Positioning AD in Media Theory: An Australian Context

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Australian Context

- Language / Translation
  - Language is vitally important to AD
  - Visual to Verbal "translation" / "interpretation"

- However, in Australia
  - Little daily need, and
  - No statutory requirement for translation of publicly accessible information
    - English – French, German, Spanish, etc – compared with EU

Australian Context

- AD Research and Service Development
  - Media Studies framework
  - Practical intersections with
    - Performing Arts
    - Disability Studies

Centrality of Media

- Media's place in understanding
  - Politics
    - **Nothing About Us Without Us**, *Charlton, 2000*
    - **The Politics of Blindness**, *McCreath, 2011*
  - Exercise of power
- Complexity of Media Power *(Couldry, 2011)*
  - Encompasses and Impacts
    - Economic power
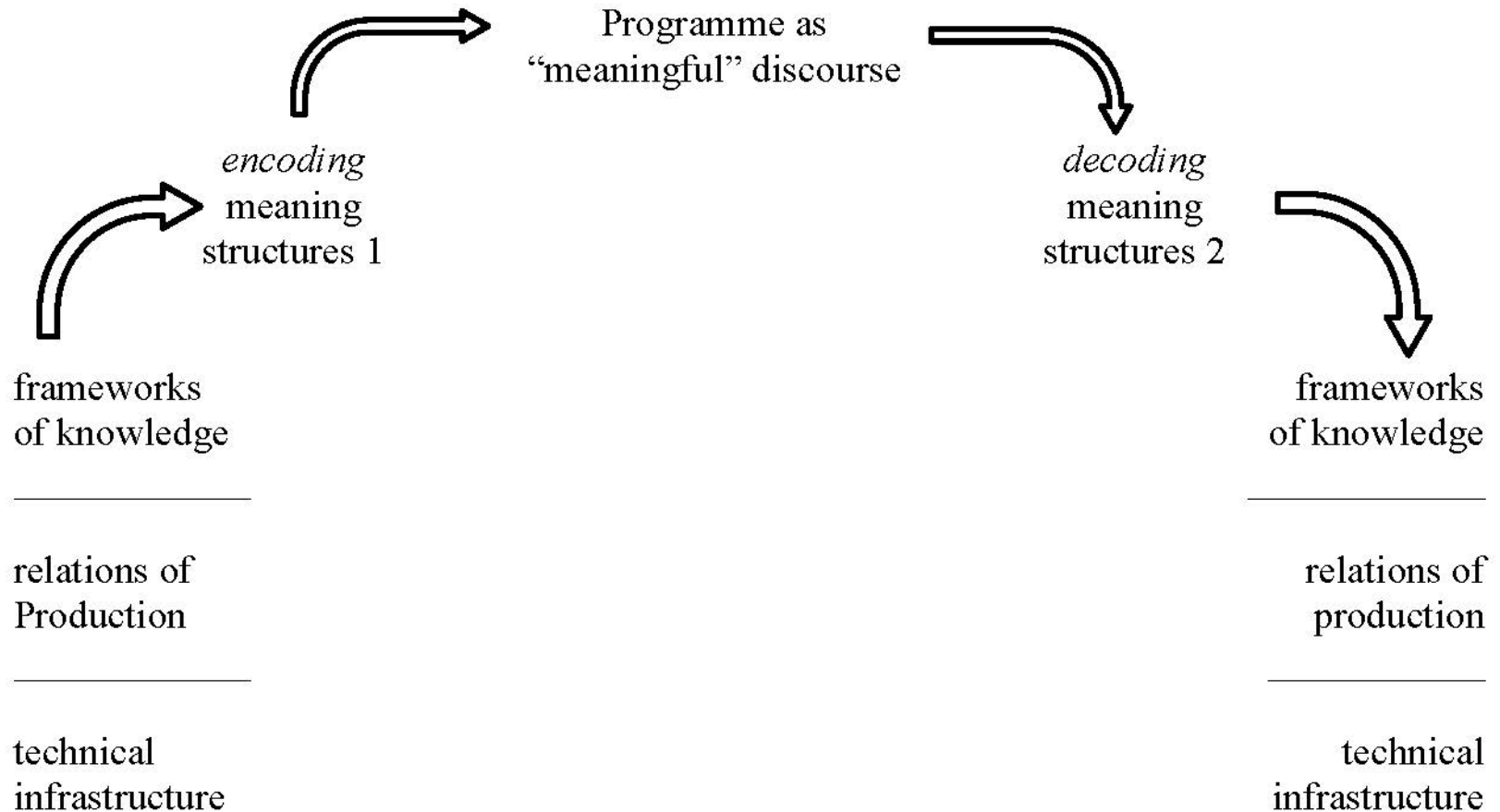   - Social power
    - Political power

Focus

- Power
  - Describer and AD end-user
- Audiences
  - Complexities
- Making of Meaning
  - Describe don't Interpret...

