MeTag & MeSort
The sustainable provision of research software for cross-media practices
Andreas Hepp, Alessandro Belli & Florian Hohmann
1. Idea of the project
2. What we already did
3. Where do we want to go?
Idea(s) of the project

• fundamental aim: developing a ‘good practice model’ for providing software for research on media use and practice - specifically: software for sorting (MeSort) and for writing media diaries (MeTag)

• That means: model for offering, documenting and providing open source access for further development of the software while building up a community of dedicated researchers/users

• ‘Co-creation approach‘
  • close cooperation with researchers as future users and developers
  • planning and evaluating of the process as well as the product together with the users (e.g. via workshops)
  • Involvement of the users in dissemination and maintenance of the software
Idea(s) for and behind the software

• in times of increasing mediatization (= media pervade every aspect of life) practices of media use can no longer be understood from a single-media point of view
  → Cross media research: investigates communicative practices across the variety of different media in a way that reflects the interrelations between these media

• There are two methods which are considered as especially appropriate for collecting data on media practice from a cross-media point of view:
  • Media diaries
  • Sorting techniques
What we already did: Media Diary (MeTag)

- appropriate especially for cross-media research on media practices
- puts the research participant at the centre of data collection, taking the users as ‘anchor’ for data collection and therefore collecting data on his or her practice across the variety of different media
- research challenges:
  - keeping a diary requires high degree of involvement, takes a remarkable amount of time and commitment
  - keeping a diary is a challenge especially for less-literate people;
  - the response rate of media diaries is typically low in research;
  - the data in qualitative media diaries are often too unstructured for comparative analysis
What we already did: Media Diary (MeTag)

• advantages of our research app (as there are no others that satisfy scientific demands esp. for data security):
  • app for a mobile phone, for example, can be used easily anytime anywhere
  • threshold to use it is lower for less-literate people than a printed diary as main parts of the information can be selected via touch screen menus
  • response rate can be improved by letting the app send reminders
  • software can offer a certain degree of prestructuring the data without limiting the possibilities of getting new (and also at this point unstructured) information
Prototype MedTag

MedTag App data collection interface

MedTag Analyse data analysis interface
What we already did: Sorting Techniques (MeSort)

- sorting methods are understood as a **helpful tool for collecting data on cross-media practices** in general
- methods include sorting certain cards, tokens or figures that represent different kinds of media in a way that the whole **media repertoire of a person** or the **media ensemble of a collectivity or organisation** becomes represented
- research challenges:
  - sorting techniques on paper have the tendency to put an emphasis on the **sorting result** instead of the (re)sorting process;
  - sense-making processes connected to the sorting process are often excluded from data collection and analysis;
  - the variety of tokens or cards is limited on paper, the production of new sets is costly
What we already did: Sorting Techniques (MeSort)

• advantages of our research app (as there are no others that are flexible enough to support different sorting schemes)
  • ability to record the sorting result and the sorting process itself, together with the accompanying interview
  • great flexibility offers the chance to easily define new ‘tokens’ or ‘cards’ during the sorting process when needed
  • ability to visualise sorting tokens in an appropriate way
  • ability to collect data from a much bigger group of people than manual sorting methods
Prototype qResearch

MedSort data collection interface

MedSort data analysis interface
Current ideas for the development of MeTag

- Reprogramming as a WebApp
- Advancement of the underlying database for more flexibility and security
- More freedom in defining the data input interface and the analysis tool
- Option to enable 'automated tracking" in a future version
- Option to record audio commentaries and speech-to-text
- Reminder functionality

- At the moment: Building a stable version „MeTag 1.0“ and MeTag Analyze in the backend
Current ideas for the development of MeSort

• Program MeSort as a completely new webbased app
• Development of a "triple interface" to support three different sorting techniques: a) Q-Sort b) Free-Sort for media repertoires (tokens on concentric circles) and c) Free-Sort-App for media ensembles (sorting box with scaling, see previous slide) [and possibly in the future: d) Network-Sort-App for qualitative network analysis]
• Option to record a video of the sorting process (screencapture the sorting movements and combine it with the spoken audio into a video format) in a future version

• At the moment: Building a stable version of „MeSort 1.0“ with focus on media repertoire sorting technique
What we already did: MeSort Alpha

- Workshops with Bremen/Hamburg research community and at ECREA in Lugano
- Intermission… [Change of laptop] to show current beta version of MeSort
Where do we want to go?

- Develop both planned applications in a stable version 1.0 that was agreed upon by all participants in a first workshop
- Further development of versions 2.0 or even 3.0 with more functions according to our ideas/plans
- Develop usage and business model

- Challenges concerning (international) research data storage
- Challenges concerning a good business model ("WordPress"-model?)
Questions/Discussion?

• More participation without personal meeting?
Thank you! 😊