Call for Abstracts
"The (Post-)Digital City: Media, Technology and Architecture"

Final Conference of the Research Network "The Digital City. Materiality and Objects of Urban Communication Culture (DIGISTA)".

17-18 February 2022 at University of Augsburg (Germany)

Cities are spaces where processes of social, cultural and technological change unfold with particular intensity. In the past decade, it is above all processes subsumed under the term "digitalisation" that are regarded as the main driver and catalyst for the ongoing transformation of urban spaces. While there is broad consensus that technologies such as sensors and cameras, measuring stations, platforms and dashboards are changing urban life, culture and governance, and have permeated cities to such an extent that they have been lately also referred to as "post-digital cities" (Negroponte 1998; Cramer 2014), it is contested in what ways these changes actually occur, what impact they have on different levels and how these changes can be normatively evaluated.

DIGISTA is an interdisciplinary research network that addresses the topic of digitalisation in cities from the perspective of communication and media studies, cultural sociology, architectural history and computational sciences. While "digitalisation" has arguably impacted the administration, planning and everyday life in cities for quite some time, we believe that changes in (post-)digital cities have recently picked up speed. Neighborhood platforms on the Internet are changing the ways local residents interact; the architecture and function of central squares and buildings in cities have changed; the infrastructures in cities have been altered and specific architectural typologies, such as libraries, are redefined. Technologies such as location-based apps and dashboards as well as applications of virtual and augmented reality have changed the perception and production of space. Understanding digitalisation as an umbrella term under which a wide range of developments and technologies that permeate cities today can be subsumed, we investigate the impact and significance of different processes of digitalisation for urban space. Assuming that digitalisation processes are neither neutral, nor purely technological, but constitute a field of highly contingent, situated and material practices mediated through technologies, as well as discourses, architectures and infrastructures and produced in different ways in the everyday lives of inhabitants, we believe that these processes in cities must be analysed from an interdisciplinary perspective.

For the final conference of our research network, we invite contributions that deal with digitalisation processes in the (post-)digital city. Submissions may relate to the four disciplines represented in our network (communication and media studies, architectural history, cultural sociology, computer science), but also come from other disciplines dealing with the complex phenomenon of (post-)digital cities. The aim of the conference is to bring together researchers as well as practitioners from the social sciences, humanities and information sciences to discuss the complexity and diversity of phenomena relating to the (post-)digital cities of our time. Negotiated in the everyday life and practices of city inhabitants and dwellers, but also in a variety of discourses, infrastructures and architectures, specific technologies and particular places, we invite submissions addressing theoretical aspects of the (post-)digital city, as well as empirical studies on the interwoven processes of social, cultural and technological changes and the associated practices and representations. Submissions on the following topics are welcome, but need not be limited to these:

Media representations, governance of and appropriation of urban spaces in the (post-)digital city
Within less than a decade, "smart urbanism" and the "smart city" have become major topics in the discourse on urban development. While the "smart city" has become somewhat of a leitmotif in the context of city branding, promising sustainability, efficiency, security, transparency and participation, it has also been criticized as instrumental to impoverishment and inhospitality, surveillance and control, as well as the enforcement of capitalist logics and technocracy (Srnicek 2017; Zuboff 2019; Dijck, Poell, and Waal 2018). In contrast, "smart urbanism" promises to take into account local conditions and the

needs of citizens (Odendaal 2021; Marvin, Luque-Ayala, and McFarlane 2016; McFarlane and Söderström 2017; Söderström, Paasche, and Klauser 2014). Digitalisation of urban spaces is, as these discourses indicate, apparently not a fixed path, but a conflict-ridden field. Questions we want to address in this panel include, but need not be limited to the following: What are the current discourses and narratives relating to the actual or imagined "smart city" or "smart urbanism"? What are the strategies and practices of local actors (civil society, politics, business) in the context of these narratives? How is the (post-)digital city represented? Do specific platforms, such as neighborhood platforms or maps, contribute to more inclusion and participation or do they (re-)produce or (re)inforce existing social, cultural and economic power structures? What are the practices and interventions that create and constitute the (post-)digital city beyond such apps and platforms? And what are the ethics of the (post-)digital city?

