

Digital Geography Research Group 4th Annual Symposium Programme

Using the Digital: Research Methods, Teaching, and Everyday Practice

1st July 2020 1–5pm GMT+1/BST

Twitter: @digital_RGS #DGRGSymp



With thanks to the Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British Geographers
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Schedule

1:00–1:15	Arrival <i>When you arrive, please send Hannah Awcock a message in the Chat with the name of the breakout room you want to be part of.</i>
1:15–2:30	Welcome remarks by DGRG Chair Professor Dorothea Kleine, University of Sheffield, UK. Opening Panel, chaired by Professor Dorothea Kleine, University of Sheffield, UK. Panellists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Jessica McLean, Macquarie University, Australia.• Professor Balaji Parthasarathy, International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore, India.• Fiona C. Ssozi, Makerere University, Uganda.• Professor Matthew Zook, University of Kentucky, USA.
2:30–2:45	Break <i>Take this opportunity to have a stretch, get a drink, go to the loo, or go and get some fresh air. If you have a spare minute, why not have a go at 'virtual networking' and use the Chat feature to message another attendee?</i>
2:45–4:00	Digital Shorts, chaired by Dr. Tess Osborne, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Netherlands. Presenters (For presentation titles and abstracts, see programme): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Garcia, University of Canterbury, Aotearoa (New Zealand).• Helen Johnson, University of Liverpool, UK.• Dr. Doug Specht, University of Westminster, UK.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maxwell Mutanda, Independent researcher. • Jamie Halliwell, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. • Jack Lowe, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK. • Charles Sewell, University of Hull, UK. • Dr. Hannah C. Gunderman, Carnegie Mellon University, USA. • Clair Cooper, Durham University, UK. • Daisy Curtis, University of Exeter, UK. • Dr. Kelle Howson, Adam Badger, Dr. Alessio Bertolini, and Professor Mark Graham, Oxford Internet Institute, UK. • Caitlin Hafferty, Countryside and Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, UK. • Dr. Katja Kaufmann, Mag Christoph Straganz, Mag Belinda Mahlkecht, and Professor Tabea Bork-Hüffer, University of Innsbruck, Austria. • Dr. Hilary Faxon, Cornell/University of California Berkeley, USA. 		
4:00–4:15	<p>Break</p> <p><i>If you have any questions for the Digital Short presenters, now would be a good time to send them a message in the Chat.</i></p>		
4:15–4:45	<p>Breakout Group 1: Research Methodologies</p> <p>Chaired by Dr. Sammia Poveda, University of Sheffield, UK.</p>	<p>Breakout Group 2: Teaching</p> <p>Chaired by Dr. Phil Jones, University of Birmingham, UK.</p>	<p>Breakout Group 3: Everyday Practice</p> <p>Chaired by Dr. Hannah Awcock, University of Edinburgh, UK.</p>
4:45–5:00	Closing Remarks		

Guidelines and Etiquette for Virtual Meetings

1. Do not share the meeting password with anyone. All attendees will be informed of the password through an Eventbrite email.
2. Use your full name to enter the meeting so that you can be checked against the Eventbrite list of attendees. If you cannot be identified, you will not be allowed to enter.
3. Adhere to the Code of Conduct throughout the Symposium. Anyone failing to do this will be ejected from the event.
4. Keep your microphone muted unless you are speaking.
5. If possible, use headphones when you are talking to avoid feedback.
6. If you would like to ask a question or contribute to a discussion, then please use the ‘raise hand’ feature and wait for the Chair to call on you. Alternatively, you can ask your question/make your point in the Chat, and the chair will read out your question/point.

Code of Conduct

The Digital Geographies Research Group aims to be open, accessible, and welcoming to all. We treat each other with kindness and respect, and we will hold attendees of the symposium to the same standards. We operate a zero-tolerance approach towards bullying, discrimination, harassment, and intimidation. Any participant who engages in discriminatory or offensive behaviour, language, gestures, or imagery will be ejected from the symposium.

Any criticism should be directed at the issue or the idea, not the person. Critical feedback should also be constructive.

Tips for Using Zoom

Most of you are probably familiar with Zoom by now, but if you're not, the Zoom Help Centre is very good: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206175806>. During the Symposium, you will need to use the following functions. If you are unsure about any of them, it's worth having a look at these guides in advance:

- In-meeting chat: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/203650445-In-meeting-chat>
- Raise hand: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205566129-Raising-your-hand-In-a-webinar>

Biographies of Keynote Panellists

Dr. Jessica McLean, Macquarie University, Australia.

