

Call for Papers

Navigating Afro-Knowledges Exploring Practices and Theories in Digital Diaspora Studies

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In recent years, Digital Diaspora Studies have emerged as a vibrant interdisciplinary field at the crossroads of media studies, migration studies, and postcolonial studies, exploring the complex interplay between technology, communication, arts, culture, and identity within diasporic communities. As diasporic individuals and communities navigate the digital landscape, they engage in practices that not only reshape their identities and the dynamics of belonging (Heyd 2016), but also contribute to the circulation of knowledges that have been ignored in mainstream spaces due to systems of domination and hegemonic power relations. However, the internet is also a space shaped by 'race' and racialization (Benjamin 2019; Nakamura 2008). This evolving discipline thus seeks to understand how digital platforms and media facilitate the dissemination and preservation of 'non-hegemonic' epistemologies and community building dynamics within the online and offline worlds. The volume *Doing Digital Migration Studies* (2024), edited by Sandra Ponzanesi and Koen Leurs, reflects the growing momentum to bridge disciplinary divides and to move beyond both techno-determinism and methodological nationalism. At its core is a commitment to centring the lived experiences and creative strategies of migrants, mobile subjects, and refugees themselves. Furthermore, the discipline also addresses the contradictions of digital culture, seeking strategies to confront racism in the media (Saha et al. 2024).

African and Afrodiasporic communities mobilize digital technologies as spaces of memory, resistance, activism and cultural production (Everett 2009; Angone 2025). However, these knowledges remain marginal / marginalized in digital diaspora studies. Therefore, there is an urgent need to foreground African and Afro-diasporic epistemologies, methodologies, and practices—what we refer to here as 'Afro-Knowledges'—and to critically examine how these frameworks shape digital cultures, identities, and imaginaries. Drawing on this assumption, this international conference aims to bring together scholars, Afrodiasporic activists and artist around the central notion of 'navigation'. The conference forms a core component of the research project "Afroeuropa and Cyberspace: Imaginations of Diasporic Communities, Digital Agency & Poetic Strategies — Unravelling the Textures" (ERC StG, 101110473) that, using literary and cultural studies methods, investigates how Afrodescendants engage with digital spaces to generate agency and processes of (re-)subjectivation in diasporic contexts. Thus, the conference's aim is to contribute to expanding the theoretical and methodological debate around Digital Diaspora Studies. The concept of 'navigation', as articulated in the conference title, is based on two interrelated ideas. First, building on Paul Gilroy's notion of 'routes' in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), which describes the transnational trajectories that shape Black diasporic formations, the conference invites reflections on how these historical and symbolic pathways are reconfigured in the digital era (Arriaga Arango 2020). Second, navigation refers to the act of 'navigating the internet' or 'web navigation' — an activity which, according to scholars such as Manuel Castells (2000), can be seen as a means of networking and negotiating power relations, and, as argued by Sherry Turkle (1995), a site for the re-articulation of identities.

By mobilising the concept of navigation, the conference also seeks to explore the possible networks between different disciplines, inspired by the notions such as 'travelling concepts' (Neumann / Nünning 2012) and 'queering' theory (El-Tayeb 2011), to study how Afro-knowledges travel and are reshaped by digital mobilities. Particular attention will be paid to the polyphonic and transmedial dimensions of these practices, as well as to the ways in which Afro-knowledges emerge,

travel, and reshape diasporic subjectivities across interconnected digital spaces. Innovative notions that have emerged from activists contexts to describe these phenomena—such as ‘aesthetic activism’ (Bela-Lobedde) or the idea of ‘contaminating’ the narratives in present times (Hakuzwimana / Fainelli)—will also be addressed and considered essential contributions for navigating and understanding these knowledges.

This conference invites participants to explore, challenge and reframe the theoretical and methodological tools currently used in the study of digital diasporas. It foregrounds the lived practices, creative expressions, and activist interventions that emerge from Afrodiasporic cyberspaces, positioning them not at the margins, but at the centre of digital cultural production and critique, with particular focus on Romance-speaking countries. We invite proposals from scholars, artists, and activists of all disciplines and backgrounds that explore these specific topics of interest, but other related topics are also welcome:

- **Travelling Theories & Concepts:** Rethinking terms such as diaspora, identity, belonging and archive, among others, through Afrodigital experience.
- **Digital Afro-Knowledges & Poetics:** How Afrodiasporic individuals generate, share, and transform knowledge across digital platforms, and the aesthetics of these Afrodigital creations.
- **Digital Archives & Counter-Memories:** Community-driven digital archiving, oral traditions, memory activism, acts of digital reclamation, etc.
- **Narrative Resistance Strategies:** Digital storytelling, podcasting, blogging, vlogging, transmedia narratives, ‘micro’-resistances (from meme cultures to hashtags), etc.
- **Platform Politics and Surveillance:** critical reflections on algorithmic bias, visibility, censorship, etc.
- **Diasporic Cartographies & Languages:** Mapping belonging, dislocation, home, emotions and affects through digital geographies; code-switching, multilingualism, visual languages, and the politics of translation in Afro-digital practices
- **Embodied Theory & Autotheoretical Practices:** Black digital feminisms, queer Afrodiasporic digital cultures, and other approaches to merging theory with lived experience through activist, artistic, or community-based practices.
- **Methodological Interventions:** Innovative, experimental, and participatory methods of researching digital content.

Submission Guidelines: Please submit a 300-word abstract and a short bio (max. 100 words) in **English** by **October 30, 2025**, to afroeuropaeyberspace@uni-bremen.de. Notifications of acceptance will be sent at the latest by end of December 2025. Please note that the conference language is English. However, regardless of their level of English fluency, we encourage anyone to submit an abstracts and to participate in the conference, as translanguaging during the conference is highly encouraged. If you anticipate any difficulties with presenting or writing in English, please contact the organizers in advance.

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