

Friedrich Krotz

Communication with a mobile Robot: Growing up and becoming older with Interactive Media

One of the great promises of computer and digitalization of communication are the interactive media. The most important media of this type are Computer Games. But also “T9” is an example of an interactive “intelligent” software, used at mobile phones in order to make it easier to write an SMS. The Tamagotchi at the end of the last century was the first hardware robot only for emotions that was a success on the market. It is still used in some countries as a tool for education: it is given to young people to make them clear that being parent of a little baby is not an easy job.

Today, interactive media slowly become more present, as computer games for the mobile phone, but also in more complex forms. So called Navigation Systems help car drivers to arrive at their goal. Another invention is the AIBO, more or less some 50000 are sold until today. This “best friend of man”, as Sony calls it, is robot which remembers to a dog. It is produced for and sold to children, to technically oriented and to older people, who cannot own a “real” dog any longer. In some sense, this 2000 Euro Robot is an own type of “animal” such that human beings like to communicate with it, whatever this means. It in addition is a connection to the Internet with an own WLAN access, which helps you to come clear with your e-mail. And it is a mobile MP3-player – mobile in the sense that it walks around in your room.

Interactive Media simulate communication and thus open the space of possible experiences into a new dimension. On the other hand, the usual fears came up that artificial pets will cause problems, e.g. with children, who seem to grow up into a strange world.

The presentation will discuss this development of new media on the base of an explorative study about an AIBO – how do people integrate this artificial animal into their lives, how do they communicate with it and what is known about its role in the life of them. Finally, we will point to some experiments to use such interactive media for learning.

Prof. Dr. Friedrich Krotz has academic degrees as a mathematician and a sociologist and made his Ph.D. in the field of Sociology. Later, he got his Venia Legendi (“Habilitation”) in Journalism and Communication Theory. He worked at a lot of Universities in different fields. Today, he is a full professor for Communication Theory and Social Communication at the University of Erfurt.

Friedrich Krotz worked on different areas of research in Media and Communication. His main question always was about the role of the media in Society and Culture, for Identity and Social Relations. Further, he was busy in comparative research with US and Japanese colleagues and worked in some European projects. His main research interests at the moment lie on the fields of digital Media, on globalization and transnational communication, on Cultural Studies and on Methodology.

He published a lot of books and articles in German, English and other languages. At the moment, he is a Head of the Section “Psychology and Public opinion” of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR).

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