

A multidisciplinary international conference

**Research Methods for Digital Work:**  
**Innovative Methods for Studying Distributed and  
Multi-modal Working Practices**

25-26 May 2017

Treetops, Wates House, University of Surrey

Programme



## SPONSORS

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**The Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS)** at the University of Surrey hosts small-scale, scientific and scholarly meetings of leading academics from all over the world to discuss specialist topics away from the pressure of everyday work. The events are multidisciplinary, bringing together scholars from different disciplines to share alternative perspectives on common problems.

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**NEMODE** is an initiative under the Research Councils UK (RCUK)'s Digital Economy (DE) research programme to bring together communities to explore new economic models in the Digital Economy.

[nemode.ac.uk](http://nemode.ac.uk)

## WELCOME

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Welcome from the Organising Committee to this Institute of Advanced Studies supported conference on Research Methods for Digital Work. We hope that you will find the programme interesting, exciting and also challenging. The papers being presented at the conference will share a range of methodological approaches derived from diverse disciplinary perspectives, homing in on the common central issue of understanding the contemporary multi-sited and multi-modal working practices enabled by digital technologies. We are very pleased to have such a variety of international speakers, from a range of disciplines and we have made room in the programme for some interactive discussion sessions to allow non-presenting participants to share their perspectives and to map out the direction for future work and publications in this field.

We are also delighted to welcome our keynote speakers, Professor Richard Rogers from University of Amsterdam, Professor Diane Bailey from University of Texas at Austin and Professor Monika Büscher from Lancaster University. We anticipate that the collaborative work initiated in this workshop will continue after it has finished in the form of continuing dialogues about our work, and in the publication of an edited collection – so we will be in touch with all the presenters about these possibilities and opportunities.

We extend our grateful thanks to the Institute of Advanced Studies for sponsoring this event, and to all those who have helped with the organisation. We do hope you enjoy the intellectual stimulation of the conference and look forward to meeting you all.

Christine Hine (University of Surrey) [c.hine@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:c.hine@surrey.ac.uk)

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**The Digital World Research Centre (DWRC)** at the University of Surrey carries out new media innovation projects with social and cultural benefit. To do this we conduct interdisciplinary research into new media platforms, content and experiences. We also strive to commercialize and apply the findings of our research in society.

[surrey.ac.uk/dwrc](http://surrey.ac.uk/dwrc)



## PROGRAMME

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### DAY 1: Thursday May 25 2017

All sessions will take place in Treetops, Wates House, University of Surrey

- 10.00 – 10.15 Introduction: Dr Christine Hine, University of Surrey
- 10.15 – 11.15 **Keynote: Professor Richard Rogers**, Digital Methods Initiative, University of Amsterdam: *“Social Media Engagement: Beyond Vanity Metrics”*
- 11.15 – 11.30 Tea and Coffee
- 11.30 – 13.00 Conference Papers
- Dr Marilou Polymeropoulou (University of Oxford): *“Mapping the chipscene: employing ethnography and social network analysis for the study of online and transnational musician networks”*
- Prof Anoush Margaryan & Prof Heather Hofmeister (Goethe University Frankfurt): *“Using life course perspective to understand learning practices within crowdwork”*
- 13.00 - 14.00 Lunch
- 14.00 – 15.00 **Keynote: Professor Diane Bailey**, Information Institute, University of Texas at Austin *“Wrestling with Digital Objects and Technologies in Observations of Work”*
- 15.00 – 15.15 Tea and Coffee
- 15.15 – 17.15 Conference Papers
- Dr Ibrar Bhatt (Queen’s University Belfast): *“Capturing writing practices and screen-based workflow as interactional accomplishments: a ‘screen-in-screen’ method”*
- Dr Andrew Whelan (University of Wollongong): *“Marginally mentionable: format and affordance in consequential workplace documents”*
- Dr Christine Hine (University of Surrey): *“Autoethnography and the digital volunteer”*
- 17.15 – 18.45 Free time – attendees may wish to congregate in the bar area of Wates House.
- 18.45 Conference Dinner in the Lakeside Restaurant (Rik Medlik building) at University of Surrey.

## PROGRAMME

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### DAY 2: Friday May 26 2017

All sessions will take place in Treetops, Wates House, University of Surrey

- 09.30 – 10.30 Open Session: An opportunity to discuss planned research work with conference participants
- 10.30 - 10.45 Coffee
- 10.45 – 12.45 Conference Papers
- Dr Lizzie Richardson (Durham University): *“Staying still or going-along: approaching transition, circulation and disruption in digital work”*
- Dr Sarah Lewthwaite (University of Southampton) & Dr Warren Pearce (University of Sheffield): *“Capturing contexts: re-orientating social media research through over-shoulder methods”*
- Dr Yenn Lee (SOAS, University of London) : *“The penumbra of academic work: The case study of #AcWriMo and scholarly writing as a second screen experience”*
- 12.45 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 – 14.30 **Keynote: Professor Monika Buscher**, Centre for Mobilities Research, University of Lancaster: *“Is IT Ethical? Mobile Work, Mobile Data, Mobile Methods in Crises”*
- 14.30 – 14.45 Coffee
- 14.45 – 16.15 Conference Papers
- Dr Elpida Prasopoulou (Coventry University), Prof Niki Panteli (Royal Holloway) & Dr Nancy Pouloudi (Athens University of Economics and Business): *“Smartphones in everyday life: Studying the enactment of temporal boundaries with daily logs”*
- Dr Esther Ruiz Ben (TU University Berlin): *“Visualisation as mixed-method tool for analysing topographies of digital work”*
- 16.15 – 16.30 Closing Remarks: Dr Christine Hine (University of Surrey), Professor Gillian Symon (Royal Holloway, University of London) and Dr Katrina Pritchard (Swansea University).

