



Thematic dossier

# Critical media literacy and adult learning

Erasmus+

**EPALE**  
Deutschland

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## Foreword

Dear participants of the TCA,

2018 was an eventful year with the topic of critical media literacy at the forefront. In 2019, this theme will once again play a key role. This is extremely important because critical information and media competence is and remains a prerequisite for political and social action and is therefore highly relevant for adult education.

At the seminar that took place between the 10th and 12th December 2018 in Berlin, you not only made interesting and important contacts. Inspired by the keynote speakers, discussions also arose on the challenges for society in the midst of the digital age. This groundbreaking process sometimes calls for answers to radical and populist hate speech online and the question how to deal with fake news, information that is difficult to verify and possible information overload. It is not only politics that has to offer answers here; (adult) education can provide answers, too – you have all recognised this already.

The TCA in Berlin ended with some very promising project ideas. Now we at EPALÉ Germany are very curious to see how these ideas will develop. We have made this dossier available to you for further reflection on the subject of media literacy. It contains a compilation of additional materials to encourage you to delve deeper into the topic.

Stay on board! A forum set up on EPALÉ offers participants an opportunity to exchange ideas before, during and after the TCA. Use this offer. Use EPALÉ to cultivate new contacts and enter into dialogue with other players in the European adult education community. Use the EPALÉ partner search to find new partners for budding ideas. Share your views with other EPALÉ users and share your opinion with adult educators from all over Europe on topics that concern you.

EPALÉ wishes you every success in dealing more critically with the media and in implementing your project ideas.

Your EPALÉ Germany Team

## I Explanation of the term media literacy

*"In fundamental terms, media competence simply means the ability to make active and appropriate use of all types of media, including for communication and the human repertoire of actions."*

Dieter Baacke (1934–1999)

### I.1 The conventional understanding of media literacy

The term media literacy was introduced in the 1970s by the educational researcher Dieter Baacke, who also set out its characteristic definition. He divides the concept into four dimensions: media criticism, media knowledge, media use and media creation. According to Baacke's understanding of media literacy, the main focus is on acquiring a critical and reflective approach towards media and on how to autonomously acquire new skills and knowledge in this area.

Baacke views **media criticism** as ongoing reflection on and expansion of a person's own knowledge about media. Background information is thus required in order to be able to evaluate and categorise media. In addition to this, Baacke also believes that there is a necessity for us to scrutinise our own action regarding media and to design it in a socially and ethically responsible way.

In Baacke's opinion, **media knowledge** means familiarity with media and the way in which they are integrated into the media landscape. This firstly encompasses knowledge of the structure and functionalities of media outlets such as private sector and state-run television and radio institutions and newspapers. Secondly, it includes abilities to use computers and programmes.

**Media use** incorporates a person's competence to deploy media in a targeted way. Baacke sees any form of media use as activities that needed to be shaped in a conscious and active manner.

Finally, he calls for real (co-) **involvement in media creation**. This plea addresses everyone, not merely journalists or editors. All people have an opportunity to participate, design media in a new way, add their own content and ultimately change media.

Dieter Baacke's definition is set out [here](#) (DE) or in more detail:

Baacke, Dieter (1997). *Medienpädagogik. Grundlagen der Medienkommunikation [Media pedagogy. Basic principles of media communication]*. (Vol. 1). Tübingen: Niemeyer. (DE)

Further definitions of the term media literacy are provided by researchers like Stefan Aufenanger, Bernd Schorb, Dieter Spanhel and Gerhard Tulodziecki. Aufenanger supplements Baacke's definition by adding further dimensions. Bernd Schorb's perspective of media literacy primarily concentrates on active media work and considers "learning in action" to be an important aspect in its development. Spanhel and Tulodziecki mainly occupy themselves with the media literacy of children and young people.

Especially the need to impart media literacy for children has been identified at a very early stage. However, also adults do not always find it easy to categorise newer media in particular and sometimes have difficulty in undertaking a critical evaluation of media and their contents. For this

reason, media and adult education experts recommend that adults also receive such support in the development of media literacy.

#### Further materials:

The definitions of Aufenanger, Spanhel, Schorb and Tulodziecki are presented [here](#) (DE).

Also interesting is a project by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE), called [MEKWEP](#) – Media education competence of continuing vocational training staff to support the use of digital media in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings (DE). Its objectives are to develop a media pedagogical competence model for staff in continuing vocational education and training and to record these competences in the field. The aim of the competence assessment is to identify the extent to which there is a need for continuing media education training for teaching staff and other employees.

Schorb, B. (2007): **Zur Bedeutung und Realisierung von Medienkompetenz [On the significance and realisation of media literacy]**. In Schorb, B., Brüggem, N. & Dommaschk, A. (Eds.), *Mit eLearning zu Medienkompetenz. Modelle für Curriculumgestaltung, Didaktik und Kooperation*. Munich: kopaed. (DE)

Schmidt-Hertha, B. & Tippelt R. (2017). **Entwicklung von Mediennutzungskompetenz im Erwachsenenalter [Development of media literacy at an adult age]**. In Erpenbeck, J. & Sauter W. (Eds.), *Handbuch Kompetenzentwicklung im Netz: Bausteine einer neuen Lernwelt* (pp. 385–409). Stuttgart: Schäffer-Poeschel. (DE)

The NRW Media literacy Portal offers a [database](#) (DE) of initial and continuing education on the topic of media literacy, which has collated provision in this thematic area.

## 1.2 Expansion of the term media literacy

A comprehensive understanding of functionalities and correlations is, however, not just required at the level of conventional media. In the wake of digitalisation, it is also necessary to address the impacts and challenges of the media shift in a concentrated way.

