
COST Action ([CA22135](#))
Data Matters: Sociotechnical Challenges of European Migration and Border Control
Workshop 2024

organized by the Working Group 1 “Inventory”

Department of Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University & Online
9 – 10 April 2024

Programme
(Times in CET)

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Location: Utrecht University www.uu.nl/en/drift-21
(access via University Library, rooms are located in the back of the building)
ROOM 0.05 Drift 21, 3512 BR Utrecht, hybrid connection
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(please note, we make use of separate links each day for each room)

14:30-16:30 Public Panel

Room 0.05
DATAMIG Part I

Moderation: Vasilis Argyriou & Veronika Nagy

“Sample in, identity out”: tracing kinship surveillance and archivization of the migrant body at the border

Philipp Seufferling, London School of Economics

Senegal’s civil registration system: The in/exclusion paradox of “symbolic modernism”

Leonie Jegen, University of Amsterdam

Mobilizing digital archives in asylum procedures: epistemic practices and conflicts of mobile phone usage for evidence

Ivan Josipovic, University of Vienna

Enacting clan crime through the production of statistical security knowledge

Room 1.05
DATAMIG PART II

Moderation: Annalisa Meloni & Zuzana Uhde

Emerging Visions of Seamless Travel: (En)Countering Camouflaged Sovereignty at the Frictionless Border

Stephan Scheel, Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Postdigital flows. Transnational labor migration and data center infrastructures in the Netherlands

Laura Candidatu, Utrecht University

Interoperability and the fragmented integration of European security
Rocco Bellanova, Free University Brussels, Silvan Pollozek & Jan-Hendrik Passoth, Viadrina University Frankfurt (Oder)

**Salah El-Kahil, Leuphana Universität
Lüneburg Centre for Digital Cultures (CDC)**

Intersecting Digitalization and Border Control
in Europe-Africa Migration: The Ceuta and
Melilla Case Study's Unique Perspective on
Security, Technology, and Media Freedoms
Noemi Mena Montes, Radboud University

Exploring Protection Politics and Data
Practices in the Institutionalized Housing of
Refugees in Germany

**Sifka Etlar Frederiksen, German Center for
Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM)
Berlin**

Automated decision-making and artificial
intelligence at European borders and their
risks for human rights

**Evelien Brouwer, Yiran Yang, Frederik
Borgesius Zuiderveen en Pascal Beckers
(University of Utrecht)**

16:30–16:45 Coffee Break

16:45–18:00 Plenary roundtable

'Nothing About Us Without Us'

**Participatory Approaches to Migration and Surveillance. Conversations with the
Migration and Technology Monitor**

Moderation: Jasper van der Kist

Speakers:

- Petra Molnar, Refugee Law Lab, York University Faculty Associate, Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society at Harvard University
- Wael Qarssifi, Migration and Technology Monitor Fellow
- Florian Schmitz, Coordinator Migration and Technology Monitor

Wednesday, 10 April 2024

COST Action DATAMIG WORKSHOP WG1

**Location: Utrecht University www.uu.nl/en/drift-21 (access via Drift 27)
ROOM 0.05 Drift 21, 3512 BR Utrecht, hybrid connection via Microsoft Teams
(please note, we make use of separate links each day for each room)**

Moderation and coordination: Vasilis Argyriou, Alice Fill, Koen Leurs, Annalisa Meloni, Veronika Nagy, Silvan Pollozek, Philipp Seufferling, Zuzana Uhde

9:00–10:45 Writing Sprint keywords 1

- Introduction and onboarding (collected keywords and clusters so far)

- Revision of keywords and clusters
- Literature research for keywords

10:45-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-13:00 Writing Sprint keywords 2

- writing session keywords in small groups
- open questions and next steps

13:00-13:15 Wrap up, farewell

Organizers:

COST Action [DATAMIG](#), Working Group 1: Vasilis Argyriou, Alice Fill, Koen Leurs, Annalisa Meloni, Veronika Nagy, Silvan Pollozek, Philipp Seufferling, Zuzana Uhde

Local Organizer: Department of Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University, with special thanks to Koen Leurs

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Abstracts

DATAMIG Panel 1: Database Archives and the Production of Security Knowledge

Moderation: Vasilis Argyriou & Veronika Nagy

“Sample in, identity out”: tracing kinship surveillance and archivization of the migrant body at the border

