



Information Communication & Society

Special Issue 2010: Call for Papers

Technical Capital and Social Inequalities

It is widely recognised that information and communication technologies are implicated in the diverse forms of social inequality. However, there are currently few good ways of exploring this interface analytically. Existing accounts of the Digital Divide – for example – make an analytical distinction between technology and social process: social inequalities retain an independent dynamic which technology, as a separate phenomenon, may be related to. Debates on class and ethnic inequality largely ignore the role of technology, even though it is clear that new technologies are now embedded across key aspects of everyday life – from work to consumption and social networks. Only in feminist theory has there been a more sustained concern to link forms of technology to the generation of gender divisions but this analysis remains largely independent of other forms of inequality.

This Special Issue begins from the premise that we need to explore systematic ways of conceptualising relations between technologies and inequalities, which transcend their analytical separation. We need theoretically grounded ways of exploring how technologies and inequalities are bound together and the implications for our understanding of both: how technological forms embody, generate, and (perhaps) contest social inequalities.

We welcome contributions which aim to develop these analytical resources. In particular we aim to examine the potential for a notion of ‘technical capital’ which might enable us to explore how technical knowledge and expertise are bound with complex social inequalities. For Bourdieu, the concept of ‘technical capital’ captures how particular social groups, including those who lack other resources of cultural and economic capital, can mobilise around technical expertise to access power and resources. However, this formulation of technical capital, may insist on an overly instrumental relationship between technology and inequality and run the risk of reifying technological forms. We are therefore keen to encourage alternative ways of conceptualising the relationship between stratification and technology, and we also welcome papers that also explore insights from other theoretical perspectives, for example Science and Technology Studies and Actor Network Theory which emphasise the indeterminacy of technology; and Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory which give greater insight to the performative and dynamic nature of social inequalities. Our overarching aim will be to develop new approaches to technology and inequality that is sensitive to both agents and social structures and to both contingency and persistent forms of inequality.

This special issue will be edited by **Melissa Gilbert** (Temple University, Philadelphia), **Susan Halford** (Southampton University, UK) and **Mike Savage** (Manchester University, UK). Papers should be a maximum of 8,000 words in length (including title, abstract, tables etc. and references).

Anyone wishing to have potential papers considered for this special issue should contact one of the editors by 15 May 2009, with a 100 word abstract, and an account of how the paper will address the theme. **Deadline for submission of papers:** May 2010.

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