Nowadays, work and our private lives are virtually inconceivable without the Internet. Many actions (some of which were formerly arduous) are made easier by the web—(professional) research, communication and purchasing goods in online shops. The resultant data trails betray a great deal of information about the people who leave them behind. The effects of the collection of this data are not always immediately apparent. Anyone using the Internet requires knowledge of the technical processes involved (e.g. algorithms) and of the consequences of their own activities. Many people need to gain a new awareness of the value of their data and of privacy protection. Only those who have engaged with the issues relating to these topics and have acquired knowledge of the new media will be in a position to develop a critical and reflective approach to media and thus be able to impart **critical media literacy**.



### Further materials:

The Bavarian Regulatory Authority for New Media has published a [brochure](#) (DE) on algorithms entitled: **"Your algorithm – my opinion! Algorithms and their significance for opinion forming and democracy"** [Dein Algorithmus – meine Meinung! Algorithmen und ihre Bedeutung für Meinungsbildung und Demokratie]. 2017.

*"The aim of this brochure is to explain the rudiments of information technology which dictate the triad of selection, evaluation and sorting. These services are made possible by algorithms, which are fed by big data, in particular by algorithms that work on the basis of so-called artificial intelligence. Like any other tool, they have their strengths and weaknesses. This information material was compiled so that you are able to arrive at your own view on whether algorithms really offer us the best information each time or whether they may in fact even be manipulating us."*

jfc Medienzentrum e.V. has developed an [interactive learning path](#) (DE) on the topic of **"Big Data"**.

*"Although the term Big Data Analytics sounds weighty and holds a strong whiff of mathematics and information technology, it makes it possible to deliver targeted advertising and precise weather forecasts and facilitates things such as navigation, real-time translation and health prognoses. This creates great opportunities for our communication, for new business models and for state organisation and research. However, this increasingly tighter surveillance and measurement of human behaviour and the world generates many pertinent philosophical and ethical questions. This learning path provides an initial insight into this fascinating and exciting thematic area."*

**"Entirely my opinion? Information intermediaries and opinion formation – a multiple method study taking Facebook as an example"** (DE) [Ganz meine Meinung? Informationsintermediäre und Meinungsbildung – Eine Mehrmethodenstudie am Beispiel von Facebook].

*"The significance of so-called information intermediaries for opinion formation has been the object of very little empirical research thus far. This expert report mainly focuses on the question of whether and to what extent Facebook influences the perception of political topics, the imparting of views and opinion formation. The study maps various stages of the opinion-forming process and provides evidence of very different effect mechanisms."*

[Commercial Digital Surveillance in Everyday Life](#). (DE)

- Recording, linking and exploitation of personalised data in the age of Big Data – international trends, risks and challenges based on selected problem areas and examples (2014). A study commissioned by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour.

You might also find this interesting: [How Companies Use Personal Data Against People](#). 2017 working paper by Cracked Labs. (EN)

[Cross-cutting information repertoires. On the role of media genres and individual provision in information and opinion formation](#). (DE)

*"In light of the media shift, various challenges are emerging with regard to the investigation of media use in general and of information behaviour in particular."*

## II How do various media influence perception?

(Mass) media are the most important source of information in society. People's ability to receive knowledge about relevant current topics is an indispensable part of democracy. Each individual medium produces effects via its publication and dissemination, and these effects may be positive or negative. Already through the choice of contributions, the different media provide an impression of the political and social topics, which are currently significant (media agenda). In consequence, people deem these subjects important (agenda setting). The presence of politicians, who take a prominent role in presenting issues in the media, produces a similar effect. This media presence for instance exerts an influence on the way in which people choose to vote.

### Further materials:

The reality of the media – an [introduction](#) to the science of communication [Die Wirklichkeit der Medien: eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft]. (DE)

How do people take information on board? The authors describe the reality of the observer. The following definition of constructivism plays a major role in this regard:

"In the theory of constructivism, learning is an active construction process in which each learner fabricates an individual representation of the world. The precise nature of what a learner learns is heavily dependent on his or her prior knowledge and on the specific learning situation."

Other topics covered include the social construction of reality.

[How media are used and the effects they create](#) (DE)

Mass media are people's most important source of information. They exert many different effects on society. Some of these may be considered positive whilst others must be viewed as negative.

[The worlds of the media – basic principles and perspectives of media observation](#) [Die Welten der Medien: Grundlagen und Perspektiven der Medienbeobachtung]. (DE)

Talking about the "reality of the media" has today become common parlance. Also increasingly more accepted is the fact that we are living and communicating in a plurality of media realities that lie between the everyday and the virtual worlds, and that we are experiencing more and more problems in coordinating this pluriverse. Media sciences have also not been able to develop a common stance and instead manoeuvre between abstract global descriptions and piecemeal empirical analyses of detail. The studies presented concentrate on four complex areas of observation. These are media/media culture/media science, virtual realities and media art forms, advertising and the commercialisation of communication and media literacy (taking non-moving and moving pictures as an example).

[Journalism and its audience](#) [Der Journalismus und sein Publikum].

In: *Der öffentliche (Mehr-)Wert von Medien*. (DE)

This article approaches the relationship between journalists and their audience from a cultural theory perspective. Based on the assumption that qualitative success in journalism depends on the interaction between the journalist's and the public's view of the journalist's role. This shapes the journalistic everyday life and its routines and is reflected in the degree of transparency and openness creation. Within this context, the author examines the imparting of information—both successful and unsuccessful—as a core task of journalism, addressing the contradiction between a popular and highly cultural orientation and 'attraction' and 'narration' as significant components of journalism.

## II.1 Risks of information overload

News from all the world reach society by means of news and topical programmes on television and radio, daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and online journalism. The ubiquitous availability of information on the Internet can be helpful when seeking out specific information, but the sheer mass of data may prove overwhelming. One example of the kind of negative consequences that may ensue from the information deluge is fake news, uploaded either deliberately or unconsciously. Users need guidance in order to adopt a critical approach, select information correctly and avoid erroneous content.

