

Editorial

This issue of *medien & zeit* is a turning point for our journal in several ways. First, we are proud to present the first issue in a new era of publishing policy of *medien & zeit*. For 37 years *medien & zeit* was a journal based on thematic issues with the editorial board and executive editors – all volunteers dedicated to the history of media and historical communication research – in charge of the editorial process and quality control. With this issue we transition to an era as a fully peer reviewed journal. As a journal we are convinced that this will not hinder the broad and inclusive approach to media and communication history we had pursued for the last decades, but instead will allow for more diversification, a widened range and broadened scope, and even more expertise. Henceforth, we will continue to have theme issues initiated by thematic calls for papers and in the responsibility of (guest) editors. In addition, each issue will be accompanied by an open section covering a wide range of current topics. The responsibility for review however will be shared with the community. Although *medien & zeit* is a journal focused on communication history, it is not ignorant of the changes in the academic publishing. We adhere the ambition of making science as open as possible. Consequently, and with the ambition to make the research which is entrusted to the journal for publication even more accessible and inclusive, *medien & zeit* is now a digital open access journal: We are happy to have the University of Vienna as a strong partner in this endeavor.

This first issue of the brand new *medien & zeit* addresses a thematic field that has seen some growth in recent years, but mostly with regards to digital media: Disconnection from, non-use of and refusal of digital media. The nascent field of disconnection studies was very prolific over the last couple of years with conferences (e.g., as preconference series at the ICA), special issues, books, projects and collaborations well on the way. The interest in disconnection spiked as a reaction to the overwhelming presence and perseverance of the society and everyday lives with the imperative of digital media. But disconnection from media with regards to individual well-being, for educational reasons, life-style

choices or activist aims is not something that emerged from a void and is genuinely linked to digital communication. Disconnection has a history. While media users and the impact of media and communication on societies as well as on individuals are a main focus in media and communication research, the group of non-users have widely remained unexplored. And if addressed they were rather seen as a deviation, a group that does not yet but should become users, should become part of the audience. That media, once established in society, are to be used and further diffused into usage is a normalized view in media and communication research. Non usage was widely interpreted as a hindrance to diffusion and a problem that has to be solved. Investigating voluntary abstention from using media is a turn in the perspective. While this disconnective turn gained traction in recent years, it is yet to be historicized. The four original articles in this issue of *medien & zeit* engage with the media we refused to use in a longterm perspective and historical lenses. Young adults and their news-usage are in the research focus of Ulla Authenrieth, Fiona Fehlmann and Matthias Künzler. The authors focus on the questions of how news usage is implemented in daily media usage of young people. Furthermore, they enlighten the motives of non-media usage and the requirements for appealing news content. To overcome the challenge of researching daily media usage a triangulation of methods was applied. The methods chosen were observation, think aloud techniques and conducting interviews. The location of the research was an apartment with media equipment called Use Lab. Participants in the study were 40 young adults between the ages of 19 to 32 years and differ regarding to age, sex and formal education background. The participants got 2 different tasks: First they should gain information about actual news of the world using their familiar media set. Secondly, they got shown pictures of informative content of the broadcasting station of Switzerland (SRF) and were asked about their knowledge of these programs. Afterwards they could use online content of the SRF to gain relevant news. The findings show that the young adults are aware of

the social expectation of having knowledge about the latest news. The authors describe how the participants justify their poor news perception: they are engaged in feminism and climate protection, they live their lives, their reception of print or TV news is connected to media socialization in the family and still occurs there. In their daily routines they prefer news apps that offer short, catchy information for free. While the participants mainly use tabloid content, they are well informed about qualitative journalism. If they get news they are interested in via apps or social media they investigate for more information in qualitative newspapers like NZZ. In general, they prefer written content regarding to news. The findings show that the young people experience themselves as being good enough informed to handle daily life. Compared with society's expectations they describe themselves as minor informed. The youngsters know about the problem of algorithm and filter bubbles, but they forget about it in daily routines. They spend their time on social media and describe this practice as a failure. In the interviews they also spoke about their ambivalent view on media production. They don't like the concept of agenda setting in mass media and are aware of perceptive messages. For this reason, they ignore mass media, even though their own lacks on the subject of news informativeness are well known. Not at least they describe the problem of information overload, especially bad news and crises and the lacks in competences of selection. Non-usage seems to be an act of self-protection. Advice by peers is an important strategy to handle information overload. The authors interpret the young adults according to former research as news deprived but also as pragmatic information oriented. They collect information for their personal life. Documentations are a high ranked format of news content. Political topics are preferred as a mixture of information and entertainment in satirical formats. Social media channels like TikTok and Instagram are main resources for actual news or content of platforms like Y-Kollektiv. In the end the authors conclude that the content creators should shift their ideas of news formats.

