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### Educational Apparatuses. Hegemony, Protest, and the Educational Function of Media Apparatuses

Looking at the question of »education within the new medium« from a political point of view including that of political theory, we soon find that not one of these terms – education, new, and medium – can be used in an unproblematic way. I suppose this is what the organizers of this congress had in mind, when phrasing their »outline«: »The primary concern will not be »new gadgets«, but formation and transformation of structures, dispositives, and technologies which in their entirety may be understood as a »new medium«. Indeed, a term such as »new medium« is of little help particularly in those cases where »new« media are to be delimited from old media. I would say, the »new« is at best a philosophical category and not plausibly a descriptive one, for the new becomes apparent only in those cases where it surprises us *off-guard* (English in the original text) in the midst of the old, bringing about that, which philosophy knows as the primeval affect of astonishment. There is nothing surprising about the phenomenon of digitalization and with it the new media including the internet.<sup>2</sup> So, the best way to put it would be to talk about the *latest* medium. This being the latest as long as we have not been surprised by yet a later one – the latest, in this sense, probably being the new one's greatest enemy. Due to this and to other reasons our research project on the use of media by protest movements, located at the University of Lucerne and supported by the SNE, does not distinguish between new protest

media and old protest media. Just imagine the vast number of possible media of protest: from archaic media such as posters, banners, and flyers, to newspapers and megaphones and through to the various platforms offered by the internet or mobile telephoning (e. g. SMS). All these media are used concertedly, while blurring the difference between old and new, just as the difference between digital and non-digital. An example from the work of my colleague Marion Hamm, may illustrate this: To what kind of media practice or medium do we refer in the following case: During a demonstration a live link is arranged by way of mobile phone from a prison for demand pending deportation, and an inmate is able to address the demonstrators by way of simply putting a megaphone close to the loudspeaker of the mobile phone?

Is the hybrid medium resulting from this a new medium? According to what has just been said, it is one, insofar as the use of media and the unusual combination of media *surprises* us. Otherwise, neither an archaic instrument of agitation, such as the megaphone, nor a modern communication tool such as the mobile phone nor both in combination feature anything, that might justify the term »new medium«.

But – to further radicalize the question – if the term »new medium« is justified only in the rarest of cases, is there anything which might *eo ipso* justify the term »medium« itself – i. e. regardless of

the question of »old or new«, »digital or analog«, »networked or having few contacts«? Is it possible that, after we have rid ourselves of the category of the new, we definitely ought to get rid of the category of the medium as well (I will come back to the category of education later)? Where do we have to locate »the medium« or »the media« within the protest event?

Let us keep to the case of a political manifestation. If the term »media« is equivalent to communication media, their definition includes the bridging of spatial distance. In this case, a political assembly in a public place confronts us with a problem, insofar as such an assembly seems to be defined by the fact that spatial distance does not need to be bridged, as indeed everybody has gathered in a common place already. If this was the case, and the slightest of reflections will give rise to serious doubts, a good deal of protest media would be unnecessary as regards the manifestation itself – they would only be relevant with respect to the perception by mass media. Precisely this notion is supported by a large section of movement research (just as by communication theory), where media are mostly conceived as an equivalent to mass media, and the public as an equivalent to public opinion. In this case, protest or alternative media are so to speak mass media which have got a raw deal, assumed to intend nothing else but provide the mass media with alternative information and contents. Joachim Raschke's dictum is representative for this perception: »A movement about which there is no reporting does not happen at all.«<sup>3</sup> Although the »fight for the public« may be called the elixir of life of social movements,<sup>4</sup> the public of protest and the public as a whole ought not be reduced to the aspect of mass media. Movement immanent media play a considerable role for the identity and the practice of protest itself. In 1987 already, Roland Roth regretfully stated that movement research had neglected the internal communication structures of media. Yet, the moulding of an autonomous public was an essential aspect of the self-constitution and dynamics of movements. The new social movements, he says, aim at »developing a political counter-public« against the normative power of the media public and the public of associations.<sup>5</sup> But if the objective of alternative media or of those media used in the context of protest events is