Philipp Seufferling, London School of Economics

This presentation explores the history and present of “kinship surveillance” at the border. Recently, US border authorities introduced “rapid DNA” machines assessing genetic relations between swab samples within 90 minutes. Through automated analysis, kinship information is extracted from migrants’ bodies, enabling quick border decisions – or, as advertised: “Sample in, identity out”. This paper addresses historical trajectories of media technologies situating social relations within the migrant body. In the 1980s, the first legal application of “DNA-fingerprinting” was for a border decision in the UK. Before, blood-type tests could exclude paternity, used e.g. on Chinese immigrants in 1950s US, suspected of trafficking communists. Earlier, phenotype comparisons were used to determine kinship. Based on archival material around the introduction of DNA-fingerprinting by the UK Home Office, I trace how border regimes naturalize kinship surveillance as a technique of knowledge-production, that draws on archivization of the migrant body to surveil the Other. Histories of kinship surveillance reveals a longsta]nding obsession with finding evidence of traceable origin. The body is made into an archive: a database to extract information, storing the allegedly truest archetypes of identity. Deconstructing this feverish obsession with archetypical truth, following Derrida (1995), exposes how genetic information is not inherently meaningful, but produced as information in interaction with border authorities. Archiv(iz)ing is an active technique of knowledge-production, rendering genes, blood, or phenotypes into media of social relations, enabled by media technologies, e.g. blood tests, gene de-coding, digital databases, or AI. A historical exploration critiques how states attach value to kinship surveillance based on archivization of the migrant body, emerging from eugenicist anxieties of modern Western states around the reproduction of (non-white) Others.

Mobilizing digital archives in asylum procedures: epistemic practices and conflicts of mobile phone usage for evidence

Ivan Josipovic, University of Vienna

In the absence of paper-based means of evidence on asylum seekers in European immigration bureaucracies, mobile phones and other personal devices are increasingly used to make claims about an applicant’s identity, travel route or country of origin. Drawing on the cases of Austria, Germany and Switzerland (DACH region), I ask how mobile phone data has been mobilized as a means of evidence in asylum procedures since 2017. Based on a qualitative analysis of 68 decisions by administrative courts in the region and, I identify four epistemic strategies through which mobile phone data are mobilized both by asylum seekers as well as immigration officers and courts in order to (de)legitimize applicants’ claims. The findings are supplemented by 10 interviews with Swiss practitioners in asylum bureaucracy on the implications of a standardized smartphone data extraction procedure, as has been legislated in the entire region since 2017. In this vein, my contribution will add to a better understanding of how the proliferation of personal digital archives shapes knowledge production in asylum procedures and eventually affects the possibilities and constraints for claiming rights.

Senegal’s civil registration system: The in/exclusion paradox of “symbolic modernism”

Leonie Jegen, University of Amsterdam

This paper considers the ongoing “modernization” process of the Senegalese civil registries through the inclusion/exclusion paradox. Key issues tackled by the project are the augmentation of registration rates alongside the enhancement of document security of records produced. The latter relates to the perception of

the civil registry as “breeder” of easily falsifiable documents (“real fake documents”) which render national IDs easy to falsify and difficult to verify. Through the introduction of what is called the “investigative modality of interoperability” the use of civil registration to produce “real fake” documents, or put differently, “aspirational identities” (Breckenridge and Szreter 2012), among others for the purpose of visa acquisition, is envisaged to be reduced. To do so the projects aims to firstly digitalize the national registration system and then render it interoperable with the existing biometric ID database. The “modernization” of the Senegalese civil registry integrates the Senegalese state within the ranks of states whose documents are considered “legible,” while simultaneously working to foster trends towards identity management and ‘securitization of identity’ (Muller 2004), that work towards the further exclusion of African mobility on a global scale.

Intersecting Digitalization and Border Control in Europe-Africa Migration: The Ceuta and Melilla Case Study's Unique Perspective on Security, Technology, and Media Freedoms

Noemi Mena Montes, Radboud University

This research study delves into the intricate dynamics of border control at the Spanish-Moroccan border in Ceuta and Melilla, with a particular focus on the evolving digitalization of security measures. In recent years, the region has become a focal point for international migration, as migrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa seek entry into Europe. To understand the multifaceted challenges of border control in this context, we conducted interviews with eight European and Spanish journalists who have been on the front lines, covering these borders and observing the deployment of cutting-edge technologies, including drones and surveillance cameras. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla have witnessed a significant transformation in their border control strategies, transitioning from traditional physical barriers to a more technology-driven approach. The study explores how these technological advancements are used not only to deter migrants but also to impede the work of journalists attempting to report on the unfolding events at the borders. It raises questions about the ethical implications of deploying digital surveillance technologies in the name of border security and its impact on press freedom. In the context of this conference, this case study presents a unique perspective on the interplay between border security, technology, and media freedoms, with broader implications for understanding the challenges faced by both migrants seeking a better life and the journalists committed to covering their stories. It ultimately brings important discussions about security and civil liberties in an era of digitalization.

