Stauff 109-78). They are less *cultural techniques* in the sense of symbolic practices (like reading, writing, or calculating) or media technological constellations (like printing or the alphabet) which remain constant over a long time hallmarking a culture. They are rather technologies that continuously work on culture and are themselves culturally constituted and differentiated in this process.

From this perspective, the productivity of media does not result from establishing structures of communication and forms of perception but (mainly) from putting these up for discussion and making

them manipulable. Therefore, media do not function as *the* basic technique of a culture—they function as a (in the widest sense) technological production and processing of cultural differentiations by way of the cultural differentiation of technologies; they are working on problem areas that are established with the media. Thereby also the complementary and competing simultaneity of different media as productive factors can be seen insofar as they always make different promises and particularly in their interaction continue producing new deficits.[5]

Governing Private Realms: Television

Even more pronounced than for other media, the existence and effects of television are to a large extent identical with the continuous problematizations of this medium. It is discussed, regulated, changed and multiplied incessantly so that it stands to reason not to locate the 'politics of television' (only) in its 'contents,' in its ways of perception, or in its ownership but in the countless strategies aiming at defining, classifying, modifying television—its apparatuses, its forms of reception, its programs—and thereby contributing persistently to the (self-)direction of individuals and populations. In the course of television's historical transformations, a number of different government-technological rationalities and strategies are realized that are accompanied by technical and institutional changes but that are in no way defined and disambiguated. If I am going to retrace some aspects of this problematization here once more, then it is mainly in order to show in what way the model of a "governmentality of media" can be differentiated from other models. On the one hand—against the popular thesis that the medium becomes invisible once it is habituated—I maintain that it is 'planted' into everyday life as a problem that needs to be worked on. On the other—against the notion of media as stable arrangements that structure spaces and time in a specific way—I maintain that television provides options of (self-)structuring.

5 This kind of immanence (or even dialectic) of problems and problem solutions occasionally is also used as 'motor' of media history. "Media are ... productive, they procreate because they are also increasing the problems that they are solving" (Engell 298). In a similar way, Hartmut Winkler sees the history of media as a chain of attempts to overcome the differentiating constraints of writing and to establish an equally universal as transparent order of signifiers; every medium, however, not only is added as an additional order of signifiers to the already existent ones but beyond that also creates internal fragmentations (cf. 14-17).

Already long before television was realized technically and institutionally in the 1930s and 1940s, the media-technological television was discussed. The "functional utopias" for a future television were continuously "nurtured by a freely rambling imagination of technical and social change" (Elsner, Müller, and Spangenberg, "Der lange Weg" 167). Since the 1920s the experimental forms of realizing television (in the context of establishing the radio) are accompanied systematically by discussions on the effects and functions of the new medium on the society as a whole. Already in 1926 (and thus three years before the first official test broadcasting in Germany), the *Berliner Zeitung* examined—still without concrete notions of its functioning—whether television would disturb sociability in the family;[6] its individual 'laws' and 'rules' were discussed in order to grant it—in addition to or replacement of other media—a certain efficiency in working out social problems (cf. Hickethier, *Geschichte* 29f).

Also during the time of National Socialism the only rudimentarily present television consistently created a "place for discussion and of cultural paradox" (Uricchio, "Fernsehen" 237). The state institutions—like the military, the ministries of postal affairs or of propaganda—were discussing various 'potentials' and 'specifics' of the medium on the background of their different goals and rationalities, developing contradictory models of its "organization, programming and possible widespread impact" (236). The "Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda" (Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda) advocated for a realization of 'television rooms' for public and collective reception in which mainly the reciprocal control of the jointly viewing public was considered desirable.[7] Disapproving commentaries that could have undermined the propaganda effects in the intimate realm of an apartment should be suppressed in this way (cf. Uricchio, "Fernsehen" 241). The assumed specific characteristics of the new medium that served as seemingly self-evident points of reference for one or the other form of realization had to be brought forth each time as appropriate complex configurations of elements, as "end and instrument of government."

Above all, however, all these examples show that not only the specifically realized constellations contribute to the 'politics of me-

6 Regarding these early problematizations of television see esp. Elsner, Müller, and Spangenberg, "Der lange Weg" and "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte"; Andriopoulos; Hickethier, "Fließband".

