



Fandom | Cultures | Research

ONLINE JOURNAL FOR FAN AND AUDIENCE STUDIES

Call for Abstracts (Themed Issue 2/27)

Upstairs, Downstairs: Television and Platforms Between Seduction and Agency

Deadline for Proposals: October 1st 2026

Contemporary television is now inextricably linked to digital platforms, making it impossible to analyze one without the other. Streaming services, social media infrastructures, algorithmic recommendation systems, and data-driven interfaces have fundamentally reshaped the production, distribution, circulation, and experience of serial narratives. Television today operates as a hybrid, cross-platform phenomenon that unfolds across interfaces, snippets, paratexts, fan practices, and algorithmically curated regimes of visibility. In these environments, users are addressed simultaneously as audiences, consumers, fans, data subjects, and co-producers. By evoking the metaphor of *Upstairs, Downstairs* (GB, ITV, 1971-1975) this themed issue interrogates the structural hierarchies and power dynamics between platform architectures (the 'upstairs' of algorithmic control and corporate infrastructure) and tactical user practices (the 'downstairs' of audience agency, resistance, and creative appropriation)

Questions of platformization have become a central concern within contemporary Television Studies and constitute a key area of interest. Across streaming services, social media platforms, public service media environments, and participatory cultures, television increasingly operates through mechanisms of attraction, guidance, and capture. Interface design, personalization, algorithmic recommendation, gamification, and affective infrastructures shape how content is discovered, circulated, and experienced. At the same time, audiences and fans engage with these environments in creative, strategic, resistant, and sometimes subversive ways.

Contemporary television cultures encompass a wide range of practices and infrastructures, including transmedia storytelling and paratextual extensions, platform interfaces and recommendation systems, public service media strategies, livestreaming and participatory cultures, fan investigations and knowledge production, as well as alternative and pirate modes of distribution and access. Examining these diverse phenomena through the lens of seduction and agency highlights how platformed television environments simultaneously enable, structure, and constrain audience participation.

These tensions invite closer examination. While platformization has been widely discussed across media and television studies, the specific relationship between seduction and agency remains a productive lens for understanding how contemporary television cultures are organized, experienced, and contested. Such a perspective allows for the analysis of

infrastructures, industries, interfaces, texts, and audiences not as separate domains but as mutually constitutive elements within platformed media environments.

This themed issue seeks to advance these discussions by bringing together theoretical, historical, empirical, methodological, and practice-oriented perspectives from Television Studies, Platform Studies, Media Industry Studies, Fan Studies, and Cultural Studies. We invite contributions that explore how the interplay of platform logics, industrial strategies, technological infrastructures, audience practices, and cultural negotiations shapes contemporary television cultures.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- New theoretical or conceptual approaches to the relationship between seduction and agency in platformed television
- Empirical case studies on specific formats, platforms, genres, or regional contexts
- Interface design, UX politics, and affective infrastructures
- Fan practices, participatory cultures, and forms of resistance or appropriation
- Transmedia storytelling, paratextual economies, and snippet/meme circulation
- Global platform dynamics and locally specific appropriations
- Public service media strategies in platform environments
- Methodological challenges and innovations in researching platformed television cultures
- Questions of datafication, visibility, moderation, nostalgia, or alternative/pirate practices
- The role of AI-generated content and automated participation

The issue seeks nuanced analyses that explore the complex entanglements and contradictions between infrastructures, industries, texts, interfaces, and audiences, rather than understanding seduction and agency as simple opposites.

Language: Bilingual, English/German

Please submit your proposal (working title, abstract of 300-500 words) along with a short biographical note by October 1st 2026 to fcj-jour@uni-marburg.de.

Notification of acceptance: November 1st 2026

Submission of full papers: April 1st 2027

Guest Editors: Kim Hebben, Christine Piepiorka, Saskia Prinzler, Herbert Schwaab, Sven Stollfuß, Monika Weiß, Yulia Yurtaeva-Martens

References

Dragomir, Marius/Túñez López, Miguel: "How Public Service Media are Changing in the Platform Era: A Comparative Study Across Four European Countries." In: *European Journal of Communication* 39 (6), 2024, 608-624.

Hebben, Kim/Piepiorka, Christine: “Easy to Snack—Hard to Digest? Strategies of Dis/Array in Streaming, Social Media, and Television.” In: *Media and Communication* 13, 2025, Art. 9430. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.9430>

Helmond, Anne: “The Platformization of the Web: Making Web Data Platform Ready.” In: *Social Media & Society* 1 (2), 2015, 1-11.

Luginbühl, Martin: “TV News on Instagram: Affordances, Genres, Journalistic Cultures.” In: *Discourse & Communication* 19 (1), 2025, 46-71.

Mayer, Annekatrin: “Updating Public Value: How Journalists Understand Their Societal Role in the Context of Digital Platforms.” In: *Digital Journalism*, 2025, 1-17.

Moe, Hallvard: “Embrace or Leave Social Media? On the Viability of Public Service Media Organizations’ Strategies Facing Platform Power.” In: *European Journal of Communication* 39 (6), 2024, 595-607.

Nelson, Jacob L.: *Imagined Audiences: How Journalists Perceive and Pursue the Public*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2021.

Prinzler, Stephanie/Stollfuß, Sven/Böttke, Anna-Katharina: “Engaging Audiences in Platformized Public Service Media Journalism: User-Generated Content and Editorial Practices in the funk Content Network.” In: *Journalism and Media* 7 (2), 2026, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia7020090>

Stollfuß, Sven: “Platformization as a Structural Dimension for Public Service Media in Germany: The funk Content Network and the New Interstate Media Treaty.” In: *Television & New Media* 25 (2), 2024, 185-203.

van Es, Karin/Poell, Thomas: “Platform Imaginaries and Dutch Public Service Media.” In: *Social Media + Society* 6 (2), 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120933289>