

CfP: MOBILE DIGITAL PRACTICES: SITUATING PEOPLE, THINGS AND DATA

Abstract deadline: February 19, 2017

Fifth issue of *Digital Culture & Society* (peer-reviewed)

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The fifth issue of *Digital Culture & Society* will address particular, situated forms of movement of people, things and data through the lens of practices. Practice-based approaches have concomitantly become pivotal for describing how people, things and data are interrelated in what can be called digital practices. While discussions surrounding the “practice turn” (Schatzki et al. 2006) in social theory have found their way into other disciplines including media studies, it has yet to be clearly identified how practices can be deciphered in terms of scale and order (Swidler 2010) and how the specifics of digital practices can be best spelled out (Couldry 2012). A number of scholars in media and anthropology have worked towards describing the various settings of “what people do with media” (Couldry 2004) in terms of *media* practices (Bräuchler/Postill 2010). Almost simultaneously, a mobilities turn has been identified, framing subjects of the social sciences through the lens of movement and networks (Sheller/Urry 2006). We aim to apply these approaches to a mobile digital realm; hence, we invite to discuss how particularly *digital* practices can be described, framed and researched and how they produce and are produced by the mobility of people, data and devices (Morley 2011).

What is the “digital” from a praxeological perspective and what/who makes it travel? Despite the frequent use of terms such as digital age, digitalization, or digitality, and approaches using concepts from the fields of digital methods, digital ethnography, and digital humanities, it is by no means in every instance clear what makes a practice ‘digital’, and what the specificity of digital practices is, or where their boundaries are. By the same token, media practices are becoming more dynamic and increasingly taking place within algorithmically transduced spaces (Kitchin/Dodge 2011), especially in the context of contemporary data-intensive mobile digital platforms and the augmented spatialities of emergent visual media. These developments contribute to an increased mobility of both media and their data across heterogeneous spaces, while also affecting the ways in which the histories of networked media can be conceptualized and (re-)written.

Digital practices take manifold forms and become meaningful in very different ways depending on who forms part of them where, in which ways, and through which means. Endorsing a non-media-centric stance (Morley 2009, Moores 2012, Krajina et al. 2014), we invite contributors to discuss the digital by reflecting on what people do with digital artefacts while moving through heterogeneous environments, and how digital data are mobilized. In doing so, we aim to further decipher the practices involved in such movements. This calls for a relational account of the digital through its embedding in social, mobile and haptic processes, as opposed to merely defining what the digital “is” or could stand for. Particularly qualitative, ethnographic studies have been helpful for providing a broader context for the use of digital technology, while among the wide array of innovative research practices, digital devices are themselves employed as methodological tools. The range of approaches for studying mobile digital practices include rather classic data collection through interviews and participant observation; video recordings of media usage (Laurier et al. 2015); digital methods (Rogers 2013); and interdisciplinary digital analytics (Marres/Gerlitz 2015), in which creative tools and new algorithmic routines are devised in order to track not just people but their digital devices as well as the respective data flows.

We invite theoretical and/or empirical contributions discussing digital practices and the relationship of humans, things and data from a situated perspective: whether as phenomena to be studied in and of themselves, or as part of innovative research designs. Disciplinary approaches may be rooted in (digital) media and cultural studies, media or digital anthropology, among other social sciences. Interdisciplinary contributions, such as those from science and technology studies or the digital humanities, are particularly encouraged.

For this fifth issue of *Digital Culture & Society*, we invite submissions which may react to and expand on to the following topics:

- Social Practices: How do mobile technologies shape social life, and how are they subject to social interaction (e.g. in mobile contexts)?
- Data Practices: How are data involved in practices of evaluating or researching and what role do infrastructures and algorithms play in their movement? How might a mobility of data be understood, framed, researched and described?
- Historical Practices: How can the digital be approached from a historical perspective and which historical practices are crucial in shaping digital subjects or phenomena? How can media historiography be studied from a praxeological point of view?
- Spatial Practices: How are digital practices involved in shaping spaces, and how do (or how can) spatial or mobile practices inform the digital?
- Visual Practices: How are visual practices and mobility intertwined, both in terms of digital visualizations and their use?

Paper proposals may relate to, but are not limited to, the following questions concerning mobile digital practices. When submitting an abstract, authors should make explicit to which of the following categories they would like to submit their paper:

1. *Field Research and Case Studies* (full paper: max. 8.000 words)
We invite articles that discuss empirical findings from studies that approach the relationships between humans and data. These may include practices of circulating or collecting data as well processes of production and evaluation. Studies may also trace the flow of data by paying attention to the practices involved, or follow the practices to gain insight into the movement of data.
2. *Methodological Reflection* (full paper: max. 8.000 words)
We invite contributions that reflect on the methodologies employed when researching mobile digital practices. These may include, for example, the specificities of ethnographic fieldwork in online/offline environments; challenges and opportunities faced when qualitatively researching quantifiable data and vice versa; approaches using mixed methods; discussions of mobile and circulative methods; and reflections of experimental forms of research.
3. *Conceptual/Theoretical Reflection* (full paper: max. 8.000 words)
We encourage contributions that reflect on the conceptual and/or theoretical dimension of mobile digital practices, and discuss or question how the digital can be defined, what it can describe, and how it can be differentiated. We also invite articles that interrogate terms such as digital or practice and call for alternatives in the conceptualization of data and “what people do” with it.
4. *Entering the Field* (2.000-3.000 words; experimental formats welcome)
This experimental section presents initial and ongoing empirical work in digital media studies. The editors have created this section to provide a platform for researchers who would like to initiate a discussion concerning their emerging (yet perhaps incomplete) research material and plans as well as methodological insights.

Deadlines and contact information

- Expressions of interest/Initial abstracts (max. 300 words) and short biographical note (max. 100 words) are due on: Feb 19, 2017.
- Authors will be notified by Feb 26, 2017, whether they are invited to submit a full paper.
- Full papers are due on: May 1, 2017.
- Notifications to authors of referee decisions: July 1, 2017
- Final versions due: August 1, 2017
- Please send your abstract and short biographical note to Anna Lisa Ramella: ramella@locatingmedia.uni-siegen.de.

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About the Journal:

Digital Culture & Society seeks contributions that display a clear, inspiring engagement with media theory and/or methodological issues. Emphasising the relevance of new practices and technology appropriation for theory as well as methodology debates, the journal also encourages empirical investigations.

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