English Abstracts

Philip Baugut / Katharina Neumann: On the Relationship of Journalists and Right-wing Extremists. A Consideration of Mutual Perception, Purpose and Interaction [Die Beziehungen zwischen Journalisten und Rechtsextremisten. Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen, Ziele und Interaktionen], pp. 144-166

This paper deals with the mutual purposes and perceptions of journalists and right-wing extremists. We approach these issues as important factors that influence the interaction between journalists and right-wing extremists. Drawing on data from interviews with 15 journalists who reported on regions with a strong right-wing extremist scene, and seven interviews with former high-ranking members of the right-wing extremist scene, we were able to detect a variety of interaction patterns which we describe and systematically explain in this paper. Our interviews with scene-leavers suggest that different parts of the scene aim at different mass media portrayals, and that journalists are seen as influential and manipulable enemy that should be instrumentalised. The journalists we interviewed were aware of the scene's heterogeneity and, in line with a self-conception of their role as passive, stressed the willingness to report on right-wing extremism in an objective rather than activist way. However, journalists showed reflections on ethics of responsibility in the way that journalists wished to reject means of promotion to the scene, making a point of their dangerousness. Against this background, journalists and scene leavers consistently described that, despite the occurrence of violence and threats against journalists, a professional exchange of information against publicity in the sense of classical PR takes place.

Key words : journalists, right-wing extremism, politics-media relationships, interactions, interviews

Christoph Neuberger / Anne Bartsch / Carsten Reinemann / Romy Fröhlich / Thomas Hanitzsch / Johanna Schindler: The Digital Transformation of Knowledge Systems. A theoretical Framework for Analysing Truth, Knowledge and Rationality in Public Communication (Der digitale Wandel der Wissensordnung. Theorierahmen für die Analyse von Wahrheit, Wissen und Rationalität in der öffentlichen Kommunikation), pp. 167-186

In the proclaimed age of 'fake news' and 'post truth', concerns have been raised regarding the dissemination of false information, the erosion of a common knowledge base and the questioning of epistemic authorities. Such developments seem to undermine the traditional knowledge system of public media discourse in democracies, and have sparked considerable research activities in communication science in recent years. However, the many empirical findings on diverse aspects of this development have not yet been integrated into a theoretical framework, which might be useful in systematically describing and explaining the digital transformation of the production, verification, distribution and appropriation of knowledge in public media discourse. We use the basic concepts of truth, knowledge and rationality as a starting point from which we develop a theoretical model of the knowledge system within public media discourse. We distinguish between phases, contexts, hierarchical levels and roles. The Internet tends to dissolve the traditional knowledge system, provoking a collapse of contexts, a levelling of epistemic hierarchy, a dissolution of the sequence of phases in the knowledge process, an opening of access to previously exclusive roles, and the emergence of hybrid roles. We discuss

243

how our theoretical model can be used to systematise the state of research and to derive a research agenda.

Key words : knowledge system, truth, knowledge, rationality, digital public sphere

Thomas Rakebrand / Daniela Schlütz: Research Ethics in Higher Education: Some Practical Insights from Media and Communication Science (Forschungsethik in der kommunikations- und medienwissenschaftlichen Hochschullehre. Erkenntnisse aus der Praxis), pp. 187-205

Recent years have seen requests to systematically incorporate research ethics into higher education. In this paper, we set out to substantiate these claims with regard to social science, communication and media research. Most noticeably, we offer suggestions regarding the question of how to integrate research ethics into higher education. Drawing on experiences from courses at the University of Leipzig, we address the aims, opportunities and challenges of such an endeavour. We recommend palpable educational modules that might be integrated in teaching plans in media and communication science, either as a singular aspect, or cross-sectional, or even as the main focus. Furthermore, we recommend establishing a scientific discourse on how to teach research ethics from a methodological as well as theoretical perspective.

Key words: research ethics, higher education, didactics

Armin Scholl / Julia Völker: On Fake News, Disinformation and the Problem of Systematisation: A Comment on Fabian Zimmermann and Matthias Kohring's article „'Fake News' als aktuelle Desinformation. Systematische Bestimmung eines heterogenen Begriffs" in M&K 4/2018 [Fake News, aktuelle Desinformationen und das Problem der Systematisierung. Anmerkungen zum Aufsatz von Fabian Zimmermann & Matthias Kohring „'Fake News' als aktuelle Desinformation – systematische Bestimmung eines heterogenen Begriffs" in M&K 4/2018], pp. 206-214

In Fabian Zimmermann and Matthias Kohring's theoretical consideration of 'fake news' (M&K 4/2018), the authors characterise these as topical, newsworthy disinformation. We value this contribution, for research on this phenomenon has seen very few theoretical efforts so far. However, we feel the urge to refine the authors' suggestions, as we consider these theoretically inconsistent in some aspects, and inefficient for practical purposes. This paper provides a critical reconstruction of Zimmermann and Kohring's course of argumentation, followed by a new perspective which we develop using five constructivist criteria. This opens up into a revised and complemented version of the authors' concept, including some suggestions on how to carry out empirical systematic classification analyses in order to identify necessary, sufficient and helpful criteria suitable to defining fake news.

Key words : fake news, disinformation, constructivism, classification analysis