Organizational communication and media

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Abstract

The paper reflects an interest in the relation between organizational communication and media. It tries to answer the question, *how we can observe the relationship between organizational communication and media*. It is a work-in-progress which tries to combine organizational studies inspired of Niklas Luhmann (Tække & Paulsen 2008, Tække 2008a) with analysis of how organizations communicate in and about media. Using systems theory and form theory, it puts forward a theoretical framework and a strategy for analysing organisational communication in and about media. The medium aspect is inspired by the *medium theory* (Meyrowitz 1985, Finnemann 2005), but framed through *media sociography* (Tække 2006). In traditional organizational studies the medium perspective is missing or only indirectly observed. In medium theory, on the other hand, the same can be said about organizational studies. Media sociography is a possible framework to draw the two disciplines together in, because it is a theory about the relation between the social and the media it is based on. First the paper sum up the Luhmann inspired theory about organizations, fleshing out how organizations are thought to communicate in and about media and how this can be observed. The rest of the paper is used to exemplify, with the Internet, how organization studies and organizations themselves can: *observe media in a conceptualized reflective manner.*

Introduction

The paper observes organizations as *communicational decision systems* (Luhmann 2006). Communication systems are observed to produce and reproduce themselves through communications while they oscillate between self-reference and external reference (Luhmann 1995, 1998). Through self-reflexivity and reflection they can construct observations of their processes and themselves, and decide to do what has become valued and qualified during their history of communication, or to try something new (Luhmann 1995, Baecker 2006). In organizations decisions must process according to decision premises, however, because not every decision premises are decided the concept of *culture* becomes central, since it is defined as consisting in undecided decision premises (Luhmann 2006). At the same time the paper observes communication as improbable

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without *media* (Luhmann 1995, 1999) and that their scope of possibilities is depended on which media they have at their disposal and how they use them (Tække 2006).

Using the form theoretical way of conceptualizing the paper now leave the observation of organizations and try to take their perspective observing media exemplified with the Internet *in a conceptualized reflective manner*. Doing this the paper observes media as providing communication with a *communicative space,* which can be analysed and described through 9 parameters (Tække 2006). This strategy of analysing, called *media sociography*, is inspired by medium theory (Meyrowitz 1985, Finnemann 1997, 1999, 2001, Ong 1982, Eisenstein 1983, Luhmann 1999). Its perspective is that media provide communication with different possibilities analytically put forward by the 9 parameters. The paper especially focuses on the parameter observing through the distinction between place and space (Plato 1977, Kant 1970, Heidegger 1993, Luhmann 1997, 1995, McLuhan 1967, Castells 2003, Baym 2000 and Tække 2002). So the paper has two sections:

A form theoretical and systems theoretical sociological section fleshing out how organizations process as meaning systems in dependence to media, communicating decisions in a network of decided and undecided decision premises, and how they observe themselves and how we as observers can observe them.

An analysis of the communicative space of the Internet, whish point out and discusses concepts that each in light the observations and reflections in regard to organizational communication in and about the Internet. In other words these concepts are put forward so organizations can use them in their self-observations and self-reflexions about their communication in media. Also organization studies can use the analysis of the communicative space of the Internet to observe organisational communication in and about the Internet. As the analysis is an exemplification it can be generalised to and applied to the analysis of other media for communication.

Communication and media

This section is meant to be a short introduction to how organizations can be observed in regard to their communication in and about media (for more readings about this perspective on organizational theory see Luhmann 2006, Baecker 2006, Seidl & Becker 2005, 2006, Højlund & Knudsen 2003, Andersen 2001 and Tække & Paulsen 2008).

Communication

First organizations as social systems are seen as *communication systems*, only consisting in communications (Luhmann 1995). They are *operationally closed* because they consist not in cells or thoughts but only in communications. Luhmanns theory demonstrates how such systems thus their closure is *structurally coupled* to their environment. Reproducing themselves selecting their next state either confirming their historically condensed selections or selecting something new and different, they either maintain operating or vanish (ibid., Baecker 2006).

Operation

Communication is observed as consisting in three selections: Selection of information, utterance and understanding (Luhmann 1995). *Information* is a selection from a repertoire of possibilities, meaning a difference to what else could have been selected; it is the *what* of a communication. *Utterance* is form of and reason for a communication; it is the *how* and *why* of the communication, meaning a difference to every other possible forms and reasons. The decisive factor is *understanding,* which is to make a distinction between information and utterance (ibid.). It is decisive because it is up to another person to make this distinction which means that communication can not be directed or even established by one person. A communicative element or operation only comes into being with the understanding (Luhmann 1995, Seidl & Becker 2006).

