

T10P06 / Digital Methods for Public Policy

Topic : T10 / Methodologies

Chair : Gray Jonathan (King's College London)

Second Chair : Nicholas Pearce (University of Bath)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The past few decades have seen an explosion in “born digital” data – including from social media services and online platforms, smart phones, digital devices and the web. These sources of data open up new avenues for the study for social and political phenomena (Savage & Burrows, 2007; Lazer et al., 2009). This panel will examine the potential implications of a shift from “digitized” to “born digital” data and methods (Rogers, 2014). This methodological shift from a focus on polls, surveys and interviews to repurposing digital traces and big data is accompanied by a corresponding shift in ways of studying and thinking about of social life.

Drawing on research in digital sociology, media studies, communication studies and Science and Technology Studies, this panel will look at how “born digital” data has and can be used in the context of public policy. In particular, it will address questions such as: How might emerging sources of digital data be repurposed to inform policy research and practice? What kinds of capacities are required for researchers, policymakers and public institutions to take advantage of these developments? What are the consequences of the growing use of born digital data for public policy-making?

The digital methods agenda has been developed in order to repurpose “born digital” data for the purpose of social, cultural and political research. The past decade has seen the development of tools and methods for using digital data from a wide variety of media – including search engines, social media and sharing platforms. These have been applied to study societal issues from migration and food safety to urban planning, illness and ageing (Rogers, 2013; Rogers, Sánchez-Querubín, & Kil, 2015). The panel aims to open up space for engagements between digital methods and public policy research - including showcasing and discussing the contribution of new digital tools, methods and born digital data in public policy research, as well as advancing methodological and theoretical reflection on their growing availability and use.

References

Lazer, D., Pentland, A., Adamic, L., Aral, S., Barabási, A.-L., Brewer, D., ... Alstyne, M. V. (2009). Computational Social Science. *Science*, 323(5915), 721–723. <http://doi.org/10.1126/science.1167742>

Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital Methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rogers, R. (2014). Political Research in the Digital Age. *International Public Policy Review*, 8(1), 73–87.

Rogers, R., Sánchez-Querubín, N., & Kil, A. (2015). *Issue Mapping for an Ageing Europe*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press.

Savage, M., & Burrows, R. (2007). The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology. *Sociology*, 41(5), 885–899. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0038038507080443>

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Drawing on research in digital sociology, media studies, communication studies and Science and Technology Studies, this panel will look at how “born digital” data is and can be used in the context of public policy.

This panel aims to open up space for engagements between digital methods and public policy research - including showcasing and discussing the contribution of new digital tools, methods and born digital data in public policy research, as well as advancing methodological and theoretical reflection on their growing availability and use. We welcome contributions on topics such as:

- Examples of the use of digital tools, methods and data in public policy research
- Opportunities and challenges around the use of “born digital” data in policy research
- Reflection on the use and availability of digital methods, tools and data in policy

- Shifts from digitised data (e.g. statistics) to born digital data (e.g. web and social media data)
- The politics of digital tools, data and methods and their role in policy research and practice

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Session 1 Digital Methods for Public Policy

Thursday, June 29th 08:15 to 10:15 (Block B 2 - 2)

Discussants

Gray Jonathan (King's College London)

Moving beyond the digitalised and natively digital divide. The case of the mapping of climate policy debates in multiple spaces

Nicolas Baya Laffite (STSLab, Université de Lausanne)

Understanding the policy process over time: Linking debates to decisions through digital sources

Jenny Lewis (University of Melbourne)

Andrew Turpin (University of Melbourne)

Mapping open data on digital media

Gray Jonathan (King's College London)

Designing Digital Methods to monitor and inform Urban Policy. The case of Paris and its Urban Nature initiative.

donato ricci (médialab|SciencesPo)

Axel Meunier

Gabriele Colombo (Politecnico di Milano)

Agata Brilli (Politecnico di Milano)