Meaning-Making

- Braun *(2007)*
  - AD involves "complex cognitive-linguistic and intermodal mediation activity"
  - Research into the creative meaning-making processes involved in AD
- Stuart Hall's **Encoding/Decoding Theory** *(1980)*
  - Process of communication
  - Producing and consuming of meaning
  - Community context in which that happens

Encoding/Decoding Model

Programme as "meaningful" discourse

encoding
meaning
structures 1

decoding
meaning
structures 2

frameworks
of knowledge

frameworks
of knowledge

relations of
Production

relations of
production

technical
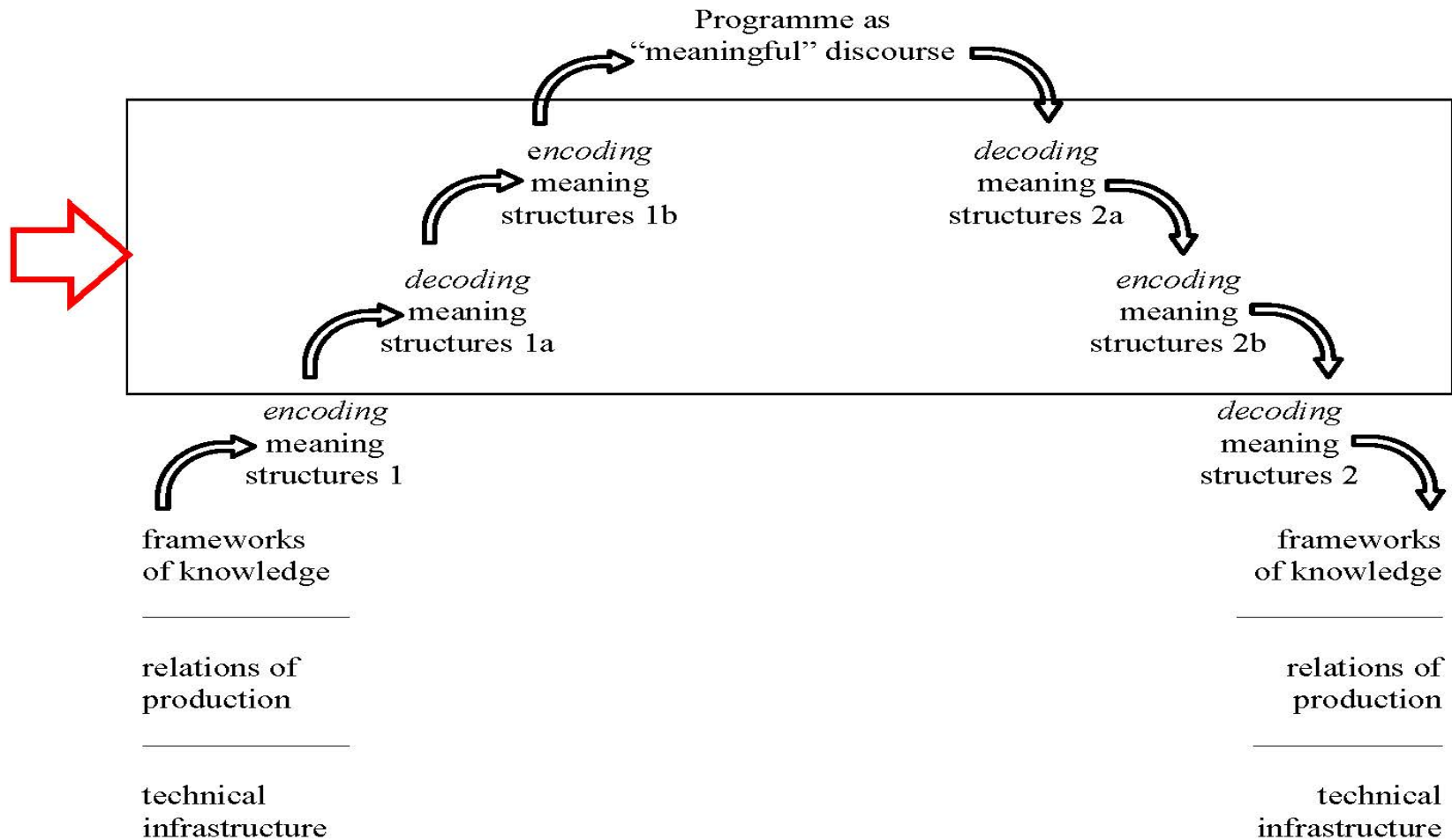infrastructure

technical
infrastructure

Meaning-Making

- Hall *(1997)* builds on Michael Foucault
  - Power and Agency
    - Power can be productive
    - Power is not linear
    - Power is circulatory – involving producers & consumers alike

- "AD is an Art, not a Science!" *(Dr Joel Snyer)*

- AD for the Performing Arts adds further complexity to Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model

Encoding/Decoding – for AD

Programme as
"meaningful" discourse

encoding
meaning
structures 1b

decoding
meaning
structures 2a

decoding
meaning
structures 1a

encoding
meaning
structures 2b

encoding
meaning
structures 1

decoding
meaning
structures 2

frameworks
of knowledge

frameworks
of knowledge

relations of
production

relations of
production

technical
infrastructure

technical
infrastructure

Power

- Inherent Power in AD process
  - afforded by sight
- Describer's role is to choose:
  - What to describe
  - How to describe it
  - When to describe it
- Allowing AD end-user liberty to negotiate their own meaning of any given visual text *(Fryer 2016; Snyder 2014)*

Audiences

- Imagined Audience vs Actual Audience
- AD Audience Complexities *(Snyder 2014)*
  - Homogeneity vs Heterogeneity:
    - Blind from birth
    - Had sight, now blind – visual memory
    - Impaired sight – current access to some visual information
  - Some elements seem to be universal

Recap

Media Studies:

- Power

- Audiences

- Making of Meaning

- Intersecting with Performing Arts & Disability Studies

- In "**Why Study the Media**" Silverstone (1999) suggests it is about "the viewing experience and the experience of viewing". For AD, that may be the listening experience, and the experience of listening.

Thank You

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