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Jan. 17th 2005

### **"Media socialisation without coherent media - on the way to semiotic spaces"**

The cultural relation between media and its users is undergoing transition. This is not one of the usual introductions to a cultural kind of argument that the phenomena are always changing, perhaps also accelerating social life. But already a superficial look onto casting shows such as *POPSTARS* or on children's games such as *Pokémon* needs a more profound explanation than just watching a new genre. Already at a first view one remarkable feature can be discovered, i.e. that the programme of the dominating TV is going to become just one element together with many others, including merchandising products. The range of offerings in the field of popular entertainment is moving away radically from the former situation where the media consisted of single, coherent and "readable" outlets. The question then becomes "What happens with the meaningful personal engagement with and the processing of media?" as part of our culture of industrial production and individual consumption? By now, more than one generation of children has already developed its media habits and media literacy on this cultural ground. Looking into the future, traditional, established forms of children's TV viewing seem old fashioned; this mode now seems closer to that of the reading of traditional books than to consumption of commodities.

Referring to examples of media offerings and media reception, the concept of a "space" is proposed which could serve as an explanatory basis for the relation between media and the user of media. From this perspective it becomes clearer how media, commodities and events - when combined through a widely embracing notion of aesthetics - begin to correlate with the patterns and activities of everyday life.

What does this mean for socialisation? It becomes clear that it will not only be coherently *readable media* which will intervene in the relation of a subject with itself - the subject's *inner world* - and the *outer world*, that is, the social-cultural and physical-factual environment. The explaining model for the person's *outer world* is the concept of *semiotic spaces*, which takes place for the coherent but separate media, commodities, services and events. By the appearing of *semiotic spaces* also the socialisatory relation between a person to him- or herself and the outer world is changing. The concept of a *semiotic space* refers to the concept of the central perspective, which was invented by Florentine artists

in the Renaissance. They put the viewer as subject in opposition to a depicted object. The viewer had to reconstruct the relation between the artist and the depicted object by a specific attitude of spatial watching. But this cultural tradition of a subject- object relation is in transition to which the fragmentation and re-integration of the media contributes. This fragmentation of the media correlates with an integrative mode of the cultural products and adequate modes of personal experiences. Fragmented cultural products receive coherency by aesthetic similarity, which opens a functional frame for specific users and their way of acquisition. The integrative modes of cultural products function just by specific modes of experiences, which are based upon a personal formation of meaning within its individual world of living.

### **1. The old fashioned TV as a normal feature of everyday life – just a reminder**

The example of the 11 year old Jens displays the main feature. Jens, a viewer of Eddie Murphy movies seems to be a good example for this kind of old fashioned media reception and processing. Children look for, acquire and process a medium in their personal perspective of the actual theme of their life. Jens likes the comedy of Eddie Murphy *The Distinguished Gentleman* (USA 1992), in which the protagonist acts as a con-man who is late but successful at last. As a powerful politician the character performed by Murphy listens to an ill girl, who hides the loss of hair resulting from her cancer treatment by wearing a wig. What is relevant for an 11 year old boy? The vulnerable girl? The successful con-man? The morality of the normal people? First of all Jens reads the film as a story which matches the actual issues of his life: moving to an unknown city, feeling alienated and probably somehow threatened, having to hide his cultural origin and identity in the unknown eastern part of Germany. However, he usually acts with the positive view of eventually becoming successful, etc, etc.

#### *Two selected statements out of seven*

*Jens fifth statement:* And then he was late to the meeting where they pick offices and so he got the worst one. They weren't even done building it. So he worked on it himself. Then he went to lots of, uh, receptions.

*Jens sixth statement:* and one time people came to him and one was a girl who had some sort of cancer or something and she got it from playing on the playground where there were some power lines. They were made out of a metal that causes cancer.

On the basis of his genre competence he transforms the film story into his personal story by using main film sequences in the time order of the film. His seven statements deliver a kind of personal short film, which offers one or more messages to a listener. Jens' verbally presented short film is easily reconstructed by video cuts. With this reconstructed personal short film in mind Jens' actual situation and themes can be understood.

One can generalise this feature of reception and acquisition: A media user sets up a relation to media

- in the perspective of his or her actual situation and in the history personal life, i.e. his or her own personal theme,
- on the basis of already achieved competency within the social frame of his life, e.g. family and peers and
- the self-referential frame of media.

## **2. A model on media socialisation which follows Norbert Elias and his explanation of the "Process of Civilisation" from 1937**

This model of reception and acquisition highlights just the specific situation of TV as the leading medium of mass communication. In this function TV was entangled symbiotically with people's everyday life. This was neither a coincidence nor a planned produced development but a process that belongs to the long-term dynamics of our culture and that nevertheless changes this dynamic. Of course people have established themselves within the industrial society by means of their symbolic capabilities particularly in the way they communicate, interpret something for themselves or to others and in the way they enjoy the moving images. But this fits into a specifically developed subjectivity with the everyday life as the realm of reality of the industrial society.<sup>1</sup> The long term development was theorized by Norbert Elias, who interpreted the end of the Middle Ages and the flourishing Renaissance also as a follow up of new tools of everyday life.

What is the basic socialisatory model behind the cultural historical development? Superficially spoken specific knowledge and experiences are *inscribed* into new tools e.g. using knife and fork for eating. This objectified specific knowledge and experience is acquired by using the cultural object (fork, knife) in everyday life. The concept of socialisation deals with this relation: A tool of everyday life objectifies the cultural features of its production and use by the parental generation, which can be acquired by the next generation by using these cultural objects within every day life. In this socialisatory environment and processes a specific kind of subjectivity becomes dominant.

In the perspective of Norbert Elias' functional description of everyday tools like fork and knife for the development of subjectivity within a culture<sup>2</sup>, also media form cultural objects like other commodities and tools of everyday life, in which the experiences of the members of a culture are inherited. By using these objects of everyday life the "inscribed", i.e.

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<sup>1</sup> This a key argument of Alfred Schütz' sociology of the western societies, which he wrote in the 1930s. See Schütz, Alfred: *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie.* Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1974. 1. Edition Wien 1932. English version: *The Phenomenology of the Social World.* Evanston, Northwestern University Press 1970

<sup>2</sup> Elias, Norbert: *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen.* Vol. 1: *Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes.* Vol. 2: *Wandlungen der Gesellschaft. Entwurf einer Theorie der Zivilisation.* Frankfurt a. M. (Suhrkamp) 1979, 6. ed. 1. edition 1937

the objectified cultural experiences are acquired by the children's generation. Socialisation works within the generations, (a) by parental generation's production of cultural goods and procedures within everyday life and (b) by the children's acquisition of the cultural heritage also with the activities of everyday life.