System

A communication becomes only a part of a communication system if a new communication links to it either accepting its proposal of meaning or negating it. However such a linkage produces a system with a history of accepted and negated proposals of meaning, differentiating it from other systems with other histories (Luhmann 1995, Tække 2006).

Form

Using the calculus of form developed by Spencer-Brown (1969) any operations can be described form theoretical, both processes in systems and observations of systems (Spencer-Brown 1969, Luhmann 1997, Baecker 1999, 2006). A form is defined as form =

marked state ⌐ unmarked state. The "⌐" is a distinction mark and can be imaged as a part of a rectangle, why what stands to the left for it is inside it, i.e. the marked state of the form. This form concept also includes what is outside it (on the right of the distinction mark).

To begin with observation, we can only observe if we make a distinction between what we observe and its surrounding world. If we look at Luhmanns concept of a social system it is: system ⌐ environment, meaning that the environment is as important as the system itself (Luhmann 1997). To observe a system is to observe how the system itself observes, and social systems observe through communications, the kind of operations they produce. Neither in the systems theory nor in the form theory is a clam of objectivity. If we use another distinction to observe through we see something different. But there are more levels of observations exactly because we can observe this, because we can observe observations. Such an observation is a reentry of the form into itself (Spencer-Brown 1969:69). Observations of observations do not give objectivity but reflexivity by the possibility to observe the distinctions that we observe with. Therefore a concept used to make a reflected observation with has a counter concept as we saw with Luhmanns concept of systems.

The operation in social systems is communications: understanding = utterance ⌐ information. When such an operation link to a former operation it can either accept or cancel the formers proposal of meaning, by either link to what is condensed in the systems history of acceptances and negations or opt for something new. In doing so the system reproduces itself, i.e. produces the distinction between system ⌐ environment.

Meaning

Meaning is defined inspired by Husserl by Luhmann (1995) as the distinction between actual ⌐ potential. The selection of information, for example, is an actualisation in a spectrum of what could possibly be communicated. The system is informed by its history consisting in former communications and provides the potentiality, which new (actual) proposals of meaning are observed in regard to.

Media

As is the case with "knowledge" stored in gens also knowledge "stored" in the oral medium goes far beyond the control and influence of individuals in a societal perspective. With the oral medium language, the social emerged as a level of system formation in its own right with its own reality. This is because language enables communication about communication, and by this self-reference the social was loosely coupled from the biological control (Tække 2006). Storing in gens was supplemented by reproduction of meaning in social systems seen in a survival perspective, but gens and all the biological are on the unmarked side of the distinction mark in the sociological perspective (social systems⌉ environment). But as mentioned earlier the right side of the distinction mark is as important as the left side. The environment is a condition sine qua non for the system, and if it changes the possibilities of the system also changes. New media like writing, printing, telephone, television extents the possibilities for communication. But in comparison each medium both provides the social with possibilities and constraints. If you select to utter your information in one medium, you choose to do without the possibilities of the others. To that, for example, an organisation that does not communicate in a medium used by other are excluded form the social reproduction in that medium and also from the possibilities and constraints of that medium. We return to media in the next section, the conclusion for now is: no media no social systems.

Organization and decision

Luhmann (2006) suggest that organizations are a special form of social systems, which communicates through decisions. Luhmann (2006: 132 – 137) defines a decision using two distinctions. The first distinction distinguishes alternatives (the marked side) from the rest of the world (the unmarked side). The second distinction distinguishes inside the marked side of the first distinction between the selected alternative and the rest of alternatives, which are not selected but excluded: selected alternative⌉ unselected alternatives⌉ the rest of the world (Tække & Paulsen 2008, Seidl & Becker 2006).

Decisions turns open contingency in regard to social expectations into fixed contingency in regard to social expectations (Luhmann 2003: 38). They create a horizon of alternatives and force a selection between them, for example, between different future scenarios. As a kind of communication also their status as being decisions depends of

being linked to by new communicated decisions. "One can speak of a *decision: if and insofar as the slant of meaning an action has is in reaction to an expectation directed to that action*" (Luhmann 1995: 294). If I ask you to close the window and you do it, that action was decided, and we can say that your action decided that my request was a decision. If you did not do it, my request was not a decision. The first distinction is between the window-subject and other possible subjects. The next distinction is between opening⌉ not opening the window.

