
PANEL 2 - MANAGEMENT OF IDENTITIES IN TRANSNATIONAL, SUPRANATIONAL, AND COMMERCIAL RECONFIGURATIONS

MONDAY, 26 JUNE, 14:00 - 17:30

PANEL INFO

PANEL PRESENTERS

- Wouter Van Rossem: Tracing the evolution of an identification software: An exploration of gateway technology in data infrastructure for border security and migration control
- Matthias Leese: What counts as intelligence? The politics of data quality in EU internal security
- Nina Dewi Toft Djanegara: Ghosts in the machine
- Roelof Troost: Passenger screening: ensuring accurate identity resolution & watch list matching

PANEL DISCUSSANTS

- Lucy Suchman
- Stefan Kuhlmann

PANEL ABSTRACT

This panel aims to explore how transnational, supranational, and commercial contexts reconfigure knowledge production and the management of identity data of people on the move. It is common to associate the identification and registration of people on the move with nation-state-building initiatives that aim to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens by establishing identity registers. Only recently have scholars begun to pay attention to transnational identification and registration practices (About et al., 2013). This is also one of the founding intuitions of the Processing Citizenship project. How should we, for instance, make sense of the responsibilities of organizations like the European Commission agencies, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, Interpol, the International Civil Aviation Organization, or ISO when it comes to rationalizing and standardizing identity management and identification systems?

The goal of the panel is to look into how a more trans- and supra-national heuristic perspective can highlight the role of private and commercial actors in the transformation of identity management and identification. Scholars have demonstrated, for instance, that only a handful of globally operating corporations have developed EU migration governance (Lemberg-Pedersen et al., 2020). How can we make sense of the ways in which these actors reshape identity management and, by extension, the creation of knowledge and non-knowledge about people on the move? How do these professionals navigate the conflicts that arise when applying internationally honed technologies to local settings? How can they develop responsible innovation in providing sensitive sociotechnical infrastructures that have long-term impact on people's lives?

Notably, the panel adopts an overtly material perspective. It proposes to examine how novel forms of identification, such as interoperability and linking and cross-checking personal data from various national and international databases, are made possible, and with which governance and political implications. In practice, making people legible through data practices can never be completely accurate. Practitioners need to be flexible and able to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, such as taking fingerprints in unfavourable weather or dealing with names that cannot be transliterated without ambiguity. Taking a cue from the materiality debate in CSS, STS and beyond, we can inquire as to whether or not the practices and infrastructures of identification in international contexts also constitute the meanings of (in)security.

REFERENCES

About, Ilse, James Brown, and Gayle Lonergan, eds. *Identification and Registration Practices in Transnational Perspective*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013. DOI: 10.1057/9781137367310.

Lemberg-Pedersen, Martin, Johanne Rübner Hansen, and Oliver Joel Halpern. *The Political Economy of Entry Governance*. Copenhagen: Aalborg University, 2020.

TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDENTIFICATION SOFTWARE: AN EXPLORATION OF GATEWAY TECHNOLOGY IN DATA INFRASTRUCTURE FOR BORDER SECURITY AND MIGRATION CONTROL

*Wouter Van Rossem,
University of Twente, The Netherlands & University of Bologna, Italy*

Systems and infrastructures for identifying and registering mobile populations have many facets and long development histories. As such, researchers' partial perspectives shape their understanding of the technologies and practices involved. Frequently, researchers study phenomena with so many moving parts by conducting their studies at multiple sites or including human and non-human actors that shape identification encounters. As another option, this presentation will highlight multi-temporal sampling methods to understand the long-term development of identification systems and infrastructures. Practically, the presentation will focus on two heuristics for selecting crucial moments in the lifecycle of identification technologies. The first heuristic employs the Social Construction of Technology's concept of "interpretative flexibility" to pick out significant moments when social groups challenge, change or close down the meanings of identification practices and technologies. The second heuristic employs the infrastructure studies' concept of "gateway technologies" to pick out moments when heterogeneous identification software systems and infrastructures intersect. Two contributions to the research agenda of long-term perspectives on identification in border security and migration management are discussed based on using these two heuristics to analyze data gathered through fieldwork at an IT vendor of software for matching people's identity data. The first contribution demonstrates how the software package's changing interpretive flexibility allows us to see actors' varying problematizations of identification, such as those related to the securitization of identification. The second contribution demonstrates how "gateway moments" make it possible to see the compromises necessary when building identification infrastructures and adapting globally honed technologies to new settings. For instance, deploying the data matching software in an EU system highlighted compromises required for backward compatibility with MS systems. Together, these findings shed light on the activities of under-the-radar actors, such as software vendors, whose distribution and reuse of software packages have long-term implications on identification practices and infrastructures in various contexts.