not only to address a broader public but also to stabilize the movement's own public respectively the identity of the movement itself, how are we to conceptualize those media used in the context of the protest genre »political assembly in a public square«? Obviously, in such cases the concept of media is not at all easily conceived and delimited. Let us go back to the times of public protest speeches of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which we know primarily from photography. What we regularly perceive there is seemingly narrowest immediacy of speaker and mass, the latter surrounding the speaker in the tightest of spaces, independent of media. Now, this compact massing has nothing to do with the fact that in politics people stood together in those days while today they insist on their individual distance of politeness but it has to do with the fact that in protest events loudspeakers appear only in the mid-1920s. We might assume that the only medium in the traditional sense serving the demands of creating an inner-movement public, was the air, and the only possible amplifier was the speaker's power of voice. But this impression is misleading. Particularly during major events the audibility of the speakers was limited, so that the integrity or compactness of the masses could not be guaranteed. In order to avoid the infamous thinning-out of the ranks in the back the strategy of re-aggregation of smaller units was employed, so that several speakers were simultaneously speaking on several stages in front of several compact groups. But if the impression of a collective rally was to be kept up, e. g. the attendants were to start cheering at the same time, this simultaneity had to be created in the first place. Thus, these simultaneous speeches at separate stages were timed by help of far-reaching media such as trumpets or flag signals.<sup>6</sup> But are these media or just a system of signals, after all only a kind of formal timing which *by itself* does not communicate any message? In this case we are far from answering the question of what is actually creating the *unity*, not only the parallelity of the attendants in this public.

For a satisfying answer we have to leave the level of mere communication theory and break up or at least extend the concept of media in two directions. First, regarding the *cultural function of media*, and second regarding the *political function of the medial*.

(a) Along the first extension of the concept of media, the movement's own media may be conceived of as production tools of a movement identity in the territory of cultural or cultural-political practice. Their role may vary: as *alternative media* they may act *past* the mass media (the Indymedia network, founded to democratize the media by spreading information and news that do not feature in the mass media may serve as a prominent example); as *counter-media* they may absolutely be trying to directly address the general public of the mass media or the political elite with counter-hegemonial contents or demands.<sup>7</sup> But for *inner-movement* media there is the second feature of this protest, i. e. the almost more relevant function of stabilizing the movement's own political or counter-cultural identity. This implies a variety of possible applications usually not considered by (mass) communication science. In contrast to means of internet activism, which have been studied extensively indeed, the use of digital cameras for the purpose of self-documentation (or for documenting eventual police actions) or of SMS for the purpose of ad hoc organization of spontaneous protest assemblies remains a desiderate of media science. Following Cultural and Media Studies,<sup>8</sup> however, the internet and scene magazines ought to be considered as being part of the movement immanent alternative and protest media, just as flyers, posters, brochures, or computer games. Yet, according to Sarah Thornton's study on club cultures, »micro media«,<sup>9</sup> such as flyers, telephone info-lines, pirate radio stations, or mailing lists (today we ought to add SMS) have indispensable organizational functions for the respective scene. Thus at the same time, today's political protest movements may be analyzed as sub-cultures or ensembles of sub-cultures, without necessarily culturalizing their political identity. However, it is pivotal that the individual protest media ought not to be studied in isolation. They have to be analyzed as a particular dispositive of protest or a particular *media apparatus*, in the long run serving to establish a counter-hegemonial formation in the territory of culture (in the broadest sense of being a short-cut for the entirety of the signifying, i. e. significance-generating, practices). Thus, the practices of alternative and protest media we are concerned with here must be referred to as counter-hegemonial

practices in a Gramscian sense. They are not arbitrarily running parallel but they are institutionally articulated within a comprehensive, but of course not at all homogenous apparatus. It is this »apparatus«, or if you like: the political-medial dispositive of a social movement, comprising more than a selective, spontaneistic event (without, however, being able to abandon such protest events as organizational junctions of their own identity), which in the original sense may count as »the medium« of a movement providing after all an institutional frame at least allowing for a lasting stabilization of the social movement.