Luhmann (2006) also has a concept of decisions about decisions defined as decision premises. When decisions are used as premises for other decisions they are not themselves subject for decision. They do not determine *what* is decided but *how* to decide. Luhmann describe three kind of decided decision premises: Programmes, personal and communication channels (also called the organization of the organization).

Organizational culture

In organizations there are also undecided decision premises, which fall in the field of organizational culture (Luhmann 2006). In Scheins (1992) theory, organizational culture is a pattern of shared core values and basic assumptions, which becomes problematic if the assumptions and values differ from the organizations espoused values. In Luhmanns conception we see the undecided decision premises in tendencies and habits, which together with the decided ones, lead the decisions in organizations. The undecided decision premises we can partly observe as a part of the culture that the organization share with its surrounding social world, as operations and semantics which it draw on, not identifying alternatives. Partly as ways of doing things that once was decided but which have lost their actuality as subjects that can be decided.

Self-reference

All elements (operations) you can ascribe a *basic self-observation*, which means that they are elements in the system, in which they anticipates to be linked to of following elements. Furthermore there are some of these elements which explicitly observe the communication in the system, that is the *self-reflective* communications, for example, utterances like, *couldn't you have called instead of mailing*, or, *don't talk to me in that language*. There is also a third level of self-observation that is *reflection*, also defined as

self-tematisation which is the level where the system re-enter the distinction between system⌐environment into the system as *self-descriptions* (Luhmann 1995, 1982).

The first level which only makes basic observations is the operational level, where you, for example, call a colleague asking for her advice. In the next level the call itself becomes the theme or object of observation (the topic of the phone conversation). At the third level the system itself are thematized, for example, as an organization where you always phone each other.

The first level is the operational one where communication *of* something is produced *in* a medium. At the next level communication *about* communication in a medium is produced in a medium. At the third level communication *about* the very system is produced still in a medium.

Following *decided* decision premises the selectivity of the communication is determined in its criteria in a reflective and explicit manner. Following *undecided* decision premises the selectivity of the communication is determined in its criteria in a non-reflective and implicit manner.

If an organization, for example, is observed to use Messenger when the members ask each other for advises this practise is decided. The next thing to observe is if this practise is a decision premise, which it is if the members when they are in doubt usually uses Messenger before they decide what to do. If this is the case we can observe if it is a decided or undecided decision premise, if it is a guideline from the management or an undecided tendency.

Depending on the aim of the analysis the result can just be noted as *state of the art*, or you can go on and analyse if the organization is reflected about this practise, if it has taken alternatives into considerations. The next question is if the media use answers its purpose. To observe this we need a theory about media, which makes it possible to observe a mediums possibility scope in relation to the social. Such a theory must furniture our observations with reflective concepts. A concept is reflected if it has a meaningful counter concept (see the form-section).

Until now the paper has answered its first question: how we can observe the relationship between organizational communication and media. The answer is: we can observe organizational communication *in* and *about* media. Now it is time to exemplify,

with the Internet, how organization studies and organizations themselves can: *observe media in a conceptualized reflective manner.*

Organizational observations of the Internet

The Internet is not observed as a self-producing system (though it has been suggested by Andersen 1998) it does not produce the operations which reproduce it (Baecker 2000). On this background the Internet is not itself an observer but a part of the organizational environment. This is not devaluation because the environment in Luhmanns concept of systems (system⌐environment) is an indispensable component of the distinction defining the form of a system (Luhmann 1997: 67). Luhmann (2002: 275) suggest that the medium of language function as a structural coupling between social systems and their environment. I generalize this suggest and observe all technical media for communication as structural couplings between social systems and both psychic systems and other social systems in their environment. To analyse technical communication media as an indispensable part of the environment of an organization I now link to the theory of *media sociography*, which exactly has this approach (Tække 2006). Media sociography is defined as the analysis and description of the social in relation to the media on which it is based (ibid.). Inspired of Meyrowitz (1985) and Finnemann (1997) this theory develops the concept of *communication space*, saying that every technical media for communication have a communication space providing communication with possibilities and constraints. Analytically seen, the communicative space consists in 9 parameters, which each offers different possibilities for observations. If you have described the 9 parameters you have described the mediums communicative space (Tække 2006).

