

Wastelands

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Conference

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CALL FOR PAPERS

34TH EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

“WASTELANDS”

Madrid, 6-8 April 2022

Panel organized by the

EAAS Digital Studies Network

Stefan Brandt (University of Graz, Austria), Frank Mehring (Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen, NL),

Tatiani Rapatzikou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

“Electronic Wastelands?”

Information Management, Cultural Memory, and the Challenges of Digitality”

Abstract:

The Digital Era has produced countless venues for distributing and managing information, in electronic databases, the social media, and other easily available repositories of cultural exchange. These virtual ‘catalogues,’ that encompass diligently developed academic archives as well as dubious websites with biased mappings of historical and social events, offer a cornucopia of materials often consumed without any filters or regulatory mechanisms. In these ‘electronic wastelands,’ infinite amounts of data are amassed and made available for undemanding – and uncritical – consumption. It is this process that makes it possible for crucial reference points of recent history to be transformed into mirror images of wild speculations and conspiracy theories. The discourses on the insurrection on the U.S. Capitol and the ongoing Covid pandemic are only the most prominent examples of counterfactual syllogisms originating from information mismanagement. Only recently, U.S. president Biden accused the social media, and Facebook in particular, of “killing people” by disseminating misinformation about vaccination.

Our panel looks at the challenges that digitalization as a process of information management poses for the production of cultural memory, including the creation of ‘empty discourses’ in the realms of

political and cultural practice. To what extent is the digital world – and are we – equipped to cope with the pitfalls of an unhinged distribution of half-truths and barely reflected knowledges? How do these oftentimes denunciatory practices generate and influence communication in everyday lives? We invite proposals for papers that explore – but are by no means limited to – topics such as electronic information management, digital strategies of memory-making, as well as conspiracy theories concocted in the social media.

Potential topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic internet databases as ‘electronic wastelands’ (formations of digital knowledge);
- Information (mis)management in social-media networks (campaigns of denunciation and misinformation in the World Wide Web, handling of the Covid pandemic, etc.);
- Alt-right media and the distortion/pollution of knowledge on the Internet (digital filter bubbles, echo chambers, etc.);
- Challenges of the Digital Era in terms of new forms of reforming and readjusting ‘electronic wastelands’;
- ‘Electronic waste’ as a ‘negative store’ (latent cultural memory, ignorance, and annihilation);
- Waste of information (production of useless and redundant data, dissemination of ‘alternative facts’ in the digital media, etc.).

Send abstracts of max. 250 words, accompanied by a bio sketch (150 words), to the three organizers

Prof. Stefan Brandt (stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at), Prof. Frank Mehring (frank.mehring@ru.nl), and Prof. Tatiani Rapatzikou (trapatz@enl.auth.gr). The deadline for proposals is August 22nd, 2021.

Contact Email:

stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at