(b) Before getting on to the question of »education« and the educational function of such apparatuses, I would like to address the second extension of the concept of media regarding the *political function of the medial*. I have claimed that the traditional concept of media is not able to explain satisfyingly what it is that makes people gather as a *mass* in a public square. The reference to the media apparatus of a movement takes us one step further, but on its own it does not suffice either. Not only do we need to explain how the identity of a social movement is stabilized by apparatuses, but also how the immediacy of compact mass identity arises at the moment of the protest event without a communication medium in the traditional sense being necessary at this very moment, as the example was supposed to illustrate. I would like to put forward the thesis that this immediacy is very much mediated, by help of an entity, however, which is not an entity of connection but first of all an entity of radical separation. This is what Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau call antagonism. With this term Laclau and Mouffe<sup>10</sup> refer to the logic of the political as such: connecting heterogeneous elements to form a chain of equivalences will only be successful, and even this only temporarily, if these elements bear on something they have in common. This common ground, however, cannot just be another element, as it would be a part of the chain of equivalences, as one element among others. What they have in common, as Laclau and Mouffe state, is the mere entity of a negatory outside, in opposition to which the chain constitutes itself as a chain of equivalences, i. e. as a common identity. Thus, the antagonism

establishes a relation of radical negation, whose negatory character makes a temporary connection possible. So, if we ask ourselves what it is after all, that makes the demonstrators assemble in this public square, we ought not – at least not at the most elementary level – search among the protest media themselves in their apparatusive function, but we have to search the discourse for the negatory entity, which assembled the originally scattered people in the first place, constituting their – paradox, because negatory – common grounds. Topologically speaking, this antagonism will run at the *outermost limits* of the protest event and will be marked by certain signifiers, corresponding to labels of political enemies. But of course it may be located discursively within the discourses of protest. The kind of public established in this way is not any longer the public square, where a demonstration takes place, or the space of traffic of the street, but it is the public of antagonism itself, or else it is the antagonism creating its own public, independently of the place or the institution it concerns. Quite often, indeed, it is exactly the space itself or the political or even non-political nature of that space turning into the subject of this antagonism, as the conquest of the street by the workers' movement in the history of May 1<sup>st</sup> or the building of barricades in the history of revolutions from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through to May 1968 vividly show. So, if antagonism itself, has a medial function, I suggest to differentiate the entity of the medial from the entity of media, thus extending Laclau's hegemony theory from a media-hilosophical point of view. In analogy to the entity of the political the medial in a strict sense would have to be specified not as a *connection* but as an antagonistic separation. Doing this we define the medial on a political level as the specific entity enabling community in the process of communication and at the same time disabling it. Politics and media in the stricter sense of media apparatuses must be distinguished from this entity of the political, taken as the mediality of antagonism.

This takes us to the question of education, not to that of education *within* the media, however, but to the question of the educational function *of* media apparatuses. At the same time the possibility of the production of counter-hegemonic publics shall be

analysed from this point of view by introducing what may be called »education of conflicts« (i. e. the medial in the sense of antagonism), maybe not least indicated by the use of protest media. For this purpose we must go back to Antonio Gramsci's insight, still relevant today for Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogy, saying that constructing any hegemonial project is not least an »educational« task which at once condenses in material, »cultural« practices. And on the other hand we have to draw on the origins of apparatus theory with Louis Althusser, in order to show how this educational function is reflected in institutional and not last media apparatuses.

