

English Abstracts

Thomas Vesting: Broadcasting law faces the challenges of networking logic. Reflections on a horizontal broadcasting order for the economy of attention (Das Rundfunkrecht vor den Herausforderungen der Logik der Vernetzung. Überlegungen zu einer horizontalen Rundfunkordnung für die Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit), pp. 287 – 305

The article highlights some of the challenges facing broadcasting law as a result of new developments in information technology and media economics (“multimedia”). These challenges are attributed to a new kind of networking logic, which, according to one of the article’s main theses, tends to make the possibility of sustaining the dual broadcasting system in its current form improbable in the long term. The answer to the new brand of networking logic is seen in a new organisational model, which takes up systems-theoretical notions of “self-organisation”. This new model accentuates, first and foremost, the need to retain cultural and economic innovative capability including the accompanying requirements. Finally, the article attempts to concretise in greater detail the implications of this model for the regulation of broadcasting.

Stefan Wehmeier: Economicisation of television. An article on the combination of system and actor (Ökonomisierung des Fernsehens. Ein Beitrag zur Verbindung von System und Akteur), pp. 306 – 324

This article stands in the tradition of surmounting the dualism of systems and actor theory. With exemplary reference to the economicisation of television the explanatory potential of an integrated systems/actor theory is also outlined for communications research. A number of premises of the systems-theoretical perspective that predominates in communications research are initially criticised and the integrated systems/actor perspective subsequently outlined on the basis of approaches developed since the mid-Eighties by the Max Planck Institute for Social Research. The application of this perspective to communications research is taking place through the process of the economicisation of television that began in the year 1984. It is argued that the dimensions and mechanisms of the structural change of television can be better exposed by a dovetailed observation of partially systemic horizons of orientation, institutional orders and actor constellations than by using a purely systems-theoretical perspective. The following consequences are identified: on the one hand, the distortion of the code of the functional system mass media by the code of economics; on the other hand, a loss of trust by the population in the expert system of the mass media.

Nicola Döring: Personal websites on the WWW. A critical overview of the state of research (Persönliche Homepages im WWW. Ein kritischer Überblick über den Forschungsstand), pp. 325 – 349

Personal websites are web offerings, which are operated by individual persons. The article begins with the delimitation and definition of this personalised form of online publication and discusses its relevance for communications research. It is argued that personal websites not only serve individual and group communication, but can also make a contribution to public communication in different ways. The literature on personal

websites, which is sometimes hard to access, is subsequently discussed. The theoretical contributions presented focus on the fact that the personal website constitutes a construction of identity and a presentation of self via computer-mediated communication. Approximately thirty studies exist on the production, classification and recipient of personal websites. The article reports of the most important findings, which were gathered via content analyses, log file analyses, oral and written surveys, and experiments, and outlines perspectives for future website research in the field of communications research.

Tilo Hartmann / Christoph Klimmt / Peter Vorderer: Avatars: parasocial relationships with virtual characters (Avatare: Parasoziale Beziehungen zu virtuellen Akteuren), pp. 350 – 368

The rise of interactive media has fostered the development of virtual characters (“avatars”). Some avatars are used as automatic personal assistants to visitors of websites, others are promoted as virtual stars and appear in various media. This article introduces the phenomenon “avatars” and discusses the question how virtual characters are perceived by media users. The concept of parasocial relationships (Horton & Wohl, 1956) is used as a theoretical framework. Subsequently, two surveys which address the quality and intensity of parasocial relationships with avatars are presented. Based on the results of these studies and the anticipated future development of virtual characters, suggestions for further research are discussed.

Jan Pinsler: Talking on free radio. A case analysis on the possibilities of alternative radio broadcasting (Sprechen im Freien Radio. Eine Fallanalyse zu Möglichkeiten alternativen Hörfunks), pp. 369 – 383

During the Nineties there was a sharp increase in the number of licensed free radio stations in the Federal Republic of Germany. Their own self-descriptions and the theoretical reflections voiced in this environment indicate that the main potential of these radio stations is their ability to “demystify” the medium, to use a language of everyday life on radio too, and to articulate a variety of subjective points of view. With reference to a conversation analysis study of programmes broadcast on coloRadio in Dresden the article shows that the special characteristic of free radio is the fact that both discussions are possible which have the structural form of news interviews as well as discussions which tend to resemble discussions in everyday life. This means that the topics voiced on free radio not only differ from those in other media, but that, due to the proximity to everyday language, different persons are also given the possibility to use radio as a means of communication in a self-determined way.