



**Já fomos midiaticizados? Se sim, quando, como e com que
implicações?¹**
**Have we ever been mediaticized? If so, when, how and with
what implications?**

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Keywords: mediaticization, institutions, culture, anthropology

There are several accounts of how the various strands of mediaticization research should be categorised (e.g. Hepp 2020; Jansson 2018). Most often, the field is divided into two main approaches: one institutional, focussing on the media as organisations and societal institutions, for example, journalism, and the other a cultural, focussing on the broader influences of communication technologies throughout history. As I have argued elsewhere (Author 2014), there is also a technological, or perhaps, a semiotic approach to mediaticisation where authors such as Jean Baudrillard (1971) have pointed to the relevance of the media as channels for communication and the semiotic codes that these are privileging.

As the concept of mediaticization implies, we are dealing with a process: something that was at one time not affected by “media” has become so, or, alternatively, has become so to a higher degree than before. In this paper, I will take my point of departure in the two or three main approaches to mediaticization in order to discuss their

¹ Trabalho apresentado ao V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Mídia e Processos Sociais. PPGCC-Unisinos. São Leopoldo, RS.



Anais de Resumos Expandidos

V Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais

ISSN 2675-4169

Vol. 1, N. 5 (2022)

analytical value. I will take my point of departure in their main characteristics when it comes to [1] the way in they theorise “media”, [2] the degrees to which they see the relation between media and society as a causal relationship, [3] and their respective view upon historical change.

I have elsewhere discussed the three approaches to mediatization (Author 2014), so suffice it for this extended abstract (to be more fully described in the full paper) to point to the differences between the institutional and the technological on the one hand and the culturalist or, as Verón (2014) calls it, the anthropological, on the other. The main difference is that the latter does not place the media, or the “mediatic process” in Verón’s terms, outside of society but inside of it, integrated in the social fabric of human activity. This also means that the question of causality, that sets its mark so clearly on the institutional approach where media institutions (e.g. journalism) impact on other societal institutions (e.g. politics), becomes if not irrelevant, so at least downplayed. And the historical perspective longer, starting at the dawn of humanity, to the opposite of the institutional and technological approaches that situates the mediatization process in the second half of the 20th century.

Verón’s position has its correspondence among British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, who – in one of his lesser-known works, *Communication* (Williams 1962/1966) – forcefully argues that communication always is an integrated part of social and cultural reality:

Many people seem to assume as a matter of course that there is, first, reality, and then, second, communication about it. We degrade art and learning by supposing that they are always second-hand activities: that there is life, and then afterwards there are these accounts of it. [...] We need to say what many of us know in experience: that the life of man, and the business of society, cannot be confined to these ends; that the struggle to learn, to describe, to understand, to educate, is a central and necessary part of our humanity. This struggle is not begun, at second hand, after reality has occurred. It is, in itself, a major way in which reality is continually formed and changed. What we call society



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is not only a network of political and economic arrangements, but also a process of learning and communication (Williams 1966: 19).

Just as Verón, Williams insists on seeing communication as a non-separable part of human activity and of social reality. In a similar way to Verón and Williams, Bruno Latour (1991/1997) – in his critique of science, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes* – argues for an anthropological, holistic view on the relations between nature, society, and discourse, pointing to the false separation of these from each other. What Latour refers to as “discourse”, is equivalent to what Verón calls “semiosis” and Williams “communication”.

Thus, if communication is already an integral part of society, the means of communication – the media technologies – are as well. We have always since the first oral cultures had such means for communicating (mnemonic technologies such as rhymes, metric, etc.). However, these means have shifted over human history, and have extended their ways of operating, which of course have had an impact on the quality and character of society. So, the question whether we have been mediatized or not will depend on how one defines media, and which media one includes in the definition. While the institutional approach mainly discusses organised mass media, the cultural or anthropological approach includes all forms of communication. A consequence of this argument with its very long historical perspective – “the longer the better” as Verón (2014:2) writes – is that we have always been mediatized. But if we have always been mediatized, have we then really ever been mediatized? When, one could well ask, were we *not* mediatized? If we, as argued, have always been reliant on various forms of communication tools, would we not need a very specific concept of mediatization – one that focussed on the quality of the impact of the media rather than on the quantity? Furthermore, against this anthropological approach to mediatization, one could also ask how the study of mediatization differs from the study of “the role of media in culture



and society”, as the definition of Media & Communication Studies is defined in Sweden and several other places. In the full version of the paper, this will be discussed in detail.

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