7 The ministry of postal affairs, on the other hand, which had advocated for a decentralized introduction of television to homes because of its connections to industry, still suggested in 1943—when there had already been no television broadcasts for a long time—to broadcast live news around the clock as the adequate form of broadcasting an individualized television.

dia' but already the multiple attempts to establish a certain constellation with its specific effects. Although it was only exemplarily realized, i.e., only in unique instances, television nevertheless was able to become effective on a massive scale and productive as cultural technology.

Even if since the late 1950s a seemingly stable form was realized for television as the "televisual medium of familial privacy for the living-room" (Zielinski 8), the medium remained a problematic and problematized object. The 'domestication' of television in no way accompanied the fact that its functions, effects and ways of usage were immobilized and made less problematic. Rather, the combination of television with the existing mechanisms and economies of the home established the starting point of a particularly intense cultural-technological differentiation: now the education of the children, gender relations, the development of a national or European identity as well as the improvement of individual tastes and lifestyles were at stake and had to be regulated or ruled.

Television was accompanied by problems and ambivalences that attained plausibility through the medium and that had to be worked out in discussing it. It became a constant task for the family and specifically for the mother to domesticate television and at the same time to domesticate *with the help of* television. In the history of television, an unequivocal, 'harmonious,' and tacit mutual adjustment of everyday practices on the one hand and the functional modes of the medium on the other never became a habit (see on the other hand Elsner and Müller).

This becomes especially visible in those problem areas that link television with the restructuring of the domestic realm in the sense of the relationships of the genders and generations. The privileged access of television to the world, to the 'outside' or the public, the overwhelming effect of presence, of 'being there' and of simultaneity is not simply given with television (with the help of technology, for example); rather, they are staged in many ways. Already the advertisement for the first television sets made pictures of sports events or (far away) landscapes visible (cf. Bernold 66f). The field of tension between this emphatic relation to the world and the sphere of private consumption and reproductive 'amenities'—which television has also stressed—brings up a series of questions (cf. Hartley 99-107). Not only the taking part in social events at home (like, for example, the viewing of opera broadcasts sitting in front of television dressed in evening attire) was a question, but also how social events could be created at home through television by inviting guests and appropriately entertaining them (cf. Spigel 99-135). What form of intimacy, which circle of people, what kind of attention is adequate for which section of the world that is being broadcast? How can the

family create an appropriate connection to the exterior world via television? How can the familial intimate world be strengthened by television (or protected from it)? In any case, the coordination of the private and public realms, of the familial and the exterior world was a task that could be mastered; the apparatus, the programs and the familial use of television provided multi-voiced instruments for it. The irritations and ambivalences made television productive because they guaranteed that it became a matter of permanent attention and concern.

The (always 'problematic') relations between the genders and generations that make up the 'familial circle' as a sensitive fabric constituted both the conditions and the effects of the familial-televisual governmentality. Periodicals and pedagogical guides gave advice on the appropriate television-programs for women and children and thus, thanks to television, being a woman or a child was simultaneously defined and shaped. This is even truer since in the programs and in the technical modifications the categories of these problematizations could be found again and thus became concretely manageable. Types of programs and apparatuses were developed, supposed to guarantee a smooth integration of television and household chores—in order to optimize (i.e., with advertisement for household appliances, cooking and family programs, etc., directed at specific target groups) the task of being a homemaker and mother. Women's magazines gave advice on how the day could be structured with the help of television and thus instigated the self-technological use of the medium (cf. Spigel 73-98). By referring to the seemingly contradictory interests of man and woman, industry was advertising the purchase of second television sets. Parallel to this, suggestions were developed how men, women, parents and children each could view their own (gender- and age-)specific programs without disturbing the familial peace. From the differentiating categories of the family, television (i.e., its technology, its programs, its use and its placement in the family) was provided with a specific rationality and at the same time it contributed to its own government-technological manageability.

During the first ten years of the development of the television, it is easy to see the emerging shift from technological-apparative questions to a problematization of the programs and 'contents,' as well as the forms of reception, thanks to the habitualization and the incremental concealment of the ('complicated') technicity of the medium. The debate regarding programs and 'contents,' however, establishes goals and rationalities that function just as 'technologically' as the apparatuses themselves. To this day, zappers and couch potatoes—not much different from the early radio- (and television-) tinkerers—operate in a heterogeneous field of operating instruc-

tions, contradictory rationalities, economical or familialistic strategies, and not least of all their own experimentations; that is, they operate in a field that makes variously structured options available for optimizing the medium, ones own relationship to it and thus also ones own everyday behavior. The smooth transition intimates that technology and program structures can indeed take over equivalent functions for the (cultural-)technological regulation and do not in any way represent levels of the medium that categorically have to be differentiated.

