Thesis For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Platformization
Digital Materiality at the Limits of Discourse

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Abstract:

The digital platform has served us well as a metaphor for an imaginary 'something' made comprehensible through theories such as matchmaking, externalities, and network effects. But as much as metaphors and theories can help us imagine and understand some aspects of a phenomenon, they can also limit us in seeing others. To understand and explain these formations of digital technology in a more nuanced way, existing theories on digital platforms need to be supplemented. In this thesis, I contribute to this emerging body of knowledge by, for example, building on and developing the concept of platformization. This thesis also illuminates, discuss, and theorize the ambivalent ontology of digital artifacts more broadly. A practice that highlights the somewhat indeterminate modes of existence of digital artifacts and the discursive work needed to make them intelligible. Hence, the thesis emphasizes and pays attention to the continuous dance between digital technology and our understanding of the same. For example, innovations and developments in a technological field may influence the meaning of an already established concept (e.g., deep learning and "AI"). Consequently, evolving material aspects of digital technology challenge prevailing discursive expressions of what 'digital technology' means. Therefore, we must be receptive to technological changes and reflect on whether these changes have consequences for our already established theories and concepts.