Universität Bremen

ZeMKI — Zentrum für Medien-, Kommunikations- und Informationsforschung

# ZeMKI-Forschungskolloquium

## ZeMKI Research Seminar

Linzer Str. 4, Room 60.070, 28359 Bremen, DE

**05.07.2023, 10.15 – 11.45 (CET)**

## Paola Lopez
(University of Vienna, Austria)

## Power and Resistance in the Twitter Bias Discourse.
## (A case study on Twitter's saliency-based image cropping tool)

**Abstract:**

In 2020, the machine learning algorithm that was deployed by Twitter to generate cropped image previews was accused of carrying a racial bias: Twitter users complained that Black people were systematically cropped out and, thus, made invisible by the cropping tool. As a response, Twitter conducted bias analyses and removed the cropping tool. Soon after, the company hosted an "algorithmic bias bounty challenge" inviting the general public to detect algorithmic harm and be rewarded for their findings. This paper examines in Foucauldian terms the push-and-pull dynamics of the power relations that are at play: Firstly, it studies the algorithmic knowledge production around the cropping tool, secondly, the bias analyses and their epistemic limitations, as well as the bias discourse as a vehicle for resistance, and, thirdly, the way in which Twitter as a company effectively stabilized its position – rendering the bias discourse a vehicle for counter-resistance, too.

**Bio:**

**Paola Lopez** is a mathematician by training and currently a researcher at the Department of Legal Philosophy at the University of Vienna. She is also an affiliated researcher at the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society. In her interdisciplinary PhD thesis, she examines questions of (in)justice that emerge from the deployment of data-based algorithmic systems in the context of state-action towards individuals. She has developed a socio-technical typology of biases, written the first published analysis of the Austrian AMS algorithm and its potential for discriminatory effects, and recently she was awarded an "AI newcomer 2023" award by the German BMBF and the German Informatics Society.