

Call for Papers

## **Digital Culture Meets Data: Critical Perspectives**

Special Issue of Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies

Guest Editors: Aristeia Fotopoulou (University of Brighton) and Helen Thornham (University of Leeds)

Algorithms and big data shape our sociocultural and technical relations and our everyday experiences. Considerations of data, algorithms and infrastructure are now central to our critical perspectives on, and approaches to digital culture. The 'data logical turn' has been talked about as a necessary critical consideration for digital culture, not least because communication, media infrastructures, practices and social environments become increasingly 'datafied'. But what does this turn to data mean for our research, scholarship and pedagogic practice? What does it mean for broader epistemological and ontological frameworks? Has the data paradigm arrived as an unquestionable unifying concept for studies of digital culture and digital media, communication, technology? It may be that a shift of focus on algorithms and data is fundamentally disruptive to the ways in which we see our research and disciplines. It may even appear to limit the theoretical and methodological tools through which we increasingly try to understand mediation, the formation of identity, social life, politics and the creative industries. To others, the data logical turn may be plainly repeating the processes of earlier instances of technological innovation. And for some, it may provide an opportunity to frame new theoretical concepts and methodological tools for a whole new set of social, cultural and political phenomena.

The focus of this special issue emerges from the ECREA conference of late 2017 and is motivated by conceptual and critical questions about the relationship between digital culture and data. We ask: What theoretical and empirical perspectives on data and digital culture can be used to augment and diversify our research and educational approaches? How might we challenge data paradigms or aim to show alternative or complementary ways to address digital culture and communication?

We invite contributions that critically engage with digital culture and data specifically in relation to research, scholarship and pedagogic practice. We invite

contributions that include (but are not reduced to) the following Themes:

- § Media studies and datafication
- § Researching media and culture using data methods
- § Data visualisation, art and design
- § Data cultures and neoliberalism
- § Data activism and citizen engagement
- § Data literacy
- § Data and audiences
- § Data and gender, race, class inequalities
- § Datafication and the creative industries
- § Feminist approaches to data
- § Machine learning and AI
- § Data and the body
- § Smart cities, data and sustainability
- § Social bots and the management of sociality

Articles should be in the range of 6000-8000 words (including all references). Please send a **500-word abstract and a 100-word biography to the editors: [A.Fotopoulou@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:A.Fotopoulou@brighton.ac.uk) and [H.Thornham@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:H.Thornham@leeds.ac.uk) by 31st August 2018**. Authors of accepted abstracts will be notified by **1st October 2018**. Full papers will be submitted **1st December 2018** and will undergo peer review following the usual procedures of the journal. The invitation to submit a full article does not guarantee acceptance into the special issue. The Special Issue will be out in 2020, and in time for REF.

#### **Brief Bio of Guest Editors:**

Dr. Aristeia Fotopoulou is Principal Lecturer in Media and Communications at the University of Brighton, where she leads the MA Digital Media, Culture & Society. Her research focuses on critical aspects of digital and emerging technologies, with current emphasis on critical data literacy, digital health, and AI. She serves as Chair of the European Communication Research & Education Association (ECREA) Digital Culture and Communication Section. Publications include:

- Fotopoulou, A. (forthcoming) Data practices, gender and citizenship. In Stephansen, H. and Trere, E. (eds) *Citizen Media and Practice*. Taylor & Francis/Routledge: Oxford.
- Fotopoulou, A. (2018) *From networked to quantified self: Self-tracking and the*

- moral economy of data sharing. In Papacharissi, Z. (ed.) *A Networked Self: Platforms, Stories, Connections*. New York: Routledge.
- Fotopoulou, A. (forthcoming) *Citizen Media and Gender*. In Baker, M., Blaagaard, B. and Pérez-González, L. (eds) *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Citizen Media*. New York: Routledge.
  - Fotopoulou, A. (2017) *Feminist activism and digital networks: between empowerment and vulnerability*, *Palgrave Studies in Communication for Social Change*, Palgrave MacMillan. (monograph).
  - Fotopoulou, A. and O'Riordan, K. (2016) *Training to self-care: Fitness tracking and the knowledge-able consumer*. *Health Sociology Review*.
  - Fotopoulou, A. and Couldry, N., (2015) *Telling the story of the stories: online content curation and digital engagement*. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(2), pp.235-249.

Dr.Helen Thornham is an Associate Professor of Digital Cultures at Leeds University and has published widely on the social and cultural transformations of digital technologies. Her interdisciplinary work has been funded across RCUK, including AHRC Knowledge Infusion Grant (AH/H500065/1), EPSRC Community and Cultures Network+ (EP/K003585/1), and ESRC Defence, Uncertainty and Risk Project (ES/K011170/1).

Publications include:

- Thornham, H (2018 forthcoming) *Gender and Digital Culture: Irreconcilability in the Digital*. Taylor Francis
- Thornham, H & Gómez Cruz (2017) *Not Just a Number? NEETS, Data and Datalogical Systems*. *Information, Communication & Society*
- Thornham, Helen & Maltby, Sarah (2017) *Beyond Pseudonymity<sup>1</sup>: The socio-technical structure of online military forums*. *New Media and Society* DOI 10.1177/1461444817707273
- Thornham, H & Gómez Cruz (2016) *Hackathons, Data and Discourse: Convolutions of the data(logical) in Big Data and Society* DOI: 10.1177/2053951716679675
- Thornham, Helen & Maltby, Sarah (2016) *The Digital Mundane and the Military Media, Culture and Society* DOI: 10.1177/0163443716646173
- Thornham, Helen & Gómez Cruz, Edgar (2016) *[Im]mobility in the Age of [im]mobile phones: young NEETs and digital practices*. *New Media and Society* DOI: 10.1177/1461444816643430