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Jess McLean does research on how humans, more-than-humans, environments and technologies interact to produce geographies of change. Her research focuses on digital technologies, water politics, climate action and activism. She is a Senior Lecturer at Macquarie University where she is Deputy Director of Outreach and Engagement and teaches Anthropocene politics, Indigenous geographies and environmental justice. In 2019, her book *Changing Digital Geographies: Technologies, Environments and People* was published and she is co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Digital Geography and Society* journal.

Professor Balaji Parthasarathy, International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore, India.

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Balaji Parthasarathy is Professor at the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore, and a co-founder of the Institute's Centre for Information Technology and Public

Policy. His interests focus on the relationship between technological innovation, economic globalization, and social change. One thread within this broad focus examines the impacts of public policy and firm strategies on the organization of production in the ICT industry. Another thread deals with ICTs for Development, or how ICT deployment and use transforms social relationships, especially in underprivileged contexts. His recent work has examined the political-economy of the digital platform economy, frugal innovation, and “smart” cities.

Fiona C. Ssozi, Makerere University, Uganda.

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Fiona is an Assistant Lecturer in the School of Computing and Informatics Technology at Makerere University (Uganda) and she has been actively teaching in the Department of Information Systems since 2007. She coordinates the Development Informatics Research Group at Makerere and has been involved in a number of ICT4D projects in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda and South Africa. Her research generally focuses on using co-design to leverage the potential of ICT tools within the rural water management sector and also with marginalized or vulnerable groups such as the visually impaired, rural residents and small-holder dairy farmers. Fiona holds a Bachelors degree in Computer Science from Makerere University (Uganda), a Masters degree in Information Systems from London South Bank University (UK) and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town (Center for ICT4D - Department of Computer Science) in South Africa.

Professor Matthew Zook, University of Kentucky, USA.

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Matthew Zook is a University Research Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky. His research centers on evolving economic and social practices afforded by information technology and big data. This includes studying how code, algorithms, space and place interact as people increasingly use mobile, digital technologies to navigate through their everyday, lived geographies. His most recent project focuses on how blockchain cryptocurrencies reshape the spaces and practices of valuation and financing particularly within tech-based startup firms. He is currently the managing editor of open access Sage journal, *Big Data & Society*.

Titles and Abstracts of Digital Shorts

To Understand Geographic Information Systems, Follow the Mapmaker

David Garcia, University of Canterbury, Aotearoa (New Zealand).

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At present, mapping happens through networked and digital information technologies. And when we talk about maps and geographic information, we usually think about how beautiful the map is; how accurate the borders are; and how good maps are for society. Whose notion of beauty? Whose lines are correct? Whose good? While these questions have been tackled in previous research such as those about participatory, feminist, and critical Geographic Information Systems (GIS), what is relatively unknown are the people whose labour make the maps and the mapping happen.

How do the mapmakers actually make the maps today? Who makes and shares the geographic information today, for whom, and why?

In the digital short, I would like to share my latest progress in an autoethnographic PhD project of becoming a mapmaker of OpenStreetMap (OSM), a crowdsourcing and international Geographic Information System (GIS). In the PhD project, I use a mix of visual, digital, and global methods to network and influence; volunteer and hustle; and care and organise. Two (2) years into the research, I have been paying attention to issues about precarity and vulnerability; diversity and inclusion; and neocolonialism and violence. Such issues played out whether I was in a town destroyed by a super cyclone; a city devastated by war; a geospatial technology conference; a humanitarian hackathon; or in interactions with fellow mapmakers through social media. Furthermore, I try to interpret such issues through a Pacific and decolonial lens.

I argue that whether in geographic and geospatial research or practice it is not only the quality of the maps or the mapping that matters. Who makes the maps matters, too.

Netnography for Geographers - Going out into the digital field

Helen Johnson, University of Liverpool, UK.

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Ethnography is a widely accepted method of fieldwork for geographers and with increasing research on digital/virtual geographies. It is surprising therefore how netnography has generally been ignored by geographers. In particular, netnography provides a unique experience to follow geographical and digital based social activity simultaneously. Feeding into wider discussion about hybrid approaches.

I will present a brief outline of my research, which follows video game developers creating working relationships online, before introducing netnography alongside potential opportunities where geographers could use netnography in their own research.

Mapping online communities in the Digital Classroom

Dr. Doug Specht, University of Westminster, UK.

