

# Why Should Film and Television Cooperate?

On the Mainz Manifesto\*

ALEXANDER KLUGE

translated by STUART LIEBMAN

## I.

The changes in the media landscape that represent challenges to film and television in no way derive *solely* from the new private media. Rather, these changes are rooted in losses of “publicity”<sup>1</sup> inherent in all societal processes. Active counter-production, which is rooted in the cultural mission of television and the film-historical mission of cinema, must gather together the forces of both, for if each acts only on its own behalf, they will probably fail. Therefore, there must be *cooperation* between film and television.

Today, we are witnessing—imperceptibly, because for the moment, nothing visible is happening—the speculative phase<sup>2</sup> of the New Media. In order to emerge, they need a kind of symbolic flagpole: the satellite.

Modern industry no longer experiences such speculative phases, at least not in our part of the world. Speculative phases lead directly to speculative crises: elimination bouts, cut-throat competition, overproduction, obstruction of outlets, bankruptcies—in all, an enormous sacrifice of capital, which today’s integrated industry would surely not permit. In the New Media, this atypical development occurs, so to speak, for “purely idealistic” reasons. Precisely because the object of and the network for this new market still do not exist (heads are not

\* This essay first appeared in Kraft Wetzel, ed. *Neue Medien contra Filmkultur?*, Berlin, Volker Spiess, 1987, pp. 237–244. The “Mainz Manifesto,” coauthored by Heinz Ungureit, Günter Rohrbach, Gunther Witte, and Kluge, was read on October 26, 1983, during the television criticism conference held at Mainz. It contained ten points, proposing, among other things, (1) that the purpose of both film and television was the production of a broader based and more open public sphere; (2) the strengthening of independent documentary film production as a source of renewal for fiction film; (3) screening old television programs in movie theaters. See also the expanded version of Kluge’s essay in Klaus von Bismarck et al., *Industrialisierung des Bewusstseins*, Munich, Piper, 1985, pp. 51–129. (All notes are by the translator.)

1. For an explanation of the translation of the key term *Öffentlichkeit*, see the translator’s first note to the selections of *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* in this issue.

2. The German *Gründerjahre*, which refers specifically to the years of financial speculation following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, has been translated as “speculative phase.”

wired, satellites are not beaming, nor do pay TV, cable, and advertising budgets really exist), development assumes an atavistic form. Hardly any of the competitors (aside from the dealers in canned feature films) approve of rapid development; each company, however, feels compelled to stake a claim, as in a gold rush. The outward form: speculative phase, foreseeable speculative crises. For it is now as difficult to increase people's time budgets as it is to increase property in the center of the city. A competition among twenty stations with the same product can only lead to collapse. It is not difficult to predict a crisis, which will be precipitated as soon as even a hint of this market exists.

All intelligent people with whom I have spoken about this respond by saying: surely you don't believe something like that will happen. Those are projects, crazes of Mr. Schwarz-Schilling;<sup>3</sup> they can be managed. I really trust some of these people, but in the meantime, I have looked into the matter closely, and I am convinced that my best friends—and indeed all public opinion—are badly mistaken in this regard. Certainly, considering the strength of our country's public institutions and, for the moment, the slight indication of viewer interest, the reality content of the New Media's project is particularly meager. None of the pretenders to power over the New Media has even a *single* adequate program. All run on canned feature films from the Edeka stores' subsidiary PKS and news from either the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* or the newspaper publishers Aktuell Presse-Fernsehen-GmbH. A poor beginning. As I already said, a big mistake.

In large measure, what is at stake in this project is the *industrialization of consciousness*. In any event, it is only indirectly a matter of entertainment programming on television broadcasts. It encompasses a radical modernization of industrial intercourse: the laying of cable, the possibility of decentralized work places, communication links between stores of commodities.

Reversing the evolution of human mental powers, social consciousness as it is constituted and stored in industry was *first* wired as cerebral cortex, *then* as nerves. Now it is a matter, so to speak, of developing an extensively automated cerebellum and midbrain that will control the motor system of economic currents beneath consciousness. What increases in speed will be unleashed by such developments, what will turn out to be impossible (and on that account will either not take place or will occur as a destructive process), what will emerge through the dissolution and new coalescence as the new industrialized consciousness—none of this is precisely known. Even the catch phrases “industrialization of consciousness” and “consciousness industry” do not denote anything precisely. Will the movements of the mind be industrialized? The contents or the accomplishments of consciousness? Or only the memory banks? Or will it be the

3. Kluge is referring to the Federal Republic's postal minister, a Christian Democratic member of the ruling coalition, who is widely regarded as responsible for the introduction of legislation promoting the creation of private television and radio stations in the Bundesrepublik.

exchange of information, or one's mental equilibrium, or the markets and values which also exist for conscious activities? Or will only the consciousness built into commodity concentrations, machinery, or computers be "liquid"? In any case, all this has nothing to do with television programming, or a show by Frank Elstner.<sup>4</sup> The real question is: where is the enormous technological potential of digitalization and of cable headed? This is the question posed over and above the project designers' fantasies.