Enacting clan crime through the production of statistical security knowledge

Salah El-Kahil, Leuphana Universität Lüneburg Centre for Digital Cultures (CDC)

In recent years, German police administrations have been producing statistical data on so-called ‘clan crime’. While the conceptual framework of this category has faced scrutiny, the statistical methodologies employed remain largely unexamined. Drawing from an analysis of publicly available documents, this article aims to address this research gap by examining three distinct quantification methods. It contends that these methods of quantifying clan crime tend to racialize the phenomenon to varying extents, by translating anti-muslim narratives into numbers. Positioning this investigation within the framework critical security research, this paper initially frames clan crime statistics as tools of securitization. Subsequently, it advocates for a process of de-securitization through independent scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, the article explicates my approach to the performativity of crime statistics, asserting that numbers do not merely represent objective facts or subjective constructions but actively shape reality itself. In the presentation, the analysis will first delineate and compare the divergent realities constructed by each statistical approach. Subsequently, it will illuminate the implicit assumptions embedded within the criminological literature underpinning these statistical methodologies.

DATAMIG Panel 2: Transnational Flows, Local Practices

Moderation: Annalisa Meloni & Zuzana Uhde

Emerging Visions of Seamless Travel: (En)Countering Camouflaged Sovereignty at the Frictionless Border

Stephan Scheel, Leuphana University of Lüneburg

The vision of seamless travel – that is: travelling without being stopped by border controls – has been a central trope in the promotion of ‘smart borders’ for more than two decades. Seamless travel and the related idea of

'frictionless borders' facilitated by mobile phone apps, self-check-in kiosks and biometric technologies continue to feature prominently on the agenda of the aviation industry and providers of security technologies. This paper interrogates the implications of seamless travel schemes for the operational logic and concrete practices of border control. Examples include the Aruba Happy Flow project in the Caribbean Netherlands and the "Aquarium", a facial recognition tunnel operating at Dubai International airport. The analysis shows that seamless travel schemes displace frontline border guards who have traditionally acted as visual delegates of sovereign power. Likewise, the exclusions, discriminations and violence implicated by border controls have largely disappeared from view. Hence, the logic of policing operating at frictionless borders has changed: the Althusserian injunction of the police 'Hey you there, stop!' has been replaced by the Rancièrian understanding of the police: 'Move on, there is nothing to see here!' Sovereign power has become camouflaged, operating largely unnoticed and thus even more efficiently. This raises the question, to cite Jacques Rancière (1992, 64): "How are we to reinvent politics?". I argue that prominent concepts from Science and Technology Studies (STS) usually mobilised for politicising issues, such as Latour's matters of concern or Puig de la Casas notion of matters of care are insufficient because they promote a politics of interference that ultimately results in reformist modes of critique. Drawing on Rancière, I argue that the logic of police pervading seamless travel can only be interrupted and contested by rendering the technologies and practices that facilitating frictionless borders and seamless travel as matters of dissent.

Postdigital flows. Transnational labor migration and data center infrastructures in the Netherlands

Laura Candidatu, Utrecht University

Critical scholarship emerging in the last two decades, part of the so-called infrastructural turn in media studies prompted a renewed examination of the social and cultural dimensions of media infrastructures (Parks and Starosielski 2015; Parks, Velcova and Ridder 2023; Larkin 2008). This work highlights the co-constitution of infrastructures and the socio-cultural milieu in which they operate. Furthermore, this scholarship places emphasis on the human labor involved in maintaining infrastructures, and recognizes the ordinary and mundane side of infrastructures as they intersect with cultures of everyday life. Similarly, theorizations of the postdigital moment (Berry 2016; Stigler 2016) show how digital technologies do not stand separate from culture and sociality as they are deeply enmeshed in the fabric of our daily lives. In this view, the digital is seen as an infrastructure (Bowker et al. 2009; Dijstelbloem 2021; Barns et al. 2017; Leurs 2019; 2023) and like other infrastructures, becomes a product of invisible effort which relies oftentimes on unequal labor efforts and has differentiated material effects. This paper takes data centers as postdigital infrastructures and explores how, in the context of the Netherlands, economic and political hegemonies blend into its cultural inscriptions across different social contexts, and along the social hierarchies of race/ethnicity, class, and national belonging inter alia. More specifically, it examines the dynamics of visibility and invisibility within the interplay of the data center as postdigital infrastructure and the migration of lower-skilled workers from Eastern Europe. The paper seeks to shed light on the transnational flow of data and labor across borders, along the online-offline continuum, thereby challenging prevailing political discourses of anti-migration.

