

PRESS RELEASE

Online conference on democracy education in digitalized societies

Conference on "Media - Democracy - Education"

Modern societies are digitally structured. Democracies enable the technical participation of their citizens in the media and promote media education to make political participation practical in the first place. This context was the focus of the conference organized by Prof. Dr. Gudrun Marci-Boehncke, Hanna Höfer-Lück, and Malte Delere from the Research Center Youth Media Education (Institute for Diversity Studies, TU Dortmund University) from January 20-22, 2021.

Together with the Interdisciplinary Media Ethics Center, the online conference "Media - Democracy - Education" offered an exchange on "Normative Mediation Processes and Diversity in Mediatized Societies" - the subtitle of the meeting. Already the opening provided a highlight: Prof. Dr. Henry Jenkins, former director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, now chair of "Communication, Journalism, Cinematic Arts and Education" at the University of Southern California, gave the opening lecture on the question "What Educators Can Learn about Democracy from Science Fiction: World-Building, the Civic Imagination and Speculative Journalism." Jenkins demonstrated concrete democracy education projects that take media fictions as a starting point to motivate civic designs for a more just and better future in workshops.

Up to 140 participants dialed in for the conference - scholars from related disciplines and faculties were also involved. Introduced in each case by a keynote address, the total of 14 presentations focused on the perspectives "Media and Democracy," "Digital Education at All Levels of Society, and "Disruption and Convergence."

The papers made clear the relevance of interdisciplinary reflection on the significance of digital media, particularly in the context of democracy education. From the perspective of subject didactics, ethics, and media sociology, a human rights-oriented discourse culture is necessary for schools to offer students a reflected, normative orientation in dealing with digital offerings at an early stage. Here, the university education of future teachers has an important task. The conference participants rejected the call for a "neutral school" and calls teachers to take a clear position on human rights and the constitution.

But the view also went beyond the purely academic horizon. On the second evening, the well-known German AI journalist Thomas Ramge reported in the Evening Lecture on his latest book "Machtmaschinen" (Power Machines). He discussed why data monopolies endanger our future and how we can break them. Following this, the discourse moved into a theatrical play. Under the direction of dramaturge and colleague Stefan Schroeder, the creative video project on the conference theme

"EscapeRoom.EchoChamber" was developed from prospective teachers' perspective in an online seminar the current semester.

The *Interdisciplinary Media Ethics Center* IMEC (<https://mediaethics.center>) sees itself as a research and consulting institution on ethics issues in networked and digitalized societies. Founded in 2015, IMEC has since held several international conferences, and the results are continuously published.

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