What is at stake is the future form of our public spheres. One can no longer think of the public sphere as an integral whole, because increasingly it is becoming only a regulative idea. In reality the public sphere has already disintegrated into partial public spheres. Every minority constructs its own separate camp. Coalitions of such camps assert that they are public.

## II.

Merely feeling or thinking something is not sufficient raw material for my consciousness of self, my identity. When I observe that others also feel or think as I do, or that they contradict my feelings or thoughts, that they therefore *relate* to me, that there are *modes of expression* making what concerns everyone and what touches me personally *mutually comprehensible*, I can be sure that these are products of the public sphere. There is no identity in isolation from others. The form of the people's and the individual's consciousness depends on our public sphere's modes of expression.

For a long time, the classical public sphere, like the forest, the earth, and the air, seemed to be something natural and accessible. It seemed to arise of its own accord, like the market. After the capitulation in 1945, the Allies artificially started it up again by granting licenses.<sup>5</sup> For example, the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Nürnberger Nachrichten*, and *Axel Springer* companies were licensed to publish newspapers. This did not make the *Frankfurter Rundschau* wealthy. A fifteen-percent fluctuation in advertising rates can drive it off the market. Somewhat less committed to diversity than the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, the *Nürnberger Nachrichten* has built an empire on local papers<sup>6</sup> in Franken. The emphatic bias of the Springer press's strategies has expanded a 1946 license into an enormous conglomerate. We know how stunned students were in 1968 when they observed how parts of the public sphere were expropriated. The conglomerates do not yet exercise absolute control, however, over the individual kiosks in which newspa-

4. Frank Elstner is a well-known West German television celebrity whose approximate equivalent in the United States would be Johnny Carson.

5. The licensing system was instituted in order to control the ideological content as well as the personnel of all publishing enterprises, particularly newspapers, in postwar Germany.

6. Kluge uses the word *Kopfblättern* (here translated as "local newspapers") to refer to the practice of large newspaper chains that purchase local newspapers, retain the original name and format, but dramatically change the content by increasing the number of syndicated, i.e., nonlocal, articles and features.

pers and magazines are sold. Distributors offer a variety of papers, though hardly any smaller newspapers. On closer inspection, most of them belong to interrelated big businesses—not a monopoly, but an oligopoly.

New cable and satellite technology adds an innovation. For the first time, the distribution outlets (the “kiosks,” the “channels”) are being appropriated by the media producers, and the middlemen are being cut out. Two different processes are involved: (1) the formation of groups, of consortia, of closed-shops; (2) the construction of a formal institutional facade which these groups or consortia set up in order to procure the necessary public authority. The two processes are *group formation* and *governmental agreements*.

The limitations imposed on the media by party influence and by the principle that only that which excludes one’s neighbor is good are evident in the phrasing of the media laws. They use established media double-talk. The multivocality of social expression, what is called communication, consists of the triad: (1) information, (2) entertainment, (3) education. In other words: news, shows, school, or documentary film, feature film, reportage.

Compare this, for instance, with the riches of the classical public spheres, with what was charming about *Florence*, what constituted music, theater, classical film, newspapers, the narrative arts, and a science that is more than popular broadcasts about stars and animals. Such riches had *one* flaw: not everyone had access to them. But it would be a criminal act of destruction to preserve the exclusivity of these *bountiful modes of expression* and simultaneously to discard the utopian possibility hidden in the classical public spheres: that it is possible for one individual or another, *and possibly even for everyone, against all probability*, to know something, to be fully aware, etc. Anyone who destroys the classical public spheres commits a crime against history.

### III.

The challenge of the New Media, the ecological threat to the structures of consciousness, requires nothing less than a return to the origins of all the products of the public sphere. The components of this capital, dating back to 1802 (and, for the most part, earlier), must be updated, revitalized. As for the moving images of the cinema, the journey *only* goes back to Lumière and Méliès, once again to the origins. In each of these origins, “cousins” and other relatives of what actually developed can be found, and these can be adapted for the New Media in very interesting ways.

No one knows if independent businesses and a labor force capable of such revisions (in cooperation with public institutions *and* the companies’ private economic consortium, but with each remaining independent, “for the time being”) will be motivated to make a sufficient effort to develop programming. Such development work cannot *realistically* be expected from either public institutions or the consortia alone. Both constituents are far too bureaucratized, technocratic, and goal-oriented to program the New Media.