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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**Richard Rogers** is University Professor and holds the Chair in New Media & Digital Culture at the University of Amsterdam. He is Director of the Digital Methods Initiative as well as Govcom.org, the groups responsible for the Issue Crawler and other critical information tools. Among other works, Rogers is author of *Information Politics on the Web* (MIT Press, 2004) and *Digital Methods* (MIT Press, 2013), awarded the Outstanding Book of the Year by the International Communication Association (ICA). Rogers has received research grants from the Soros Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation and Gates Foundation. His latest projects are 'Doing Digital Methods' and 'Critical Analytics'.

### *Social Media Engagement: Beyond Vanity Metrics*

In the age of social media one dominant mode of engagement is distraction. Whilst appearing oxymoronic, distracted modes of engagement have invited the coining of such terms as 'flickering man', 'continuous partial attention' and 'ambient awareness.' One's engagement with social media (however much in a distracted state) is also routinely measured. Klout scores and similar are often called 'vanity metrics' because they measure performance in (what is referred to as) the 'success theater' of social media. The notion of vanity metrics implies at least three projects: a critique of metrics concerning both the object of measurement as well as their capacity to measure unobtrusively or only to encourage performance. The second is a corrective interface project, for users are continually distracted by number badges calling to be clicked; there is a recently revived movement afoot for so-called 'encalming technology'. A third project could consider how one may rework the metrics. In the project I call critical analytics, I propose to repurpose altmetrics scores and other engagement measures for social research, and seek to measure the 'otherwise engaged,' or other modes of engagement (than vanity).

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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**Diane E. Bailey** is Associate Professor in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin, where she studies technology and work in information and technical occupations. Her current research interests include engineering product design, remote occupational socialization, big data in healthcare, and ICT4D. With an expertise in organizational ethnography, Professor Bailey conducts primarily large-scale empirical studies, often involving multiple occupations, countries, and researchers. She publishes her research in organization studies, engineering, information studies, and communications journals. She is the author, with Paul Leonardi, of the MIT Press book, *Technology Choices, Why Occupations Differ in Their Embrace of New Technology*. Professor Bailey has won teaching awards at UT Austin, Stanford University, and the University of Southern California. Her research has won best paper awards, a dissertation award, and an NSF CAREER award. She holds a Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering and Operations Research from the University of California at Berkeley.

### *Wrestling with Digital Objects and Technologies in Observations of Work*

Observing people who use computers at work can be difficult. A person working with physical objects and physical technologies behaves in ways that an observer can readily track. For example, in early motion and time studies, the Gilbreths devised a system of 18 elemental movements (e.g., select, grasp, move, inspect) to analyze what workers did. A person working with digital objects and digital technologies poses a greater challenge for the observer because small, nearly indiscernible actions (such as typing a single letter) may initiate a series of work actions on the computer. Worse still, a person may be hard at work when away from the computer while software programs run "in the background." In this talk, I discuss the methods that I developed with my colleagues to combat these issues in our multi-year field study of engineering work and technology. Our methods blend the industrial engineer's eye for detail with the ethnographic tradition of observation and interpretation. I discuss in particular methods for collecting and analyzing digital objects and for understanding the array of digital technologies in a workplace.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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**Monika Büscher** is Professor of Sociology, Director of the Centre for Mobilities Research and Associate Director for the Institute for Social Futures at Lancaster University. She co-edits the book series Changing Mobilities. Monika currently leads research on disaster mobilities and ethical, legal and social issues of IT innovation in the EU FP7 SeclnCore project. Monika's research explores the digital dimension of contemporary 'mobile lives' with a focus on IT ethics. She combines qualitative, often ethnographic studies of everyday practices, social theory and design through mobile, experimental, 'inventive' engagement with industry and stakeholders. An analytical orientation to intersecting physical and virtual mobilities, blocked movements and immobilities of people, objects and information drives this work. Monika's most recent research brings this perspective to the informationalization of large-scale multi-agency emergency response, which raises opportunities and challenges around social media-based public engagement, agile and 'whole community' approaches to disaster response, data sharing, data protection and privacy.

### *Is IT Ethical? Mobile Work, Mobile Data, Mobile Methods in Crises*

Disaster response can involve extreme physical and digital mobilities. In the aftermath of the 2015 Germanwings crash, for example, hundreds of emergency personnel from local and international agencies converged to scour two square miles of steep, rocky terrain for debris and DNA. Surrounding such physical mobilities are often myriad efforts to mobilise information and coordinate actions through digital technologies. New capabilities for mobile work that emerge in this context can be very positive, but they can also raise complex ethical, legal and social challenges. In collaborative research with practitioners, information technology developers and interdisciplinary teams of researchers, I explore what it means to do work on the move in crisis management to gain insight into the relationship between embodied practices of mobile work and the im|material im|mobilities of data. This takes the form of engaged 'speculative' sociology and involves a mixture of mobile methods, including participant observation and participant intervention, ways of 'following the information', affirmative critique, disclosive ethics, utopia as method, ethical and privacy impact assessment, and speculative design. These methods are a means for 'staying with the trouble' of often ambiguous emergent 'intra-actions' and effects. In this talk I provide examples from this collaborative research to explore how we can combine methods or devise new methods to capitalise on diverse forms of data to build rich and practically as well as theoretically fruitful understandings of digitally-suffused working life.





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