English Abstracts

Christian Katzenbach / Christian Pentzold: Working with Theory in Communication Studies: Complexity between complification and simplification (Theoriearbeit in der Kommunikationswissenschaft zwischen Komplexitätssteigerung und Komplexitätsreduzierung), pp. 483-499

The article aims to capture the theory work in communication science as a balancing of both an increase and a reduction of complexity in dealing with its subject-matters and concepts. At first, we attribute the dynamics of theoretical developments in the study of media and communication to the interplay of inter-disciplinary and inner-disciplinary tendencies as well as the transformation of its empirical objects. Then we chart pertinent approaches that try to recognize the conditions, processes or consequences of communication processes and media systems in their complexity. As a result, the engagement with complexity as a pivot for theorization in communication science is discussed. We consider ways to arrive at a substantial disciplinary understanding of complexity and its ambivalences. With this, the overview and introduction contributes to the conceptual foundation of the diversifying academic field of communication science, its ties to debates in other disciplines and the necessary reflection on a changing area of practice.
Keywords: complexity, theory building, cybernetics, theory of complex systems, emergence

Marian Adolf: The Challenges of Complexity to Communication Research: of Maps, Strategies and Pitfalls (Komplexität als Herausforderung der Kommunikationswissenschaft: von Landkarten, Strategien und Fallen), pp. 500-516

Media and communication research, just like other social sciences, find themselves increasingly challenged by modern society's ever growing complexity. This paper tracks social complexity as an academic concept and problem, discussing some of the challenges this poses for the field. It aims to provide a systematic approach to dealing with unavoidable complexity with regards to research objects, scientific observation and, last not least, the general issue of science philosophy. Tracing the sources of increasing complexity as far as the level of objects (transformation of societal communication) and endogenous developments of the field (specialization and sub-divisions of perspectives), this paper discusses the implications for the construction of theory. I conclude by critiquing strategies of inadequate analytic reductionism and suggest emphasizing reflexive theorization and intensified intra-disciplinary debate as a strategy for coping with the continuous increase in complexity.
Keywords: complexity, theory building, normativity, media and communication studies

Laura Wolff: Hypertextuality and Coping with Complexity: Systematising the Field and Drafting a Research Approach (Komplexitätsbewältigung und Hypertextualität. Systematisierung des Forschungsfelds und Entwurf eines aneignungstheoretischen Untersuchungsansatzes), pp. 517-533

This paper sheds light on the significance of the new media to individual and social coping strategies with regard to the increasing complexity of modern life. Hypertextuality is seen as a non-linear and dynamic organisation principle of knowledge and information, and regarded as a key to the discussion of media causes and strategies for dealing with

increasing communicative and social complexity. My aim is to systematically review the field, providing an overview of the state of research on the relation between hypertextuality and (coping with) complexity from a structural as well as an individual point of view. Drawing on the concept of appropriation, I propose to complement the existing approaches by adding an everyday perspective and focusing on problem-oriented research on subjective attributions of explanations and meanings.
Keywords: social and media change, coping complexity, hypertextuality, appropriation

Annie Waldherr: The Public Sphere as a Complex System: a Theoretical Framework and its Methodological Consequences (Öffentlichkeit als komplexes System. Theoretischer Entwurf und methodische Konsequenzen), pp. 534-549

In this paper, I show how concepts of complexity can be used to explain dynamic macro phenomena of the public sphere, such as news waves, polarization, or communication cascades. I also discuss to what extent public spheres have grown more complex in the course of digitalization, and how this affects the dynamics of public communication processes. My focus is to further develop existing system theoretical approaches of the public sphere towards a theory of complex, adaptive systems that can be connected to other models of public spheres; notably network and public arenas models, as well as to interdisciplinary complexity research. I introduce the fundamental characteristics of complex systems; i.e. interconnectedness, self-organization, emergence, nonlinearity and heterogeneity, showing how they apply to the system of the public sphere in its contemporary digitized context. I then point out the methodological consequences of this perspective, and conclude by commenting on its integrative potential for theory development in public sphere research.
Keywords: public sphere, system theory, complexity theory, networked public sphere, digitalization

Christoph Neuberger: The Return of the Crowd: Collective Phenomena on the Internet from a Mass and Complexity Theory Perspective (Die Rückkehr der Masse. Kollektivphänomene im Internet aus Sicht der Massen- und Komplexitätstheorie), pp. 550-572

A multitude of actors often interact with one another in Internet public spaces; particularly within social media. Extensive and intersecting sequences of interaction and diffusion can be observed here. This distinctly differs from what the model of mass communication tells us, which has determined research within communication studies so far. This paper proposes to take up mass and complexity theory to explore the variance of collective phenomena in different contexts. Drawing on the mass theory reaching back into the 19th century, disperse, additive and co-present collectives can be distinguished. With the help of the complexity theory, however, a wide range and variety of elements and relations, self-organisation and adaptive actions of participants as well as the momentum and emergence of processes in public communication with a large number of participants can be explored. The opportunities of adopting both theories in communication research will be shown.
Keywords: crowd, mass communication, complexity, complex system

Susanne Eichner / Elizabeth Prommer: Doing Media: Multiple Perspectives as a Concept for Theory and Empirical Research in a Complex Media Environment (Doing Media: Multiperspektivität als Theorie- und Forschungskonzept in komplexen Medienwelten), pp. 573-590

The boundaries between different kinds of media are dissolving. To adequately address the complexity of this phenomenon, researchers need new theoretical references and new analytical strategies. We suggest conceptualising media activities as 'doing media' in order to placing an even stronger focus on the agency and the non-linear, sometimes polychrone activities of media audiences. Presenting our ideas on 'doing media', we aim to encourage a more holistic view of media use, opening up the discussion about theory and methodology. The following theoretical references are crucial to the 'doing media' model: symbolic interactionism, media usage as meaningful social action in users' everyday lives, the textuality of media products, and the cross-media usage flow. Doing implies action, agency, interaction, construction, and situation of socially embedded individual. In this sense, 'doing media' considers audience members as active creators of meaning, while acknowledging that in an interactive and convergent media environment media texts carry meanings and provide structures.
Keywords: audiences, media use as social action, agency, cultural studies, reception aesthetics, symbolic interactionism, life world, multiscreen reception, polychronic

Carsten Winter / Christopher Buschow: The New Complexity of Networked Media Management: Theory Innovations for Media Management Research (Die neue Komplexität *vernetzten* Medienmanagements. Theorieinnovationen für die Medienmanagementforschung), pp. 591-612

This paper explains why the conditions and prerequisites of media management in relation to the development, distribution and utilization of new digital media have become more complex in recent years, and how this challenges the conceptualization of media management. With the new media and the emergence of a 'networked media economy' in mind, we propose a conceptualisation of media communication and management theory, and a practice theoretical research strategy; demonstrating this by drawing on our own studies. We use the example of newly networked added value constellations in the music business and in journalism; discussing how and why a practice theoretical perspective allows us to explore new management practices more openly and closer to the subject in practice.
Keywords: media management, complexity, music management, journalism, practice theory, digital network media, strategy, management innovation, startups