



New Media & Society



CALL FOR PAPERS: Special issue of *New Media & Society*

“We are on a mission”. Exploring the role of future imaginaries in the making and governing of digital technology

Call for Papers

Deadline: 31.08.2018

Guest editors:

Astrid Mager, Institute of Technology Assessment (ITA), Austrian Academy of Sciences
astrid.mager@oeaw.ac.at

Christian Katzenbach, Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society, Berlin & Freie Universität Berlin
katzenbach@hiig.de

Tentative timeline:

- Abstract submission deadline: 31.8.2018
- Notification of acceptance/selection: 30.09.2018
- Deadline for full papers: 28.02.2019

“We are on a mission to build a more open, accessible, and fair financial future, one piece of software at a time” promises the software platform *Blockchain*. “Imagine if everyone could get

around easily and safely, without tired, drunk or distracted driving” envisions the self-driving car company *Waymo* (a subsidiary of Google’s parent company, *Alphabet Inc.*). “The Regulation is an essential step to strengthen citizens’ fundamental rights in the digital age and facilitate business by simplifying rules for companies in the Digital Single Market” claims the *European Commission* with regard to the General Data Protection Regulation.

These examples show how imaginaries of future societies are enacted to promote digital innovations or legitimate certain modes of internet governance. They illustrate how software providers, tech companies and legislators dig into the rich pool of cultural norms, visions and values to support (or question) digital tools, rules and regulations. Future prospects seem to be central for making decisions in the present. The future, however, is not only imagined, but also constructed, made and unmade in different constellations and contexts. The “Internet imaginaire” helped software designers, businesses, politicians, and individual users to adopt this technology instead of another, as Flichy (2008) argues. Metaphors are not only used to discuss the future of the Internet, but also to influence and shape public debate, policy and theory, as Wyatt notes: “Sometimes today’s imaginary becomes tomorrow’s lived reality.” (Wyatt 2004: 244). Sociotechnical imaginaries provide insights in the way technology and political orders are co-produced in particular social, cultural and political contexts, as Jasanoff and Kim (2009) show.

This special issue will thus be concerned with the function, power, and performativity of future imaginaries in today’s making and governing of digital technology. Papers could address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- What role do future imaginaries play in the making and governing of present digital technology?
- How are they mobilized to push or oppose digital innovations such as artificial intelligence, the internet of things, blockchain technology or open source/ open data projects?
- How are prospective imaginaries shaped in public debates, policy discourses and governance practices regarding networked technology and global data flows?
- What significance do European specificities have in global technology imaginations and vice versa?
- Can different mechanisms be identified in mainstream discourses and counter-narratives?
- What happens if future scenarios are contested and digital promises become contradictory?

Please note that the guest editors welcome submissions on a wide variety of theoretical and/or empirical contributions to the study of future imaginaries in the making and governing of digital technology.

Submission

Proposals of 500-750 words should include an abstract and a short description explaining whether/how previous or current research relates to the special issue theme. Please submit your proposal via the website <https://www.hiig.de/en/cfp-special-issue-new-media-society/> no later than August 31, 2018.

Invited paper submissions will be due 28 February 2019 and will be submitted directly to the submission site for New Media and Society: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/nms> where they will undergo peer review following the usual procedures of New Media & Society. Approximately 10-12 papers will be sent out for full review. Therefore, the invitation to submit a full article does not guarantee acceptance into the special issue. The special issue is scheduled for publication in early 2020.

References

Flichy, P (2007) *The Internet Imaginaire*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jasanoff S and S.H Kim (2009) Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea. *Minerva* 47:119–146.

Wyatt S (2004) Danger! Metaphors at Work in Economics, Geophysiology, and the Internet. *Science, Technology and Human Values* 29(2): 242-261.