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Given the increasingly prominent position of digital technologies in the Higher Education classroom, this paper uses a mixed method approach to explore the ways in which blogging might be used to support student learning through a large MA dissertation module, comprising students from five courses. Taking as its impetus the idea that blogging can create a community to support students in the writing of their own dissertation. The research saw 179 students invited to undertake blogging over a 10-week period, with proscribed activities for eight of these weeks. The networks built by students were modelled through Gephi, and this data was supplemented with two surveys carried out before and following the module. The results showed a mild trend towards the blogs not producing a community, nor creating an environment in which self-reflective practice was forthcoming. The role of the teacher also appeared to become solidified as the sole motivating factor, leading to a low uptake in posting on the blog, and even lower in commenting. The work also highlights the two-fold issue of students being fearful of giving negative, coupled with the sense that peer feedback was not worth as much as staff feedback, significantly reduced the development of the community, and of critical thinking. The work concludes that while blogs might have some potential, this case demonstrates that they need to be more deeply embedded within the pedagogy of the course, and not used as an 'add-on'.

Digital Research Methodologies in Zimbabwe: Studying Urban and Virtual Geographies in the Country with the Most Expensive Internet in the World

Maxwell Mutanda, Independent researcher.

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The average cost in 2019 of one (1) gigabyte (GB) of mobile data in Zimbabwe was seventy-two dollars and twenty cents (USD 75.20) resulting in the most expensive digital connection worldwide. Comparatively, in India the average cost of 1GB of data was cheapest at only twenty-six cents (USD 0.26). Concurrently, the ubiquity of digital geographies in Zimbabwe is evidenced by figures from the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) during the same period that show an internet penetration rate of 62.9% via asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL) and fibre-optic networks; and a mobile phone penetration rate of 91.9% or 12,748,551 active mobile phone subscriptions in the country. The advent of mobile telephony is particularly important in sub-Saharan Africa because digital communications developed where access to landline phones was previously scarce or non-existent. In this regard, as the Internet of Things (IoT) proliferates in Africa it perpetuates the structural violence (Galtung, 1969) of social and economic inequality prevalent within postcolonial urban geographies due to high mobile data tariffs. However, widespread mobile phone penetration presents the potential for participatory community-based digital research strategies to document discrimination, dispossession and

displacement before and during nationwide stay-at-home lockdown orders. This summary highlights Geographic Information System (GIS) collecting, analysing, editing, and visualisation using open source General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) mobile software to analysis informal transit networks and non-standard labour geographies in Harare, Zimbabwe.

“Click me with your mouse! (or tap me with your finger)” Performing gender and sexuality through daily Facebook and Twitter Eurovision fan practices

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The democratisation of the internet through social media platforms enables fans and audiences to connect with the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) and network with like-minded others on a daily basis. In this paper, I analyse how both Facebook and Twitter are used for practicing fandom in everyday life but produce different and complex constructions of fan in/visibility. I explore the ways gender and sexuality, through ESC fan practices, are performed online through qualitative data in the form of interview extracts, WhatsApp group chats and Twitter tweets from ESC fans. I critically examine these fan practices in relation to debates surrounding code/space and queer code/space. Code/space is identified as the ways software becomes embedded and intertwined within everyday life (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011) and queer code/space is defined as the ways sexuality and technology intersect and disrupt online heteronormativity, and how they can challenge social norms and mainstream culture (Cockayne and Richardson, 2017). I apply these concepts to examine how social media fan practices can produce alternative fan and sexual performances of identity, through the interpretation of multiple socio-sexual digital codes, that disrupt, and rework prescribed understandings of what constitutes daily social media interactions. I tease out the ways that Facebook and Twitter software influences these performances through the communicative tools available to fans, such as images, GIFs, videos and Twitter tweets which encourages them to define their socio-sexual identities fluidly and regularly. Lastly, I emphasise how the social media platforms of WhatsApp and Twitter can be deployed as digital research methods for qualitative data analysis, particularly where we are increasingly encouraged to find innovative ways of doing research in a COVID-19 and social distancing world.

Digital game design as a geographical research method

Jack Lowe, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK.

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Digital games have begun to garner significant attention in geography over the past decade, as media with increasing cultural, economic and political influence globally, as well as distinct representational, affective, material and social attributes. Already provoking

methodological innovations in the use of video ethnographies (Ash, 2010), covert and (auto)ethnographic play (Dornelles, 2019), alongside more conventional qualitative methods, where geographical scholarship on digital games has been lacking is in direct engagement with the processes of making these works.