Before getting to Gramsci and finally Foucault, let us have a look at Althusser's famous theory of ideological state apparatuses, which has indeed proven to be relevant for cinema, media, and communication theories – including those of Cultural Studies – and is reflected even in Gregory Ulmer's concept of the »electronic apparatus« or in Jaques Derrida's concept of the »tele-technological apparatus«. According to Althusser's famous essay, a subject is constituted, i. e. »hailed«, by the ideological state apparatuses, i. e. by those institutions of civil society, the *società civile* to use Gramsci's words, which precede the »repressive state apparatuses«: among the latter Althusser counts government, administration, armed forces, police, law courts, and prisons. Among the former he counts the religious ideological state apparatuses (ISA) of churches, the school ISA of public and private educational institutions, and the ISA of family, law, trade unions, and politics. Media sciences rarely notice that Althusser already introduces the concept of a specific media apparatus, namely the »ISA of information (press, radio, TV aso)« (as well as the »cultural ISA (literature, arts, sports aso)«, relevant in this context).<sup>11</sup> According to Althusser, this information apparatus contributes to the reproduction of the relations of production »by stuffing every citizen with a daily dose of nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism aso., by help of press, broadcasting, and TV«. <sup>12</sup> It becomes obvious that Althusser complies with a very traditional model of communication. His choice of words is significant, as the idea of »stuffing« the citizens comes close to the behaviorist scenario of »imprinting«

the message onto the passive mass of receivers. In addition, there is the classical approach of ideology criticism to the media: in this context information is generally introduced as *false* information. Thus ideology is equivalent to the misunderstanding of the relation of individuals to a reality obviously presented by the media only in nationalist, chauvinist, liberalist, moralist, in short: ideological terms. At once Althusser conceives *culture* – just as the media – as only one of many regions, finding only one example for the effectiveness of the cultural ideological state apparatus, i. e. the role of sports in chauvinism.

While this concept of the media as ideologic state apparatuses of information is thoroughly disappointing and has to be replaced by an extended concept of the apparatus, as sketched out earlier, Althusser proves to be quite sensitive as regards the educational function not only of the media but in this case also of ideological state apparatuses as a whole. According to Althusser there is a predominant ISA within the entire complex of ideological state apparatuses. In pre-capitalism this role was filled by the church having religious, school, and cultural functions. Due to the essential role of this ISA, the hegemonic fight of the rising bourgeoisie was also a fight against the church and »for the establishment of bourgeois hegemony of the functions the church held before: most of all by way of schooling.«<sup>13</sup> Althusser assumes »that the *ideological apparatus of school* is the one ideological state apparatus which has been put in a dominating position in the mature capitalist formations at the end of a violent political and ideologic class war against the formerly dominating ideologic state apparatus.«<sup>14</sup> In other words, in the bourgeois age, in which we still are, school – or rather the institutional complex which I would like to call the *educational state apparatus* – became the predominant ideological state apparatus.

»Thus, there are good reasons for assuming that behind the game of its political ideological state apparatus dominating the foreground of the scenery [that is, the political ISA of parliamentary representation], it was the school apparatus which the bourgeoisie built up as its ideologic state apparatus No. 1,

i. e. the predominant one, which has actually replaced in its functions the earlier predominant ideological state apparatus, that is the church. One may even add: the pair school-family has replaced the pair church-family.«<sup>15</sup>

Obviously it is not necessary to stress that, if Althusser's analysis is correct, the effects on our all too harmless ideas of education, communication, and pedagogy must be considerable. For if we start out from school in the strict sense only, no ideological state apparatus is provided »for such a long period of time with the obligatory audience (which is also free ...) of the entirety of the children of the capitalist social formation – 5 to 6 days a week and 8 hours a day.«<sup>16</sup> Of course, in this context school has a particularly privileged function among educational state apparatuses (not least because it has the opportunity to effectively combine the moment of ideology reproduction with moments of »constraint«, such as compulsory school attendance). »Starting with kindergarden« school »accommodates children from all social classes, and right from the beginning of kindergarden it imprints »skills« onto them throughout the years – years during which the child is most easily »injured«, as it is hemmed in between the state apparatus of family and the state apparatus of school – by help of both new and old methods which are either wrapped in the ruling ideology (French, Mathematics, natural history, literature history) or quite simply the ruling ideology in its unadulterated form (morals, civic education, philosophy).«<sup>17</sup> For Althusser, the »ideology of school« is one of the »constitutive forms of the dominant bourgeois ideology: an ideology which presents school as a neutral milieu without ideology (as [...] being worldly), where teachers respecting the »conscience« and »freedom« of the children, who have been (trustfully) intrusted to them by their »parents« (who are also free, i. e. they possess their children) lead them towards freedom, morality, and the responsibility of adults by way of their own example, knowledge, literature, and »liberating« virtues.«<sup>18</sup>

