

merzWissenschaft | MEDIEN + ERZIEHUNG

CALL FOR PAPERS 2022

DIGITALITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

DOES MEDIA EDUCATION NEED NEW CORE CONCEPTS?

Supervising Editors Prof. Dr. Patrick Bettinger (PH Zürich),

Dr. Wolfgang Reißmann (FU Berlin) and merzWissenschaft editorial board (JFF)

The sovereign subject is a core concept in media-educational activity. Sovereignty expresses the possibility of emancipation from power structures and as a concept of political theory outlines a societally negotiated desired or target horizon. Understood as empowerment for social entitlement, sovereignty includes a normative component which assumes a fundamental ability to act and thus enables freedom of movement for critical positioning. This target horizon is also to be found in current variations on 'data literacy', 'informational media education', 'digital sovereignty', 'informational self-determination' – and in German-speaking areas also the highly regarded Dagstuhl and Frankfurt triangles. In conceptual terms this understanding is as a rule linked with the idea of a 'strong' subject which can be empowered to productively process reality and actively interpret the world.

However, in the context of the Digital Transformation it must be asked to what extent 'individual sovereignty' is still viable and more than anything practically feasible as a media-educational target category. This question is also encountered in the recent (renewed) debate regarding a modified and in particular more strongly decentered concept of subject and concepts of shared agency. Faced with the immanent potent and yet perceptually elusive omnipresence of algorithmic structures, the rapid growth of digital corporate concerns, the associated tendencies towards monopolization and the increasing integration of algorithmic decision-making systems in media services which can intervene in the individual's freedom to make decisions, the possibilities of self-determined and autonomous media behavior become threatened as an objective. Strictly speaking, it could be theorized that digital, commercially driven mediatisation and continuous datafication make the 'strong' subject impossible both empirically and in terms of utopia and make it a 'weak' subject: Surveillance in the 'datafied society', value creation in 'digital capitalism' and technological 'black boxes' increase doubts about whether media-educational impulses oriented towards the ability of the subjects to act (can) actually contribute to a sovereign life with media.

In spite of the modified point of departure, it is eminently important for media education to be able to rely on a concept or a vision which is in principle feasible and which also appears well-reflected in normative terms and which provides media education with orientation and points of reference for practical action as well as in theoretical reflection. In this context *merzWissenschaft* 2022 addresses the question of how sovereignty can be newly defined and how media-educational actions can be re-oriented. We look forward to receiving articles which look at the issue outlined above in empirical terms; we also welcome theoretical-conceptual contributions and reflections from practice which address one or more of the following questions and areas:

- *Forms of sovereignty:* Traditionally, media education addresses the socially positioned individual active in a community. However, sovereignty as used in political theory has a significantly broader scope of meaning and is not bound to subjects alone. What additional forms and layers of sovereignty can and should media education focus on in order to continue to ensure its own relevance? What is the meaning of digital sovereignty/digital autonomy? How can the concept be meshed with educational approaches? How would a (new) realistic utopia look?
- *Understanding media and subject:* The media-educational understanding of the subject developed in the 1980s/90s in orientation towards action-theory socialization approaches and in reference to publicly available (mass) media. To what extent do types of media and technology, which appear as infrastructures and data

(tracks) and not primarily as symbol and knowledge inventories modify, traditional notions of the subject (including media appropriation and media education processes)? To what extent does the term 'media' have to be investigated and be subject to new discussion? What demands result for the socialization-theory foundations of media-educational concepts?

- *Shared agency*: To what extent can changes in perspective, based for example on 'practice' and/or 'material turn', provide new insights and approaches for media-educational research and activity? How is sovereignty to be understood, when the conceptual point of departure is 'weak' subjects? How are the interaction and balance of power between humans and technology to be described and researched? What experience has already been gained with technologies such as AI and what conclusions can be derived from that experience?
- *Invisibility and objectification*: To an increasing extent, media education is encountering phenomena and questions (e. g. Artificial Intelligence, 'algorithmic cultures') which do not exist per se in objectified forms such as image, sound, or video. What methods does media education have, or lack, for making visible e. g. processes of data collection and data processing and thus making it possible to discuss such processes and integrate them in the critical, societal debate? What practical approaches are taken today to handling the invisibility or opacity of digital media? What best practices emerge when it comes to the transformation?
- *New alliances/governance/cross-networking*: What models and strategic concepts are there for intermeshing and intensifying the collaboration between media education, informational education, media and infrastructure design, technological impact assessments, media policy and/or media law?
- *Historical comparisons*: What previously existing core media-educational concepts still remain formative today? What can be learned for the present from previous 'disruptions' in media-educational work and theory? How did media education deal with the invisible, intangible dimensions of the medial world in the past (e. g. embedding medial products in cultural discourse; media-economic power and domination relationships)? How do these challenges differ?

merzWissenschaft provides a forum advancing scientific analysis in media education and promoting progress in the theoretical foundation of the discipline. For this purpose, qualified articles are called for from various relevant disciplines (including media-educational, communication sciences, media sciences, (developmental) psychological, informatics, professional-historical, and philosophical perspectives), also with an interdisciplinary approach, for the continuing development of expert media-educational dialog. Of interest are original papers with an empirical or theoretical foundation, presenting new findings, aspects or approaches to the topic and which are explicitly related to one of the topic areas or questions outlined above, or which explore a separate topic within the scope of the overall context of the Call.

Abstracts with a maximum length of 6,000 characters (including blank spaces) can be submitted to the merz-editorial team (merz@jff.de) until February 11, 2022. Submissions should follow the merzWissenschaft layout specifications, available at <https://www.merz-zeitschrift.de/manuskriptrichtlinien/>. The length of the articles should not exceed a maximum of approximately 35,000 characters (including blank spaces). Please feel free to contact Susanne Eggert, tel.: +49.89.68989.152, e-mail: susanne.eggert@jff.de

DEADLINES AT A GLANCE

- 11 February 2022: Submission of abstracts to merz@jff.de
- 28 February 2022: Decision on acceptance/rejection of abstracts
- 20 June 2022: Submission of articles
- June/July 2022: Assessment phase (double-blind peer review)
- August/September 2022: Revision phase (multi-phase when appropriate)
- End of November 2022: *merzWissenschaft* 2022 published