

Call for Papers for the 2nd Weizenbaum Conference “Challenges of Digital Inequality

Digital Education | Digital Work | Digital Life”

16 and 17 May 2019 in Berlin, Germany

The Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society is organising a conference on Thursday, 16 May and Friday, 17 May 2019 on the subject of “Challenges of Digital Inequality: Digital Education, Digital Work, Digital Life” and invites you to submit short and regular papers for presentation at the conference.

The aim of the conference is to bring together different disciplinary perspectives (e.g. education and social sciences, legal studies, communication science, computer science, economics science and engineering science) to highlight the challenges, drivers and consequences of inequality in the age of digitalisation.

In this context, we strive to identify viable solutions to ensure the creation of a self-determined society.

Introduction

Digitalisation transforms the society we live in today: It changes the way we communicate, learn, work, and live. Digital technologies provide access to information anytime and anywhere and promise to empower users around the world by delivering more and easier opportunities for transparency and social participation. Despite this potential, modern societies are increasingly witnessing a gaping chasm of inequality as social actors experience differential results of ubiquitous digitalisation around the world. Understanding and finding ways to solve this paradox is a primary motivation for the Weizenbaum Conference 2019.

For example, the question of whether the digital transformation of education reduces or exacerbates inequalities remains open. Indeed, while popular online learning platforms allow global access to educational materials for anyone, their use is highly dependent on appropriate Internet access and a certain level of Internet skills. Furthermore, many existing online learning platforms are designed for specific cultural contexts and frequently fail to account for users with special needs. As a result, existing inequalities might be further solidified instead of mitigated. For instance, many refugees struggle with a stable Internet connection upon their arrival to a host country which slows down their progress of learning the language and impedes social inclusion. In the context of school education, available equipment, Internet access, the curriculum, teaching methods as well as teachers’ competencies could be contributing factors for inequality. While demands for more inclusive ways of education have reached schools, practice reveals pressing challenges that need to be overcome. In this context, digital tools may offer solutions, but can also build barriers.

The world of research is also not immune to inequality struggles. Digitalisation is a prerequisite when it comes to research collaboration, as well as the production and presentation of research

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findings. Nonetheless, access to research output varies from institution to institution, as does the researchers' ability to publish in the open access format. To address these issues, open access and open research data are currently on everyone's lips, with other aspects of open science, such as citizen science, also on the rise.

As labour markets are witnessing tremendous digital transformation, more and more workers choose to leverage digital tools to engage in the new "platform economy", promising more autonomy and flexibility. These developments are challenging traditional approaches to the welfare state as well as open new gateways for discrimination, which calls for new approaches to address these developments. Furthermore, as companies actively embrace digital solutions and automation, demands for new digital skill sets and qualifications are pressing. Large enterprises have already focused their strategies on developing new competencies in their workforce. However, small and medium-sized enterprises are still in the orientation phase and are often lost when it comes to developing digital skill strategies for their employees.

On the individual level, digitalisation is blurring the boundaries between personal life and work, dividing workers between those who can and those who cannot accommodate to the new realities of constant availability. Furthermore, usage patterns, contextual and personality characteristics all contribute to the outcomes users obtain online. For example, while active participation on social media has been linked to beneficial outcomes such as social connectedness, social capital, and gains in social support, passive use of these technologies has been associated with negative outcomes like decreased life satisfaction and negative affectivity. Untangling these complexities is a critical research challenge to ensure beneficial uses of emerging technologies for all.

Finally, with the growing popularity of automated algorithmic decision-making, there are concerns that existing inequalities are solidified as a result of data-driven decisions and inherent biases. Many life-changing decisions like whether to keep someone in preventive detention are already relying on automated algorithms. Existing inequalities can be aggravated for example if biased data is used as the ground truth to train algorithms. At the same time, a lack of transparency impedes the detection of inbuilt moral assumptions, biases, and priorities underlying the algorithm. Hence, it is very difficult or even impossible for systematically disfavoured groups or individuals to question decisions and demand fair re-evaluation.

Taking the lens of digital inequality, this conference seeks contributions that help to steer self-determined digital transformation in digital education, digital work, and digital life. In line with the mission of the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, we set to explore possibilities to shape digital change in a meaningful way.

Thematic priorities of the conference:

- Perspectives on Marginalized Groups in the Digital Society
- Digital Inequality and Digital Divide
- Inclusion and Digital Education
- Adoption of Digital Education in Schools and Higher Education
- Digital Teaching and Digital Learning

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- Designing Engaging Learning Experiences
- Legal Aspects of Open Education, Learning Analytics, and Educational Data Mining
- Ethical Challenges of Digital Education and Learning Analytics
- Digital Science and Research Lifecycle in the Digital Age
- Open Science, Open Access, and Open Research Data
- Citizen Science and Automatization of Science
- Critical Perspectives on Measuring Research Productivity
- Digital Work: Skill Change, Education, and Learning
- New Forms and Dynamics of Work in the Digital World
- Digital Transformation of the Labour Market
- Competencies for Participation in the New Platform Economy
- Discrimination in the Sharing Economy
- Algorithmic Governance: Using Data Intelligence at the Workplace
- Work-Life Balance and Work-Life Integration
- Labour Law and Legal Aspects of Digital Surveillance
- Dark Sides of Digital Work: Stress, Overload, Social Isolation, Exclusion, Surveillance
- Digitised Individual, Health, and Well-Being
- Digitised Individual, Work, and Performance
- Digitised Individual, Society, and Policy Implications
- Legal Issues of Digital Self

We invite short papers of 2 pages and regular papers of 7 pages.

KEY DATES

- **STEP 1 (mandatory):** To ensure that your paper fits the overarching theme of the conference, please submit a short abstract (300 words) by 11 January 2019 or before per email at: weizenbaum-conference@wzb.eu.
- Notification on the theme fit will be issued by 18 January 2019 at the latest.
- **STEP 2 (Contingent on the decision at STEP 1):** short (2 pages) and regular (7 pages) papers must be submitted by 8 February 2019. All submissions should follow the provided template and be submitted via [the submission system](#)
- Decision notification will be issued by 5 March 2019.
- **STEP 3:** Authors of accepted papers are given the opportunity to revise their submissions based on reviewers' feedback by 5 April 2019. Both short and long papers will be published in the proceedings. Authors of long papers will be given the opportunity to present their paper at the conference, while authors of short papers will be asked to present their work as a poster.
- **CONFERENCE DATE:** 16 – 17 May 2019

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Conference updates will continuously be posted on the Conference website:

<https://weizenbaum-conference.org>

The Weizenbaum Institute is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research Germany and was founded in 2017. It is operated by a Berlin-Brandenburg consortium coordinated by the [Berlin Social Science Center](#) (WZB) and also includes four Berlin universities: [Freie Universität Berlin](#), [Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin](#), [Technische Universität Berlin](#), and the [Berlin University of the Arts](#) as well as the [University of Potsdam](#) and the [Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems](#) (FOKUS). The institute's aim is to combine interdisciplinary basic research with an exploration of concrete solutions and knowledge transfer into politics, business and society.

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