Project title:

VISUALISING REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL

Topics in Information Visualisation and Cultural Analytics

Background

The convergence of the internet and Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) in the 1990s promised to connect people in new ways, recoding normative kinship and gender structures and anticipating a break with the eighteenth century mandate of biological and racial lineage. Yet today as users advance through ART systems, they also find themselves submitting to the compulsive racial and sexual identification that now characterises much of our online activity.

Classic Gold Premium is an interface and performance (in-progress) that I have produced with my partner Anyely Marín Cisneros (under our artistic research moniker @criticaldías). At the moment this interface-project consists of two URLS – one that works as a kind of word cloud of the most common words used across ART websites and the other that evaluates each word in terms of its value to the ART industry. As a user clicks the words, bars appear in each column indicating that this word produces a particular value in terms of the four categories displayed. It operates by converting clicks (data picked up via local storage) into a visual table in real time and according to an algorithm that we have developed based on research into the European assisted reproductive technology industry, and specifically the context of Barcelona, which has since the mid-2000s become a centre of so-called 'reproductive tourism'.

This situation has produced new flows of capital that are often simultaneously affective, economic and rooted in the production of user-data. This is material that is continually extracted by companies and clinics (via drop-down lists, mouse-tracking and data-entry points) and used to speculate with great normalising effects - something that can be observed across ART clinic websites in which a single model of family-making has effectively 'gone viral'.

The intention is to be able to analyse and recover the value of our user clicks to companies and the data-brokering industry so as to consider how we might empower ourselves – either through collective analysis of these *structures* or by changing habits and interactions with interfaces.

The gradual regulation or normalising of the once potentially 'queer' technologies of assisted reproduction to reproduce dominant models of the family coincides with (and has been impossible without) the gradual 'enclosing' of the internet – once a place for anonymous avatars and intraceability across networks and now a site of compulsory sexual and racial identification. *Classic Gold Premium* re-appropriates these user data surveillance technologies (specifically local storage) to visualise how this 'reproduction' of antiquated race, gender and ability norms occurs. The project asks: how might the space of the *interface* be reclaimed as a site for both imagining and materialising alternative economies, ontologies and biologies of reproduction?

Visualising Reproductive Control

In this project for the Topics in Information Visualisation and Cultural Analytics course I would like to produce a third URL in which some of my background assumptions pertaining to the notion of 'reproductive control' are also 'visualised'.

Reproductive control is an analytic category used across various fields, including the social sciences and anthropology, in which post-structural theories of 'societal control' intersect with studies of the policies and norms of reproductive health. The term has a prominent feminist, queer and anti-racist activist genealogy. SisterSong, a North American black feminist collective, define 'reproductive justice' in their slogan as 'the right to have children, not have children and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable environments' (Sister Song, 2018). As this slogan suggests, reproductive justice responds to very different forms of 'control', having to do with both 'biological' and 'social' reproduction. The former might include anything from state policies of sterilisation, unequal access to health and reproductive technologies or environmental factors (including commercial toxicity), all of which impede on biological health. The latter takes into account the social and institutional structures that influence the raising of children, as well as economies, industries and informal networks of care.

Due to the complexity of different, overlapping and often contradictory policies of reproductive control, it is very difficult to visualise as a phenomena that can be studied, historicized or intervened in politically, artistically, academically. I intend to produce a series of visualizing 'sketches' that render legible a series of questions pertaining to key areas of reproductive control.

Project research questions + tools

1. How is the intensification of the use of user-data surveillance technologies + densification of donor data (personality maps, images, audio recordings etc.) across ART websites contributing to the production of normalized gender, class and racial norms? **(python scrape of biobank descriptions + word cloud / manual analysis of text)**
2. How much of the language used to describe biological material (classic, gold, premium, washed etc. but also racial classifications such as 'Caucasian') originates in colonial economy of 17th century?
3. How have migratory control system protocols impacted family formation *in contrast* to the stimulation of a certain sector of the population to reproduce using ARTs? (What families are being supported by state and medical infrastructure?) **(Atlas.ti geomap)**
4. Who is talking about fertility / who is talking about assisted reproduction? Who is talking about surrogacy? **(Atlas.ti twitter tags network)**

I use the word 'sketch' because the structure the project is informed by gesture, experiment, trial and error, with a main motive being to try out the tools shared in the course, specifically Atlas.ti.

Data sets

Compiling data sets using information sourced across global media and government statistics reports.

Visualization tools

- Atlas.ti twitter tag network
- Atlas.ti geomap
- Atlas.ti word clouds

Final presentation

Presentation of final visualisations online using https://hotglue.me