UNIVERSITÄT SALZBURG

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CALL FOR ABSTRACTS · ISSUE 19 / 2027

Shaping Together – but on Whose Terms?

Participatory Cultures, Communicative Practices, and Community Building

– Thematic Focus and Open Call –

Abstract submission deadline: 21 December 2026

In fan communities, community radio stations, digital neighbourhood groups, and local cultural initiatives, people shape media and cultural publics. They produce content, share knowledge, negotiate common concerns, and organise collective action. In doing so, they forge manifold connections between media production, social participation, and community building. Participatory cultures combine cultural production, informal learning, and communal exchange (Jenkins et al., 2009). Zobl and Drüeke (2020, p. 1) draw attention to the "cultural practices in which various media are used and produced". This foregrounds the social contexts of media use and production, as well as the question of who can help shape them, and under what conditions. Participation is thus not merely a matter of access, but also of the actual possibilities to co-shape processes and to influence decisions. Carpentier's (2011) distinction between access, interaction, and participation offers an analytical point of departure here. Who holds the power to decide who may take part and who may not?



Community building denotes the communicative production and maintenance of communities. Communities are shaped by the meanings people ascribe to them in everyday life, and by the cultural, medial, and social practices, institutions, and power relations that structure them. In contrast to deficit-oriented perspectives on communities, asset-based approaches to community building emphasise the existing interests, competencies, and potentials of their members and highlight these as enrichment (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Whereas participation addresses questions of power, agency, and the right to social participation, community building points to the significance of shared experiences and resources, the development of local relationships, and the collective appropriation and exercise of agency by communities.

How digital media, in turn, enable and transform social relationships also depends on the social contexts of their use (Baym, 2015). Collaborative cultural production opens up opportunities to bring one's own perspectives into the public sphere, yet it remains shaped by unequal access and societal power relations (Zobl et al.,

2019). Platform-mediated participation introduces additional conditions: technical infrastructures, business models, and platform operators' rules contribute to how cultural practices are organised (Poell et al., 2019). This raises the further question of what room for manoeuvre communities are able to develop under these conditions.

Possible Topics and Research Questions



The 19th issue of the open-access journal *kommunikation.medien* invites contributions that examine participatory cultures and community building from a communication and media studies perspective. We seek empirical and theoretical contributions on the relationships between communicative practices, medial conditions, and the distribution of opportunities for co-determination. The following thematic fields and sample questions are intended as guidance and leave room for further emphases within the broader subject area.

Media Production and Cultural Participation

How do participants in community radio stations, artistic and cultural projects, podcast collectives, or fan fiction communities jointly shape content and production processes? How are the roles of producers and audiences negotiated in these contexts? What role do DIY media play in peer-to-peer knowledge transfer and DIY citizenship, and how do they enable informal learning in analogue and digital communities?

Community as Communicative Practice

How do communities emerge in digital and analogue contexts, and through which communicative practices are they sustained? What significance do, for instance, shared narratives, recurring formats of exchange, or the interplay of messenger groups and face-to-face meetings have for belonging and cohesion?

Platforms, Visibility, and Power

How do recommendation algorithms, moderation rules, and business models shape the participatory opportunities and visibility of communities? How do, for example, fan communities or local initiatives respond to changing platform rules? What scope for action do self-managed communication services open up?

Shared Decision-Making, Conflict, and Exclusion

Wie kann Partizipation bestehende Strukturen verändern, statt Menschen lediglich zur Beteiligung innerhalb dieser Strukturen einzuladen? Wie werden etwa in partizipativen Redaktionen oder Kulturprojekten Themen, Ressourcen und Entscheidungsrechte ausgehandelt? Welche Rolle spielen Widerspruch, Barrierefreiheit und der Umgang mit ungleichen Voraussetzungen?

Counterpublics and Collective Action

How do, for example, queer-feminist initiatives, artistic projects, migrant media projects, or climate movements use their own media as cultural practices to articulate counter-positions publicly and to organise collective action? How do medial practices and local activities interlock? Under what conditions do short-term mobilisations evolve into longer-term structures of collaboration?

Open Call

In addition to the topics outlined above, we also welcome submissions on other fields of communication and media research. We are interested in, among others, studies on media change, media use, reception, visual communication, organisational communication, and transcultural publics. Theoretical, methodological, and interdisciplinary contributions may also be submitted. Submissions to the open call need not be related to the thematic focus.

Submission and Review

We invite extended abstracts in German or English of 4,000 to 6,000 characters (including spaces and bibliographic references). The abstract should set out the central research question, the theoretical framing, the methodological approach, and the (expected) findings. For theoretical contributions, the line of argument and the intended contribution to knowledge are of primary importance.

Submissions and enquiries: kommunikation.medien@plus.ac.at
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About *kommunikation.medien*



The open-access journal *kommunikation.medien* has been published since 2012 as part of a master's project at the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Salzburg. It is aimed in particular at early-career researchers and also makes research based on theses and dissertations accessible to a specialist audience. In addition to scholarly articles, the journal publishes book reviews and conference reports; the Salzburger Sonderfenster offers insights into student research projects.

Timeline

Submission of abstracts:	21 December 2026
Feedback / invitation to submit full papers:	mid-January 2027
Submission of full papers:	1 March 2027
Publication:	end of June 2027

Acceptance of an abstract is initially an invitation to submit a full paper. Whether the paper will be published will be decided on the basis of the outcome of the anonymous peer-review process. Full papers must not have been submitted elsewhere for publication or already published.

Website of *kommunikation.medien*: https://eplus.uni-salzburg.at/JKM
Information for authors: https://eplus.uni-salzburg.at/JKM/wiki/hinweise

For further insights into the editorial team's work and current information about *kommunikation.medien*, follow us on our social media channels:



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Images

The two illustrations, as well as the icons accompanying the possible thematic focus areas, were created with ChatGPT on 30 October 2026.