That which holds true for the school, holds – as one must say – for educational state apparatuses in general, that is for the entire complex of family-school-university-museum etc. However, according

to the logic of the argument, it is not clear why the educational function should be restricted to the educational state apparatuses in the strict sense. Is it not so, that even a typical *repressive* state apparatus, such as the armed forces, definitely holds an educational function, e. g. as »the school of the nation«? And is it not likely, that similar aspects of the educational function may be found within all state apparatuses, may they be formally »repressive« or »ideological«? Indeed, could not justice serve as a classic example of an *educational state apparatus* in an extended sense, with the prison as an affiliated reformatory? And just like many others, the medial (or the ISA of information) and the cultural apparatuses ought to fulfil this educational function as well. If this is the case, the educational state apparatus would be not only the *dominating* state apparatus within civil society, but the state apparatus which determines *all other* apparatuses. Thus, however, we would have come back full circle to Gramsci's hegemony theory to which Althusser is more indebted than is immediately obvious.

Althusser adopts Gramsci's idea of an extended or »integral« state, which includes those institutions, which Gramsci calls »political society« (the state in a traditional sense), as well as »civil society«. The latter, conceived of as the terrain where general approval and consent are hegemonically secured – basically serves as a model for Althusser's later concept of ideological state apparatuses. And this is not yet the end of the common grounds. It is interesting that Gramsci – four decades earlier than Althusser – found school to be an important place for the securing of bourgeois hegemony: »In this respect, school as a positive function of education and law courts as a repressive and negative function of education are the most important activities of the state: but in reality a number of other, so called private activities and initiatives aim at this, composing the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.«<sup>19</sup> Gramsci is convinced that the state in the first place ought to be perceived as an »educator«.<sup>20</sup> The state fulfills an educational function – and »every relationship of ›hegemony‹ is necessarily an educational relationship«.<sup>21</sup> But there is also a distinct difference to Althusser. Gramsci's approach is fundamentally political-activist, not economic-determinist. For

Gramsci the field of civil society (with Althusser: the complex of ideological state apparatuses) is constantly contested, hegemony is never completely achieved, the construction of a counter-hegemonial »collective will«, i. e. a political counter-project, is not a task hopeless right from the beginning. Precisely because the educational state apparatuses are contested terrain and not, as Althusser's model suggests, a terrain that has always been lost already, emancipatory education – in the form of an »education of conflict« – is possible. And the counter-hegemonial media apparatuses – in the broad sense – of the social movements bear witness of the fact that establishing an educational relationship, or better: *counter-educational* relationship has to be an integral part of every political project if there are to be any long-term hegemonial effects.

Gramsci coined the term »trench warfare« for this laborious fight for the construction of a counter-hegemonial formation: as a metaphor for a confusing situation where – on the cultural terrain of »civil society« – multiple trench fights take place in various locations, various apparatus-like constellations are put together and apart again, and not even the front line is clearly specified. In a fine conversation during his activist period Foucault assessed political activism in a very similar way which is still relevant – with certain restrictions – for current social movements (which, just as the movement of precariousness, seem to pursue *single issue* politics but meanwhile show an observable tendency universality regarding their objectives):

»This implies that the system cannot be fought at one single place; we must be present at all fronts: university, prisons, psychiatry; not at the same time – our powers are too limited – but one after the other. One pushes, one lashes out at the persistent obstacles; the system shows cracks elsewhere, one fights on, one believes to have won, the institution consolidates again, one starts all over again. It is a long fight, full of repetitions and seemingly without coherence: the system which is at stake, and the power exerted within it provide coherence to the fight.«<sup>22</sup>