In the following the paper exemplifies this analytical strategy by observing the Internet using concepts from the litterateur. That is to observe the observations of the literature making it explicit which distinctions are used in it. The output is a spectrum of reflective concepts discoursed partly theoretical and partly in relation to functions in organizations and their structural couplings. The reason for this analysis is to furnish the organizational communication about media with concepts and thereby with reflective possibilities for changing undecided decision premises into decided in regard to media use.

First I present the 9 parameters shortly and generally and after that more deeply and specific in regard to the Internet.

1. *Price* is a parameter observing if it is economically profitable to invest in a given medium. 2. *Usability* observes if the medium exclude many because it is hard to master. 3. *Directionality* observes which possibilities and constraints the medium provides in regard to who can send and receive messages. 4. *Time* observes if the medium gives space for synchronic, a-synchronic or near-synchronic communication. 5. *Storing* observes possibilities for saving messages. 6. *Retrieving* observes possibilities for categorize, systematize and retrieve messages. 7. *Remediation* observes social and psychic consequences in regard to reproduction of existing social processes in new media. 8. *Form* observes what message-forms that can be made in the medium, in-forming it. 9. *Space* observes what the medium means for the extension of the organization in both virtual and geographic sense.

Price

This parameter observes primary through the distinction expensive⌉cheap, that is how selective is the medium in regard to economy. This parameter has to do with how many who can participate in the societal production and reproduction in a given medium. Sociologically seen it is a distinction between inclusion⌉exclusion. Organizations couple to the function system economy, which has the binary code pay ⌉doesn't pay (Tække & Paulsen 2008).[2]

Organizations must reflect about which Internet media they spend expensive attention on and in addition they must consider buying hardware, software, education, and support. These investments must be reflected in regard to how inclusive the medium is in regard to whom the organizations want to communicate with, for example, customers, stockholders and mass media.

Frome out Castells (2003) we can observe through the distinction between *space of flows⌉ space of place*. Space of flows describes how the most urbanized and wealthy places in the world are stronger and more closely coupled to each other in regard to both economy and communication than they are to their surrounding area and nations.

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[2] Organizations couple to all the function systems of society and of cause not only to economy, they must, for example, follow the low.

Decisions, development, profit making, trends etc. is produced here in this digital supported network of metropolis. This describes the world as having two classes of people them who are living in the flows of space and them who does not. In December 2007 20% of the world population was coupled to the Internet covering a wide variation, for example, 83% in Denmark and 4, 7 percent in Africa as a whole (www.internetworldstats.com). Just because 83% of the Danish population are coupled to the Internet it does not mean that they all have the educational background for overcoming the semantic distances of the Internet, or at all bother to surf at organizations. Any way it seems probable that it pay to invest in Internet media if the organizations stakeholders live in the space of flows.

If we cross the distinction mark we can observe that places (space of place), which are placed in the space of flows are inhabited by people who are challenged. They are challenged because they always have to be at disposal (online) and live up to the norms and trends in the flows of space, simultaneous as they are confronted with the demands of norms from family and friends in the space of place (Rose 2005). This observation could be used to reflect about stress in organizations.

Usability

This parameter observes through the distinction easy⌉ difficult coding of the medium. Again it is the selectivity of the medium that is in the focus. The question is if many are excluded from the communication in the medium because it is too difficult to handle. The Internet is difficult to handle, you must be able to read and write and to handle the computer and concrete applications. Meyrowitz (1985) also pointed out that the ability to handle the basic code of reading does not mean that one is able to read and understand a more complicated text. This means that the semantic distances in cyberspace is excluding less educated people like complex texts does.

Organizations must also be reflective about social codes, i.e. genre, norms and semantics, partly in different Internet media, and partly in different groups in the same type of media but with different communication histories behind them providing them with different norms. Well known examples are e-mails, Usenet newsgroup posts and weblogs, which do not follow the netiquette, FAQ and norms, doing more harm than

good. In weblogs, for example, it is the general opinion that you must link also if it damages your own argument and also update on a daily base (Blood 2002).

