Feministische Studien Heft 2/2019

Call for Papers

Cyborgs revisited: on the connection of gender, technologies and machines

One of the great merits of gender studies has been to show that technological artefacts are not gender-neutral and that technological relations are always gender relations as well. In the 1980s, with her metaphor of the cyborg, Donna Haraway highlighted a transition to a new order of knowledge and to technological practices which proceed from a biocybernetic understanding of nature: rather than investigating laws of nature, science and technology are used for interventions to drive forward innovation and optimisation. The ordering categories hitherto used in the process of scholarship – as Haraway argued – and the associated boundary demarcations and dualisms of Western societies no longer do justice to these processes, including those between nature/culture, human/machine, subject/object, natural/technical and male/female.

Since the 1980s, developments in new technologies have advanced rapidly, particularly in informatics and biotechnology. Self-learning robots, autonomous vehicles, wearable technology, biohacking, body enhancement, augmented reality and big data are only some of the phenomena or catchwords that point to the dynamic intensity of societal developments in the field of new technologies and practices. These entail further shifts in societal development and in the scientific conception of the way in which humans, technology and machines are interwoven. New interfaces or fluid transitions are being created, such as brain-computer interfaces, new actors with the ability to take action emerge, and socio-technical systems such as 'virtual assistants' or the 'Internet of Things' change societies and challenge politics and science in a completely new way. This gives rise to a very fundamental change in social, political and economic relations between the genders, between gender and machine or more specifically between genders and technologies.

Feminist technology research pointed out from an early stage that along with all the risks, these processes also have inherent transgressive and emancipatory potentials which are, however, far from fully exploited. Instead, at these interfaces and connections, an intensification or at least a reproduction of traditional gender constructions, stereotypes and relations can often be observed. This can be seen, for example, in the field of robotics, where gender-specific differentiation in appearance and behaviour is supposed to improve the acceptance and quality of interaction between man and machine; in the field of algorithms, which determine the gender of users and fine-tune search results or personalised advertising accordingly; or in the field of reproduction, where companies such as Google, Apple or Facebook promote "egg freezing" or "social freezing" as a 'technological fix' for their female employees but, in doing so, ignore and circumvent underlying societal problems that are deeply rooted in questions of social inequality in gender relations. At the same time, this process raises entirely new questions with regard to the web of relations between gender,

gender relations, technical engineering and technologies.

A special issue of the journal *feministische studien* will be addressed to these developments in the relations between gender, technologies and machine. It proposes to present the associated scientific and socio-theoretical, ethical and political implications for discussion from a gender studies perspective. We would therefore like to invite submissions relating principally, but not exclusively, to the following core themes:

1. In which domains or contexts do gender, technologies and machines form connections, and how? To what extent are social inequalities and power relations, gender norms and gender relations reproduced, established, shifted or broken down in and through gender-technology-machine connections? Where do entirely new power relations and inequalities emerge? What effects are exerted here by intersections of gender with race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and coloniality?

2. What classifications, normalisations and standardisations are undertaken in the various gender-technology-machine connections? What ontological policies are embedded in these classifications? What epistemic and material infrastructures are formed in order to establish new social orders technologically? In other words, "which categories come to matter"?

3. What rationality is followed by processes of constructing gender-technology-machine connections? How do they change the perception of social reality, self-perception, sociality and corporeality?

4. What tensions can be identified in the fields of technological and social interface design, and in possible self-willed applications and societal appropriation of technologies and artefacts? Can we even talk in terms of interfaces any more? Do forms of resistance and patterns of denial exist vis à vis certain connections between gender, technologies and machines?

5. What are the ethical and political challenges, implications and strategies that arise in this context? How and by what methods can this complex web of relations between gender, technologies and machines be analysed and developed in such a way as to contribute to the elimination of social inequalities in the future?

6. Who designs and uses technological artefacts, for what purpose and with what implications for gendered identities, values, relationships, networks and societal/social contexts? How are social configurations and relationships technologically shaped? What knowledge of gender is assumed, used, produced and established in human-machine connections?

7. How are labour and gender relations shaped in those places where technological artefacts and machines are researched and designed? What societal discourses are

drawn upon, and how is the category of gender negotiated in these discourses? How do specifically structured ideas bring forth specific forms of gender and gender relations in construction, negotiation and implementation? How are they translated into practices and do the said practices then give rise to specific socio-technical gender arrangements?

It is envisaged that the journal *feministische studien – Journal for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies* No. 2/2019 will include six to eight articles on this theme, consisting of essays (up to 40,000 characters) and contributions to discussion (up to 25,000 characters, incl. spaces), which will be selected according to a peer review procedure. We would also welcome conference papers and reviews or omnibus reviews of publications that are preferably, but not necessarily exclusively, concerned with the main focus of this issue.

We cordially invite you to submit an abstract of up to 2,000 characters to the special-issue editors, Anna-Lena Berscheid (University of Paderborn), Prof. Dr. Ilona Horwath (University of Paderborn) and Prof. Dr. Birgit Riegraf (University of Paderborn), by 31 March 2018.

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