Call for Papers

For a Special Issue of *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (JITP)

The Empiricist's Challenge: Asking Meaningful Questions in Political Science in the Age of Big Data

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Submission Deadline: March 1, 2016

Objective for the JITP Special Issue:

The continuously growing use of digital services has provided social scientists with an expanding reservoir of data, potentially holding valuable insights into social systems and political behavior. The potentials of the use of digital trace data in social science research has famously given rise to the terms "big data" and "computational social science". Using such data, social scientists have argued, will enable us to better understand social, political and economic life through the generation of large datasets that are composed not of questions asked of citizens concerning their attitudes and behaviors, but of the digital traces of their actual behaviour as they navigate the online world.

After a first phase, in which researchers demonstrated the potentials of the use of digital trace data in the social sciences through case studies, the field now has to enter a second, and some would argue, more demanding phase. To move into the core of social science, researchers using digital trace data have to connect with established research traditions and theoretical discourses. This involves: developing standards for data collection, preparation, analysis and reporting; establishing more systematic links between the existing body of research in the social sciences; and moving away from proofs-of-concepts, and towards the systematic development and testing of hypotheses. This goes hand in hand with providing better justifications as to why and how the use of specific digital trace data collections improves upon previous approaches in the social sciences as well as providing better evidence for digital trace data's problem-solving capacity.

We would like to invite you to contribute to this debate in the pages of a special issue of the *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* (JITP).

What papers are we looking for?

We invite papers addressing the use of digital trace data in the social sciences with a special focus on political phenomena, behavior and processes. Topics of discussion could for example include:

- Which questions prevalent in political science should we expect to be addressed freshly through the use of digital trace data and how can this be illustrated?
- Which current theoretical debates offer researchers using digital trace data a valuable context to frame their research questions and develop and test hypotheses?
- How have other social actors (such as political professionals, NGOs, media organizations, or corporations) used digital trace data to measure and expand their political activities?
- What are the main challenges to be resolved before the use of digital trace data can enter the mainstream of political science research?

We invite papers which pursue these and related questions. Papers might address these and related questions either conceptually or empirically.

Papers should follow the submission guidelines of JITP available online (http://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=witp20&page=instructions). Papers not following these guidelines will be desk rejected. Papers should be submitted through JITPs submission platform (https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/witp) no later than March 1, 2016. While submitting please select your manuscript for consideration in the appropriate special issue on the platform.