Directionality

This parameter observes through the distinction sender⌐recipient. We can observe if the concrete Internet medium opens for one to one, one to many, or many to many communication. We can also observe the access to information and messages in relation to ownership and permission (Jensen 1999). The Internet as a digital medium gives all thinkable possibilities for communication patterns, but just as many possibilities to restrict communication patterns. Internal the questions for the organizations are who must know what, who need not to know, who must not know, and too who may have the possibility to answer back and who may not. So this is a question about the configuration of media with power in organizations (Tække 2008b). As an example regulation about directionality in regard to knowledge sharing must be considered. External the organizations must consider restrictions in their corporate weblogs in regard to who may write on them, upload photos etc. - should it require membership to participate and what would that communicate?

Time

This parameter observes through the distinction reversible⌐irreversible. The question is if time is conceived of as linearly proceeding in a punctuated sequence, or as a continued possibility to operate, and maybe do something new and different (Luhmann 1979). If the organization has a corporate blog it must continually maintain its identity producing new elements (entries). The history of the system consisting of such elements slips by as documents open for investigations later on. Moreover members of the organization must produce and maintain their personal identities and positions on a daily base in mailing lists and other media.

Under this parameter is also the distinction between synchronous ⌐ asynchronous communication, with the near synchronous coupled on the outside of the distinction mark. Where e.g. an internet-conference on Skype is synchronous, mailing lists and weblogs are asynchronous and chat on Messenger is near synchronous. Synchronous media leaves lesser time for internal reflection when communicating with

the external social environment. Internal organizations must consider if knowledge sharing shut run in both synchronous and asynchronous media. They must decide how much and often members are allowed to interrupt one another asking what to do. They must decide what media provide the best knowledge sharing in regard to their organization culture, a wiki which is asynchronous and still open for alternations in its content, but not very insisting, or Messenger which is near synchronous with a stronger *space bias*, where elements as temporary processes disappear immediately after coming in to being, but as insisting as a synchronous communication like a phone call.[3]

Not only Henry Ford's conveyer belt, but also technical media for communication mediate power in organizations because they manage the time with consequences on stress level, knowledge sharing, quality, production time etc. (Tække 2008b). Not only the digital calendar with open access and outer-control dominates how time is used in organizations but all its media and the way they are used, decided or not. There lies a tremendous display of power implicit in the social selections in regard to media use. This selectivity can be made the subject for observation and reflectivity so it's not only the possibilities of the media, the inhabited instinct to exploit of the management, or fortuitousness and tendencies that govern it. Think at meetings without agenda, time framework, chairman etc. in the same way as professional meetings are governed also communication in new media must rest on decide decision premises and here time is a central analytical parameter that provides the organization with many observation possibilities.

Storing

This parameter observes through the distinction preserve⌐delete. The organization must select what information to preserve for later reproduction and what it can let go relieve itself from preserve. This is not a simple matter and also the organization regularly must go through its store reselecting what to preserve, update it and maybe recategorize it. Digital media has replaced the function as storing medium from print media (Finnemann 2005).

An old and basic distinction is between space bias⌐time bias (Innis 1991). A medium has a time bias when it is relatively hard to transport (or cannot at all distribute

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[3] In next section I go a little more in to Innis (1991) distinction between time bias⌐space bias.

its content in space) and also tends towards being stiff or impossible to update, resulting in a conserving effect on the social. A medium tends towards a space bias if it is relatively easy to transport (or has a relatively ability to distribute its content in space) and update, resulting in a destabilising effect on the social (ibid.). The Internet has a strong space bias, information is updated incessantly differently different places leaving organizations in a constant need for updating its knowledge storage and in huge organizations for synchronizing different storages.

Retrieving

This parameter observes through the distinction relevant⌐irrelevant (Paulsen 2001). The evolution of technical communication media is also the history about the loosely coupling of retrieving from interaction, geography, hierarchy, limited number of copies etc. With digital media and the immanent consultative interactivity, text based searching is propelled out as an ordinary part of every Internet users everyday life. The digital mediums functionary architecture is a search structure. The whole store in the computer is synchronously manifested and thereby available (Finnemann 1999b), which also counts for the Internet (Andersen 1998). With search engines not only searching for single words are possible but also searching for whole sentences is possible, enabling one to specify the selectivity of the search. Therefore the medium has an enormous potentiality for searching and retrieving, but this potentiality must be matched by social complexity in the organization if the organization is to benefit of it. Internally the potentiality means chaotic retrieve conditions, if not the selectivity for what is stored and updated are an object of organizational reflection. In regard to knowledge sharing, for example, the organization must observe if its decisions about knowledge sharing are matched with its actual practices for storing and its technical search possibilities.

