
WORKSHOP

Mapping Complexity with Digital Methods

Political Challenges in the Mediterranean Basin and Southeast Europe

Date: July 1-2, 2016

Location: Center for Southeast European Studies, Uni Graz

Organizers: Dr. Florian Bieber
Dr. Arnaud Kurze
Dr. Vjeran Pavlakovic

Summary

This workshop on digital methods in the humanistic social sciences brings together participants from the United States and Europe to explore contemporary sociopolitical issues across the Mediterranean Basin and Southeast Europe using digital research technology. Workshop methods include data mining, data visualization and text analysis, among others. Based on interactive, praxis-oriented sessions, this workshop introduces innovative, critical social research methods to capture and assess social, political and cultural phenomena, including contentious politics, memory politics and transitional justice during regime change and in post-authoritarian and post-conflict settings. The impact of the global financial crisis on Southeast Europe, the ramifications of the post-Arab Spring repressions across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the institutional crisis of the European Union, among others, serve as empirical examples to analyze social issues with the help of new digital methods. Various sessions provide an opportunity for participants to showcase their individual research projects, share their research findings and receive valuable feedback from colleagues through vital, scholarly discussions on different conceptual, methodological and empirical aspects of the studies.

Objectives

Scholarly Collaboration

The workshop aims at strengthening cross-regional and interdisciplinary collaboration, introducing new conceptual frameworks and novel ways of conducting research in the humanistic social sciences. It fosters cooperation between scholars from various disciplines, including political science, sociology, history and linguistics, among others, which, in turn, fuels novel forms of scholarship in the respective, participating disciplines.

Knowledge Exchange

The workshop also helps social scientists working on a variety of sociopolitical, socioeconomic and sociocultural issues to better capture correlational and causal complexity by providing specific tools for mixed methods, including text analysis, data mining and data visualization, among others. The workshop participants will also present critical research methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative data analysis to their peers, including a digital open-source text analysis software called SVEN.

Introducing Innovative Methodology

SVEN is an experimental tool to collect, organize and analyze text fragments from online and offline documents. It is an excellent tool to respond to the technological needs of a data-driven world and provides precise analytical solutions to collect and assess data. By increasing the information accessibility via visualization methods and automatic term extractions, SVEN allows researchers to trace emerging social phenomena through time and allows for a better understanding of the collected data, which facilitates the data evaluation process. As an analytical research tool, SVEN is also useful to elaborate policy strategies to help address sociopolitical issues.