### Further materials:

[Motivated doubts. How the preconceptions of recipients regarding a reporting subject influence their perception of media credibility](#) [Motivierte Zweifel. Wie die Voreinstellungen der Rezipienten zum Berichterstattungsgegenstand ihre Wahrnehmung der Medienglaubwürdigkeit beeinflussen]. (DE)

Accusations of a 'lying' press levelled by right-wing populist groups and the increasing fear of the effects of fake news on the formation of public opinion have lent a new immediacy to the question of how to regain trust in the news media.

Social psychology theories such as the hostile media effect or the idea of motivated reasoning suggest that recipients perceive media coverage as trustworthy if it happens to be in line with their own preconceived notions of the reporting subject, regardless of actual accuracy and balance. The present study tests this assumption by considering the influence of pre-existing attitudes to climate change on the perception of the credibility of media articles that dramatise or downplay the issue. As expected, participants indeed perceive news articles to be more trustworthy if the facts displayed are in line with their own attitudes towards climate change. This is particularly true in the case of recipients with extreme views.

[Prejudices of media groups – how prejudices are influenced by media reception in groups](#) [Vorurteile-Medien-Gruppen: Wie Vorurteile durch Medienrezeption in Gruppen beeinflusst werden]. (DE)

In everyday life, many people's contact to adherents of various other societal groups (out-groups) exists solely via media contacts. At the same time, they frequently use and process media contents within their own group (in-group). Johanna Schindler and Anne Bartsch highlight the influence of media reception in small groups on prejudice vis-à-vis out-groups. For this purpose, they categorise academic research findings on prejudice and media reception and combine these two aspects. The authors also present the outcomes of an exploratory field study, hereby facilitating an integrative perspective of group phenomena in modern media society.

[Exploratory visual analyses thanks to data updated on a daily basis](#) [Explorative visuelle Analysen dank tagesaktuellen Daten]. (DE)

Data acquired by means of an RCS study offer two benefits. Firstly, they are suitable for the investigation of short-term changes in the intentions and perceptions of voters. Secondly, thanks to comparable daily sub-samples, this sort of information enables the use of visual analyses to identify such shifts. The graphical representation of interesting developments over the course of the period of the investigation—in this case the final weeks of campaigning leading up to the Swiss General Election of 2011—facilitates an initial impression of potential correlations and highlights *turning points* in these developments. Notwithstanding this, the daily mean values on which such visual analyses are based usually exhibit considerable fluctuation. This makes interpretation more difficult because the resultant curves are unstable.



[Traces \(and lack of traces\) of social media](#) [Spuren(losigkeit) Sozialer Medien].

In: *Handbuch NGO-Kommunikation*. (DE)

Intermediary organisations have been undergoing enormous structural change for some time. They bemoan a decreasing number of members, whilst the pluralisation of organised interests is making it more difficult to generate publicity and garner public support. All of this is furthermore accompanied by deep-seated changes on the media market. In light of these developments, the question arises as to whether or how the internal and external communication of intermediary organisations has changed over recent years. Another investigation topic is the question how intermediary organisations use social media in order to communicate with members internally and strengthen the articulation of the interests of the association externally. Despite the existence of extensive research on the use of social media in other contexts, very few findings have been hitherto available regarding the relevance of such media for NGOs. The findings presented were the result of a research project funded by the Otto Brenner Foundation.

["Corporate shitstorm management" – confrontations on social media](#) [Corporate Shitstorm Management: Konfrontationen in sozialen Medien]. (DE)

The rapid development in social media communication has brought about massive changes in the way in which consumers interact with companies. One negative aspect of this is the fact that corporate decisions and actions may be critically discussed on public platforms. When this phenomenon becomes extreme in nature, the situation is referred to, in Germany, as a "corporate shitstorm". In many cases, companies are frequently surprised by its dynamic development and intensity and may become overwhelmed. Thus, it is essential to gain an understanding of the correlations within the phenomenon and to be able to analyse events in order to react accordingly. The present chapter explains the phenomenon and describes the "corporate shitstorm management" model. It clarifies the situation, reaction and consequences of the "shitstorm". The reader gains a basic understanding, which enables them to shed light on essential situative factors and to select an appropriate response. The applicability of the explanations provided in each section is established via relation to a specific case (e.g. public outcry experienced by United Airlines at the start of 2017). Even though these "shitstorms" cannot fundamentally be avoided, the preparatory approaches described can help ensure that reactions to emergency situations are not too hasty.

[Quicker, shorter, more casual – our changing language](#) [Schneller, kürzer, lässiger – unsere Sprache im Wandel]. (DE)

How does information overload affect reading habits and use of language? According to the FAZ (national daily) "a quarter of all Germans no longer read any books." The newspaper goes on to state: "Causes are time scarcity, lack of attention due to information overload, dependence on digital media and loss of the ability to concentrate."

[Determinants and effects of information overload in the workplace](#) [Determinanten und Auswirkungen von Informationsüberflutung am Arbeitsplatz]. (DE)

The results of this systematic review indicate a correlation between a high amount of information in the workplace and a perception of information overload. On basis of the studies included, information overload is positively associated with work time spent on emails and work-to-family conflicts, while it is negatively associated with aspects such as technical support, segmentation between work and family life, and appropriate email management techniques.

[Market research for touchpoint management – quality elements for present success and further development in the future](#) [Marktforschung für das Touchpoint Management: Qualitätselemente für das Gelingen heute und die Weiterentwicklung morgen].

