

Slap a Label on It. Civic Registration Categories of Non-Citizens, Tropes of Language and the Digital Promise

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Abstract

This paper looks at digital technologies not as math codes but as language, and asks what can tech do for citizenship in today's digital age. New digital tools infiltrate our daily lives and far from being neutral, they codify or replicate existing racial hierarchies, strengthening pervasive system of oppression and discrimination hidden behind codes and algorithms, and it's our role as a social scientist to contribute to develop conceptual tools to decode them that allow us to understand the world in new ways. The paper problematizes the way digital technology is embedded in the social context of national civic registration categories. The sort of logic that pulls out the argument in the paper is calling attention to the digital as a language trope, and argues for the literal capacity of language to produce value to, both, resist and counteract established knowledges in state policies about diversity. These main threads are accompanied by a more critical concern to address the non –citizen as the unit of analysis rather than the citizen. Drawing on cultural and political themes in critical theory and post-coloniality, the paper aims to explore what links are there between digitization and an approach to reformulate and reorient the relation between diversity, citizenship and representation. The paper is based on literature and documentation review of state policies and civil registration in the Netherlands.

Keywords: digital platforms, language, non-citizens, post-coloniality, social divisions based on race.