The Structuring or Problematization of Space

This simultaneously addresses a decisive media-theoretical shift that results from perspectivizing media as technologies of government. While the model proposed here locates the 'politics of media' on the level of its problematizations and thus on the level of multiple strategies, other approaches center on the standardizing effects. It is specifically with the question of the mediated structuring of space and time that the difference in perspectives can be illustrated.

When Marshall McLuhan very directly links "tribal society," "national state" or the "global village" with specific media, he postulates that the social and cultural spaces, relatively speaking, result directly from the technologically defined range, the speed and the capacity of reproduction of the media. Thus, a specific but to a large extent unequivocal space-structuring effect can be attributed to each medium. By explicitly referring to McLuhan, Joshua Meyrowitz has analyzed the restructuring of social and notably domestic realms by television. In his study *No Sense of Place*, Meyrowitz postulates that media become socially effective by shaping the delimitation and accessibility of different social spaces. Every individual medium leads to a specific structuring of the social realms (cf. Meyrowitz, "Medium" 59).

It thus would be characteristic for television that it undermines a sharp differentiation of social spaces that to date had been characterized by book culture and thereby effectuates a dissolution (or at least a blurring) of so far distinctive social subjectivities—and in fact irrespective of its specific contents: one watches television together (while one reads alone); one sees—in the flow of the program—not only the most different situations; one also can (contrary to the book) see concretely what other persons see. By submitting the most varied situations to the observation of a socially undifferentiated public, television questions spatial delimitations. The "structure of social 'situations'" established by television thus undermines the socially differentiating function of spatial structures (Meyrowitz,

No Sense 4). Central effects of this spatial organization through television, as diagnosed by Meyrowitz—apart from a sinking relevance of figures of authority that now are observed in 'private' situations as well—is a blurring of group identities (his example here is the relationship of the genders) and a suspension of clearly delimited role transitions (his example here is the transition from childhood to maturity).

A specific organization of space is thus attributed to television that becomes effective always in the same and compulsive way, at odds with the different practical realms. This argumentation then resembles the simplified use of the term Panopticon in some of the studies in media research already discussed above. From the media characteristics of television, Meyrowitz deduces its indisputable effectiveness. Thus, relationships of genders or generations can be different from one medium to the next, but they are always unequivocally defined by them, and so they do not emerge as argumentative fields or strategies that come into view as a reaction to and a link with the space-structuring effects of television in order to change them, to use or to support them. "In Meyrowitz's account there is [...] politics, but no discursive power; appropriation, but no containment; technology, but no technique" (Berland 150).

If, on the other hand, we take into account the strategical modifications, the practices and problematizations of the medium, then the space-structuring effects of television (and thus also their importance for social differentiations) remain basically ambivalent. It is true that with the introduction of television the established spatial organization of the familial domestic realm is changed and the relationship of public and private space is modified; but this is seen as a change in the set of problems and the strategic field of the familial organization of space. Television does not establish *one* spatial organization; rather, through intersecting its own technology, its communicative structures and the forms of its programs with the existing mechanisms structuring space, it constitutes a series of problems and simultaneously a series of instruments of spatial organization. The relationships of the genders or the generations are not simple effects of media structuring space; they are relatively independent mechanisms (i.e., relevant in a plurality of practices and discourses) that in the first place make television spatially effective. The gender-differentiation of spaces and times of the day (as can be seen, for example, from the clearly different advertisements shown during daytime and prime time television) for economical reasons alone is reproduced and modified by television; it becomes a specifically productive problem of television because it is also managed by other mechanisms. The spatial ambivalence of television thus turns out to be neither an original (and soon to be mastered) problem, nor

an effect determined by media technology; it rather has the character of a permanent task.