In: *Qualität und Data Science in der Marktforschung*. (DE) Market research is still currently

differentiated into two time periods. The first of these is the present, i.e. high quality structuring of the market research process to determine customer contact points and their relevance for customers and companies and the design concept of measurement procedures. The second time period relates to the future, i.e. to the coming years, in which market research is used to develop procedures in order to shape analogue and digital interaction within the scope of touchpoint management (TPM) in the best possible way. It is easier to report on the first of these because errors and pitfalls are more readily identifiable, while being, however, difficult to avoid. Only the initial aspects of the second time period can be described. This is in the nature of things, as we are only at the start of the development.

[Digitalisation of knowledge work – companies striking a difficult balance between innovation and control](#) [Die Digitalisierung der Wissensarbeit - Unternehmen im Spagat zwischen Innovation und Kontrolle]. (DE)

The digitalisation of all areas of life has led to rising needs and requirements in terms of technological support in the knowledge-based workplace. This development has created a dichotomy for companies. On the one hand, they would wish to accord their employees greater freedoms and autonomy in respect of selection and use of IT, especially against the background of possible gains in efficiency and areas of potential. On the other hand, a minimum degree of control is indispensable, primarily due to compliance and governance requirements. This article states specific recommendations for the design of the digital workplace, which have emerged from business information technology research.

[Overwhelmed by data overload](#) [Überforderung durch Datenflut].

In: *Die Digitalisierung frisst ihre User*. (DE)

Rapidity holds both playful and sporting elements. The danger of addiction is, however, not far away. Burnout is also a possible consequence of being constantly overwhelmed. Those who do not take small time outs in everyday digital life run the risk of becoming lost within the flow of big data, suffering at the same time information overload and a permanent information deficit. As well as discovering how to handle data overload, people need to be made aware about the use of their own data on the Internet. Bans and stipulations are mostly of short-term benefit only. An autonomous approach towards health management may be the key to sustained well-being. This is equally important for digital natives and for anyone who is involved with digitalisation in their personal or professional lives.

## II.2 The development of general media use over recent years

Today's media are the television, the radio, newspapers and the Internet. Media use has increased sharply in general terms over recent years, while the kinds of media used have changed radically depending on age group. The growth in online services has come at the expense of the print media, and daily newspapers have suffered in particular. Whereas older users often prefer to read a newspaper in its print version, younger users are particularly likely to favour online formats such as social media.

### Further materials:

[Development of media use](#) [Entwicklung der Mediennutzung].

In: *Zeitungsverlage zu neuem Wachstum führen*. (DE)

If we look at media use in Germany (the same applies to other European and western countries), it is possible to discern long-term trends and shifts in the consumer media mix or, to put it another way, in society. Radio and the daily newspapers in particular were the most used media during the 1950s,

1960s and 1970s before a significant change set in from the mid-1980s onwards. The dominance of print and radio in the first three of the decades mentioned is a simple matter to explain.

[Development of media use and of use behaviour within the area of current media](#) [Entwicklung der Mediennutzung und des Nutzungsverhaltens im Bereich der aktuellen Medien].

In: *Handbuch Medien- und Multimediamanagement*. (DE)

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann once complained about the “low level of spontaneous interest in the multimedia audience”. That was in 1969. Much seems to have changed in the meantime, as we now read of the sample sizes and of the financial, technical and intellectual outlay invested in media research, today mainly in the form of so-called standard research. In the press media section of the 2001/11 Media Analysis, 26,032 persons were asked about their use of magazines, daily newspapers and cinema. 54,154 telephone interviews were conducted for the MA 2001/II on radio use. The data of the Allensbacher Advertising Medium Analysis is based on around 2,000 interviews. The GfK Panel, which surveys daily television use around the clock, was extended in the year 2000 to include 5,640 households comprising approximately 13,000 persons aged three and above. If we also take account of the investigations commissioned on a case-by-case or ongoing basis by publishing houses, publishers’ associations, state media institutes, public radio and television companies, media foundations and other organisations, then both the amount of data and the financial expense of recording media use both reach almost unfathomable heights. Why all this expenditure of time and money? And does this mean that Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann’s complaint is no longer an issue? What do we know about the media audience and its use behaviour?

[From two-step flow to influencer relations – the development of communication with opinion leaders](#)

[Von Two-Step-Flow bis Influencer Relations: Die Entwicklung der Kommunikation mit Meinungsführern].

In: *Influencer Relations*. (DE)

The development of the sub-discipline ‘influencer relations’ is based on communication with and via digital opinion leaders. This new field of work has emerged resulting from a rapid development of opportunities for digital communication and of general conditions in the social networks. Such a pre-occupation with opinion leaders is, however, nothing new, but founded in the so-called Columbia Studies conducted by Lazarsfeld and Katz in the 1940s. Media effects research also looks at the relationship between people and media persons. This article illustrates the terms of reference between theoretical and empirical opinion leader and media effects research in order to arrive at findings on how to deal with the discipline and engage in productive communications work. It provides indications as to how the characteristics of influencers and their relationship with followers can be evaluated and investigated.

[Introduction – mediatised societies, media communication and social worlds undergoing change](#)

[Einleitung: Mediatisierte Gesellschaften, Medienkommunikation und Sozialwelten im Wandel]. (DE)

The public discussion on the increasing importance of the media, digital communication and global networking is fluctuating between alarmism and expectation of salvation. In contrast, this edited volume provides a critical inventory of media and social change in mediatised societies on basis of the mediatisation theory.

[Media didactics – teaching and learning using media](#) [Mediendidaktik: Lehren und Lernen mit Medien].

In: *Medienpädagogik*. (DE)

Media didactics is regularly discussed in terms of its positioning vis-à-vis both media pedagogy and general didactics (e.g. Kerres 2007, Kron/Sofos 2003), focusing on the question of whether it

constitutes a sub-discipline or a related discipline. With regard to general didactics, Kerres (2007) concludes that media didactics cannot be considered to be a sub-area of general didactics because it is not tied to institutional contexts. It further transcends the framework of general didactics by dint of the fact that it encompasses informal learning processes (via vehicles such as edutainment software, computer games, apps, social media services etc.).

