

Call for Papers

Visibility in the Digital Age: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Guest Editors

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In the digital age, calls for transparency and openness as well as for privacy and confidentiality prevail: Struggles for visibility occur simultaneously with fights for invisibility and hidden battles for power and privileges of interpretation. Concerns about a loss of digital self-determination exist just like concerns about the “right to be forgotten”. While a few years ago the idea of a “transparent user”—as the ultimate of (in)voluntary visibility—caused a broad outcry in society and scientific debate (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008), the debate is nowadays shifting towards considerations of Internet governance and regulation (Camenisch, Fischer-Hübner, & Hansen, 2015). The societally relevant aspects of visibility and invisibility in the digital age are increasingly discussed and analyzed. Visibility and invisibility become important dimensions in the description and explanation of digital communication. They encompass for example “(1) the availability of information, (2) approval to share information, and (3) the accessibility of information to third parties” (Stohl, Stohl, & Leonardi, 2016, p. 125). They can be addressed with regard to individuals and institutions (e.g., their ability to speak, their power or opinion leadership), structures and processes (e.g., in the meaning of becoming visible or making visible), as well as data and information (e.g., their accessibility or comprehensibility). Studies are, however, scattered across various fields of research in media and communication science. Therefore, the thematic section aims at gathering cutting-edge research on visibility and invisibility in digital publics. We invite submissions from different divisions in media and communication studies that present outstanding meta-analytical perspectives, new theoretical approaches, innovative methodological approaches, or lessons to be learned from empirical analyses. Submissions relating (but not limited) to the following areas and questions are invited:

- **Understanding and analysis of digital (in)visibility:** How can visibility be conceptualized in the digital world? How is it connected to other concepts, e.g., transparency or attention? What aspects are included in the state of being visible in comparison to the process of becoming visible? Which theoretical concepts and methodological perspectives are useful and necessary to describe and analyze the (in)visible of digital communication? How can the invisible be made visible for research? How can the effects of the invisible, but also of the visible, be measured?
- **Tensions between visibility and invisibility:** What tensions between visibility and invisibility can be observed in society in general or in specific contexts? Why do they emerge? How are these tensions addressed by various actors, e.g., in interactions between journalists and audience members or in instances of cyberbullying?
- **Actors, institutions, structures and processes regarding digital (in)visibility:** Who is involved in creating, shaping or governing digital (in)visibility? How can structures and processes regarding (in)visibility be described? How are conditions and constraints of (in)visibility created and shaped? In what ways do processes of governance or management and intervolved power

relations become visible themselves? How does the (in)visibility of information affect structures and processes in society in general or in specific contexts like media companies or other organizations? How do users deal with (in)visibility in their everyday media practices and how are they influenced by the affordances of social media or underlying societal and cultural norms?

- **Sociopolitical significance and consequences of digital (in)visibility:** What significance does (in)visibility have in the digital world? What positive or negative implications for sociopolitical frameworks and contexts arise from the influence of actors, technologies, processes, and practices on what users see or do not see online and how they see it? How does the visible frame the media- and non-media-related everyday life? What consequences does the (in)visibility of actors, opinions, or processes have for social coexistence, societal institutions, or foundations of democracy?

Submission guidelines

The length of the articles in the thematic section should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words (including abstract and references). All submitted papers must adhere to APA6 style (www.apastyle.org). The journal welcomes submissions in English, German, French, or Italian, but the abstract must be in English. All submissions should be sent to the guest editors via the following email addresses: brantner@iwaf.at and helena.stehle@uni-hohenheim.de.

The submission process consists of two phases:

- In a first step, abstracts of 500 words (plus the name(s) of the author(s) and affiliation(s), title, and 3 to 5 keywords) should be submitted no later than **July 15, 2019**.
- In the second step, the decision for an invitation to submit a full paper will be given by **August 15, 2019**.
- Invited paper submissions will be due **November 30, 2019**. The invitation to submit a full paper does not guarantee acceptance into the thematic section. Final acceptance depends on a double-blind peer review process.

The expected publishing date of this thematic section is **December 2020**. Successful contributions that are not accepted for the thematic section will be published in other issues of the journal.

Key dates

- Abstracts are required no later than July 15, 2019
- Invitation to submit a full paper will be given by August 15, 2019
- Full papers are required no later than November 30, 2019
- 1st review will be provided by February 15, 2020
- 2nd submission should be submitted by April 15, 2020
- 2nd review and notification of acceptance will be provided by June 1, 2020
- Final papers should be submitted by July 15, 2020

We look forward to receiving your submissions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the guest editors: Cornelia Brantner (brantner@iwaf.at) or Helena Stehle (helena.stehle@uni-hohenheim.de).

SCoMS is an international open access journal of communication research that is jointly edited by the Swiss Association of Communication and Media Studies (SACMR) and the Faculty of Communication Sciences of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI Lugano). The journal is fully open access to both the authors and readers. The publishing home is HOPE, which stands for Hauptbibliothek Open Publishing Environment, which is offered by the Main Library of the University of Zurich based on the infrastructure of the Zentrale Informatik.