



Jssj call for papers

## **SPATIAL JUSTICE... DOES NOT COMPUTE?**

*Algorithmic governmentality and spatial justice*

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The analysis of spatial justice, here envisioned as an articulation of social justice and space, necessitates a careful assessment of four main dimensions:

- The highlighting of socio-spatial inequalities,
- The specific consequences which regards justice of territorial enclosures at various scales,
- The definition of which of these inequalities might be considered just or unjust,
- And the consequent imagining of fairer socio-spatial relations.

Particularly regarding the first and last items, the search for justice, whether social or spatial, eagerly calls for quantitative data in order to apprehend and estimate inequalities as well as to correct them. This search is constantly looking for better, finer, more reliable, and more up-to-date indicators, as well as for the intellectual means to interpret them. Yet, in this world, data is produced *en masse*, regardless of spatial or social justice issues. This production is tied in to an economy seemingly insatiable in this regard. Justice thus echoes the economy of data production, and frequently cannot even come into existence without undergoing a preliminary phase of algorithmic definition, data collection and data analysis which are routinely performed by computers.

This issue of JSSJ aims at examining this situation, and the « computational reason » brought on by massive computer use (BACHIMONT 2004, 2008). Does the automation of mathematics, intrinsic to computers, make it impossible for the human brain to apprehend the essence of computational reason? We routinely trust computers with the task of calculations we cannot even comprehend, and whose formalism necessitates a level of abstraction distinct from all discernible particular realities. The end-results of these formal calculations then necessitate an act of translation/treason into natural language. In other words, the understanding of situations considered "complex" can only be attained today through a series of formal calculations which are absolutely unintelligible. Making sense of these results can only come with the help of rhetorical devices which are socially (and dare we say scientifically) permitted.

We thus wish to reframe an age-old question: when we entrust tools with reasoning, reasoning processes change, and when our minds reclaim the results of this reasoning, they will find things they would not have found, had they completed the process themselves.

Following this line of thought, the aim of this issue is to understand what computational reasoning does to our framing of spatial justice.

### **Expectations for this issue**

Papers submitted should address the following themes:

#### 1°) QUANTIFYING JUSTICE: KNOWLEDGE AND POWER THROUGH DATA

A vast amount of spatial justice arguments cannot be articulated without quantification: the quantification of a loss allows for the quantification of its compensation. The quantification of a specific discrimination allows for its identification as well as its recognition. Statistical tools in combination with cartographic tools have developed dramatically over the past half-century. They allow the designing of extremely precise multifunctional territorial diagnoses which steer public policies. Yet, data is still made of symbols as well as formalisms. What happens when justice undergoes the data equivalence process envisioned by Desrosières as a battlefield (DESROSIERES 2002, 2008)? What happens then when this data becomes the building material of computer-based analysis? Spatial justice runs the risk of becoming caught in a race for data and indicators always demanding more accuracy and better legibility of the social body, thus calling for the advent of a new governmentality based on universal transparency.

#### 2°) ALGORITHMIC CONTROL AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Directly quoting Michel Foucault's last work, Rouvroy's critique of this new governmentality (ROUVROY 2013) expresses in the scientific arena the anxiety also displayed in the abundant cultural productions dealing with the loss of civil liberties, the constant pressure of advertisement and the replacement of an Orwellian Big Brother by numerous Little Sisters busy spying each other. What can spatial justice tell us on the issue of civil liberties when, for instance, some claim a right to a form of locational intimacy, a right to not be located (DESBOIS 2012)? Would it not be tempting for spatial justice to envision Big Data as a formidable opportunity to decrypt inequalities? In this sense, would spatial justice not be able to follow current feminist theory (HARAWAY 1991, BRAIDOTTI 2013) which

sees the post human cyborg as the only possible form allowing for the overcoming of the deeper inequalities, and particularly gender inequalities? What is the opinion of those who defend Open Data and Open Source, arguing that the shared usage of digital data will overcome domination processes? What does one have to say in this context about public policies whose efficiency is increasingly assessed in test-territories via complex calculation methods, and in particular social and health related policies?

### 3°) JUSTICE AND THE ANTICIPATIVE CONTROL OF CONDUCTS

Yet this anxiety with regards civil liberties and privacy, might just as well hide something else. If data collection and data analysis work plans carefully avoid addressing the issue of conscious and reflexive individuals (meaning that we all more or less consent to giving away and having our information processed), could it be because what is actually at stake has nothing to do with individuals (ROUVROY 2013)? The issue of control needs to be understood not in a policing sense, but in a cybernetic sense with the advent of the predictive mass management of conducts. Careful consideration thus needs to be given to understanding what kind of relationships actually exist between computers and the latest stages of capitalism. Spatial justice should then take into consideration computers as channels of inequalities that run way deeper than the mere digital divide existing between territories unevenly connected to the global grid.

***Submissions should be sent no later than October 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 to***

***[contact@jssj.org](mailto:contact@jssj.org)***

***please follow carefully the autors guidelines***

***<http://www.jssj.org/recommandations-aux-auteurs/>***

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