

Living queer with data

Everyday relationships with digital data in Brighton and Hove, UK

Department: Human Geography and Spatial Planning

Research group: Urban Geography

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Project description

Embodied, human and private experiences are becoming digital data through the devices and platforms we use. This data is transferred across different places and scales, being quantified and capitalised, becoming the most valuable global commodity, where citizens are losing privacy and surveillance is intensifying (Kitchin, 2014; Dalton, Taylor and Thatcher, 2016; Thatcher, O'Sullivan and Mahmoudi, 2016; Zuboff, 2019). At the same time, tech companies present a reality where digital data is supposed to offer a 'seamless' and 'convenient' future. The use of these technologies is shaping everyday lives, having negative impacts on marginalised groups. Data privacy, surveillance and security are now under scrutiny from academics, politicians and human rights organisations and alternative imaginings of digital technologies are emerging.

Everyday lives are being transformed by data and people are learning to live with the datafication of their lives. My preliminary research (2021-2022) revealed that LGBTQ+ people living in Brighton and Hove felt uncertain about the future of digital data, at local and global scales, in terms of rights, equality and well-being. Relations with data were situated in the urban context, where data became meaningful in relation to Brighton's 'queer' and 'gay-friendly' atmosphere. Participants had concerns about the ways data becomes co-opted into political agendas (for example, tracking migrants) and what that may mean for growing right-wing ideologies (for example, the institutionalisation of transphobia and the privatisation of health care in the UK). The student working on this project would assist in the analysis of the qualitative data set (25 interviews) using NVivo, exploring how LGBTQ+ people negotiate, contest and resist digital data in their everyday urban lives. The student would also conduct a literature review search in the field of 'critical data studies' and 'digital geographies' to help understand the research data.

Job Requirements

This project would be well suited to a student who has an interest in digital geographies and/or feminist/queer geographies and who would like to develop qualitative analysis skills.

- Qualitative research analysis skills
- Ability to review and synthesise academic literature
- English language proficiency