[Handbook of Media Sociology](#) [Handbuch Mediensoziologie]. (DE)

The Handbook of Media Sociology offers a comprehensive summary of major theories, research approaches and fields of research, which are dedicated to the reference context of the individual, media and society. Its collected articles offer a systematic point of access to media sociology areas of interest, modes of thought, explanatory models and available interpretations. It presents micro, macro and meta-theoretical approaches alongside historical and sociological time-based and current diagnoses, primarily linking the constitution of societies with their communication, media and knowledge systems. The latest state of the art of research into a wide variety of thematic areas (including gender, body, music, politics and sport) and a sociological investigation of individual media (such as image, film, television and hybrid media) are presented. The handbook also provides insight into the quantitative and qualitative research methods that are mainly applied in media sociology.

[Online communication as a culture](#) [Onlinekommunikation als Kultur].

In: *Handbuch Online-Kommunikation*. (DE)

Cultural Studies assumes a close correlation between culture and communication. Against this background, it addressed the aspect of online media at a very early stage. The initial aim of the summary provided here is to illustrate a number of important basic principles of cultural studies, which characterise the perspective adopted towards digital media. This is followed by a closer consideration of "cybercultural studies", the title under which the online-specific theory and empiricism of cultural studies is conflated. Section 2 presents sample works investigating identity shift, newer developments such as big data, and the domestication approach. Acquisition and usage studies within the scope of cultural studies are outlined in Section 3, which further indicates a number of more recent fields of research in this area. Specific investigations serve the purpose of illustrating the respective perspectives and the empirical implementation and also illustrate the discourses. A final insight – and forecast – is provided in the question for broader approaches within the scope of cultural studies, which integrate the development of digital media in an overall perspective. This is discussed in Section 4, with a core emphasis is on the mediatisation approach.

### II.3 Significance of media in political systems today

Media are a fixed component of the political system. They are intermediaries and guardians, contributing both to stability and to the constant change of society. The media report on current developments which affect society, such as politics, the economy, culture and social affairs.

The task of the media is to provide information that is as complete, objective and comprehensible as possible and to contribute to the opinion formation discussion. They also assume a monitoring function when investigative journalism scrutinises, evaluates and uncovers processes and developments.

### Further materials:

[Opinion formation in and via social media](#) [Meinungsbildung in und mit sozialen Medien]. (DE)  
2016, two events ensured the instigation of a vehement debate of the role played by social media in political opinion formation. The Brexit vote delivered by the population of the United Kingdom and the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA were incisive events of world politics. Both were also comparatively close decisions, which did not go the way initially predicted.

[The legitimization crisis of representative democracy against the background of digital media](#) [Die repräsentative Demokratie in der Legitimationskrise vor dem Hintergrund digitaler Medien].

In: *Digitale Medien zwischen Transparenz und Manipulation*. (DE)

The following chapter provides a theoretical analysis of the role of digital media in political communication and in the public democratic decision-making process. It also takes a look at the impacts of digital media in the relationship between citizens and the state.

[How campaigns influence the decision of voters – on the potential short-term effect of media reports and election polls in Switzerland](#) [Wie Kampagnen die Entscheidung der Wähler beeinflussen: zum kurzfristigen Wirkungspotential von Medienberichten und Wahlumfragen in der Schweiz]. (DE)

A rolling cross-section survey was conducted for the first time in Switzerland in the run-up to the 2011 General Election. Thomas De Rocchi uses the data collected to identify short-term changes in voter attitudes and preferences over the course of the campaign and to explain these shifts in relation to (communication) events from the self-same campaign. For this reason, the analyses presented provide important new findings with regard to the influence of media reports and election polls on opinion formation and the underlying effect mechanisms.

[How issues and their association with certain parties influence the preferences of voters](#) [Wie Issues und ihre Verknüpfung mit bestimmten Parteien die Präferenzen der Wählerinnen beeinflussen]. (DE)

Undoubtedly, the media are accorded an important role when it comes to creating an electorate that is at least informed to a certain extent. As a consequence, a correlation exists between public opinion and reporting contents. Although the media are not able to determine *what* citizens think, Cohen demonstrated that they are certainly able to exert an influence on what the population is *thinking about*.

You might also find this interesting: [Press and Foreign Policy](#) (EN)

[Digital participation – the web as a political arena? New opportunities for political involvement on the Internet](#) [Digitale Partizipation - Das Netz als Arena des Politischen? Neue Möglichkeiten politischer Beteiligung im Internet]. (DE)

The debate about the increasing significance of the media, of digital communication and of global networking, frequently ranges from alarmism to hope of salvation. This edited volume uses the mediatisation theory as a basis for undertaking a critical inventory of media and social change in mediatised societies.

[News management in the digital shift](#) [News Management im digitalen Wandel].

In: *Strategische Politische Kommunikation im digitalen Wandel*. (DE)

The relationship between government stakeholders and the media are changing due to the digitalisation of political communication. New areas of action are opening up for strategic news management. Government stakeholders are able to circumvent traditional news media by providing information and communication services on the Internet and on social media platforms themselves. This enables them to build their own agendas and address target groups directly. At the same time,

the traditional news media continue to play a key role in strategic government communication. This article aims to use a survey of the parties involved and an online content analysis to depict the extent to which the relations between government and the media are changing due to digital communication and to show the relevance possessed by “conventional” and “new” communication channels. The result reveals complementary interaction of new and old media forms in information provision via those responsible for government communication. The constitutional mission to provide information is described as a central principle of the government’s own work. Established media still have a key part to play, although the increasingly problematic nature of their structural conditions is emphasised. Digitalisation is being seized as an opportunity, while it is also viewed critically with regard to its function in accelerating policy and political communication.