This presentation will outline how I have used creative practices of digital game design and development as a geographical method for researching location-based games. Drawing on experiences from my autoethnographic PhD fieldwork, I will discuss how apprehending research questions creatively as a design brief can lead to more expansive understandings of the intricate relationships between digital technologies, embodied experiences and cultural meaning-making enacted through making and playing digital games. I will also touch on some of the challenges related to expertise, ethics and data collection presented by practice-based research on digital topics, which have been encountered and negotiated throughout my doctoral research.

Reconnecting with the local through the online folk community: Neolocalism, netnography and the *unimagined* community

Charles Sewell, University of Hull, UK.

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To contribute to and expand upon the growing narrative around the concept of neolocalism, I have designed a research project which looks at the folk community of the East Riding of Yorkshire and Kingston upon Hull region as a case study example and potential frontier for neolocalism. More specifically, my research project focuses on the folk community's domestic and online cultural practices as a local response to a global pandemic. The "folk" as a small homogeneous group of people, whose culture largely revolves around local traditions, have maintained an interesting dynamic with the local and regional scales since the birth of globalisation (Reed, 1976; Carney, 1998; Wright, 2014), sparking a distinct and fruitful discipline known as folk geography, as well as other interdisciplinary fields (Lornell & Mealer, 1983). To evaluate the folk community of East Yorkshire as a potential frontier for neolocalism, I have designed an investigation which will provide primary data for my research project. The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has forced the folk community, which would usually operate within the spaces created by traditional and "folksy" pubs, clubs and grassroots music venues and festivals (Carney, 1998; Wright, 2014), to predominantly domestic and online spaces. Hence my investigation has followed the folk community in their swift transition from normality to an alternative, online environment.

My online investigation predominantly revolves around an online ethnography, or "netnography" of social institutions which create a significant platform for the construction and practicing of folk life. In an experimental photo-elicitation-esque technique, I am asking some of these connections to participate by providing a piece of art they have created (such as a sketch, painting, poem or piece of music) which reflects on their experience of folk culture in light of the UK's lockdown.

Video Games as Data: Gathering Place-Based Data from Player Exploration in Video Game Environments

Dr. Hannah C. Gunderman, Carnegie Mellon University, USA.

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Video games provide players an opportunity to explore fantasy worlds, virtual representations of real landscapes, and alternative realities to escape from, and enhance, our daily lives. The 2016 release of Hitman and the 2018 release of Hitman 2 offers players the opportunity to explore in-depth maps of places across the world, including Mumbai (India), Miami (USA), Hokkaido (Japan), Colombia, Paris (France), and Italy. These maps are heavily researched by the game developers, who take great care to closely mimic the real geographical areas on which their maps are based. While the player has objectives they can meet to “win” the mission, they are not required to complete the objectives and can, instead, explore the maps freely. Characteristics of these maps, including NPC (non-player character) dialogue, scenery, clothing, and architecture, all represent data sources which give insight into understanding the geographical area being represented in these missions.

In this 5 minute digital short, I describe how I conceptualize the maps in Hitman and Hitman 2 as data in which we can extract information about the geographical areas being represented. For those who cannot travel to places like Mumbai, Colombia, and Hokkaido, playing these games may offer a chance for the player to gain a better familiarity with these geographical areas from a distance and in a digital capacity. I also offer a caveat for using these maps as data for better understanding a place in lieu of actually visiting there, as these games may perpetuate certain harmful stereotypes about geographical areas.

The distribution of key characteristics of Nature-based solutions across Europe: a novel approach to quantitative-qualitative methods

Clair Cooper, Durham University, UK.

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Nature-based solutions is a conceptual framework that seeks to use the properties of nature to co-produce ecosystems services to build climate change resilience and improve quality of urban life (Nesshover, et al 2017). To investigate to what extent these forms of urban nature influence relate to social, economic and health outcome indicators that influence material aspects of quality of life in cities, (Salmond et al, 2016), this short introduces a novel, mixed-method approach that combines multivariate techniques such as Multiple Factor Analysis (Abidi et al, 2013) with co-occurrence network analysis (Higuchi, 2016). The paper will discuss the challenges encountered developing a creative and novel approach to mining large datasets consisting of binary and continuous data using multivariate analysis and the important of critical reflexivity throughout the knowledge production process (Kwan, 2015).

Engagement via Social Media: From an Unfamiliar Subject to 5G is #Trening

Daisy Curtis, University of Exeter, UK.

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This digital short will explore the engagement of a research topic, 5G technology, via social media platforms. Focusing upon my experience undertaking PhD research, this short will reflect upon how social media platforms, in particular Twitter, can act as an archive; a way to engage with a research topic; and a means to recruit interview participants. This small vignette into the research process will discuss how these three uses of social media have emerged over time as the research topic of 5G has moved from being a subject which many were unfamiliar with to one which has been trending on multiple occasions.

