

Call for Abstracts

Special Section of the International Journal for Communication: **Big Data Discourses: Communicating, Deliberating, and Imagining Datafication**

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Approaching datafication through discourse means to understand and to engage with the eminent reality-making power of communication, deliberation, and imagination. It foregrounds the work that goes into rendering datafication a socially relevant phenomenon and problem.

The Special Section of IJOC sets out from the idea that the public understanding of datafication is driven by discourses in the media and among policymakers and the imaginaries they evoke. It invites us to look at what datafication is or should be for a variety of publics and speakers and how they discuss, criticize, or envision the collection and use of data at different places, speaking from different situations, and at different times. That way, the contributions do not merely interrogate the status quo of Big Data analytics. Rather, discourses also involve prospective ambitions and normative stances about potential, desirable, or unwanted innovations. The Special Section turns its attention to discourses whose programs of thought actively shape the social constitution of Big Data and translate into practices, organizational forms, policies, and institutions. Discourses are in fact integral to how we come to engage with datafication.

Inquiring into the semantics, interpretations, and cultural values that prelude, accompany, and surround investments and innovations into Big Data requires by definition interdisciplinary work. This includes, among others, critical data studies, STS, sociology, communication, linguistics, political science, cultural studies, geography and education, as well as security studies and gender studies.

By taking the understanding of datafication as a matter of contingent articulation, the Special Section helps to dismantle claims about the given and irrevocable facticity of data formats and data analytics so as to explore ways of reimagining their status and implications. In doing so, it seeks to gain leverage in critically examining how datafication's social imaginaries are shaped and to enable alternative readings.

The Special Section is open to theoretical and empirical approaches. Due to the variety of paradigms, we believe that it is necessary to work across disciplines and embrace an international perspective. It invites senior as well as emerging scholars to contemplate the entanglement of discourse and technology.

Contributions can address, but are not limited to, the following aspects:

- Deliberation, policymaking processes, and datafication
- Rhetoric and metaphors of dataism
- Datafication imagery and visuals
- Critiques of dataveillance and data colonialism
- Non-Western voices on global and local form of data exploitation
- Media reports and (data) journalism on data analytics
- Discourses around data analytics in fields such as education, health, policing, welfare, etc.
- Visions and anticipations of future data usage
- Fictions and works of art engaging with data and data analytics
- Domestication of data-driven services and technologies

- Folk theories around datafication and people's algorithmic imaginaries
- Critical studies of data analytics' marketing material and business talk
- Self-presentation of actors from data-rich sectors
- Data feminism
- Data scandals and the performance of whistleblowers as public figures
- Narratives and counternarratives around datafication

There will be no publication fee.

Timeline and procedure

500 to 700 word abstracts should be sent to (bigdatadiscourses@gmail.com) by February 08, 2024. The abstract should articulate: 1) the issue or research question to be discussed, 2) the methodological or critical framework used, and 3) the expected findings or conclusions. Feel free to consult with the Special Section Editors about your article ideas and potential angles or approaches.

Decisions will be communicated to the authors by February 22, 2024. Invited paper submissions will be due September 1, 2024 and will be submitted to bigdatadiscourses@gmail.com. They will then undergo peer review through IJoC following the journal's standard double-blind procedures. The invitation to submit a full article does not guarantee acceptance into the Special Section. The Special Section is scheduled for publication in fall 2025.

This call for abstracts is also accessible via <https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/en/institut-fuer-kommunikations-und-medienwissenschaft/professuren/chair-of-media-and-communication/forschungs-und-praxisprojekte/framing-big-data>

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