Back to media socialisation! Since the 1960s until now TV has been a main cultural object for socialisation, but in the mode of that time, which was the fictional film in the private context of family, at the beginning without, later with advertising as a window to the world of consumption. The leading question regarding TV as a device for socialisation asks for the cultural experiences contained in television. This question needs a frame, which explains the specific relation of an individual to its *world*, i.e. the factual, social and cultural *outer world* as well as the personal *inner world* of emotions, desires, dreams, experiences etc. By entering this basic relation of the individual to himself or herself and the *outer world*, media contribute to the formation of a specific and culturally dominating subjectivity.

The major media of our culture are able to fulfil an important socialisatory function because of their integration in the everyday life of our society. At least there are three connecting points between media and everyday life:

- Integration of media in meaningful activities like reception and interaction.
- Setting up institutional relations within a society, e.g. between the industrialised production of programmes and its individual reception in an self-determined context.
- Connecting generations. The rapid emerging and changing of technical media itself contributes to the relation of the generations, because both generations, the one of the parents and that of the young have to acquire the usage skills of new media, but within their different contexts and modes of experiences. Internet and PC are a recent example. For example, the young look primarily for entertainment, they discover functions of Internet and PC by a kind of playing with it. The established generation looks for getting information and knowledge; they learn how to use the Internet and the PC in a scholastic manner.

In the 1930s Norbert Elias did not just describe a model of socialisation and cultural development, he also depicted the modern type of personality, which emerged in the ongoing Renaissance by using and acquiring cultural products. He asked especially how the modern self-controlled and self-organised personality became dominant. The main feature of this modern personality is defined by its dissociation to the social and factional world. The modern being conceives the world as being in opposite. Self-organisation, self-control and dissociation as defining elements of a modern personality became the prerequisites for a successful industrial society, in which blue as well as white collar workers guide themselves through their self-targeted professional labour. An important prerequisite is to grow up e.g. with the fork, because this tool negotiates the feeling for distance to the vitally necessary food already at

a very early age. But recent industrialised food also indicates a big cultural change of the dynamic of socialisation, which leaves behind dissociation and distance as main features. Instead the integration in system structures becomes important.<sup>3</sup> The cultural and social changing from distance to integration into system structures is reinforced by new food, e.g. by Mc Donald's food units, which allow free choice in the sense of combining elements within a system. But getting familiar with distance by using a fork is not longer socially necessary.

In the cultural history one crucial mechanism to develop distance and dissociation to the world was the central perspective of the Renaissance. For centuries in the western societies the central perspective provided distance for the way to gain experiences. Painting and drawing pictures in the depicting mode of the central perspective put the viewer in opposition to the world. The organisation of an image supports a spatial constructed world in the mind of the viewer. By deciphering an image based on the central perspective a viewer learns to translate the construction of the image into own spatial imaginations. With the depicting mode of the central perspective as taken for granted the viewer was no longer an integrative part of the world but rather its observer, who could understand the principles of the world's function and reconstruct it as his own product. In this cultural development of subjectivity the television became culturally possible, at its beginning just by the definition of the BBC, which defined a TV programme as balanced representation of information, education and entertainment. But with the dominance of entertainment in mass communication from the 1980s onwards an important step was taken from the cultural moulding line of the distant reconstruction of the world by images. It is the integration of the TV as one element within a larger system. TV is taking the same path a good dish took when it became part of McDonald's food system. The actually emerging system of multi-medial and multi-modal cultural products is going to swallow the coherent media like the Eddie-Murphy movie. This new system will reinforce specific modes of socialisation and finally new types of subjectivity.

Just to briefly summarize, subjectivity is formed by using everyday objects, which function as objectified cultural experiences. This means by using cultural products a child acquires the objectified cultural features as a personal feature, which functions in two directions. By applying these objects its cultural features are personally acquired and amalgamated into the relation (a) to the personal inner world and (b) to the social, cultural and factual environment. In this sense media as cultural products interfere with the relation of a subject to itself (inner world, which consists of self-perception, dreams, fantasies etc.) and the relation to the social, the cultural and the factual environment.

This argumentation on the socialisation function of cultural products can be condensed to the following model of socialisation:

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<sup>3</sup> See Ritzer, George: *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, London (Pine Forge Press / Sage) 1993

Everyday objects including media interfere into the relationship of a child to its

- Inner World,
- Social Environment,
- World of Objects and Events,
- World of Culture.

What does this model of socialisation contribute to the explanation of the phenomenon, which is in the main focus of this argumentation? Obviously, the coherent TV film like the one Jens talked about played its role in the media socialisation of almost two generations. During the period of the growing of the Internet and the PC a fragmentation of mediated representation as well as the establishment of new modes of its integration occurred. The phenomenon of the media is undergoing transition, in which it is becoming a complex of several media and events. The casting show *POPSTARS* is a typical example. In the theoretical perspective of media socialisation these complexes or arrangements of different representational products interfere with the relationship of children/ young people to their inner and outer world. In the case of *POPSTARS* one can assume the following concretised relation to the

- Inner World: success, happiness, being a star, ego-oriented identity
- Social Environment: lifestyle-oriented balance between competition and integration
- World of Facts and Objects: to find a personal way to select the relevant symbolic commodities out of the overwhelming prefabricated system and transform them into elements of a personal world of living by formation of meaning.
- World of Culture: non-reflexive media literacy which includes reading as a modern skill (processing discontinuous texts); integration of a prefabricated variety of consumptive objects by individual acquisition.

In order to argue closer to the socialisation model of the objectified cultural experiences paragraph 4 will list the elements of the arrangement *POPSTARS* and try to look at socialising influences of these elements. But first a draft of the integrative frame of such an arrangement of media, commodities, services, and events is attempted. The concept of a *semiotic space*<sup>4</sup> as the dominant system structure is proposed.

