

Call for Papers

The media we refused to use:

The non-use of media and disconnection through the ages

Media and Communication Research is characterized by a strong focus on the impact of media and communication (technologies) on societies and social life on the one hand and the consequences of use and appropriation of media on an individual level on the other. Less common is a focus on what it means for people to willingly abstain from usage of media in general or particular technologies and practices respectively. That media, once established in society, will also be used and further diffused into usage is kind of a normalized view in media and communication research. Non-use, on the contrary, was often interpreted as a hindrance to diffusion, caused by laggards who need to be convinced or educated to use or by structural obstacles that prevent use and should be overcome.

Only in recent years has the interest in abstention from using media, mainly in the context of willful disconnection from digital technologies, grown: a vivid area of research has addressed digital disconnection for ideological reasons, as a means of political protest or as a lifestyle choice and commodity. However, the historical persistence of objecting to the use of media for a variety of reasons and individual or collective choices has so far found less attention in this growing area of disconnection research. For this issue of *medien & zeit*, we invite historically grounded and informed research on the media we refused to use. We also invite research on the motives and consequences of non-use as well as public discourses that revolve(d) around the rejection of particular media. The special issue asks for contributions which illuminate continuity and change in the non-use of media, the recurring or evolving arguments against use and hopes, as well as visions for social life that were pursued or idealized through non-use. The historical scope of the issue is not limited to the recent decades of digitalization and apparently ubiquitous media, but is open to contributions concerned with all aspects and media technologies and innovations since the beginning of mass communication. Submissions addressing the historical evolution of non-use in the age of computerization and digital media technologies, however, are particularly welcome.

The special issue is open for all original contributions in the subject area, including theoretical and methodological reflections and case studies on particular media technologies and practices. Topics to be addressed include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Non-use and disconnection in the focus of media and communication research: From the digital divide and pathologizing non-use to the disconnective turn and the luxury of choice to 'digitally detox'.
- Boycott, protest and refusal for political ends: when and how did protesters, social movements and activist object to the use of media in general or particular media corporations (e.g., the feud between the 68 movement and the Springer Presse in Germany, populist activism against public service broadcasting, Boycott Facebook and other social media, critical data activism, etc.)?
- Disconnection for protection: submission in this trajectory may range from educational arguments and pedagogical or political efforts for avoiding the harmful influence of media

- (e.g., mis- and disinformation) to authorities suppressing allegedly politically disobedient or socially deviant contents for the purported protection of the people.
- Resistance to new technologies in diverse contexts: the first computers in the workplace were not welcomed by all; skepticism, fear and anxiety were closely linked to the emergence and invasion of new technologies. Similarly, in educational contexts or the family home, new media were and new technologies have not been and are not simply welcomed as an expansion of possibilities, but have also been met with resistance from the first radio receivers, through television and the Internet, to smart technologies. Research into arguments for and practices of resistance is welcome for submission.
 - Non-use and avoidance of news: being an informed citizen is considered an important prerequisite for participating in democratic society, but news avoidance is more than just a recent phenomenon. We are interested in practices, motives and consequences of news-avoidance in various historical settings as well as in the alternatives people turned to when avoiding traditional news.
 - Non-use as lifestyle and commodity: 'digital detox' and digital-free tourism have become growing branches of commercializing the non-use of technologies. How has this particular branch evolved over time and what precursors can be found, if any?
 - Non-use as a media topic: media discourse on the perils and benefits of using or not using particular media, and the constructed normality of users and uses related to it, as well as narratives and images of non-users.
 - Researching non-use and non-users as a methodological challenge: investigating what people do not do is methodologically tricky, especially when the non-use is to be addressed in historical perspective. What methodological approaches, sources and research designs can help illuminating the historical non-use or practices of disconnection in the past, which material or communicative traces allow approaching historical non-use?

Submissions in English or German language are welcome. Submissions of abstracts (no more than 500 words and a tentative title) outlining a prospective submission will be subjected to review by the academic editors of the issue. Based on this, authors will be invited to develop full papers (6,000 words including title, abstract, tables, figures, and references list). All full papers will undergo rigorous double-blind peer review. During a potential revisions stage, after peer-review, authors can extend the article length to a maximum of 8,000 words in the light of reviewers' and editors' suggestions. *medien & zeit* is fully open access and does not charge Article processing fees from its authors!

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Special issue editors: Diotima Bertel, Julia Himmelsbach, Gaby Falböck and Christian Schwarzenegger

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medien&zeit (<https://medienundzeit.at>) is a media and communication studies journal with a focus on media and communication history. Founded in 1986, the journal is undergoing a transformation starting with its 38 volume and will be affiliated with the University of Vienna as a fully peer-reviewed and open access journal starting with issue 1/2023. This will be the first issue in the new format.