Remediation

This parameter observes through the distinction between communication in one medium⌐communication in another medium (e.g. McLuhan 1967, Meyrowitz 1985, Tække 2006). The logic is that the same content have different meanings or consequences in different media (Bolter & Grusin 2000). Digital media is the first kind of medium which both makes messages perceptible on a distance and at the same time makes storing in them

possible in the same form (Aarseth 1993). Also every former media can be remediated in them.

Here the question is if the remediation of, for example, knowledge sharing from face to face interactions to interactivity with a medium like a weblog or a wiki works out. Is there, for instance, congruity between the organization culture for knowledge sharing and a decision saying that the staff must type in their knowledge in a wiki? If the decision is followed (decided) does it then have the result that staff members stop asking their colleges for supervision? And is it good if colleges stop interrupting each other because they can look for answers in the wiki? Or is the wiki used at all? There is also a question about personal identity; on the one side some would be worried if their name is connected with information in the wiki if others have better information or time will show that the information is wrong. On the other side others would hold back their information if the system is worked out so you cannot see who have entered the information. Also it would harm the trust to the wiki if you cannot see who has entered the information in it. All these observations the organization must execute and reflect about them in regard to the organization culture to become clear about the media use. There are many other aspects of remediation for example differences of asking, ordering etc. face to face, by phone, messenger or email.

Form

This parameter observes through the distinction form⌐medium. The linguistic alphabet can only provide linguistic representations, while the informational alphabet (the binary) can represent multiple semantic regimes (Finnemann 1999).

The question is how organizations uses the mediums possibilities in relation to production and reception, how reflected they are in regard to the possibility space of the medium. The concrete information-system sets the limits and provide the possebilities for how the interface of the organization, the knowledge sharing system etc can be sculptured and handled. Because the digital medium can remediate every other media it is not the possibilities of the medium that set the limit for the realization for any forms at all except some aspects of face to face communication. So how does the organization exploit the digital medium in relation to the Internet?

Space

I will go more into depth with this parameter, partly because it is interesting and partly because it focuses on the conference topic. The discussion about space takes its point of departure in the fight between relationalism and absolutism which can be traced back to the difference between Plato's (1977) and Aristotle's (1947) observation of space. With Plato's *Timaeus* the first abstract concept of space, *chora*, was constructed. It was defined as the nurse of all becoming, the receptacle in where all phenomena appear, and the container where ideas get matter to their form (Plato 1977: 177). Already Aristotle opposed against this conception where space constitute an independent dimension, in his opinion we can only talk about place and relations between places. For centuries this discussion was repeated, for instance, with Newton (1973) as a strong advocate for the absolutism with his concept of *absolute space* and Leibniz (1973) as advocate for the relationistic perspective with his monadology. In a form analytical interpretation of the absolutism we find the distinction place⌐ space, while we in the relationalism find the distinction place⌐ other places. In the discussion of the virtual as a space it looks easier and closer to the physical architecture, to talk about relations (connections) between memory, processer and keyboard in the computer and between computers and servers in regard to the Internet. On the other side is the absolutism according to which there are web-places in a cyberspace. This is an observation there goes beyond a transmission view on communication and also capture cyberspace as a special communicative space.

With the philosophy of Kant the focus is turned to our cognition in which space is the form of intuition which structures all outer representations given us. In this view we give space to the world to percept it, but at the same time Kant opt that the nature of space is equal to the descriptions of space that Newton gave, why Kant must be seen as an absolutist. With phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger the subjective and embodied cognitions become the key concepts in the discussion about how we interpret space. Form theoretically seen Kant observes using the distinction between human cognition⌐ external reality. This distinction is preserved in the phenomenological observation, but with the difference that space now is seen as variable from person to person, meaning that we do not percept the surrounding space in a mathematical linear way like a robot, but as an embodied subjective gearing at the world.