### **3. The cultural heritage of the Renaissance: from the *central perspective* to *semiotic spaces***

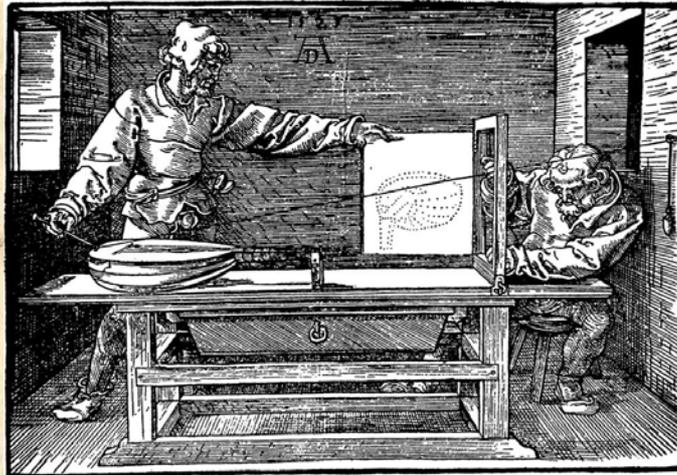
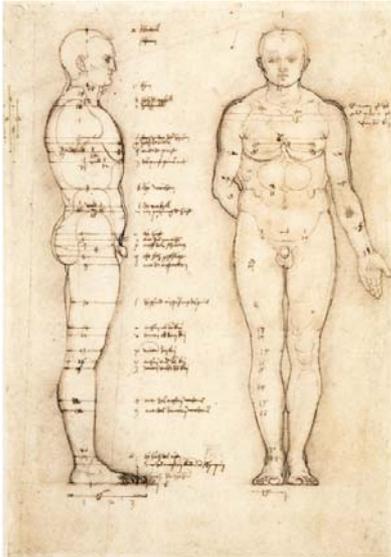
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<sup>4</sup> This refers to the concepts of Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen on "The semiotic landscape: language and visual communication" (p. 15 ff.) and "Representation and interaction: designing the position of the viewer" (p. 119 ff.) in: Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen: Reading Images. The Grammar of the Visual Design. Routledge. London. 1996; Stuart Hall' "Work of Representation", especially the chapter "From Language to Culture : Linguistics to Semiotics". In: Stuart Hall (ed.): Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices. Sage. London 1997, p. 13 ff., p.36

After having outlined the model of media socialisation the further strand of argumentation should identify a crucial and moulding dynamic of our western cultural development. The western culture defines space as one of the key modes of our experience, which is also a heritage of the Renaissance. The proposed concept of a *semiotic space* refers, as already mentioned, to the concept of the central perspective, which was invented by Florentine artists in the Renaissance. They put the viewer as subject in opposition to a depicted object. The viewer had to reconstruct the relation between the artist and the depicted object through a specific attitude of watching and perceiving. For exemplifying the specific idea of space the reflection of the famous German Renaissance painter Albrecht Dürer (1471 – 1528) is helpful, because he depicted his theory of how to construct the real and the beautiful by using a spatial frame. Because of its general validity over centuries this spatial relation, which was objectified by fine arts, negotiated the socialisation in the above described way of acquiring cultural products of everyday life. The spatial relation of the central perspective and its diminishing actual relevance is a kind of argumentative anchor to indicate the actual changing of main features of socialisation.

### **The world of the central perspective**

Albrecht Dürer looks from his self-portrait, painted in 1500 as a masterpiece of the German Renaissance, like a contemporary person to today's observer. This is possible because of the picture's organisation and the high degree of correlation between the subjectivity of the Renaissance and the one of today. One main correlation is the central perspective and its view onto the world from a distant viewing point to the facts and ongoing events. In its consequence the Renaissance used the central perspective as Archimedes' point, first to analyse and then to reconstruct the world. Because the human being is not an integrated part of the world, it is able to reflect the world analytically and construct it deliberately. This requires a subjectivity and mode of perception, which is based especially on distance in perception and emotions together with self-control. In his graphic work Albrecht Dürer reflects this mode of perception and construction. For example in 1538 he drew an artist, who used a grid between himself and the depicted object, e.g. a vase or a lute. A ruler helps to define reliability in handling the distance. The same constructive constellation shows an image of an erotic attractively positioned woman in front of a painter, also with a dissociating grid in between. Distance is taken for granted and internalised, acquired by the technique of a central perspective as the ruling mode of experience. As well Albrecht Dürer displayed the engineering procedure for constructing a realistic and beautiful image like his self-portrait. A human body is displayed in the front and in the side position with added names for parts of the body. The matching of names and body parts is done with numbers.



Der Zeichner der Laute. 131 x 188  
[Meder 269; Panofsky 362; Knappe 371]

[1458]

This mode of depicting, in general, of representing the world is based upon a spatial organisation of painter and depicted objects, which is represented in the image by means of the central perspective. From the Renaissance until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this was the definitional basis for representing the real and the beautiful.

### Main changes in media and in socialisation

This spatially negotiated cultural tradition of the subject-object relation is currently undergoing transition. One mechanism is the fragmentation of the distinct, coherent media and the integration of multimodal representations into complex arrangements. The fragmentation of the coherent media correlates not only with an integrative mode of the cultural products but also with adequate modes of personal experiences. Fragmented cultural products receive coherency by aesthetic similarity, which opens a functional frame for specific users and their mode of acquisition. The integrative effects of cultural products function through specific modes of experiences, which are based upon a personal formation of meaning within an individual life-living. The following outline drafts both sides of the actual transition of a mediated culture.

### Functional changes in media

- The amalgamation of mediated mass communication and the market of commodities pushes back the single and coherent medium and enforces complex arrangements of media, commodities and events. Arrangements like *POPSTARS* offer a kind of space, which is made up by its elements and their interrelation among each other.
- Media becomes just one *provider* among others of symbolic materials for the everyday world. More or less all commodities and services can be used and offered in its communicative, symbolic function. This symbolic function is growing over the practical function and is defining cultural products. E.g. a t-shirt with the word *POPSTARS* is more important as a social sign than being a cloth, which protects the body.

- The traditional and familiar relation of a sign, a signifier and the signified is not longer reliable, not only because of the lack of a concise regional cultural frame but for the arrangements like *POPSTARS*, which work as temporary frame for the relation of cultural products, signifier and signified. In this sense arrangements of media, commodities and events are a kind of cultural circus of symbols, which is presented and managed by the producers and the audience.

