Call for papers

Publication of the [Journal des anthropologues](http://www.afa.msh-paris.fr/?page_id=1480)

Margins and Digital Technologies

Social, political, cultural and economical challenges raised by digital technologies are often studied from the perspective of the educated urban populations who live in North America and Western Europe. Hence, these tools are attributed great powers.

Their capacity to accelerate interactions and to reduce space-time distance is believed to impact deeply the ways we think and live. The kind of relations and simultaneous presence they foster have led us to reconsider communities, institutions and spaces using other models than those of discrete groups structured by territoriality. Moreover, it is generally considered that these technologies have reshaped the political economy of public speech in our societies:, since they offer individuals or groups condemnedto a form of social invisibility means to express themselves in the public space.

First, this call for papers asks for a shift of perspective by questioning the challenges raised by digital technologies from the margins. Contributors will be asked to focus on the ways digital technologies impact people’s lives outside of Western Europe and North America, as well as in spaces constructed as marginal. What shapes does take digital economy within these spaces whether through formal and informal channels? How do individuals appropriate the many existing technological devices generated by digital technologies? What are the new hierarchies and inequalities created by the (lack of) dissemination of these new tools?

This call for paper also asks to focus on the ways minoritized groups, in countries considered to be at the “center” or the “margins” of the global system, are using digital tools for social, political, cultural or economic intervention. Contributors should adopt a critical perspective by paying attention both to the limits and the ambiguities of the ways marginalized actors use these tools. Indeed, digital tools have been used to promote emancipation, but they can also lead to new forms of domination, or even enslavement.

Finally, this call for papers aims to promote a theoretical discussion about the notion of margins itself. How can we construct a robust notion of margins (be they spatial, political, cultural, or economic) in a world shaped by codes, algorithms, flux and networks and where the notions of distance, proximity, subject and object have to be re-examined?

Conducted by an interdisciplinary team, this call for papers is aimed at social scientists as well as digital practitioners (artists, programmers, hackers, etc…) This deliberately open call should allow for robust discussion with other research methodologies as well as with social or artistic points of view and thus to examine new perspectives on the challenges raised by the digital technologies.

We will focus on three topics in this special issue:

1. **Deconstructing and reconstructing the notion of margins**

The papers should question the notion of margins. What is the relevance of this cultural and political construct, shaped by an Euclidian perception of space, that still dissociate between “centers” and “margins. Under which circumstances can the study of modes of appropriation of digital tools show that the notion was coined in a specific ethnocentric context?

**2- Margins and modes of appropriation of digital technologies**

The papers should also focus on the specificities of modes of appropriation of digital tools in spaces constructed as marginal. How does digital technology get to those territories? Through which networks of formal /informal economy? How do dominant actors of digital technologies adapt to those modes of appropriation?

In what ways are spaces considered marginal are also places that favours offshoring strategies conceived by the dominant actors ?

Digital technologies are often studied in urban contexts, how are they used in rural contexts? How do individuals, considered to be living at the margins, actually use digital tools? Can we consider margins as labs to understand the ways in which people subvert digital norms and dominant codes?

**3-Margins and digital tools, between domination and resistance**

Finally, the papers should discuss the ways some social actors are marginalised (individuals, artistic and cultural groups, political groups…) when they use digital tools to defend their rights. How are those tools used by those actors (as means to transgress censorship, as means to gain visibility, as tools to mobilize…)? How do they organize, spread information, towards which audiences, on which scales and with what consequences? To what extent are those tools also constraining and how do those constraints impact people’s initiatives? What is the impact of these tactics compared to the strategies of social, political, economical and cultural domination, which also largely use digital tools?

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**Timing of the Call for Proposal**s

- 1st of June, abstract between 1000 and 1500 words should be send at: margesnumeriques@gmail.com

- Final version (40.000 typed characters, including spaces) should be received by November 2014

- This special issue will be published by the end of 2015