
Abstract of the Phd thesis

Tamás Tófalvy, BME HPS Doctoral School, 2014.

In the dissertation, with the tools of Sociology of science and Science, technology and society studies (STS) my aim is to show how values attached to digital technologies converge with the construction of hierarchical structures and discursive boundary works of contemporary Anglo-American journalism.

The aim of the thesis is threefold. Firstly, I demonstrate that the values attached to media platforms and the discourses formed by the ideologies used for constructing the profession of journalism are bound together closely. They actively formulate each other and the innovation and usage patterns of technological platforms. I call this interrelated discursive pattern Platform-based demarcation. Secondly, I aim to show that contemporary platform-based demarcation practices show remarkable parallelisms with the demarcation discourses surrounding the communication and media technologies of the preceding century. Thirdly, I argue that media platforms function not only as technological artefacts and communication networks, but as epistemic and social spaces, cultural-discursive fields in the cultural system of the profession of journalism.

With the help of theoretical tools borrowed from the Philosophy and Sociology of science, I survey the historical roots of the construction of values attached to technologies, and also the demarcation and boundary work practices that characterize the special professional context of journalism. At the intersection of the two main research scopes I show how the construction of professional boundaries and hierarchies interrelate with the use of media platforms and with the construction of values attached to them.

In the first two chapters the historical roots and construction mechanisms of the values attached to technologies are surveyed. In the third and fourth chapters the main findings of the academic research on professional and expert boundary work processes are presented, furthermore the particular demarcation practices, value hierarchies in the field of journalism are analyzed. In the closing chapter the convergence of the value-producing and boundary making strategies is presented, and the way how in the process of platform-based demarcation the notions of journalists and non-journalist, the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ journalists are demarcated, and ultimately, how the platform-based discourse affects the scope, use and fate of media innovations.