### **Changes on the side of children and young people**

- The main trend is the emerging of new modes of experiences with the following characteristics: The attentive reception of an object, e.g. a media programme, becomes just one approach within a variety of patterns of acquisition and activities. The attentive reception is a heritage of the Renaissance's opposition of painter and viewer to the world as object, which loses its dominance for the patterns of acquisition. Therefore the following chapter will take a closer look at the elements of the casting show *POPSTARS* as an example of such an arrangement of media, events and other cultural products, which offer a space which meaningful activities are possible.
- Within a fragmented cultural society without general and valid frames constructive modes of living and acting move into the foreground. Together with the growing and variable symbolic function of commodities, services and events the personal formation of meaning with regard to the cultural products is a necessary task for the young generation.
- A transitional cultural and social world needs individuals as self-responsible actors in his or her own world of living. The main social focus shifts from the objectified needs, values, obligation, and the definition of general frames to the actor's individual world in his or her personal sense. Explaining and understanding the *world* occurs through personal experiences and the dynamic of evaluation. In this sense the young generation acquires facts, commodities, culture, society etc. by and mainly through their personal kind of experiences. The modern individualised world exists through everybody's concrete experience with eyes, ears, body, and the personally acquired experiences.

#### 4. The casting show *POPSTARS* – an arrangement of media, commodities and events<sup>5</sup>

Media are on the way of becoming just one symbolic source within a complex arrangement of a variety of media, events and commodities. These elements are forming and offering a *semiotic space* in which and to which an recipient can react by individual forming of meaning.

What are the mechanisms which combine the variety of elements into a coherent space? Coherence is provided by aesthetics. But not only integrative aesthetic features given by the producers deliver the semiotic space, also the recipients form coherence by interpreting the given products and their common aesthetic feature. Generally explicated, a recipient forms his or her own meaning, e.g. by calling the casting agency, buying a CD as a prerequisite for voting on the preferred displayed music band or by becoming a part of the fan groups.

The following list tries to depict an overview over the relevant elements of the casting show *POPSTARS*, which was produced and broadcasted by the major German TV channel *ProSieben* for a German speaking audience on the basis of an Australian model. The TV show with the subtitle „Das Duell“ (The Duell) was on screen throughout three months in the year 2003. The following list is organised in respect of the dominant mode of representation and tries to formulate first and not empirically confirmed assumptions on the possible socialisation function of the elements.

##### (1) Short description of the logo<sup>6</sup>



The logo consist of a red background depicting red and white characters. It contains the title of the show POPSTARS (red characters on a white shield, which includes a red and white star). This main title is subtitled for the actual series: Das Duell (the duel), which indicates a sophisticated, rather noble kind of battle or competition. This subtitle uses the biggest characters in white. It is accompanied by an imperative in small white characters: “Lebe Deinen Traum!” (live your dream), which also runs through all trailers.

##### Assumed impulses for socialisation

Also in German the title POPSTARS carries a meaning: to become a star in the music world of pop. This is underlined by the symbol of star. “Das Duell” (the duel) represents a comparatively strong noun for a fight, which is civilised to a competition by strict and noble regulations. The competition is additionally framed by the imperative to realise the per-

<sup>5</sup> Fiona Sánchez investigated and contributed to the description of the elements of POPSTARS.

<sup>6</sup> The logo runs more or less through all modes of representation and is not an autonomous element,

sonal dream as real live, not as a day dream or watching fictional programmes.

## **(2) TV programmes**

### **(2.1) The weekly TV programme**

The third series of the internationally licensed casting programme POPSTARS is broadcast in Germany from August to November 2003. Every Monday at 20:15h a show of 60 to 90 minutes is aired on the major private TV channel *ProSieben* for 14 consecutive weeks. Due to the great success of the programme, five additional episodes are put together ad hoc and screened during prime-time on Friday. "Germany's most emotional casting show", as the programme is labelled, cuts into three sections. The initial phase shows the casting process of close to 12.000 candidates in four national German cities. The best 46 aspiring youngsters compete against each other at the show held at Düsseldorf airport. About half of them get to jump on the plane which is making up part of the scene immediately after performing on stage in front of a jury as well as their families and friends. Phase two commences with the arrival of the plane in Orlando, Florida. During four weeks the upcoming want-to-be POPSTARS are drilled to dance and sing and compete against each other on a weekly basis. Close to exhaustion the candidates who do not make it to the next round break down in tears when being sent home. Two bands, a girl and a boy group called *Preluders* and *Overground* respectively, are formed out of the best eight remaining candidates. Since the bands do not perform in the way the music producers would like them to, two additional candidates, one male and one female, are nominated into the groups – thereby adding pressure and excitement. The third round consists of the road show of the two bands. Recording and promoting their singles the final winning band is determined during a final live show. The group who sold the larger number of CD singles and is voted for most by telephone on the day of the show is the winner. Both bands receive a production contract, however the more successful group gets to release their new single and album first.

The overall programme is organised more in a documentary style than a show. Stories are shown in a chronological sequence, thereby focusing on emotional scenes. There is no anchorman to be seen, only the voice also used in the programme trailers guides through the episodes. The straightforward jury comments very openly on the candidates' performance as well as their outward appearance, thereby often hurting the youngsters' feelings. The board consists of the well-known German rap queen Sabrina Setlur and the very strict and hard working dance coach Detlef D! Soost, labelled the "drill instructor". The third member of the jury is Uwe Petersen-Fahrenkrog, the only German producer who ever managed to achieve a number 1 hit on the US music market with Nena's "99 red balloons" in the 80's. He also produced the energy-packed title song to the program called "Leb Deinen Traum" (i.e. "Live your dream") as well as the first hit single of the girl band Preluders. All three members of the jury are well respected by the candidates.

Market shares<sup>7</sup> of "POPSTARS - Das Duell" on ProSieben

Adults. 14-49 years	Children 3-13 years	Women 14-29 years	Women 30-49 years	Women over 50 years	Men 14-29 years	Men 30-49 years	Men over 50 years.
15,1 %	21,1 %	32,9 %	12,1 %	1,5 %	20,9 %	9,1%	1%

The young women at the age of 14 to 29 years are the main viewers. One third of the TV viewing young women are watching POPSTARS. The children follow on the second rank, around a fifth of the TV viewing children see the show. On the third rank is the viewer group of young men, which includes around a fifth of this TV viewing age group. For the group of TV viewer between 30 to 49 years POPSTARS is not really relevant. For the male and female age group of viewers over the age of 50 POPSTARS does not seem to be attractive.

**Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Becoming a star by one's own activities and achievements,
- Formalized learning and working as prerequisite for becoming a star of entertainment; pressure and excitement belong to success,
- Competitive but social integrative,
- The pursuit of an attractive body as prerequisite for an attractive life,
- Being expressive, never timid,
- "Female" in the sense of a gender attitude is in the foreground,
- The style pattern of action and suspense, of being modern is dominant.<sup>8</sup>

**(2.2) TV: Promotional programme trailers**

There are several trailers which deliver few but typical images of the casting and the pop group performance. The treatment follows a kind of count down to the first presentation of the show with clear links to the calendar.

**Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Trailers are highly relevant for a complex but homogenous products like POPSTARS, which support integrative activities of the viewers. Finally the viewer has to form a coherent system out of the variety of programme elements. The programme trailers prove the audience with information of relevance, what belongs to the programme system etc.
- They deliver the social „plot“ for orientation and integration.

**(2.3) Cross-promotional on air activities**

<sup>7</sup> **Share** is the percentage of the population tuned to a particular programme or channel out of all those using television at that time.

<sup>8</sup> See the "scheme of suspense" (Spannungsschema) in: Schulze, Gerhard: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart. Frankfurt a.M. (Campus) 1992, page 157 ff.)

During the period in which *POPSTARS – Das Duell* is broadcasted on *ProSieben*, the POPSTARS theme can often be found in programmes produced for and aired on the channel. The week-daily screened life-style magazine "taff" promotes the POPSTARS' short messaging quizzes played via mobile phone and advertises the ring tones as well as POPSTARS-related news provided for download. Furthermore every Monday at 18:00h the magazine shows a "taff Spezial" – a programme special solely dedicated to POPSTARS. Also the popular late night show "TV Total" aired Monday through to Thursday at 22.15h features POPSTARS and provides a platform for live appearances of candidates and jury members. Various other programmes include so-called "plings" and "crawls" emerging in written form on the screen and promoting games and quizzes dealing with the casting format. The climax of the cross-promotional entwinement of the POPSTARS theme is reached on the day of the final show in November 2003. Starting at 11.25h, all programmes deal with POPSTARS issues, thereby emphasizing the importance and relevance of the topic. Either former candidates, jury members or one of the two bands perform in the different programmes.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- The difference between a programme, its announcement and its being advertised becomes irrelevant

#### **(3) Ceefax offerings**

The ceefax offering gives a brief overview of current POPSTARS related programme information. The predominantly black screen is divided into four sections, which are separated from one another by bright red borders. While the main section of the screen displays the TV channel's logo, a red "7", and some short information aimed at animating the reader to participate actively in the castings, the bordering lower part of the screen only contains arrows to navigate through the ceefax pages. On the right hand side two separate boxes of equal size are displayed. The upper one provides headlines such as "News", "Weather" or "Football", the lower showing a picture of a remote control to call up the desired pages.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Reading literacy: discontinuous texts
- Looking for and using additional information, which is presented on a simple level of reflexivity.

#### **(4) Short description of print elements**

##### **(4.1) Programme announcement posters**

In order to promote the programme also through off air campaigns, large posters advertising POPSTARS were posted at the stops of public transportation. There are two different posters featuring either a female

or a male singer performing in front of a huge crowd of fans. Both young persons are shown from below their eyes downwards, thereby leaving room for interpretation. Due to the long red hair, the face of the slim, disco-style dressed girl cannot be seen. The well-build male wearing a partly unbuttoned red shirt and black trousers can not be identified either. The two figures seem to be standing on stage, singing into a microphone. Fans are cheering with their hands raised high in the air.

The slogan "Lebe Deinen Traum" (i.e. „Live your dream“) is printed in large white letters across the belly of the poster protagonist and the POPSTARS logo is printed below their feet. Furthermore the programme scheduling information "Ab 11.8. jeden mo 20:15" (i.e. "Starting 11.8. every mo 20:15") is given. Here the reader obviously is supposed to be familiar with the abbreviation of Monday as "mo" as well as interpreting "20:15" as the scheduled program time, even though it does not contain any information such as "h" for "hours" or "o'clock".

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Being familiar with an important feature of advertisement and the hints for the schedule of a TV channel. Reading is not necessary. Without the ability to read in a narrow scholastic sense one can not identify the message of the posters.
- Without reading literacy a main idea of stardom is made visible: to be over the audience, the audience is bodily longing for the star.

#### **(4.2) The official fan magazine**

Two issues of the official POPSTARS magazine are published on the German speaking market. The print medium consists of 68 colour pages and is printed 280.000 times. It is sold for 2 Euro via the common magazine sale outlets. The first issue is available immediately after the two bands are announced and it appears in two different versions. While one of them is showing the girl group *Preluders* on the cover, the other one depicts their male counterpart *Overground*. The second issue is published after the final winner is chosen and therefore gives a picture of the triumphant boy band. Both issues are made up like regular magazines targeted at a young audience. The magazine's title is printed in large red letters across the cover page. On the left hand side next to the main band picture the magazine contents are advertised. Hereby, special interest is placed on the posters, which make up a large section of the magazine.

The magazine gives a large array of background information on the nine candidates, who qualified for the two bands. The detailed personalisation offers the reader possibilities to identify with the individuals. Furthermore, information on former POPSTARS bands as well as lyrics of the current songs and a vast amount of band posters are included in the publication.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- The target group of the youngsters and the children are expected to

read longer and discontinuous text, which consist of a mélange of images and characters.

- The fan magazine offers reflection in the way tabloids cover celebrities in a personalized and not critical way.

#### **(4.3) Sponsoring print commercial: POPSTARS party tour in *youngLisa***

*youngLisa*, a pocket-sized glossy magazine targeted at the young female, success-oriented audience is one of the three companies sponsoring the POPSTARS party tour. In their December 2003 issue they include a full-sized one page advertisement promoting the events. The background of the page is bright red and announces the tour in large white writing. In the centre of the page the photographs of both POPSTARS bands incorporating the programme logo are shown. Furthermore a prize game featuring an exclusive meet & greet with the band members is advertised as the event's highlight. The lower third of the page provides further information on the tour dates and offers web links leading to more detailed information on the events. In the two upper corners the logos of *youngLisa* and Fiat are shown, the broadcaster's claim "We love to entertain you" as well as the ProSieben company logo are printed on the bottom edges of the page.