#### [Social media in political conflict situations](#) [Soziale Medien in politischen Konfliktsituationen].

In: Sicherheitskritische Mensch-Computer-Interaktion. (DE)

The upheavals in the Middle East, the so-called “Arab Spring”, have become an object of increased debate in academic circles. This chapter shows how academic research deals with the topic of social media in conflict situations (with a focus on the Middle East). Essential terminology and the particular circumstances of the investigation context are explained for this purpose. Various methodological approaches are described, and a summary of the findings thus far is provided. In the end, three example cases of application from research conducted “on the ground” in Tunisia, Syria and Palestine are presented. Upon reading this chapter, the reader will be provided with an overview of the field of investigation and of various research methods, illustrated by practically related case studies.

#### [The functions of local media for local government policy](#) [Die Funktionen von Lokalmedien für die Kommunalpolitik]. (DE)

This article investigates the functions of local media for local government policy stakeholders. These functions can be divided into a resource function, which refers to the way in which policy stakeholders observe media reporting and their objectives in so doing, and an operational function, which encompasses the instrumental use of media by politicians. Only very few studies have previously obtained such a functional perspective of the relations between the media and politics whilst focusing on either the national or the federal state level. The significance of media at local government level and its specific conditions has not been an object of consideration thus far. Based on a representative survey of local government policy stakeholders, this study depicts media to be a key source of information at local level in terms of providing information on public opinion, the current thematic agenda and other political participants. Respondents further attempt to use the media as a vehicle for exerting an influence on the political decision making process. Local media thus fulfil an important function by acting as intermediaries between civil society and the policy and administrative system as well as within the political arena itself. These functions are particularly realised by local daily newspapers.

#### [Climate change in the media](#) [Klimawandel in den Medien]. (DE)

Current climate change is constructed by society in two ways. Anthropogenous climate change is a side-effect of the societal development and technology. It is furthermore a phenomenon occupying public debate, policy making, scientific research and culture and is subject to societal interpretation. To this extent, it is a socially constructed phenomenon (Beck 1996, p. 128). People discuss about what they believe climate change to be, whether they view it as a problem and what needs to be done about it. It is precisely these processes of social interpretation production and the consequences for society that are the object of a communication theory analysis of climate change. “Rather than starting with (scientific) ignorance and ending with (scientific) certainty, telling the story of climate change is in fact much more interesting. It is the unfolding story of an idea and how this idea is changing the way that we think, feel and act” (Hulme 2009, p. 42).

You will find Hulme’s article [here](#). (EN)



[Does the candidate take priority over content? \[Kandidat vor Inhalt?\]](#)

In: *Professionalisierte politische Kommunikation*. (DE)

Personalisation is perceived as being an essential part of the professionalisation of political communication. This article investigates the extent and the nature of the personal representation of candidates in the 2017 North-Rhine Westphalian federal state elections. The authors use an iconographic procedure to investigate selected election posters produced by the SPD, CDU, Greens, FDP, the Left Party and the AfD. The results lead them to state that personalisation in an election campaign only seems to take place in the case of some parties. Additionally, only initial signs of the consequences normally linked with personalisation, for instance de-ideologisation and the privatisation of political communication, can be confirmed.

More material on the function of election posters in political communication can be found [here](#). (EN)

[2018 Development Policy Opinion Monitor – attitudes to development cooperation and sustainable development](#) [Meinungsmonitor Entwicklungspolitik 2018: Einstellungen zu Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und nachhaltiger Entwicklung]. (DE)

This study deals with the attitudes, knowledge and commitment of the German population vis-à-vis development policy, development cooperation and global sustainable development. It provides state and civil society stakeholders in this thematic field with current information and analyses for the strategic alignment of their activities and for their communication and education work. The main database is the [Aid Attitudes Tracker](#) (EN), a country comparison panel survey, which has been collecting information in Germany, France, the United Kingdom and the USA since 2013.

[Adult political education. A peripheral phenomenon? \[Randerscheinung politische Erwachsenenbildung?\]](#). (DE)

The development and importance of political education, with a particular focus on adult education centres, from the Weimar Republic down to the present day against the background of increasing local government budgetary restraints and the mediatisation of society.

[Digital humanities in German-speaking countries in 2018](#) [Digital Humanities im deutschsprachigen Raum 2018]. (DE)

Summary, forecast, critical reflection: A method stands and falls with its set of symbols to be trained. If important symbols are left out, this will have major impacts on interpretative meaningfulness. Similarly to texts, synergy effects in visual media are not produced unless there is a combination of close and distant watching (Hayles 2010). The presented experiment shows that the approach of considering YouTube videos “from a distance” using MultiPath is effective. MultiPath training is currently being optimised in order to generate the best possible results. The next stage will involve a complete evaluation of the corpus and scrutiny of results via close watching of selected videos. The results of this refinement will inform the presentation.

You will find “How we read” by Hayles (2010) [here](#). (EN)

[The social distribution of political knowledge in Germany – differences in knowledge and their causes](#) [Die soziale Verteilung politischen Wissens in Deutschland: Wissensunterschiede und deren Ursachen]. (DE)

In this representative study, Thomas Schübel investigates the distribution of political knowledge within the German populations by using psychometric models. He demonstrates that the mean value of knowledge of Germans is lower than generally assumed and that political knowledge is unequally distributed. Particularly socially disadvantaged persons are likely to display levels of knowledge that

are below average. The author investigates the causes of these inequalities and provides clues for how knowledge asymmetries can be reduced.

