

CfP: Workshop on Feminist Data Protection



Berlin, 20 November 2019

Forum Privacy ('Forum Privatheit'), a German research project, is hosting an exploratory, multi-disciplinary, one-day workshop on feminist approaches to data protection.

The workshop is organized with the support of the Unabhängiges Landeszentrum für Datenschutz (ULD) Schleswig-Holstein, the International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities (IZEW) and the Center for Gender and Diversity Research (ZGD) of the University of Tübingen and the Law, Science, Technology and Society Research Group of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

The notion of data protection has increasingly become a part of legal and political discourse in Europe, as exemplified by the inclusion of a right to data protection in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Yet there have been relatively few engagements in thinking and framing data protection from an explicitly feminist perspective. This stands in stark contrast to the notion of privacy, with which data protection is often conflated and which has been the subject of extensive feminist critique, particularly insofar as it relates to the distinction between public and private spheres. The starting point of this workshop is that the notion of data protection, once disentangled from privacy, warrants further examination from a perspective of intersectional feminism.

Data protection may be understood by considering the power imbalance with which individuals are confronted when their data are processed: public and private entities can collect data without the individuals' knowledge and it is hardly possible for individuals to control their data, once collected. The processing of data thereby creates inherent risks for individuals – particularly so for those already marginalized or subject to discrimination – and affects the distribution of power in our societies. Thus data protection, like feminism, aims at theorizing and changing structural inequalities and power relations. We wish to discuss these structural issues as well as potential answers through the lens of emancipatory approaches, such as feminist, queer, Marxist, post-colonial, critical race or disability studies perspectives.

We invite submissions on the topic of feminist and other emancipatory approaches to data protection addressing the power imbalance faced by individuals, especially with regard to discrimination, marginalization and oppression. We are interested in a wide variety of perspectives on the intersection between feminism and data protection, both in Europe and beyond, whether they are focused on mutual critique or on how either can benefit from the other and what their common or related aims could be. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- *Data protection and privacy*: How can the relation between these “positive” notions in one discourse and the negative image of private space whose “legal vacuum” facilitates the exploitation of structural inequalities be analysed and brought into a dialogue?
- *Data activism, digital rights, and feminism*: Around which issues are European and worldwide feminist initiatives focusing on data processing practices emerging? What are the intersections between such initiatives and data protection?



- *Countering illegitimate data processing*: How can women and marginalized groups profit from the networking effects of social networks in order to organize while being protected from the fallout inherent in their capitalist business models, i.e. tracking and profiling?
- *Surveillance*: How is technology developed and used to oppress certain groups? What are the dangers disproportionately affecting women, especially women of colour, in the context of surveillance? How could or should surveillance be avoided, subverted or countered?
- *Artificial Intelligence and Big Data*: Should these practices be conceived of as a form of automated and inherent discrimination or as tools for visualizing and countering existent discrimination? What biases are built into them, and what are their regulatory effects?
- *Online gender ascription*: How is information about gender being collected and processed? Which parameters determine gender ascription? Is the gender identity of individuals (including non-binary persons) respected, and could data protection law further this cause?
- *Data processing and identity formation*: What role do notions such as visibility, hiding, outing, and performativity play in the context of data processing and reproduction of gender norms and gendered identities? Can and should data protection intervene in such processes?
- *Practices of categorisation*: How are categories constructed, by which actors, and what is their impact, particularly for oppressed groups such as women? How are biases built into data systems by means of categorisation and how should we respond to this?
- *Data subjects and rights*: Can we rethink notions of data protection law in ways which go beyond the neoliberal focus on the ostensibly gender-neutral, self-determining individual? How can we go beyond data subject rights (e.g. group rights, or other languages of resistance)?

The workshop will take place on Wednesday, **20 November 2019** (before the annual conference of Forum Privacy, taking place in Berlin from 21 to 22 November 2019). We are looking forward to intense discussions between around 10–15 participants, each briefly presenting their submission. Interested scholars should submit an abstract of around 500 to 750 words and a short CV to feministdataprotection@izew.uni-tuebingen.de by **15 June 2019**. We encourage submissions especially from scholars in the early stages of their career (PhD and post-doc) of all academic fields (e.g. sociology, history, political and other social sciences, ethics, law, computer science, psychology, surveillance studies) and welcome interdisciplinary submissions.

If your abstract is accepted, you will be expected to submit a draft paper of around 8000 words by **3 November 2019**. Papers will be circulated among the workshop participants in advance to facilitate discussions. Publication opportunities will be discussed at the workshop.

The workshop will take place in the Landesvertretung, the permanent representation of Schleswig-Holstein in Berlin, located centrally between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz (In den Ministergärten 8, 10117 Berlin). The room is wheelchair accessible. Sign language interpretation will be available if required.

Limited funds are available as travel grants for those who do not have institutional support. If you wish to apply for these funds please indicate the relevant amount when submitting your abstract.

For any further questions, please feel free to contact the organizing committee: Regina Ammicht Quinn, Andreas Baur, Felix Bieker, Gloria González Fuster, Marit Hansen, and Jens T. Theilen. You can reach us at feministdataprotection@izew.uni-tuebingen.de or visit the website of the workshop: <https://www.forum-privatheit.de/veranstaltungen/20-11-2019-cfp-workshop-on-feminist-data-protection/>