It comes down to a tripartite division of all programming time. One-third must continue to be reserved for the forms of the classical public spheres. Official institutions and big firms would have rights equal to the other two-thirds.

Therefore, a third of programming time, created through the cooperation of nonprofit enterprises and the so-called culture channel, must be available as a "window" [*Fenster*].<sup>7</sup> These three easily identifiable criteria clearly distinguish the independent third's status from that of the public third (which is always connected to large enterprises) and from consortium status (which is what a company consisting of offices and services always is).

By the end of 1987 in Europe and in the Federal Republic, *three* powerful, private, full-blown program schedules, constructed as profit-oriented entertainment vehicles competing ruthlessly to eliminate each other, will arrive on the scene.

Politically, it is a question of the future equilibrium between the public system and the nascent forms of a private broadcasting system. The underlying issue is the struggle between a concept of the individual as a mere buyer, a consumer of the entertainment industry, and an opposing view of the individual as the controller of his or her reality, sensuality, and life experience, one who therefore depends upon a variety of factors that allow for, but are not exclusively concerned with, entertainment. Obviously, this struggle is at odds with the division between public and private. But the two modes offered to consciousness presuppose stability and dualism in the institutional area.

Probably only the experts can conceive what is necessary to make a full-blown program schedule of five to ten hours a day, 365 days a year, that is attractive to a sufficient number of viewers. A decisive condition, internationally, in the competition for comprehensive program schedules seems to be the lengthening of program times (up to twenty-four hours). Therefore, in the future the majority of domestic program suppliers (print companies [aside from Bertelsmann], all independent third parties, producers of "cultural variety," etc.) will also only be able to showcase programs [*Programmfenster herstellen*] in conjunction with partners who already have umbrella program schedules (the network principle). Programs that are not significantly distinctive will be considered one program schedule; viewers can regard foreign suppliers without important domestic partners as *one* program schedule. The same is true for stations that broadcast programs only at different times.

Given the possible capacities for umbrella program schedules, the following six possibilities result from the combining of showcases [*Fenster*]:

7. Kluge uses the word *Fenster* in several different senses throughout this essay, as well as throughout his work. Here, he uses it metaphorically to suggest that television programming provides a "window" onto experience. *Fenster* is also used to mean "showcase," "time slot," or "niche." When these variants are meant, *Fenster* or its derivatives will appear in brackets after the translation.

*Public with private third parties*

(1) A full-blown program schedule A[rbeitsgemeinschaft der] R[undfunk-anstalten] D[euetschlands] with slots [*Fenster*] for other Europeans;

(2) A full-blown program schedule Z[weites] D[euetsches] F[ernsehen] II, plus a music channel, with the participation of ORF [Austrian radio], SRG [Swiss radio] (eventually in combination with private third parties) [cf. 3SAT];<sup>8</sup>

(3) a public/private third-party joint program schedule;

*Purely private*

(4) Arbeitsgemeinschaft ECS 1, Ludwigshafen [cf. SAT 1];

(5) Bertelsmann/RTL [Luxembourg radio and television]/Luxembourg;

(6) English full-blown program schedules (for example, Murdoch).

Comprehensive program schedules other than these are unlikely because of the lack of an umbrella program schedule.

During the phase of competitive confrontation in about one and a half years, none of the three *purely* private programs will be able to act in the interests of "cultural variety," on behalf of minorities, or in cooperation with independent third parties.

After establishing the three possible, strictly private, full-blown program schedules, there remain private interests that can only participate in the new media public spheres in cooperation with the umbrella program schedule of the public broadcasting system. If this possibility is precluded, arbitrary competitive distortions in the private sector will be created. If, on the other hand, cooperation between the public systems and private third parties is required because of the practical necessity of an umbrella program schedule, this will guarantee a cultural variety of independent program producers.

It is not a matter of *one* culture channel, but cultural variety in *all* channels. The realization of such a *principle* indirectly also has repercussions for the quality of the three *purely* private comprehensive program schedules.

#### IV.

The simple addition of media worlds produces repressive works of art. Real human and historical relations are *repressed*. This prospect is disastrous for the community, and very seductive to opportunists.

Will our country be able to incorporate these new media public spheres as part of our communal life?

At stake is our language, the particular experiences of our country, that quantum of "seriousness of life" not exhausted by entertainment. If the essential

8. 3SAT and SAT 1 are commercial venture broadcasting via satellite in West Germany.

creative powers of our country are not to be lost to foreign countries, we need a high level of integration within the country. The fragmentation and provincialization, comparable to the small-state mentality of pre-Bismarck Germany, that result from a lack of conscientious commitment on the part of the federal authorities and the cross purposes of the powers-that-be will dissipate our energies. In such a case, the concentrated interest in our market by foreigners would not cease. The responsibility for meeting this challenge cannot be assigned to one state or another.