Editorial: Introducing Media in Action and Media of Cooperation

The dynamics of contemporary media have created a fast-paced field, in which academic studies are often challenged, both methodologically and theoretically, to keep pace with current developments in media, technology and society. In our view, the question of cooperation is a crucial issue surrounding these dynamics. Digital networked media in particular can be viewed as cooperative platforms, enabling people to work together, share experiences and information about their lives, and interact with each other. This is, however, not a new phenomenon: the media have always been vital for connecting individuals, groups or whole societies. Likewise, cooperation is a fundamental feature of all human endeavours. The journal *Media in Action* aims to explore how to connect the two observations that (1) contemporary digital media are prima facie media of cooperation and (2) media and cooperation have been tightly enmeshed long before the digital age. This question lies at the core of this interdisciplinary journal on cooperative media and it unites the scholars in the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) 1187 *Media of Cooperation* at the University of Siegen.[1]

The journal will cover interdisciplinary approaches and discussions, offer insights into the current research on selected issues and provide a growing corpus of papers spanning historical and contemporary analysis of cooperative media. We share a common ground in emphasising that cooperative media should be studied "in action". This practice-based view highlights the inherent dynamics between media and cooperation as situated processes of co-construction and mutual creation. This may sound like common sense, but even the obvious can become controversial in its

everyday detail. Separating telecommunications from interaction, information from social relationships and signal transmission from questions of cultural empowerment was much easier before the social media of digital networks turned their fusion into both a resource and a topic. It is the consequences of this fusion that we will address and explore in the coming issues of this journal.

The journal will bring together diverse fields, disciplines, theories and methods. In particular, we seek to highlight the theoretical and methodological challenges that emerge by joining forces to study media of cooperation from heterogeneous fields and disciplines, spanning Media Studies, Anthropology, German Language and Literature, History, Sociology, Political, Educational and Computer Sciences. Each discipline has one or more distinct approaches to understanding and studying media, cooperation and practices. The scope of this journal mirrors this diversity in a productive manner. It serves as a locale where research from a variety of scholarly backgrounds is collected and shared. Last but not least, it provides a permanent space for keeping up to date with the overall development of our aim to understand contemporary media as cooperative media in action. Consequently, the journal *Media in Action* will then itself serve as a medium of cooperation.

Media in Action will consist of two issues per year. Whenever possible, we plan to organise the contributions around key topics, providing the individual issues with a comprehensive and focussed discussion. To this end, we have decided to encourage different formats within the journal. The main contributions will be original research articles in the first part of the journal. These will be followed by focus topics, typically based on workshops or conferences organised by members of the CRC *Media of Cooperation*. Some issues will also feature guest editors responsible for specific focus areas, even devoting whole issues to a special topic. The remainder of the journal will include shorter reports of the CRC's activities and contributions from guest researchers. This first issue is a good example for this structure.

This issue starts with a programmatic research article by Erhard Schüttpelz about **Infrastructural Media and Public Media**, addressing the basic ideas of the CRC *Media of Cooperation*. He observes that practice theory cannot be reduced to the mere study of practices. Instead the theoretical programme of practice theory demands that practice is given priority over all other theoretical entities. Based on research in social informatics and the concept of boundary objects by Susan Leigh Star, cooperation can be defined as mutual creation of joint goals, means and processes with or without consensus. Infrastructural media are made by and for cooperative work procedures. They are the sources of public media that give rise to both anonymous and private communication. Thus, the traditional research that analysed media production, distribution and reception separately, will have to be replaced by an approach that historicises them together. Digital media are an unprecedented fusion of administrative and public media. Against the background of a revised historiography, current digital media and their practices appear much more plausible and their prospective potential can be estimated in greater detail.

This issue's focus topic, the **Fundaments of Digitisation**, explores the beginning of the "era of digitisation" in the 1960s to 1980s. These decades are seen as a threshold for digitisation before the "digital take-off" took place. These years, when digital media of cooperation and bulk data processing were still in their infancy, saw the emergence of ongoing debates around data security, privacy protection, data management and technical changes. The focus topic illustrates that current debates on digital media of cooperation can be traced back many decades. It offers the reader a practice-based view on early digital demands for data management, on the conditions for privacy and regulation of digital media cooperation and on media competition for the same type of cooperation.

This issue closes with a short report by Michael Lynch, who was invited by the CRC as a Mercator Fellow in June 2016. He looks at **Media of Cooperation: Ethnomethodology, GPS, and Tacit Knowledge** based

on his insights and discussions with the scholars in Siegen. Many of the themes debated during his stay focused on how embodied practices in specific social environments relate to instructional devices and representations of the relevant practices. Referring to his own study on GPS devices, he shares his thoughts on the concept of tacit knowledge and its relationship to technology.

Now we have introduced the journal and this issue, meet the editorial team. Kathrin Englert is a sociologist with a special interest in the transformations of both work and the state as well as in the processes of co-construction of the internet and society. She is currently serving as a co-investigator in the research project "Un-/Desired Observation: Surveillance Society and the Social Field of Media". Lene Faust is a scientific coordinator for the CRC. She is a social anthropologist whose research focuses on memory cultures in Italy. In particular she researches fascist memory practices in transgenerational family environments and with regard to mechanisms of social and political identity construction. Sebastian Gießmann is a media historian and theorist specialising in the evolution of digital payments. He acts as a junior research group leader and organises the "Workshop and Lecture Series on Practice Theory". Christian Henrich-Franke is a senior researcher in Economic History. He is the principal investigator in the project "The Culture of Telecommunication Standardisation" which focuses on the standardisation of the Integrated Services Digital Networks (ISDN) in the 1970s and 1980s. Claudia Müller is an assistant professor within the study area "IT for the ageing society" in the department of information systems. She follows a praxeological and participatory approach for designing assistive technologies used by the elderly. Her projects aim to support and enhance social inclusion, mobility and autonomy of elderly people in order to strengthen their quality of life and health status in old age. Cornelius Schubert is a sociologist specialising in Science and Technology Studies. He is the principal investigator in the project "Visually Integrated Clinical Cooperation" which studies new imaging modalities for cooperative tasks on a neuro-

surgical ward in a Siegen hospital. Ehler Voss is an anthropologist spe-
cialised in media, medicine, and religion. He works as a scientific coor-
dinator within the CRC and is researching the relation between human
mediums and technical media in Europe and the US from the 19th cen-
tury until today.

We, the editorial team, are more than pleased to invite you to browse
through and read this first issue of *Media in Action.* We hope you will en-
joy reading further issues.

Yours
Kathrin Englert, Lene Faust, Sebastian Gießmann, Christian Henrich-
Franke, Claudia Müller, Cornelius Schubert, Ehler Voss

Notes

1 www.mediacoop.uni-siegen.de