The almost identical content and layout were also used for the posters and flyers promoting the party tour.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Stardom becomes part of personal and body related experiences which produces the impression of reality. The magazine clings the realm of celebrities to the normal everyday life.
- Making fiction and fantasies real for the personal imagination.

#### **(4.4) Flyer for the acquisition of new members for *ProSieben Club***

The first page of the Din-A6 sized 4-page flyer is designed almost the exact same way as the print advertisement in *youngLisa* (the sponsoring print commercial described in 3.3). The cardboard front page gives even more details on the tour dates and locations and favours the address of the broadcasters Internet page over that of the others. Opening the red-coloured leaflet, information regarding the live performance of the POPSTARS bands is given. Furthermore, three event programme points are listed as "fun factors". All this information is accompanied by the according photographs. Guest who would like to participate in the meet & greet with the bands Preluders or Overground need to proceed to Fiat's stall. Here they obtain a t-shirt necessary for the prize draw. *YoungLisa*'s styling lounge is promoted as a location offering expert styling advice and a pop star like make-over. Also a singing and dancing contest is advertised, showing the picture of the product package.

The flyer can be torn apart as to make use of the final page as a postcard. This card needs to be filled out in order to become a member of the ProSieben Club. Since the leaflet mentions that members get to enter the tour parties for half of the regular price, it should catch the eye of the

predominantly young and financially sensitive fans. Furthermore, in order to obtain the t-shirt, which serves as a prerequisite to join the meet & greet price draw, a completed member application needs to be handed in.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- assumed impulses of the other printed elements including the reading of discontinuous texts the possibility of being a part of a real fan group is in the foreground. This links the real life of everyday, e.g. getting a ticket for half price, with the real events of the star groups, in which one could meet "bodily" the stars. A feeling for reality and its different qualities is possible.

## **(5) Online elements**

### **(5.1) Background information on the program content online**

A vast array of information regarding the POPSTARS programme is offered online. Starting off from the TV channel's homepage at [www.prosieben.de](http://www.prosieben.de) the programme POPSTARS can be selected from a drop-down menu. After selecting it, the user is taken to the according web page. The screen is divided into four parts. On the top a header with links to the different programming categories ranging from "film & kino" (i.e. film & cinema) and "community & dating" to "shop & more" are offered. POPSTARS is part of the "music & sound" sections and the programme logo serves as an additional, sub-sectional header. Below the logo further POPSTARS-related links such as "casting", "workshop", "jury" or "games" are offered. Once one of these links is selected, another layer of subcategories emerges. However, in order to help the user keep track of the section in which he is moving about, the selected category path remains open. The path to the section is shown in small writing right on top of the logo (e.g. „home > music & sound > popstars > mobile > sms quiz“).

The information provided in the specifically programme related sections such as "casting" or "workshop" mainly contain some written background information on the programme phase, accompanied by photographs. The less candidates remain in the programme and the more personalization of the individual characters takes place, the more detailed the information provided on the candidates.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Reading literacy: discontinuous texts
- Looking for and using additional information, which is presented on a simple level of reflexivity.

### **(5.2) POPSTARS community and discussion platform**

In order to enter the POPSTARS community pages online, interested users first need to register. After providing the required information such as name, user name, age, gender, etc. and accepting the business terms and conditions, the user enters the overall ProSieben community zone.

Generally speaking the online page is set up similar to the background information on the programme content online (described in section 4.1). However, it seems surprising not to be directly guided to a web page depicting the large POPSTARS logo. Between categories labelled "Grammy 2004", "Madonna" or "Grand Prix Eurovision" POPSTARS-related forums can be found. They range from general POPSTARS – Das Duell programme groups to specific forums dealing solely with either the male or female band. Furthermore also forum sections regarding the individual band members are available.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Integration of texts and events, which are industrially produced and delivered, into mediated modes of concrete communication. Strengthening of the concrete modes of experiences and reflection.

#### **(5.3) Online live chat with the POPSTARS bands**

In October 2003, shortly after the two bands emanate out of the Orlando workshop, they get together at one of the offices at the television channel in Germany in order to communicate with their fans live and online. The chats for both bands are organized separately on two subsequent days. In order to facilitate the communication, the broadcaster sets up a particular forum in the community area of his web pages. This very much equals the POPSTARS community and discussion platform (descriptions given under 5.2). About a week prior to the live chats registered members have the possibility to post messages to their favoured band and individual group members. The forum is very popular, almost 1.500 letters and notes are posted by the day of the last chat. Particularly female fans do not hesitate to publish private information such as their full name, email addresses and mobile phone numbers, begging band members to contact them.

#### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Integration of texts and events, which are industrially produced and delivered, into mediated modes of concrete communication. Strengthening of the concrete modes of experiences and reflection.

#### **(5.4) Casting application form**

As a prerequisite for the participation in the casting, aspirants need to complete an application form. The one page paper is available for download on the *ProSieben* web pages but can also be obtained at the actual casting itself. On the top of the paper the red *POPSTARS – Das Duell* logo can be seen, further to the left the equally red "7", the broadcaster's logo, is shown. Below the logo section the form contains fields in black writing and personal information such as name, date of birth and contact details are asked for. Furthermore data of possible agents and also professional artist schools visited prior to the casting are to be named. At the bottom of the page a declaration of consent is printed in smaller letters. By signing the form the candidate agrees to resign from

any rights regarding picture or tone material on which he or she appears. Colourful logos of the production company and advertising partners are printed at the very bottom of the page.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Becoming active for the own purposes of the own personal development
- Reading and writing literacy

### **Further Online elements**

(5.5) E-Mail newsletter sent on Mondays prior to the broadcast

(5.6) Instructions for content downloads to mobile phones

(5.7) "Public Relations Lounge" providing information (in written, audio and video format) for downloads to journalists

## **(6) CD and merchandising products**

### **(6.1) CD sales as a voting tool to determine the final winning band**

McDonalds sold the CDs, which functioned as a voting tool to determine the final winning band, until January 2004. Within the contest period of three weeks during the programme screening more than 600,000 copies of the Preluders CD and over 400,000 copies of the Overground CD. Both singles reached the gold and platinum label and reached number 1 on the charts.

