
Introduction

It is a commonplace that media play an important role in young people's socialization processes (Paus-Hasebrink, Kulterer & Sinner, 2019). This is even more relevant for the digitalized media environment in contemporary societies. In addition to traditional media such as journals, books, and television, digital media play an increasingly important role within the media repertoires (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006, p. 93) of children and adolescents. Moreover, in times of the "convergence culture" (Jenkins, 2008), "old media" like television or books adapt to the digital practices of youth and provide multimedia or cross media connections.

During the past decade, both, the proportion of children using smartphones and their amount of internet use have increased substantially (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 6). "Watching videos, listening to music, communicating with friends and family, visiting a social networking site and playing online games top the list of activities that children do on a daily basis." (ibid.). Several studies show that even the youngest click through the apps on their parents' smartphones, long before developing reading and writing skills (Livingstone, Mascheroni & Staksrud, 2018). Growing up in times of ongoing media technological change can be referred to as "mediatized childhoods" (Drotner, 2005). This process goes hand in hand with the commercialization and commodification of youth: children and teens not only act as a central target group of (digital) marketing strategies, but their digital devices and applications figure as important consumer goods and consequently, youth itself is intensively commodified, too (Buckingham, 2011).

The use of digital media therefore has diverse and manifold consequences for young people's communication, their personal relationships, construction of identity, and formation of youth cultures. Young people are confronted with ambiguous forces, and they arrange their individual media repertoires and construct their individual practices accordingly. However, the extent to which media are used in a constructive way varies by context. Studies reveal that the practices and literacies of young people depend on their socio-economic and social-cultural circumstances. Moreover, parents with a higher level of formal education are more likely to support their offspring in terms of their media use than those who come from less highly educated backgrounds (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019, p. 158f.).

Addressing digital culture in relation to children and youth, new cultural phenomena and practices come into play: practices of self-disclosure, connecting, sharing, expressing solidarity and showing political and also civic engagement, as the "Fridays for Future" and the recent "Black Lives Matter" movements impressively demonstrate. In addition to new practices, new discourses develop, which represent the ambiguity of digital media and their everyday use. Yet, those practices and discourses are deeply embedded in power relations, be they political, social, cultural or

economical. Additionally, in the digitally immersed society, technology plays a crucial role with non-human agents and algorithms calculating and shaping our medial (and even non-medial) activities and creating a kind of “hyperreality” (Baudrillard, 1994).

The papers in this special issue focus on practices and cultures of youth in a digitalized world. However, the first contribution by *Jasmin Kulterer* also goes back to pre-digital times, asking “*Is the Video Star Dead? The Role of MTV in Young People’s Lives in the Context of a Changing Media Environment: A Typology of Viewers*”. In her contribution, she presents findings from a study, carried out in Austria and the U.S. in 2013, looking at the development of MTV over the course of time and its relevance in young people’s lives and media repertoires today. In doing so, Kulterer develops a typology of four different types of MTV viewers: The Enthusiasts, the Opportunists, the Distinction Seeking and the Nostalgists.

Brigitte Hipfl and *Elena Pilipets* refer to youth’s media practices using the example of selfies and (anti-)selfies on the social network Instagram. They use the theoretical concept of assemblage in order to explain the ambiguous forces that shape young people’s media practices. By analysing the distribution of relations between 200 photos that were shared on Instagram using the hashtags *#selfie* and *#antiselfie*, they determine a network of tagging, liking and sharing selfies. This network represents a hybrid assemblage of youth on Instagram by addressing the digital affordances of connectivity, relations of identity performance and the attention economy of the social network in their complex affective dynamics.

Along with the use of digital media, we can not only observe the emergence of new practices, but new discourses are also developed. This aspect is taken up in *Maria Karafotia*’s contribution on “*New Media, Old Anxieties – Mainstream Narratives of Childhood and Sexting*”. Using a qualitative research approach, she investigates Greek newspaper articles of the past ten years concerning the childhood-sexuality-relation and the way in which childhood is discussed in connection to sexting. The study reveals that the public discourse is dominated by a problem-focused approach of children “at risk”, a narrative which derives mainly from their use of digital media and which corresponds with the concept of “media panics” as maintained by Drotner (1999), Buckingham and Jensen (2012).

In her paper, “*Always Online - Always Stressed? How Young People in Germany and Finland View the Use of Digital Media in a Mediatized Work Life*”, *Kerstin Liesem* picks up another aspect of digital culture by focussing on the world of work. Over the past decades, digital media have contributed to changes in working practices and cultures. Against this background, the author presents partial results of a comparative study among German and Finnish young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. Her research is based on 48 guided interviews exploring digital media’s impact on the professional lives of the young people and their attitudes towards the challenges of digital media usage at work. While employees in both countries struggle with the need for perma-

ment connectivity and availability and suffer from interrupted workflows, the author notes that the respective coping strategies differ.

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