AUTHOR BIO

Wouter Van Rossem is a PhD research in the context of the European Research Council (ERC) funded project Processing Citizenship and at the Science Technology, and Policy Studies department at the University of Twente (The Netherlands). He is currently a visiting researcher at the University of Bologna. His research investigates how people's identities are matched between data infrastructures for population management in Europe and how different actors deal with data quality problems.

WHAT COUNTS AS INTELLIGENCE? THE POLITICS OF DATA QUALITY IN EU INTERNAL SECURITY

Matthias Leese

Professor, Department of Humanities, Social and Political Sciences, ETH Zurich

Data and information sharing systems form the backbone of intelligence production for the regulation of a multiplicity of mobility and security contexts in the EU. Data, in other words, largely define who is considered a potential threat and who is allowed to cross borders and move freely. More recently, however, the trustworthiness of data in the Schengen Information System and other large-scale database for EU internal security has been questioned, leading to an emergent politics of data quality that seeks to ensure that data are suitable and reliable for the regulatory tasks for which they are mobilized.

This paper investigates how such a politics comes into being. To do so, it investigates the ways in which the European Commission and the Council of the European Union are addressing the question of data quality in EU internal security databases. Based on document analysis, the paper shows how data quality is imagined as a top-down approach (Commission) vs a bottom-up process (Council). When taken together, both approaches define what counts as good data and subsequently as intelligence in the constitution of European public order.

AUTHOR BIO

Matthias Leese is Assistant Professor for Technology and Governance at the Department of Humanities, Social and Political Sciences, ETH Zurich. His research is interested in the effects of digital technologies on social order. It pays specific attention to security organizations and their rationales and practices that are co-constituted between the technological and the social.

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINE

Nina Dewi Toft Djanegara

Associate Director, Technology & Racial Equity Initiative Center for Comparative Studies in Race & Ethnicity, Stanford University

The National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) Facial Recognition Vendor Test is considered the gold standard for assessing the performance of facial recognition models. Since the test series began in 1994, it has been regarded as an objective benchmark for corporations and academic research groups to compare their models against one another. To evaluate the accuracy of facial recognition models, NIST draws upon a database of millions of photos of US visa applicants and border crossers. Without their knowledge or consent, immigrants' photos have become raw material for the refinement of facial recognition software. This presentation discusses the afterlife of these images, photos of immigrants and non-citizens that have been repurposed for a function that goes far beyond their original intent.

AUTHOR BIO

Nina Dewi Toft Djanegara is the Associate Director of CCSRE's Technology and Racial Equity Initiative where she oversees the Initiative's practitioner fellows program, graduate and undergraduate fellowships, and strategic development. Previously, Nina was a Program Assistant and Graduate Fellow with the Technology and Racial Equity Initiative.

A doctoral student in the Stanford Anthropology Department, her research uses ethnographic and archival methods to investigate how technology is applied in political contexts. In particular, her dissertation investigates how biometric technologies – such as fingerprinting and facial recognition – are applied to border enforcement in the United States. Nina holds an MSc in Environmental Science from Yale University and a BA in International Development Studies from the University of California, Berkeley.

PASSENGER SCREENING: ENSURING ACCURATE IDENTITY RESOLUTION & WATCH LIST MATCHING

Roelof Troost

Chief Operating Officer, WCC

According to Annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation as published by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), each UN member state “(..) shall establish an Advance Passenger Information (API) system.” These systems screen incoming passengers in advance of their arrival against national and international watchlists. This screening process is challenging: identity data provided by the airlines can be of questionable quality. Data contained in watchlists is often inaccurate and incomplete. Too flexible screening settings will yield a high number of false positives. Too rigid matching may result in a potentially disastrous false negative. This presentation will cover some real-world examples and demonstrate a pragmatic but effective approach to these challenges.

AUTHOR BIO

Roelof Troost is Chief Operating Officer at WCC. WCC is a commercial organization that has over 25 years of experience in delivering advanced Identity Management and identification software solutions to governments. Roelof has been a part of WCC for the last 15 years and as such has managed or supervised many large software implementations for government and non-governmental agencies. Some examples of these projects: the implementation of a biometric refugee registration system for the UNHCR, a biographic matching engine for the centralized European visa application registration system (EU-VIS) and more recently the implementation of two nationwide Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems.