

Uneven and Contested Geographies of Data Centres

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In recent years, data centres have become an increasingly common subject of public and political debate (Edwards, 2024). The focus and criticism in these debates are usually directed at the massive consumption of natural resources (Brodie, 2024; Hogan, 2015), their effect on local communities (Bridges, 2024), and the concentration of geopolitical power – especially with regards to large data centers that are currently being planned or built in the context of the hype surrounding artificial intelligence. As essential infrastructure for living in our increasingly datafied worlds and for organising digital capitalism, data centres also raise a variety of geographical questions and problems. These range from the conflict-ridden embedding of data centres in local environments (Rone, 2024), to their role in larger infrastructure constellations (Atkins, 2021; Velkova, 2016), urban settings, and geopolitical issues such as digital sovereignty, digital colonialism (Kwet, 2019) and data localisation (Rosa, 2022). This session brings together conceptual and empirical contributions to critical data centre studies and research on the geographies of digital infrastructures. Against this backdrop, we look forward to contributions from researchers in digital geography, political geography, urban studies, political ecology and science and technology studies, examining the socio-technical imaginations, material effects and geopolitical and infrastructural embeddings of data centres. Papers might engage with topics such as data centers in the Global South / Global Majority regions, contested infrastructuralization of data centers in rural and urban areas, the embedding of data centers in geopolitical strategies, programs, and conflicts, sociotechnical imaginations of AI data centers or social movements mobilizing against the data centers.

Please send a 250-word abstract and a 50-word bio to boris.michel@geo.uni-halle.de and finn.dammann@fau.de by 16th February 2026.

Keywords:

Digital Infrastructures, Data Centers, digital Geography, Cloud, AI

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