Press release

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Digital Futures: A New Toolbox for Learning in Schools and Universities

In cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb), the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG) is publishing a new educational toolbox titled Making Sense of the Future. It addresses questions about possible futures in our digital world and can be used in teaching units, seminars and workshops. As an Open Educational Resource (OER), the online materials are freely available for schools, universities, organisations and private individuals.

Due to the incessant stream of technological innovations and new developments, the digitalisation of everyday life is often difficult to understand. This is why Making Sense of the Future supports teachers and learners in gaining a critical understanding of digital policy issues and problems. Containing six different exercise units – including a creative writing lesson in which students pen a fictional newspaper article from the year 2040 – the toolbox uses methods from futurology. These exercises are designed to encourage students to rethink global visions of the future and to discuss the influence of digital transformation on our society. They focus on the following questions: How do we want to live together in the future? How will communication and participation be designed and regulated? How can we use digitalisation to increase sustainability and work towards the common good?

Digitalisation in an educational context

“As a research institute for internet and society, it is our aim to introduce ideas and concepts concerning digitalisation to an educational context”, explains Prof Dr Wolfgang Schulz, Research Director of HIIG. “Therefore, we want to offer teachers this didactic approach to make the effects of digitalisation understandable and accessible to learners.” Dr Benedikt Fecher, head of the Knowledge & Society programme at HIIG, adds: “The materials for the exercises were created in the context of our 2040 project, in which participants cooperatively developed digital visions of the future. We were also able to gain valuable insights for the development of the Open Educational Resource (OER) from the HIIG lecture series Making sense of digital society.”

All materials, including instructions for teachers, are freely available at hiig.de/futures-OER. The toolbox was developed by Philine Janus and Johanna Wallenborn.

Try out the toolbox at HIIG

On 4 November, HIIG is organising a workshop for teachers, multipliers and other interested parties who wish to familiarise themselves with the toolbox before using it in their studies or professional context. If you are interested in participating, please contact Johanna Wallenborn by e-mail at johanna.wallenborn@hiig.de.

About HIIG
The Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG) researches the development of the internet from a societal perspective. The aim is to better understand the digitalisation of all spheres of life. As the first research institute in Germany to focus on internet and society, HIIG has established an understanding that emphasises the embeddedness of digital innovations in societal processes. As a node in the Global Network of Interdisciplinary Internet & Society Research Centers, an initiative of scientific institutions worldwide in the field of interdisciplinary research on internet and society, the institute is trying to develop a European perspective on digital transformation.

HIIG was founded in 2011 by the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the University of the Arts Berlin and the WZB Berlin Social Science Center, in alliance with the Hans-Bredow Institute for Media Research in Hamburg as an integrated co-operation partner. The research directors of the institute are Prof. Dr. Jeanette Hofmann, Prof. Dr. Björn Scheuermann, Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Schildhauer and Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schulz.

About bpb

The Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb) seeks to promote awareness for democracy and participation in politics. It engages with contemporary and historical subjects through publications, by organising seminars, events, educational trips, exhibitions and competitions, by providing professional development training for journalists and by producing films and online content. The broad range of educational activities provided by the bpb are designed to motivate and enable people to critically engage with a wide range of political and social issues and to play an active part in political life. Considering Germany’s history of various forms of dictatorial rule, the Federal Republic of Germany bears a unique responsibility to firmly anchor the values of democracy, pluralism and tolerance in people’s minds.

The bpb bears the sole socio-political, educational and journalistic responsibility for its work. As an institution entrusted with the provision of civic education as specified in the German constitution, it also supports events organised by more than 300 approved educational establishments, foundations and non-governmental organisations involved in civic education in the Federal Republic of Germany.

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Illustration Making Sense of the Future