Media as Institutionalized Problems

A considerable part of media communication is communication 'on' media. The 'governmentality of media' is realized by its continuing problematization, and it is of great importance for the governmental technology 'television' that it is a 'lay technique.' Even large and expert technologies are repeatedly the subject of ambivalent fascination and of disputes about their dangers and chances. For example, in the current debates on genetic technology both the dichotomizing patterns of argumentation can be found, as can indications that these are old ones. Particularly the links between apparatuses, practices and discourses and thus also the coupling between machinery and self-technology fundamentally differ between lay and expert technologies. If, for example, a technology like nuclear energy becomes a matter of social discussion, this hardly has strategic and cultural-technological consequences.[8] Even though—as both its opponents and its advocates are pointing out in the same way—nuclear energy also has effects in our everyday life (be it because it necessitates the structures of a police state, or be it because it brings inexpensive electricity independent of oil supply to the households) it is neither present in everyday life as a differentiated object region that opens up a variety of manners, nor can differentiated effects for differentiated forms of use be directly observed and managed (one only has to compare the difficulties of proving a raised risk of cancer in the environment of atomic plants and react to it individually with the clearly direct evidence of the so-called Monday syndrome of fidgety children). Significantly, the dominant protests are those that refer to nuclear energy, fundamentally against its use, while those (much less public) protests regarding television rather are aiming at its regulation and its optimization: either parents' initiatives demand less violence and sex, or fan groups want to prevent the discontinuance of a series.

The cultural technologies of media can thus be located between inaccessibly complex technologies and largely unproblematic technical apparatuses or instruments (electric drill, iron, etc.): on the

8 A comparison between television and nuclear energy is not as far fetched as one might at first think; in 1979, the then Federal Chancellor of Germany Helmut Schmidt supposedly had declined approving plans for a cable network with the following words: "We should not stumble into dangers that are more acute and more dangerous than nuclear energy" (*Tagesspiegel* 28 Dec. 2003, n. pag.).

one hand accessible for all, while on the other an interface of manifold and oppositional techniques, practices, and discourses that do not come together into a stable constellation but that constantly need technological control. Much more than the museum or the movies, radio and television install permanent government-technological machinery that is intertwined with most of (everyday) practices.

Individualization as Optimization of Media Use

The problematic fields and rationalities that let television become productive have shifted over and over again. Video recorders and remote controls have just as much contributed to reorganizing (and thus problematizing) temporal structures and keeping their public as has the increasing economization to which television was exposed, at least in Europe. The cultural-technological way of functioning—the care for the family, etc.—is nevertheless in no way replaced by 'mere' economical maxims. After all, an economic profit orientation (contrary to all other assertions) cannot be clearly inscribed into technology nor into 'contents;' it erects itself an experimental field implying the linkage of manifold partial mechanisms (ratings and mail of viewers, program politics and image of the broadcasting company, industrial and intermedial cooperation, etc.). It can be observed, however, that the cultural-technological productivity of television is approaching the constellation of neoliberalism. In the course of the pluralization of programs, of digitization and diverse 'interactive' formats, the successful individualization increasingly becomes a central problem that is supposed to be dealt with by television. Be it with hard-disc recorders or with sports shows without advertisement: The promise that we 'will no longer miss anything' and that, in the light of the variety of programs we will always find what 'corresponds to our personal wishes' with the help of electronic program guides, this promise has to be seen at the same time as an invitation to realize and to optimize ones personality through ones own television. An individualized management of time and content is demanded of television just as much as it is made possible by it (cf. Stauff). The fact that this changed constellation does not function as 'liberation' from the seemingly restrictive guidelines of a conventional, familialistic television should have become clear on the background of Foucault's perspective. At the same time, however, the promises of individuality, choice and interactivity can also not be exposed as mere ideology to which reality does not correspond in any way. The current constellation of media indeed puts technologies at our disposal that in this way allow individual-

ity, one's own taste, optimization of ones own use of media not only to become desirable, but makes it also plausible and manageable. The governmentality of media cannot be located between the poles of liberation and suppression, between enlightenment and manipulation.

Instead we have to ask how media are made into something manageable with 'potentials' and 'dangers' whose rational management again makes practices, family conditions, subjectivities, and populations accessible for regulating and/or ruling. 'The media' (and every individual medium itself) obtain their 'identity' and thus also their politics only through the problematizations, the discursive reproductions and the media-technological practices that integrate them into governmental rationalities.

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