In the context of today's protest movements, much of this quotation seems quite up to date. However,

the notion of a »system«, of *the system*, working as a unifying guarantor of disparate fights, a notion quite typical of that time then, is hardly convincing anymore. If it refers to a positive and positively describable entity – such as Althusser's fatal nexus of ideological state apparatuses – »the system« does not exist. Every entity ensuring a temporary unity of disparate fights cannot have any positive content itself, as we have shown. But as an empty signifier of precisely that entity of radical negation that connects heterogeneous fights to form a chain of equivalences, by being their *negatory outside*, »the system« had its discursive function even in those days. But the crucial point is the following: it is not possible to conclude from the medial function of the antagonism and thus of the political, which concrete media will be connected to form what kind of apparatuses and which discursive elements will form which chains of equivalences. Today's equivalent to the signifier called »system« is the signifier called »globalization« or, depending on the kind of protest, another signifier. Only a close discourse analysis of the respective protest event will reveal the apparatusive forms the mediality of antagonism takes on as well as which education of the medium, i. e. which politics, serves which hegemonial or counter-hegemonial purposes. Thus, although there can be no doubt about the function of medial apparatuses, it is not predictable which powers they serve in a specific case. This is one more reason for the emancipatory education of conflict which is not scared and most of all not deceived by apparent fatal nexus and by seemingly insurmountable power relations.

- 1 This text was written in the context of the SNF-funded research project *Protest als Medium – Medien des Protests (Protest as a Medium – Media of Protest)*.
- 2 See Marchart, Oliver: *Techno-Kolonialismus. Theorie und imaginäre Kartographie von Kultur und Medien*, Wien 2004.
- 3 Raschke, Joachim: *Soziale Bewegungen. Ein historisch-systematischer Grundriß*, Frankfurt 1985, p. 343.

- 4 Roth, Roland; Heike Walk: »Der Ausverkauf der Politik – neue Herausforderungen für globale soziale Bewegungen«, in: Huffschmid, Jörg (ed.): *Die Privatisierung der Welt. Hintergründe, Folgen, Gegenstrategien. Reader des wissenschaftlichen Beirats von Attac*, Hamburg 2004, pp. 95–101, p. 95.
- 5 Roth, Roland: »Kommunikationsstrukturen und Vernetzungen in neuen sozialen Bewegungen«, in: Roth, Roland; Dieter Rucht (eds.): *Neue soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik*, Frankfurt, New York 1987, pp. 68–88, p. 74.
- 6 On this see Rucht, Dieter: »heraus zum 1. Mai!« – Ein Protestritual im Wandel«, in: Rucht, Dieter (ed.): *Protests in der Bundesrepublik. Strukturen und Entwicklungen*, Frankfurt, New York 2001, pp. 143–173, p. 150.
- 7 Downing, John D.H.; Tamara V. Ford; Geneve Gil: *Radical Media. Rebellious Communication and Social Movements*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 2001.
- 8 Atton, Chris: *Alternative Media*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 2002.
- 9 Thornton, Sarah: *Club Cultures. Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Hannover, London 1996, p. 6.
- 10 Laclau, Ernesto; Chantal Mouffe: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a radical democratic politics*, London 1985.
- 11 Althusser, Louis (1976): *Ideologie und Ideologische Staatsapparate. Aufsätze zur marxistischen Theorie*, Hamburg, Berlin 1977, p. 120.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid., p. 126.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., p. 127.
- 16 Ibid., p. 129.
- 17 Ibid., p. 128.
- 18 Ibid., p. 129.
- 19 Gramsci, Antonio: *Erziehung und Bildung*, ed. by Andreas Merckens, Hamburg 2004, p. 49.
- 20 Ibid., p. 71.
- 21 Ibid., p. 80.

- 22 Foucault, Michel (1971): »Gespräch zwischen Michel Foucault und Studenten. Jenseits von Gut und Böse«, in: *Von der Subversion des Wissens*, ed. by Walter Seitter, Frankfurt 1987, p. 102 f.