Interoperability and the fragmented integration of European security

Rocco Bellanova, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Silvan Pollozek & Jan-Hendrik Passoth, Viadrina University Frankfurt (Oder)

In 2019, European Union (EU) institutions adopted two EU Interoperability Regulations to let EU centralised databases speak to each other. The ambition of the European Commission was to "close gaps and remove blind spots in our information systems for security, borders and migration" (EC 2017d, np). Indeed, interoperability is expected to do many things for migration governance, border control and security. The stated goals range from the improvement of "efficiency of checks at the external borders" or the "prevention and combating illegal immigration" to the "prevention, detection and investigation of terrorist offences and other serious criminal offences" (EU Reg 2019). The stated ambitions of these two Regulations highlight the deeply political and transformative nature of database interoperability. As such, they offer us a much-needed reminder that interoperability is far from being a "mere" technical matter. Rather, it has become difficult to think about the further transformation of statecraft without assuming the need to implement some form of interoperability. In this paper, we argue that the importance of interoperability reflects a more general mode of Europeanizing migration and border and security practices, which is based on patchwork. Instead of an overall system or rigid EU-wide standardization, existing systems are punctually linked, platforms with overlapping domains are created, and "connector" devices of data exchange, merging, and oversight are added. A mode of

Europeanization, we tend to describe as fragmented and partial integration, which is ever only preliminary. We suggest an analytics that focuses on incremental evolution, update, coordination, and technical work. Moreover, we point to the deeply violent forms of data capture as basic operations for an interoperable 'Security Union' being entangled with compulsion, containment, and incarceration of people on the move. Finally, we discuss some critical entry points for an analysis of an interoperable migration and border control.

Exploring Protection Politics and Data Practices in the Institutionalized Housing of Refugees in Germany

Sifka Etlar Frederiksen, German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM) Berlin

After the influx of refugees in 2015, the harsh conditions and considerable violence within refugee accommodations in Germany came under scrutiny, prompting the establishment of a federal initiative focused on knowledge acquisition and protection strategies for these settings. Since then, there has been an increased focus on protection politics within the field of refugee accommodations in Germany, however, due to the decentralized and fragmented nature of the governance of refugee housing across various regions in Germany (Wendel, 2014), grasping the governance and protection standards in accommodations is challenging. Each state is responsible for refugee accommodations, each with its own evolving legal framework. Thus, there is no knowledge at the national level regarding the number of refugee accommodations across Germany. Additionally, individual accommodations or operators vary in their methods, further complicating the landscape. As part of the focus on protection politics, the Violence Protection Monitor was developed and implemented, as a sociotechnical phenomenon aimed at enhancing safety in refugee accommodations. This program aims to establish a better data foundation in refugee accommodations to assess and reflect on the implementation of minimum standards and to monitor these standards across seven federal states cooperating. This PhD project focuses on the co-production of the manufacturing of this data practice by state and non-state actors. It explores how violence protection in refugee accommodations is enacted as objects of government through this new data practice, and through strategic ignorance and the production of (non)knowledge. Furthermore, it seeks to engage with data practices enacting the needs of marginalized populations. This sociotechnical program can possibly be viewed as an infrastructure of counter-surveillance, as it shifts away from data gathered on migrants justified through discourses on securitization of migration (Bigo, 2006), towards contributing to data gathered on the institutions of governance of migrants.

Automated decision-making and artificial intelligence at European borders and their risks for human rights

Evelien Brouwer, Yiran Yang, Frederik Borgesius Zuiderveen en Pascal Beckers (University of Utrecht)

Many countries use automated decision-making (ADM) systems, often based on artificial intelligence (AI), to manage migration at their borders. This interdisciplinary paper explores two questions. What are the main ways that automated decision-making is used at EU borders? Does such automated decision-making bring risks related to human rights, and if so: which risks? The paper introduces a taxonomy of four types of ADM systems at EU borders. Three types are used at borders: systems for (1) identification and verification by checking biometrics, (2) risk assessment, and (3) border monitoring. In addition, (4) polygraphs and emotion detectors are being tested at EU borders. We discuss three categories of risks of such automated decision-making, namely risks related to the human rights to (1) privacy and data protection, (2) non-discrimination, and (3) a fair trial and effective remedies. The paper is largely based on a literature review that we conducted about the use of automated decision-making at borders. The paper combines insights from several disciplines, including social sciences, law, computer science, and migration studies.