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Call for papers

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Digital Academia
Investigating Science and Higher Education in the Digital Age

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Digital Transformation as a major issue in science and higher education

It is widely recognized among practitioners and social scientists that digital transformation presents a major change process for today's society (cf. Schiølin 2020; Schwab 2018; Massen & Passoth 2020; Weyer 2019). Many observers argue that digital change is disrupting established product markets through "creative disruption", altering valued skills in labor markets and goes along with the destruction of old job profiles and the creation of new knowledge-intensive occupations.

In view of these challenges and opportunities, actors from the economy and politics expect the university system to address these needs in research and teaching and to become themselves "modern", for example more "digitalized", organizational actors. Actors in science policy and research funding formulate specific expectations regarding the digital transformation of academia through strategies and priorities that are intended to guarantee competitiveness and adaptivity to the needs of labor markets (cf. European Economic and Social Committee 2019, SBFI 2020).

This relevance attributed to the university sector in digitalization is mirrored in the activities of higher education institutions as well as scientific disciplines (cf. Barton, Müller & Seel; 2019, Hassan 2017; Henke & Pasternack 2020; Mocquet 2017, Wannemacher 2016): Universities around the world declare digital transformation as a major strategic and operational issue (Getto & Kerres 2017; Prinsloo 2020),

and we are currently witnessing the creation of new curricula and research fields such as data sciences (cf. Dorschel 2020; Saner 2019) or digital humanities (cf. Antonijević 2015), and of digital teaching platforms (cf. Williamson 2020). Additionally, we witness how digital technologies reconfigure key practices of academics in general: They cooperate with laymen in citizen-science projects via digital platforms (e.g. “galaxy zoo” or “fold it”), make scientific data and publications widely available (“open data”, “open science”, “open access”) and – possibly – evaluate each other more and more strongly via “altmetrics” (cf. Franzen 2018; Franzoni & Sauerman 2013; Plantin, Lagoze & Edwards 2018). Furthermore, the institutional context that makes research possible – namely university administrations – is also adopting digital technologies, opening up new freedoms but also creating new restrictions.

The aim of the special issue: Insights into digital transformation in academia

Based on these observations, we aim to assemble contributions that analyze aspects of the digital transformation of science and higher education and give insights into the preconditions, processes and consequences of the uptake of the issue of digital transformation in science and higher education. We welcome conceptual contributions as well as empirical studies from sociology and related fields such as science and technology studies, organizational studies and educational studies. Additionally, we are also open to methodological contributions that discuss the potential of digital technologies as research tools in the social sciences in general and in science studies and higher education research in particular. While we are open to all contributions that relate to the afore-mentioned observations, we especially welcome contributions that address the following types of questions:

- *Digital transformation as a discourse*: How is “digitalization” discursively constructed and what are the involvements and consequences of the academic field?
- *Digital transformation of scientific disciplines*: Through which processes do new research fields emerge and how do they affect the established system of disciplines?
- *Digital transformation of research practices*: How do digital technologies shape research processes in disciplines such as the humanities, the social sciences or the natural sciences?
- *Digital transformation of institutions of higher education*: What are the challenges of digital transformation for institutions of higher education as contexts of research but also of the transmission of scientific knowledge and competences?
- *Digital transformation and the Covid-19 pandemic*: How does the current pandemic and health crisis affect the digital transformation of university teaching and research? How is the forced shift to distance education changing the conditions of teaching and learning in the post-pandemic university?
- *Comparative perspectives*: How is digital transformation as an issue adopted in different national contexts or in different types of institutions of higher education?
- *Historical perspectives*: How can the current process of digital transformation in higher education and research be situated in a larger historical context?

We particularly welcome contributions that address the issue of digital transformation in research and higher education in the Swiss higher education system, for instance in the form of case studies or comparative studies. However, we are also interested in contributions that study other institutional contexts and give insights into ways digital transformation is shaped by pre-existing structures and processes (and vice versa).

Please send an abstract of your contribution proposal to Luca Tratschin (luca.tratschin@chess.uzh.ch), no later than **November 15, 2021.**

The following documents should be included with the proposed paper:

- Name, e-mail address and institutional affiliation of all authors
- Title of the paper
- Abstract of about 500 words plus short bibliography (topic, main objective, theoretical perspective, empirical basis, main results/first results).

The guest editors will decide by **December 1, 2021** which authors will be invited to submit a manuscript.

The selected authors will be invited to submit a paper (of maximum 8'000 words or 50'000 characters including tables, graphs and references). The deadline for submission of a contribution is **June 1, 2022**. Contributions are subject to the usual review process of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. To promote consistency of the volume and international visibility, we ask that contributions be submitted in English only. For more information on the Swiss Journal of Sociology and how to prepare manuscripts, see https://szs.sgs-sss.ch/.

Should you have any questions, please contact Luca Tratschin (luca.tratschin@chess.uzh.ch)

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