

39. DGS-Kongress „Komplexe Dynamiken globaler und lokaler Entwicklungen“ vom 24.-28.09.2018 in Göttingen

CfP: Big Data and Algorithms of Intersectionality: Grounding Critical Queer-Feminist Research in the Digital Age

Veranstaltung der Sektion Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung

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Politics of location and politics of difference have been the indispensable driving forces behind the intersectional research on gender. While politics of location points at how places and spaces that we inherit and occupy shape and define our lives both in discursive and material ways, politics of difference calls attention to how our particular experiences and practices with regard to our sexual, racial, religious, ethnic, class, and ability differences fit within the discursive and material representations that shaped and are shaped by these ‘locations’. These two aspects of intersectional gender research took new turn in the digital age, since; the digital age complicated the analytic framework of subject-positions/positionings, i.e *who speaks from where*.

However, perceived as borderless, the Internet, on the one hand, contested the definitions of local and global, national and transnational, while creating “different kinds of borders, demanding different kind of understandings of location” (Pinar Tuzcu). On the other hand, these new digital geographies took politics of difference to a new level, pushed it into a new form of identity politics: I click therefore I am.

The clicks, or the digital footprints, we leave online while purchasing commercial products, commenting on our social media profiles, filling in online forms, sending emails, visiting websites and blogs produce a messy chunk of digitized information called ‘Big Data’. However, it is the algorithmic processing that enables Big Data to ‘interpret’ our online registers such as gender, race, abilities, as well as location, citizenship and income status to (re)create our “algorithmic identities” (John Cheney-Lippold). Thus, Big Data is not only used to estimate ‘who we are’ or simply ‘where we are’ but also employed to condition those.

Although they are often portrayed as “neutral”, algorithms also have an impact on the live and livelihoods of individuals and communities. They are used for political, social and economic decisions-makings, therefore potentially reproduce the bio/power

dynamics. Search results in search engines are one of the most immediate examples of this. For, algorithms have the capacity to make choices and decide what should be visible and what should stay unseeable; or who should get the loan, who should not; who is eligible/trustable/reliable and who is not.

Big Data in this sense is not only used by commercial and governmental interest but also for empirical purposes in social science. Its celebration for enabling so-called ‘more accurate’ research results due to its big scale led to undermine the importance of qualitative methods and methodologies, thus largely dismiss the critical approaches on doing social research posed by postcolonial, decolonial and queer-feminist perspectives.

With this in mind, we argue that the debates on digital social research, in general, on ‘Big Data’, in particular, should not only deal with the scale of collected data but also should ask how and what sorts of politics of location and politics of difference are de- and re-coded in generating such data.

For this panel, we welcome papers that primarily, but not exclusively, focus on the following questions:

1. How and in what forms does cyberspace challenge, contest; affirm our analog understandings of politics of difference and politics of location?
2. What kind of virtual ‘geographies’ does it create beyond the categories of local and global? How do social categories such as race, sexual orientation, ability and class form and shape these geographies?
3. How are these new forms of politics of difference and politics of location employed or ignored in the contemporary narratives of ‘Big Data’ and in its empirical use?
4. How and in what form are the existing bio/power dynamics and hierarchies registered in the process of creating ‘algorithmic identities’?
5. What are the intersectional and decolonial queer-feminist concerns and critics

towards ‘Big Data’? For instance, how can we discuss processes such as ‘data mining’ in the context of ‘cyber-colonialism’ and its relation to the exploitation of labor and the environment?

6. What kinds of resistance, intersectional (digital) queer-feminist strategies, methods and methodologies can and might emerge from these concerns and critics?

Please submit your max. 250 words abstracts in English or in German by **March 23, 2018** to the organizers of the panel session:

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