### **(6.2) Merchandising products**

A large selection of POPSTARS merchandise ranging from t-shirts, sweat-shirts, coffee mugs, pillows and calendars are advertised in magazines and on the broadcaster's web page. The high quality goods come with the print of either the POPSTARS logo or with the claim "We Love" used in ProSieben's marketing campaign. For both of the logos it is striking that they are mainly typed in bright red letters on white ground. (This design element is condensed in the logo.) An exception are a black t-shirt and a black baseball cap, as well as some t-shirts offered in popular colours of the season, e.g. in pink and olive-green. All merchandise is exclusively sold via Internet and by calling a 0180-phone number.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Consumption and participation go together,
- Showing one's being part of a social event,
- Active interference of a programme and normal life.

## **(7) Mobile, Telephone**

### **(7.1) Mobile**

SMS news, SMS ring tones, Mobile phone logos, SMS prize games and quizzes, SMS competitions among fans are offered with regard to POPSTARS.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Integration by communication
- *Telephoning ergo sum* – self reflexivity
- Being independent from a location

### **(7.2) Telephone**

Prize games and quizzes, purchase of merchandise, audience calls as a voting tool to determine the final winning band

### **(8) Live events**

#### **(8.1) Castings**

Castings offered as the initial stage of application for potential participants in five cities within Germany

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- Working for success and stardom
- Starting at the very first step
- Competition and cooperation

#### **(8.2) POPSTARS Party Tour**

From the end of November until the middle of December 2003 four POPSTARS parties take place in large cities throughout Germany. On air and print commercials advertise the events and posters as well as flyers promoting the happenings are distributed at the locations upfront. Targeted at a young teenage audience, the events commence at 20.00h and are held in discotheques catering to the young crowd. The locations are decorated predominantly with red colours. Hereby especially the large POPSTARS banners and the illuminated "7"-icon representing the broadcaster's channel logo add to the glamorous atmosphere. The programme includes the live performance of the POPSTARS band as well as an exclusive meet & greet with the members of the band for the winner of a prize draw. In order to participate in the prize game, guests have to wear one of the limited t-shirts stating "Ich bin Popstar" (i.e. "I am Popstar") handed out at the event location. Furthermore the fans can enjoy a make-over at the styling lounge and they may participate in a dance contest.

The party concept provides an additional marketing ground for the broadcaster as well as it makes available a platform for financing this activity. Various sponsors are integrated into the concept, e.g. the meet & greet prize game is run by the automobile manufacturer Fiat while the female youth magazine youngLisa operates the styling lounge at the party and Big Ben Interactive provides the mats necessary for the dance contest.

### **Assumed impulses for socialisation**

- The physical reality is an anchor for the world of entertainment and celebrities,
- Celebrities can be observed and seen in between the fantasy world

- of the celebrities and the normal big party
- The real functions as sign in a mis-en-scène. The fans are just props of a mis-en-scène of a promotional tour and of marketing strategies.
  - Concrete social learning of life-style attitudes.

## 5. Aesthetics deliver a coherent frame which correlates with patterns of activities, values and experiences

The diversity of elements of an arrangement of media, commodities, services and events provides the capacity of a space for acquisitive and expressive activities. Within the German cultural theory the sociologist Gerhard Schulze<sup>9</sup> explained from empirical data<sup>10</sup> how to define and discriminate cultural products within a coherent frame for social segmentation within the dynamic of fragmentation and individualisation. Fragmented cultural products are interrelated by aesthetic features and individualisation is accompanied by social milieus, which pre-structure typical activities. Aesthetic features together with social milieus and their typical activities lead to concise lifestyle schemes. Arrangements of cultural products like *POPSTARS* receive their coherency by aesthetic schemes, which correlate with one or more specific social milieus and their preferred cultural products as well as their preferred modes of activities, acquisition and expression. In this perspective *social spaces* like milieus are organized by correlating aesthetic, activity patterns and basic values. An arrangement of cultural products like *POPSTARS* delivers the symbolic, or in other wording, delivers the aesthetic interrelation, which offers a spatial frame for reception, interpretation, expression, communication and other activities to an user.

Because of its openness and due to its cultural uncertainty an arrangement of cultural products challenges the user's formation of meaning. The cultural uncertainty results from the lack of traditional cultural frames for using and interpreting cultural products. But by means of its aesthetic feature an arrangement like *POPSTARS* offers a platform, a symbolic space for activities and social integration or exclusion<sup>11</sup>, which is prefabricated by its interrelating elements. The elements reach interrelation by an aesthetic coherency, which opens a semiotic space for the users meaningful activities. These meaningful activities are pre-stabilised by the social spaces like milieus to which arrangements like *POPSTARS* belong or correspond to.

### 5.1 Milieus and lifestyle schemes

As already mentioned milieus are organised by correlating aesthetic, activity patterns and basic values. Based on the data accumulated at the end of the 1980s Gerhard Schulze describes the interrelation of the following elements to the coherent feature of a milieu and their specific styles, which result from users' meaningful activities. User put together:

- the symbolic material of **cultural products** like media,
- their **aesthetically differentiating schemes**,
- their **essential approaches** for orientation to the world,

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<sup>9</sup> Schulze, Gerhard: Die Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart. Frankfurt a.M. (Campus) 1992

<sup>10</sup> The data base is not sufficient for drawing valid conclusion for the actual situation, but display a concrete model of argumentation.

<sup>11</sup> The market share of *POPSTARS* main TV series indicate, that specific age and gender groups react consenting or assenting in the sense of belonging to the social space to which *POPSTARS* correlates by its aesthetic feature.

- their leading images, orienting myths or **values**.

Milieus and their corresponding lifestyles arise by the producers' and the users' activities to combine the symbolic material of media and other cultural products like clothing with values, myths and leading images. Following Gerhard Schulze categories, arrangements of cultural products emerge by being produced, offered and used within:

**Aesthetically differentiating schemes with the following alternatives:**

- classical music in the scheme of high culture,
- folk music in the scheme of triviality,
- action or disco in the scheme of suspense.

**Existential approaches with the following alternatives:**

(a) To be anchored within an outside world.

Possible modes of this approach:

- Living in a hierarchy and striving for a higher rank,
- To fulfil social expectations and search for conformity,
- The world is conceived as difficult and threatening, which leads to a striving for comfort,

(b) To be anchored in one's own self.

Possible modes of this approach:

- Developing a centre of identity and striving for self-realisation,
- To fulfil one's desires and needs, striving for stimulation.

