

Call for Papers

ECREA Midterm Conference

Organized by the ECREA Mediatization and Philosophy of Communication Sections

“Datafication, Mediatization, and the Machine Age”

University of Bonn, Germany

(Media Studies)

November 1st – 2nd, 2019

The rapid development of technologies in the last decades has undeniable impacts on the social, cultural and political processes in contemporary societies and on the everyday lives of their members. Digital platforms became the new spaces of social action, and data has turned into a value system of its own. These transformations, which in the framework of mediatization theory have been described as a ‘metaprocess’ of social change, may promise the increase of efficiency of human performance, but they might as well mean a loss of control or a new landscape for work, privacy or democracy, just to name some of the man contexts involved. No doubt, these processes are in need of critical reflections on the changing relationships between humans and technology.

Particularly two developments currently seem to characterize mediatization processes: *Datafication* and the introduction of ‘*digital machines*’ into everyday life.

Datafication understood as the process of translating information about the social practices of individuals (such as everyday and private communication or consumption) and institutional actors and organisations (such as in politics, the world of work, commerce or the health system) into digital data, refers to the comprehensive collection, storage, archiving and use of digital data in all areas of society (micro, meso and macro levels). As one of the central consequences of digitization, the relevance of data archiving is therefore increasing in all areas and poses major challenges, especially to democratically constituted, liberal societies. Digitization and data archiving mark both a technological and cultural change in society as a whole, the effects of which will have a decisive influence not only on the future of democracy but also on it. In the public discourse, contemporary diagnoses and, in particular, prognoses for the future of democratic society usually oscillate between optimistic-utopian perspectives on the one hand and pessimistic-dystopian scenarios on the other.

As one of the most visible consequences of datafication, the role of the ‘machine’ has come into focus recently. It is not only the ubiquity of algorithms and AI, it is as well the explosion of usage contexts for robots, which far exceeds the long-known industrial robots. Even considering that people's relationships to technology and to ‘machines’ has always been ambivalent, the current development touches on new limitations - machines stand for progress and threat alike. In the course of human history, emotional charging,

mythical exaggeration or demonisation and the political interpretation of machines have almost always accompanied the relationship to technological innovations. With new machines like social robots or autonomous weapons, ethical conflicts are inevitable.

These often conflicting relationships between (wo)man and machines mark leaps in the development of social change, since these conflicts illustrate how people reorganize themselves around technology.

In view of the described massive technological changes, it becomes clear that machines can no longer be reduced to a physical object, but can also be program codes, algorithms or artificial intelligence. These processes of change point to the necessity to detach the concept of the machine from its materiality.

Such “invasion” of the machines at the very heart of the social invites media scholars and philosophers to rethink and reconceptualize the core elements the traditional social thought.

Hence, we invite papers to the following themes.

- Is the technologically permeated society qualitatively different from its earlier forms?
- What are the principles of human-machine interaction?
- What is the nature of agency, is there any sense of applying this concept to the functions performed by machines?
- Historical and recent perspectives on machines
- Datafication as mediatization
- Ethical and political perspectives on machines
- New understanding of the machine concept and artificial intelligence, machine ethics, robot ethics,
- Politics, technology and equality, e.g. models of ‘digital feudalism’
- Images of machines in journalistic (mass) media
- Changes in society due to datafication
- The meaning of being human in the technologized society

Please note that we invite contributions in various formats, e.g. workshops, panels and individual presentations.

- Proposals should consist of an abstract max. 500 words (not including references).
- Please submit an abstract outlining the state of the study or project, as well as the research question(s) or hypotheses, findings and conclusion(s).
- We also encourage submitting theoretical papers, work in progress, e.g. new theoretical, methodological or didactic ideas.
- Presentations can be either short pitch/poster sessions or traditional presentations (feel free to be creative).
- Panels consist of various presentations addressing a common topic from different perspectives. Panels are scheduled for one hour, including discussions. Panel proposals should include a description of the topic and an overall panel goal, addressing the relevance of the topic to the conference theme (400 words). The

proposal should also suggest a chair to serve as moderator and should include a short abstract of each of the presentations (max. 200 words each).

Deadline for submissions: Saturday, July 15th, 2019

Official Website: www.ecrea-bonn2019.de

Please include your author information (name, institution, contact) in the accompanying e-mail.

Accepted presenters will be informed by 1st of August, 2019.

Please submit abstracts as anonymized word-or pdf-documents to:

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