## II.4 Pitfalls of traditional media in contrast to new media

The world of media has undergone dramatic change in recent years in the wake of the triumph of Internet and social media in particular. While twenty years ago, daily newspapers acted as the main sources of information for society alongside news programmes on television and radio, they are now in retreat or else are using their own web presences to transport contents to readers. The Internet has also increased the speed of the information flow as well as the quantity of information. The web facilitates highly diverse image montages, which steer and capture the attention of the reader. Maintaining the quality of fast-moving information is a task for journalism.

### Further materials:

[Medien und Gesellschaft im Wandel](#) [Media and society undergoing change]. (DE)

The media shift and media crisis may lead to scandalisation, moralisation and personalisation in reporting. Does media use support everyone's knowledgeability, or do the better educated benefit more? How are old and new media being used?

### [Genre.](#)

In: *Games Studies*. (DE)

Genres create a helpful bridge between video games and films. Horror, fantasy, science fiction and adventure settings familiar from the cinema are frequently used in games to provide guidance to players. In some cases, for instance the pirate adventure *Monkey Island* or the survival horror games *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*, games make independent contributions to a transmedia genre story. The article takes Rick Altman's pragmatic genre model as a basis to explain various approaches to genre analysis in game studies.

Please find "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" (Altman, 1984) [here](#). (EN)

[Communication theory gender studies – on the current validity of critical societal analysis](#)

[Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Gender Studies: zur Aktualität kritischer Gesellschaftsanalyse]. (DE)

Current societal and cultural transformation processes are affecting aspects such as the relationship between public life and participation and increasing exclusion via precarisation and neo-liberalisation. The resulting societal splits exert a strong influence on media and communication processes. The theoretical reflections and empirical analyses collected here highlight perspectives of gender research based on communication theory. This approach links the objectives of enshrining critical positions in media and communication science and of making knowledge available for societal changes.

[The journalistic society – journalism and media in an age of platform capitalism](#) [Die publizistische Gesellschaft: Journalismus und Medien im Zeitalter des Plattformkapitalismus]. (DE)

This work in the essential series describes the radical change induced by the rise of platforms on the media and on journalism in general. It shows how new stakeholders with new approaches are taking to the stage. The changes portrayed mean that anyone can publish journalistic material across the world without any particular expert knowledge. This is fundamentally altering production methods and business models in the media and in journalism itself as everyone is becoming a journalist. The

platforms themselves now dictate the rules governing who may publish and who can earn money in this way. This is, however, also a major opportunity for journalism rather than merely a threat.

#### [Cross-mediality in journalism and corporate communications – introduction to the edited volume](#)

[Crossmedialität in Journalismus und Unternehmenskommunikation: Einführung in den Band]. (DE) Cross-mediality is one of the major trends in journalism and media communication in the new millennium. Contents are published via several platforms, and organisation, planning, research and quality assurance adapt to this approach. Media convergence thus evolves from a theoretical concept into media practice. This article shows how cross-mediality has developed as a consequence of technical and social processes. Digitalisation and individualisation of society are presented as relevant drivers of this development. The main areas of cross-mediality are depicted. These levels are referred to in depth in the articles included in the edited volume.

### III Critical media literacy as a task of political adult education

A critical and reflective approach to media is not merely necessary for the protection of a person's own data and privacy. It is also important for the community's social development and for in-depth understanding of democracy in an increasingly digitalised society.

The main focus is on the consequences of mediatisation, i.e. the ramifications created at a cultural and societal level by the media shift that is currently taking place. Digitalisation and networking are playing a much greater role than 20 years ago and are affecting social interaction in general. Aspects such as permanent and location-independent availability and the increase in media-related communication forms are changing the habits, norms and expectations of social co-existence. The establishment of new platforms, which create new types of public life are, however, also making it more difficult for appropriate democratic dialogue to be conducted. Although communication occurs, it is not always effective and all too often polemicising. This introduces one core task of political education: the creation of a new debate culture and the formation of media literacy.

The multiple phenomena that accompany the wake of new media—of which echo chambers, filter bubbles and algorithms are just some examples—create an increased risk that we will perceive reality only from our own perspective and in a way which is distorted by news and articles that have been filtered by algorithms. "Reality will not be constructable in any way we want, but it will become malleable or elastic depending on the political, social and ethical standards of the users." (Helmut Peissl "[Kritische Medienkompetenz - Herausforderungen vor dem Hintergrund der Mediatisierung](#)" [Critical media competence – challenges against the background of mediatisation])

The political dimension of media activities is also revealed if we undertake a more precise investigation. What are the vested interests of the various stakeholders? Which power structures and dynamics are concealed behind (social) media, and how can citizens recognise and uncover these?

Various competences, some of which are new, are required in order to be able to evaluate and criticise media contents and thus take part in social public life. However, once these competences have been mastered, many opportunities open for shaping media contents and taking part in discourses and in the formation of democracy. Community radio, for example, provides a vehicle for citizens to present their own topics.

### Further materials:

#### [Media literacy](#) [Medienkompetenz]

Series of publications by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) – Challenge for policy making, political education and media education [Herausforderung für Politik, politische Bildung und Medienbildung]. (DE)

*“The digital transformation of society is in full swing, and the political system is not immune to its progress either. Bots and big data analyses in election campaigns, leaks and fake news reports and new digital participation models are changing political communication and the decision making process. In order to counter insecurity as to the effects these have, critical thought is required to understand these new phenomena and mechanisms. Media and political education begin to merge as part of this. Media literacy has a key role as a democratic competence.”*

A highly informative [article](#) about critical media literacy and its significance for learning, understanding of democracy and community development. (DE)

*“The ability to critically approach and use media is fundamentally growing in significance for learning, the understanding of democracy and community development. Adult education needs to address the impacts and challenges of the media shift that are emerging in the wake of digitalisation. [...] Media literacy concepts are presented alongside current phenomena which are becoming more prevalent in the digital age.”*