Augmentation and virtualisation in the (post-)digital city

The (post-)digital city is in many respects a hybrid space. While we already interact with media augmented cities in the form of digital maps in our everyday lives, research and large companies are increasingly looking toward a future of visually augmented three dimensional urban spaces"? From a technological as well as practical perspective, we are interested in Mixed Reality technologie such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) in the (post-) digital city, particularly in public places. In order to move towards Mixed Reality technologies being an omnipresent phenomenon, we need to rethink paradigms that we are used to in the smartphone age. How can Mixed Reality applications for public spaces be designed and where can they be used? Which challenges do users of such applications face? How do design principles, philosophies, and technologies change the way we communicate and perceive public space? How can established best practices in human-computer interface design be transferred or reinterpreted in Mixed Reality? Besides HCI-related topics, it is crucial to develop concepts and negotiate rules for the participatory design of augmented public spaces as a society. In this context, content-filtering technologies such as collaborative filtering and AI-based approaches need to be designed and evaluated, both from the perspective of content creators and consumers.

Architectures and infrastructures in the (post-)digital city

The (post-)digital city is not located in some remote "cloud". Although data transmission and storage may seem ephemeral, they are tethered to a whole range of real, material and physical infrastructures and geographically situated in actual spaces and architectures. It is these kinds of tangible infrastructures on the ground (such as cable routes, transmission masts, distribution boxes or Wi-Fi routers) and specific architectures (such as data centers and control rooms) that enable digitalization "to take place". Physical infrastructures and architectures, hence, form an important part of the (post-)digital city. While architectures and infrastructures have been the subject of social science research for quite some time now, it remains open to what extent these are distinct in the (post-)digital city. Questions we want address in this panel include, but need not be limited to the following: In what ways are the infrastructures of the (post-)digital city unique and how do they differ from other infrastructures (Laak 2018; Barlösius 2019; Büchner 2018)? What are their politics, what power relations are (re-)produced by the infrastructures of the (post-)digital city and which (new) inequalities possibly arise in this process (Graham and Marvin 2001; Rodgers and O'Neill 2012; Larkin 2013)? In what ways can digital infrastructures be usefully described as invisible, and what does that imply? To what extent has this invisibility increased in the (post-)digital city? Because infrastructures have been generally conceived of as embedded in (other) structures, shaped by and shaping the conventions of a community of practice, as well as largely invisible but visible upon breakdown (Star and Ruhleder 1996; Star 1999), these are some of the questions worth asking. Apart from the infrastructures and architecture of and *for* the (post-)digital city, digitalization has also affected the architectural nature of long-standing institutions (such as museums and libraries). In what ways are such existing architectural typologies transformed by digitalization (Arantes 2012)? What does the architecture of the (post-)digital look like and how do people interact with it? What new architecture is being produced in the (post-)digital city? And does this architecture influence the practices and interaction processes of its inhabitants and, if so, in what ways?

The conference is planned for **February 17 and 18, 2022**. Depending on the pandemic situation, the conference will be either held in a hybrid format online and onsite in Augsburg or online only.

Proposals (that address the topics listed under the three headings or related topics) can be submitted in the form of an abstract (max. 7,000 characters) by **October 31, 2021 (either in English or German).** (Notice of acceptance will be given until November 15). Please also indicate whether you would like to present in English or German. Selected papers of the conference will be published in a peer reviewed book. We especially encourage emerging scholars.

We are looking forward to your abstracts. Please send them to Paula Nitschke, University of Augsburg (**paula.nitschke@phil.uni-augsburg.de**).

Do not hesitate to contact us in case of any questions or further information (www.digista.de)

DIGISTA
die digitale Stadt

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