I suggest the distinction cyberspace⌐geographic space which plays on cyberspace as a parallel space providing another extension than the geographic space (Tække 2002). In the history of ideas there is a remarkable analogy in the development on both sides of the distinction mark. The first concept of space, *chaos*, comes from the mythology, where the world and its creatures was portrayed as animated by the gods in a gloomy cosmos (Hesoid 1979). The concept of *cyberspace* was coined in the cyber-punk genre of science fiction by the author William Gibson, and describes a likewise gloomy universe. The distinction between absolutism and relationalism also plays a roll in the discussion about cyberspace. This can be seen in the difficult rhetorical operation it is to postulate the existence of something that cannot be sensed in itself: "Third is Space, which is everlasting, not admitting destruction; providing a situation for all things that come into being, but itself apprehended without the senses by a sort of bastard reasoning, and hardly an object of belief" (Plato 1977: 192). This quotation could as well have been used describing the virtual space which computers and the Internet constitute the ontological foundation for (Jacobs 2007).

As with space so also with cyberspace, focus is turned from the distinctions used in the absolutism and relationalism with the Kantian observation, because in this optic it is us who give space to what we percept and at the same time it is the perceptions that let us observe the world as it is. Newton's absolute space and Euclid's geometry is the foundation for the pure intuition of space which works as a condition for synthetic a priori knowledge. Even though Kant must be seen as an absolutist the focus is moved to the distinction between inner cognition and external reality. Here comes the phenomenology into the picture, Husserl does not define the concept of phenomena as appearance in the same meaning as Kant did, where there are an understanding of something behind the phenomena (the thing in it self, here the absolute space). In Husserl's view the phenomena is the reality itself, just as it appears for us as the consciousness intentional content.

With the later phenomenologists the focus is moved to the distinction between incorporated consciousness⌐situated thrownness in the world (history, society, language, technology, culture etc.). We are evolved in and therefore bodily adapted to the geographic space. Here we navigate around using our musculoskeletal system and senses, following our intentional objects. Against this, cyberspace appears as a different space,

thus we still pursue our intentional object in this space we have to do it using the handling mechanisms of the computer in a landscape where distances are not geographic but semantic. Where the geographic space is heliocentric the cyberspace is geocentric because we do not move around through this space, but generate it around us. Using our semantic knowledge we move places in cyberspace to us. With Luhmann, who sees social systems as self-referential systems parallel with psychic systems, the organizations observation of cyberspace comes into focus. How do organizations communicate in cyberspace and how do they communicate about cyberspace? This is a distinction between operation⌉ semantic, which enable the observer to observe to what extent organizations are reflected about their decided and undecided decision premises in regard to cyberspace. There are obviously many intentional objects – things and activities – which appeal and create interest in organizations, which only exist in cyberspace.

In our experience the distance between the body and the screen disappears in the same way as the distance between television and viewer, you only percept in the space the medium provide. Time and distance keeps people from each other in the geographic space, they can correspond but not interact. In the most developed form of technical mediated sociality psychic systems transcendent the geographic space and find them selves as communicant, lover, or for example, worker in cyberspace leaving their body in the geographic space. Not only the geographic space but also the biological system becomes secondary under the stay in cyberspace. The psychosocial work environment is logically seen influenced of the being and socializing in cyberspace but how? The body with its brain, senses and musculoskeletal system still is the basis for psychic and social systems, but is no longer available for the interaction partner.

In a Heidegger perspective we cannot escape cyberspace when we are there, and the being of the being must realize its project under other conditions than in the geographic space. Heidegger's philosophy of the being, where potentiality no longer referees to the appearance of eternal forms, puts focus on processes. If the technology is ready-to-hand the being can realize itself in cyberspace and fulfil intentions within the setting of this space following the possibilities offered in it. Contrary if the technology is experienced present-at-hand the being will move its focus from the intended process to the technical foundation of cyberspace and feel limited and maybe alternated. In the light of this distinction, between ready-to-hand⌉ present-at-hand, the psychosocial work

environment of the organization is guided by the decided decisions premises, by the organizations ability to reduce the complexity presented by the technology. The norms of the organization culture must be reflected to match the continuously new information situation so the communication can pursue its goals and not be paralysed by the technology.[4]

The reflection about Internet must not be limited to narrow technological questions but particularly focus on the changed social structures given by the Internet. Fuchs (2008), for example, observes the Internet using the distinction competition⌉ cooperation which is explained as two conflicting forces fighting about the control in cyberspace, as a continuation of the class struggle in society. Wikipedia is emphasized as an example of cooperation where information is put at free disposal and negotiated in a collective manner. The other side of the distinction is exemplified with Google.com who more secretly, by gaining monopoly on different services, earns money on lower classes production of content. This is yet another observation of the different modus which must be employed to achieve goals in cyberspace.