#### [Dossier Critical media literacy and community media](#) [Kritische Medienkompetenz und Community Medien].

This 66-page brochure highlights how non-commercial community media can be used to form critical media literacy: *“Media literacy in adult education is a topic which has been widely neglected over past years. This is not easy to understand in light of the role that the media assumes for learners today as a source of information, as a means of social interaction and as an important basis for political opinion formation. The discussion centring on effects such as filter bubbles and the enormous dissemination of fake news and hate speech have directed attention to media literacy in the educational policy debate, often in regard to digital competence or media and information competence.”*

Please find [here](#) a collection of documents on Community Media by the UMAC project – understanding media for active citizenship. (EN)

Series of presentations on [“Critical media literacy in political adult education”](#) [Kritische Medienkompetenz in der politischen Erwachsenenbildung]. (DE)

*“Terms like ‘fake news’ and filter bubbles as well as hate posts have been on everyone’s lips for some years now. The change in media use that this has brought about, especially in the use of social media, is creating new challenges for our society and gives rise to the question as to whether and how critical media activities are possible.”*

The Federal Agency for Civic Education staged a specialist conference on media literacy in 2014. The topic of the conference was “Media pedagogy in digital upheaval”. The results and discussions that took place are documented in a [blog](#). (DE)

Is it at all possible to acquire the ability for self-directed action via the fostering of media literacy? What challenges arise for media pedagogy work in this regard? Michael Seemann and Niels Brüggemann discuss an [interview](#) with Jöran Muuß-Merholz (pb21.de). (DE)

### [Public life and media in the digital age – between differentiation and new institutionalisation](#)

[Öffentlichkeit und Medien im digitalen Zeitalter: zwischen Differenzierung und Neu-Institutionalisierung]. (DE)

A basic principle for the imparting of media literacy is to understand how public life is structured and which standards and rules apply in which public sphere. The digitalisation of communication media has led to a transformation of public life, which can only be described – even if inadequately – by the terms convergence or disruption. A strongly hierarchical mass media-based information system characterised by journalism is developing into a more heterogenic global communication system, which is organised and usable by the many. This article outlines this differentiation of established mass media and the new institutionalisation of social media and other platforms.

## IV Ideas for the development of critical media literacy—practical applications

Today, people face the challenge of having to assess the truth content of information for themselves. The reasons for this include growing uncertainty regarding the quality of journalistic work and also the fact that it is becoming increasingly easy for people to access information for themselves. Because this development is relatively new, there is also a need for adults to take action and acquire competences. It therefore comes as no surprise that the need for educational offers on the topic of “critical media literacy” in the field of adult education increased and that there is now a whole series of continuing programmes looking at the identification of fake news, media manipulation and the clarification of conspiracy theories. Such provision is not (any longer) exclusively directed at journalists or school teachers, and the spectrum of formats has also expanded significantly. Alongside people’s opportunity to acquire knowledge for themselves via guides or YouTube videos on the Internet, other events such as presentations and lectures, seminars extending over a period of several hours, or even paid educational leave for a number of days enable those who are interested to grapple with the topic in greater depth. Dealing with the various media plays a major role in terms of taking a reflective approach to the oversupply of information that is available, recognising false trails or contents, and forming a well-founded opinion.

### **Further materials:**

[Fact finder](#) [Faktenfinder]. (DE)

The “Fact finder” offered by the “Tagesschau” TV news programme enables the truth content of news to be checked. Tutorials on various topics are also available.

Users can follow a few simple steps to check the truth content of news themselves, as well. Instructions are given [here](#). (EN)

Tips on [unmasking fake tweets](#):

Instructions on how to recognise bots on Twitter may be viewed here.

[Quiz time](#). (EN)

Twitter has a quiz which offers users a light-hearted way of testing and improving their own abilities to detect fake news and gather information on photographs.

[How can one convey critical media literacy in an era of global disinformation?](#) (DE)

Documentation on a workshop aimed at teachers, which looked at specifically this question:

Fake news on the Internet— what are the challenges that arise for adult education? [Fake News im Internet. Welche Herausforderungen ergeben sich für die Erwachsenenbildung?].

*"The simple access to information offered by the Internet also has inherent risks. Fake news is disseminated too, and this is not always easily identifiable. What can adult education do to counter fake news? Which methods and formats are useful?"*

Article by Merkt, M. (to be published Dec 2019).

In: *weiter bilden – DIE Zeitschrift für Erwachsenenbildung*.

[#whatthefact](#) – online game. (DE)

#whatthefact is an interactive online puzzle game for those who wish to seek out the truth. Various categories test the factual knowledge of participants, frequently providing intriguing insights.

["Wahre Welle"](#) (a mock [TV channel](#) showing satirical reports). (DE)

"Conspiracy theories have been circulating for a number of years, primarily via the Internet and social media. [...] The Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) cooperates with journalists to present information showing what lies behind current conspiracy theories. How do they come about? At whom are they directed? How valid are they? And why do some people believe in conspiracy theories whilst others do not?"

[Media literacy support in adult education](#) [Medienkompetenzförderung in der Erwachsenenbildung].

(DE)

*"Adult life is characterised by a huge and complex range of situations for which there is almost no common denominator. This article looks at current challenges, using them as a basis to pool sample problem constellations, which need to be taken into account when designing initiatives to foster media literacy."*



## Imprint

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53175 Bonn

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[www.na-bibb.de](http://www.na-bibb.de)

<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/de>

Responsible according to the press law: Klaus Fahle

Status: January 2019

Editors: Dr. Christine Bertram, Karoline Jagodzinski

Authors: Susanne Witt, Julia Lyß

German Institute for Adult Education Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning (DIE)

Design: National Support Service EPALE Germany



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Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
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