

## Fachbereich 9 - Medienstudiengänge

Department 9 - Media Courses

### Kommentar zur Lehrveranstaltung im WiSe 2021/22

Description of seminars

#### Veranstalter\*in:

n:

Lecturer: Andreas Hepp

#### Titel (dt.):

Titel (engl.): Research Seminar Part II:

Pioneers of digital society: Experimentation, innovation and the good life

#### Beschreibung:

Description:

Far-reaching media-related changes are envisioned by forerunners decades before they become more widespread in society. For example, we cannot understand the development of the personal computer without also considering the Whole Earth Network, an 'extraordinary influential group of San Francisco Bay area journalists and entrepreneurs' (Turner 2006: 3). We can call such groups or networks 'pioneer communities' (Hepp 2020: 30). There are several reasons for this: They typically refer to themselves as (social) 'movements' with whom they share a desire to change society, but on closer inspection they are not social movements in the strictest sense of the term as they are too apolitical. They are more like 'intermediaries' (Bourdieu 2010: 151) who present themselves as 'movement'. Pioneer communities tend to have a certain "life cycle": By offering a particular thematic frame they arise out of the context of many different other figurations.

'Pioneers' in this respect are less the 'extraordinary inventors' of certain technologies heralded as 'disruptive' by innovation researchers, rather, they can be seen as operating at the more quotidian heights of technological change. We should also approach them reflexively and critically and avoid simply adopting and accepting their innovation discourses and ideologies. Such pioneers can be professionals (journalists working in a professional domain, for example), or amateurs (people who tinker, for example, as makers in their spare time). The distinction of 'professional' and 'amateur' is a relative one insofar as amateur pioneers can refine their pioneering domain in such a way that it becomes an area of professional engagement. An example for this would be a member of the maker movement who 'professionalizes' him- or her- self in a way that he or she can earn a living through their pioneering ideas. Furthermore, 'amateur pioneers' are not necessarily amateurs with reference to their education: they are often trained as engineers, programmers or professionally educated in other related fields. But when they act as part of the pioneer community, they are not necessarily focused on professional value creation.

The objective of the research seminar is to empirically investigate current such pioneers and pioneer communities of digital society. Examples in the field of journalism could be the Hacks/Hackers movement, other examples could be the Biohacking movement, the Maker movement, Civic Hacking or current initiatives for platform coops and the "exit to community" network (Alleyne et al 2020; Scholz & Schneider 2017) which pushed a new sustainability concept for media start-ups. We will develop a set of case studies. In doing so, we will address a number of questions: In what ways are the chosen pioneer communities experimenting? What ideas of "innovation" and "change" are widespread in these groups? What imaginations of a digital society do they have? And what significance do they attach to the "good life", i.e. the promotion of productive human togetherness? Methodologically, the research seminar is open, i.e. starting from the questions above, we want to find the appropriate research methods to realize the individual student research projects.

Now that we have developed our various student projects during the summer semester and collected the data over the lecture-free period, the focus in the winter semester is on data analysis and writing.

## **Module examination**

The seminar is concluded in this second semester by a jointly written research report of approx. 20 pages per person. Besides that, various tasks are necessary for attending this seminar. This includes:

- Active participation in all sessions,
- Participation in various forms of group work during the sessions,
- Shorter presentations on the status of group work,
- Text reading,
- Preparation of one presentation,
- Data collection,
- Data analysis.

## **Literatur:**

### *Literature:*

#### Basic reading:

- Alleyne, M., Canon, C., Evans, A., Feng, Y., Schneider, N., & Zepeda, M. (2020). Exit to community. A community primer. Boulder: MedLab, Zebras Unite.
- Bourdieu, P. (2010). Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste. London, New York: Routledge.
- Thomas, G. (2017). How to do your research project: A guide for students. 3rd edition. London: Sage.
- Hepp, A. (2020). Deep mediatization. London: Routledge.
- Turner, F. (2006). From counterculture to cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the rise of digital utopianism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Turner, F., & Butler-Wall, A. (2021). Designing for neoliberalism. In G. Kaplan (Ed.), After the Bauhaus, Before the Internet. A history of graphic design pedagogy. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Scholz, T., & Schneider, N. (Eds.). (2017). Ours to hack and to own. The rise of platform cooperativism, a new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet. New York, London: OR books.