**Leading values, images and orienting myths and their modes of realisation**

- Sources and target areas: (a) politics and society, (b) religion, (c) individual freedom,
- Modes of realisation of values, leading images and orientating myths:

Alternative modes of reflection: (a) complex and controlled; (b) simple, direct, without negotiation, striving for relief,

Alternative modes of acting: (a) security and standards, (b) spontaneous, self determined activities,

Aesthetically differentiating schemes, existential approaches and leading values, images, and orienting myths are basic feature of the formation of life worlds within the Western industrialised societies<sup>12</sup>. These try to explain phenomena like the recent POPSTARS and Yu-Gi-Oh, or Pokémon and WWF-Wrestling<sup>13</sup>, which can meanwhile be considered out of date. A German investigation organised by the children's TV channel SuperRTL concretised the feature to react to media as part of a world of

<sup>12</sup> This argument follows the theoretical proposal of Alfred Schütz, e.g. „Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt. Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie“. Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1974. 1. Edition Wien 1932. English version: The Phenomenology of the Social World. Evanston, Northwestern University Press 1970

<sup>13</sup> For WWF-Wrestling, an arrangement of media, commodities and events from the 1990s see the German analysis of Bachmair, Ben, Kress, Gunther (eds): Höllen-Inszenierung Wrestling. Beiträge zur pädagogischen Genre-Forschung. Opladen (Leske + Budrich) 1996

living for the current generation of children. Unfortunately the concept of the investigation solely targets TV and its integration into children's patterns of living and does not look for the arrangements of cultural products to which actual TV programmes belong to. But also the investigation of the patterns of TV use within a life world helps to foresee the features of *semiotic spaces*.

## 5.2. Children and young people respond to and set up aesthetic spaces with patterns of activities – research results from SuperRTL<sup>14</sup>

In the case of TV children's activity patterns range from casual watching to the complex integration of TV programmes into mundane and individual action patterns with different levels of activity and external orientation, as well as *emotional patterns*. This integration of media elements into action patterns and modes of feelings in everyday life is in the focus of our social development on the mundane reality of everyday life. Again the keyword here is *individualisation*. The linkage of everyday life to systemically integrated media offerings occurs as people latch themselves onto the supplies of mass media. In the public realm mass communication and its media prepare this kind of latching, which spans from advertising to the complex programme overview or self-explanation of how the medium or one of its contributions can be understood. This preparation on the part of the medium corresponds with the directive activities of the user as a part of his or her life accomplishments. Among other the empirical categorisation are (a) patterns of activity, (b) patterns of emotions, and (c) dimensions of experiences.

### (a) Patterns of children's activities with regard to TV / media (SRTL Kinderwelten 2000, page 58)

Children are categorised into

- The "passives," with few of their own activities, but with a great deal of "action-rich television consumption",
- The "play-children" with many toys and fairy tales,
- "The intellectuals," who concentrate on accumulating "more knowledge, in order to receive an achievement-oriented advantage",
- The "gamer" with their plethora of "games, fun, and excitement",
- The "unnoticables," with their love of animals and openness to new

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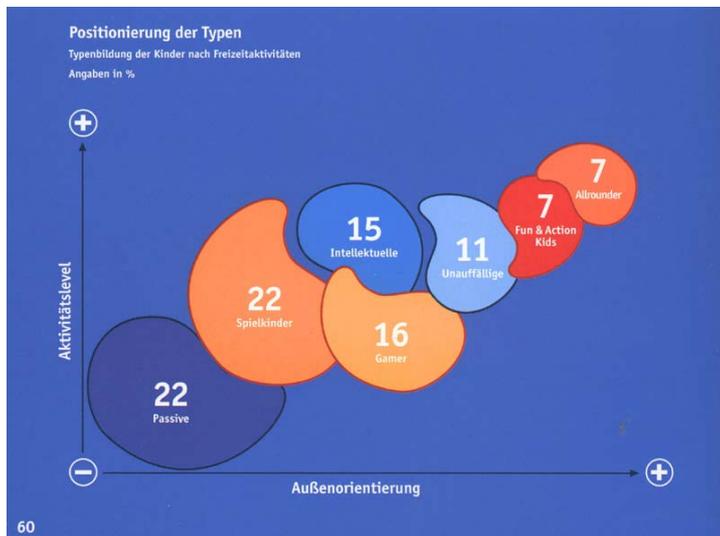
<sup>14</sup> Super RTL Medienforschung: Kinderwelten 2000. Studienbericht Köln (RTL Disney Fernsehen GmbH & Co. KG). Durchführung der Studie: IJF Institut für Jugendforschung, München. Datenanalyse und Redaktion des Studienberichtes: Transferzentrum Publizistik und Kommunikation, München

Super RTL Medienforschung: Kinderwelten 2002. Studienbericht Köln (RTL Disney Fernsehen GmbH & Co. KG). Durchführung der Studie: IJF Institut für Jugendforschung, München. Datenanalyse und Redaktion des Studienberichtes: Transferzentrum Publizistik und Kommunikation, München

Super RTL Medienforschung: Kinderwelten 2004. Studienbericht Köln (RTL Disney Fernsehen GmbH & Co. KG). Durchführung der Studie: IJF Institut für Jugendforschung, München. Datenanalyse und Redaktion des Studienberichtes: Transferzentrum Publizistik und Kommunikation, München

things,

- The “fun and action kids,” who are “young, dynamic, and rarely alone”,
- The “allrounders,” with a “need for leadership” and “corners and edges.”



These patterns of activities, which function as a frame for TV reception, differ with regard to two main dimension of activities:

- Orientation to the outer world / orientation to the inner world,
- Level of activities: low / high.

(b) **TV / media are elements in the following patterns of emotions and feelings** (SRTL Kinderwelten 2000, page 60)

- boredom,
- relaxation,
- regulation with being angry and fury,
- mood of sadness,
- mood of separation and treat,
- getting comfort.

(c) **Dimensions of experiences in the attention to TV / media**

- comfort and attention in the family,
- self-determined retreat,
- friends,
- excitement and surprise,
- learning and desire for knowledge,
- curiosity for others,
- retreat, disinterest and boredom,
- dramatic search for suspense.

Of course these categorisations of patterns are still in the typical wording

of marketing but at the same time indicate where to look for basic patterns of children's acting to and within spatial semiotic phenomena like the arrangements of media, commodities and events.