

Abstracts

Pascal Schneiders: More than Meso. An Integrative Framework for Analyzing the Platformization of the News Ecosystem

To provide a comprehensive description of the news ecosystem's platformization, this article examines how platform logic spreads at the micro, meso, and macro levels, how these levels interact, and what consequences arise for democratic public spheres. The article distinguishes between stability, gradual change, and transformative change and identifies indicators for these at all three levels. It argues that platformization is a power-driven vertical and horizontal diffusion of platform logic throughout the news ecosystem. Current developments are characterized primarily by a hybridization of platform and news media logics, which is accompanied by a loss of autonomy among audiences, news media, journalism, and the public sphere.

Megan Hanisch/Nicolas Even/Marc-Christian Ollrog: Adapted Journalists? How Journalists in Germany Are Responding to Platformization and Artificial Intelligence

Digitalization, platformization, and artificial intelligence are driving a profound transformation of journalism. Drawing on a quantitative online survey of journalists in Germany and nine complementary guided interviews, this article examines what forms of adaptation can be observed in German journalism in response to platformization, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. It analyses the media-ethical implications of these developments for journalistic practices across the triad of research, selection, and presentation. The findings show that journalists navigate a tension between professional-normative values and organizational demands for monetization.

Lukas Kick: Journalism in the Age of Technical Generability. Media-Ethical Perspectives on Authenticity and Artificial Intelligence in Journalism

New technologies are affecting journalistic work routines. One technological innovation that has become increasingly significant is artificial intelligence. Given its technical characteristics, it is important to ask what role artificial intelligence can play in journalistic work processes. This article examines the media-ethical implications that may arise from the use of artificial intelligence in journalism. The key question is whether it is necessary to expand existing journalistic quality criteria – for example, with regard to the concept of authenticity as proof of the quality of careful, human-reviewed work.

Patrick Rupert-Kruse: Avatar-AisthEthics. Algorithmic Body Hermeneutics and the Constitution Problem of the Data Body

This article develops the concept of an Avatar-AisthEthics, examining how immersive systems translate the lived body into a data body through sensor-algorithmic processes. Starting from the question of how algorithmic body hermeneutics constitutes the avatar as a formatted data body, the article combines phenomenological, media-theoretical, and technology-ethical perspectives. Through technological case analyses, it demonstrates how bodily micro-dynamics are converted into exploitable biometric signatures of the self. The article introduces the concept of senso-motoric privacy and argues that any ethical assessment of immersive systems presupposes an *aesthetic* analysis of the constitutive conditions of the data body.

Jeffrey Wimmer: Between Curation and Decentralization. A Qualitative Analysis of Mastodon Use

This article examines the use of Mastodon within the context of platform-based digital communication. It asks how Mastodon is integrated into everyday practices, how addresses interactions are structured, and which topics and values shape user behavior. The study is based on 24 qualitative interviews analyzed using grounded theory. Findings show that Mastodon use is characterized by curated, normatively guided practices within decentralized publics. Visibility emerges less through algorithms than through active user selection, resulting in reduced conflict dynamics but also in fragmented communication spaces.

Korbinian Klinghardt: Innovation Isn't Rocket Science. Vanessa Wormer on the Relevance and Implementation of Innovation in Journalism in Democratic Societies

Journalism faces enormous challenges today. These include, for example, the phenomenon of news avoidance, the difficulty of reaching young audiences, and how newsrooms handle new technologies, such as artificial intelligence. How journalism responds to these challenges is of enormous social significance. As a source of information and opinion-forming authority it is, after all, essential to democratic societies. In this interview, Vanessa Wormer, head of the SWR X Lab, reflects on the multiple crises facing journalism and explains the solutions the innovation lab is currently working on.

Tom Zinram: Between Connection and Overload. Digital Media as Spaces of Social Participation for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

The progressing digitalisation has transformed communication and social participation, creating both opportunities and challenges for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This paper examines the potential of digital media for social interaction for individuals with ASD as well as the influence of psychological, emotional and sensory characteristics. To this end, a qualitative content analysis with fifteen interviews were conducted. The examination shows: for many participants with autism, digital media such as Discord and Virtual Reality facilitate social interaction by enabling easier communication and providing a sense of control. Media such as music support emotional regulation, while Emojis are often difficult to interpret.

Max Tretter/ Yannick Schlote: Art, Memes, Elementarization. Toward a Systematic Analysis of Christian AI Short Videos

The current discourse on Christian AI short videos is as diverse as it is disorganized, hampering any differentiated engagement with the phenomenon. The article sets out to bring order to this debate. To this end, it develops three heuristic interpretive lenses – Christian AI videos as religious art, as memes, and as elementarization – from which it derives two evaluative criteria each: aesthetics and piety, audience-oriented attention and communicative uptake, and content adequacy and perspectival integrity. The resulting framework of three lenses and six criteria allows for a more differentiated understanding of the phenomenon and more nuanced normative judgments.

Ilona Nord/Kerstin Radde-Antweiler: Agency, Religion, and Digitalization. Interdisciplinary Research and Systematic Reflections

The growing datafication of society raises urgent questions about the agency of human and non-human entities. This article provides an interdisciplinary overview of research discourses on agency, religion, and digitalization across philosophy, sociology, media and communication studies, as well as theology and religious studies. The analysis reveals that while agency is discussed across multiple disciplines, the intersection of religious agency and digitalization/AI remains underdeveloped. The authors advocate for an interdisciplinary dialogue that productively moves beyond binary human-machine dichotomies by drawing on relational conceptual frameworks.