Engaging digital labour to research digital labour platforms

Dr. Kelle Howson, Adam Badger, Dr. Alessio Bertolini, and Professor Mark Graham, Oxford Internet Institute, UK.

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Fairwork is an action research project which researches digital labour platforms in several countries, and scores them against five Principles of Fair Work. By equipping consumers and workers with greater knowledge of the best and worst labour practices in the platform economy, Fairwork aims to exert pressure on platforms to improve conditions. For researchers interested in work on digital platforms, the platforms themselves offer an obvious recruitment avenue. Both geographically-tethered platforms (ridehailing, food delivery, care work and cleaning), and cloudwork platforms (micro-tasking, translation, remote freelancing), connect users to workers and thus can facilitate access to workers by researchers. We find this method has obvious advantages, not least of which are ease, scalability, (in some cases) filtering capabilities, and (in other cases) randomness. However, it also has inherent limitations, and raises ethical considerations. Challenges include understanding the potential influence of algorithms on sampling, and mitigating risks to participants. The power relationship stemming from the positionality of the researcher as a platform-user/client also demands reflexive consideration. Power relations are further complicated in action research explicitly aiming to influence platforms' practices. In light of these factors, this presentation describes evolving recruitment methods used by the Fairwork project for interviews with gig workers on geographically-tethered platforms in different sub-sectors. We reflect that the nature of the platform and the manner of the interaction between user and worker must be taken into account when choosing to employ this strategy, and note some steps we have taken to mitigate power imbalance and risk.

Futures of digital engagement: how digital methodologies are transforming participatory approaches during lockdown and beyond

Caitlin Hafferty, Countryside and Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, UK.

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The purpose of this research project is to contribute to the development of methods and tools for improving participation in decision-making processes. In recent months we have witnessed a surge in the use of digital methods for connecting and engaging with communities and stakeholder groups. Face-to-face meetings and consultations are increasingly being carried out online using tools such as surveys, polling, webinars, and specialist consultation platforms. The recent explosion of the use of more remote, digital methods for various purposes and applications has also pushed digital ethics into the spotlight. Important questions are being increasingly asked in news and social media regarding the use of digital tools and ethics, power and equality, inclusivity, privacy, and knowledge production. Using participatory approaches in the environmental sector as an example, this project aims to help contribute to understandings of how different technologies are being used and adapted. By understanding how we can use technology to engage with people in the most effective, fair, and inclusive ways possible, we can help keep the conversation going during lockdown and beyond to inform digital engagement strategies for the future.

Reaching Young People During a Pandemic with Mobile Instant Messaging Interviews: Methodological Potentials for the Analysis of Socio-Material-Technological Spatialities

Dr. Katja Kaufmann, Mag Christoph Straganz, Mag Belinda Mahlkecht, and Professor Tabea Bork-Hüffer, University of Innsbruck, Austria.

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Accessing participants in-situ in their daily lives can be challenging for researchers, even more so in the midst of a pandemic. The affordances of smartphones, nowadays constant “companions” (Thulin et al., 2020: 170) in the pockets of many people, offer novel ways to conduct qualitative research in such situations (Kaufmann, 2020). This digital short gives methodological insight into an ongoing longitudinal research project (COV-IDENTITIES) that studies the everyday spaces and practices of young adults in Austria turned upside down by strict pandemic containment measures such as lockdown and social distancing. Capitalizing on the vital role that mobile messengers on smartphones play for these young people in their daily routines, we used the popular messenger WhatsApp to conduct Mobile Instant Messaging Interviews (MIMIs; Kaufmann & Peil, 2020) with students and high school graduates (21 participants in total). In a series of single day collections, we accompanied participants in WhatsApp individually, asking them in a private chat repeatedly throughout the day about currently conducted everyday practices, specific spatialities and perceived changes in face of the pandemic containment measures. In this way, we gained unique insights into the socio-material-technological entanglements, orderings and makings of everyday spaces of education, communication, interaction, work and leisure during this

exceptional, psychologically demanding situation for the young adults physically often confined to a single place in their homes.

Studying Myanmar's Digital Villages

Dr. Hilary Faxon, Cornell/University of California Berkeley, USA.

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In this digital short, I'll introduce my research on and in Village Facebook Groups in different ethnic communities in rural Myanmar. I'll discuss some strategies for accessing and analyzing these groups through in-person ethnographic participation and online observation, and connect key findings to my larger research on rural and political transformation in Myanmar.