While the contemporary debate on disconnection is often linked to individual

self-care, Viktoria Kratel argues to take sociological factors into account. Kratel brings in the factor that social structural and power relations are at the heart of the decision who can voluntarily disconnect and who can't. Not everyone is given sufficient agency, privilege, and control to have a fully self-determined media use. Therefore, the author proposes a figure called homo disconnectus, that is based on agency concepts informed by Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens placed in the tradition of fictional agents like homo economicus and homo sociologicus. To sketch an ideal disconnection subject Kratel builds on a systematic literature review and investigates sociodemographic factors: As Kratel describes gender is a decisive category when it comes to self-determined use of digital media also the social class. The homo disconnectus has the opportunity to disconnect or not, while others, in particular with care obligations do not have the privilege of choice. While there are professions in which the workforce is forced to disconnect during working hours, for other professions disconnection is not a choice they can make. The ability to voluntarily disconnect is telling with regards to the social status and social inequalities in the digital society.

Learn how to write a program code or just be a user without these specific skills? – this is the question that drives the debate in the community of computer experts and pedagogues. The article of Patryk Wasiak set out to explore the history of computer culture and the shifts regarding this discourse in two historical settings: The 1980's and the presence. Facing the particular problem of the lack of sources Wasiak decided to investigate how other social actors – programmers and pedagogues - defined users and non-users and shaped the discourse. The first setting is labelled as era of microcomputers with the rise of home technology (Commodore 64 or Apple II) and marked by the programming languages BASIC and LOGO as well as the emerging gaming culture. The author assumes that this era was marked by the utopian imagery of the positive impact of computers on personal lives and economies. Besides this debate Wasiak explores the discourse how computer literacy was defined as an important skill for children. Based on the sources of special interest journals to

computing and historical work published in the 1980s a pathological imagery of children non-programmers became visible. Simply using available software meant that the child passively follows orders given by the software designers. In his longitudinal work Wasiak compares these debates with the current discussions about children's digital skills: The enthusiastic view on the opportunities of access to computers and the hope that access will solve a range of educational, social and economic problems characterized recent debates. The presence is dominated by a computer culture named as "learn to code" movement regarding to the development in digital economy and the need of resistance by having coding skills. As Wasiak points out the current discourse might be summarized as anti-utopianism. In sum this article attempts to show that the main core of the debate is the demand of user agency and the aim to give people control over the digital technology.

The normalization of use or non-use and proper ways of using has been a traditional era of public debates, especially around (then) new media and how they might affect vulnerable groups, as children. This vulnerable group is of highly interest in public discourse and the entrance of new media in the media system was always accompanied by the appeal to protect children. Since the pedagogical view has made a shift in the 1960s the stance of making the children competent and self-determined has enriched the discussion. When it comes to digitalization the shift to the positive aspects of usage happened quickly. Meanwhile the common talk about digital technologies in childhood and education is to point out the positive potential on access to digitalization and digital literacy. Jesper

Balslev and Mie Oehlenschläger challenge this widely held view and argue for a position that is more differentiated, incorporating scientific findings. Using a qualitative document analysis of strategic policy papers since 1994 the authors describe the public and political discourse of Denmark as a country that is on top of international surveys asking for the digitalization of the public sector. What they found was a stable optimism about the potentials of digital technologies regarding motivation, learning, global competition, management, communication between school and parents. Raising doubts are an exception in the reports and concrete strategies to educate digital or media literacy were only part of one report. Digital non-use is connoted through the digital-divide lens and a challenge that should be overcome. Besides the scientific discourses adopt a different, critical position to digital media use in childhood regarding to physical and mental health, productivity, freedom and sustainability. As the authors point out these positions regarding to non-usage are not explicitly stated in educational policy papers and that these themes are salient to education. Facing a generation that is concerned about economic crises and climate discourses the authors suggest a positive framing of disconnectivity: the positioning for sustainability and mental health might be more motivating for the grown-ups and young adults.

In conclusion this issue shows that disconnectivity can and should be read in a variety of ways. The historic perspective adds important nuance to this current debate. We hope you find the reading enjoyable and informative.

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