Humans are not freer in the experience-space cyberspace than in the geographic space. We can not escape the individual history of socialization, the language, the culture, the history nor the technology in any space. If we go back to Kant with the quotation: "Space is a necessary a priori representation, which underlies all outer intuitions" (Kant 1970: 68), but keep it in mind that we cannot, like Kant, take for given that the space outside us sufficiently can be in lighted following Newton's concept of absolute space, and dissolve this Kantian incongruence in the phenomenological analysis of the experienced space, space still is the form of intuition of man. The parallel space cyberspace emerges on basis of the geographic space an eliminate it. The geographic space vanishes in the meaning of distance that takes time and risk to overcome. Cyberspace is established on technology, but the technology disappears in our experience why the parallel space becomes a new receptacle for social systems and a new surrounding world for the psychic systems. The psychic systems still have their bodies in the geographical space, but if their intentionality is directed towards the geography eliminating space, it only exists as a form of intuition. When organizations can achieve

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[4] See Meyrowitz's (1985) exemplary analysis inspired of Goffman's distinction between front stage⌉ back stage, in regard to the new information situation given by the television in the 1960ties.

their goals in cyberspace also parts of their extension become parallel to the geographic space. Organizations get a virtual extension beyond the geographic space and must in different extent reproduce themselves with cyberspace as space. And this is because a range of functions and goals only can be realized in cyberspace.

Inspired of Baym (2000) we can observe the Internet using the distinction online⌐ offline, not to emphasize the difference of the distinction's two sides, but to emphasize the reentry on both sides of the distinction mark. Being in cyberspace and being in the geographic space is not as isolated from each other as the distinction cyberspace⌐ geographic space observes. Mailing lists and other online activities works in harmony with administration meetings and other offline activities in the cooperation in organizations. Equally commercials online works in harmony with offline sail (and vice versa), and moreover social communities offline who keeps organization members happy is supported by online activities. This observation, which seems more relationalistic with its view of the Internet almost as a communication channel between individuals, is orthogonal to the more absolutistic observation of a cyberspace.

With McLuhan's (1967) concept of the global village we can introduce the distinction between global⌐local to observe the Internet. Because the Internet is omnipresent the world also shrink offline and new interest organizations, tendencies, meanings, etc. emerge across old national borders. Technology becomes an extension of our body and senses which let us participate in the rest of the world, or to formulate it carefully, in that part of the world which is online and which organizations have semantic capital enough to understand. As the cartoon crisis showed, organizations must have a permanent semantic watchfulness and sensitivity for how understanding is selected on a more global plan than before the emergence of digital media.

Concluding remarks

This paper focus on *how we can observe the relationship between organizational communication and media*. Using systems theory and form theory, it presents a theoretical framework and a strategy for analysing organisational communication in and about media. The analysis has two levels:

The first one concerns an epistemology about organizations as self-referential communication systems and how they observe and can be observed. The conclusion is

that their self-reference process in three levels which are basic self-reference, reflexivity and reflexion. The three levels provide the organization with communication elements that reproduces it, decides to do what has become valued and qualified during its history of communication, or to try something new, and finally, describes itself as an organization performing in special way - gaining identity. Organizations are observed always to communicate *in* a medium, for instance, through speech or email, and the paper links to the three levels of self-reference as an analytical look to focus on the communication *about* this media use.

The second level of analysis tries to put forward how we, in a way that is consistent with the form - and systems theoretical framework for understanding observation and organization, can observe media sociologically. The conclusion is that we can describe a communicative space for each medium if we take the 9 presented analytical parameters into consideration. Thus it lies open if there are more or less parameters qua the concept of observations as two sided forms based on contingent distinctions, the contribution of this paper, which is a work-in-progress, does open the debate and initiate reflections about media use in organizations. For example the parameter of *prize* initiates reflections about inclusion⌉exclusion, and the parameter of *remediation* directs our attention to reflect about different consequences, in regard to communicate the same in different media.

The distinctions concerning place and space that this conference's theme actualizes initiate reflections in depth about the double constitution of organizations. On the one hand organizations operate at *places* where they have their members and where their members have their social lives among each other, and are habitualized and integrated and familiar with the internal and local surrounding culture and life world. On the other hand organizations are also coupled to *space* and therefore also coupled to other forms of cultures and life worlds. This parameter does both give an explanation for why organizations must be reflected about their media use and also open for an understanding of why the other parameters are central.

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