

ONTOLOGIES AND EPISTEMOLOGIES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES

International Workshop
ERC Project "Doing Digital Identities" (DigID)

23-24 October 2024
Leuphana University, Lüneburg



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission



LEUPHANA
CENTRE FOR DIGITAL CULTURES

WORKSHOP RATIONALE

Welcome to the third workshop of the DigID-project (2023-2028) entitled "Ontologies and Epistemologies in Science and Technology Studies". Our interest in this topic emerges out of the DigID-project's research agenda which investigates how the digitization of identification practices reconfigures relations between citizens and state authorities. We want to trace and study these reconfigurations at three sites: birth registration, citizen-government transactions and border controls. The implications of digital ID devices are studied ethnographically in one international and five country case studies (Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Malawi, Sierra Leone). Based on insights gained in these multi-sited, collaborative ethnographies, the DigID-project aims to develop a novel understanding of material citizenship in the digital age which allows to capture and expose how material devices and infrastructures shape and affect the lived experience and practical meaning of citizenship. Our project therefore raises a number of theoretical questions about socio-material relations.

It has been many years since Actor-Network Theory (ANT) proposed a radical shift in research on science and technologies. The material turn suggests new epistemologies and ontologies that do away with taken-for-granted divisions between subjects and objects, humans and non-humans, and even nature and culture. Yet, the successors to ANT have developed into a diverse set of approaches that go beyond its early assumptions and case studies. Feminist scholarship, studies of (post-)coloniality, migration, and other fields foreground different theoretical sensibilities, concepts, and ideas. Although there are differences between these approaches, we can still identify common themes such as a relational ontology, the refusal of preconceptions, and a subsequent emphasis on the situatedness of knowledge production.

The objective of this workshop is to discuss the various theoretical assumptions and methodological consequences that exist and arise in interdisciplinary Science and Technology Studies. Firstly, we will identify the heterogeneous ontological and epistemological approaches to materiality and technology that are prevalent in our respective field. Our guiding questions will be the different ways we can understand materiality and technology as well as ascertaining the shared epistemological sensibilities between them. Second, we will discuss the methodological implications of different conceptualisations of materiality and technology. Our aim is to explore how methods can and should reflect our theoretical assumptions and how we can compare situated descriptions in transnational case studies and beyond. Third, we will create an open space where we can further discuss theoretical sensibilities in the context of concrete empirical research and give room to open questions and unsolved research puzzles.

For 1.5 days, a group of selected scholars will engage with the above themes. On Wednesday, 23.10.2024, Prof. Amade M'Charek (University of Amsterdam) will present a keynote lecture on "A politics of neglect: Trailing Life and Death in a Postcolonial Landscape". On Thursday, 24.10.2024, the workshop will comprise two sessions and an open space, during which a variety of theoretical and methodological themes will be explored.

Formats and Roles

This workshop is intended to provide space for presenting work-in-progress and open discussions for researchers and practitioners at different levels of their careers. While most participants will have assigned roles, we ask everyone to contribute to a conducive discussion atmosphere where everyone is encouraged to participate equally.

Presenters: Please present your conceptual argument or main research puzzle and how you addressed it in short inputs (5-8 min) with a view on the topic of the panel/roundtable you have been assigned. In the interest of providing space for joint discussions, we will adhere to rather strict time-keeping.

Chairs: Please be strict with respect to time in order to allow for enough time for discussion.

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23. October 2024

16:30 Get-Together & Coffee

Venue: Klippo Café, Leuphana University

|| Keynote Lecture

Venue: Lecture Hall 3 (LH3), Leuphana University

18:00 Amade Aouatef M'charek (University of Amsterdam): "A politics of neglect: Trailing Life and Death in a Postcolonial Landscape"

Since 2014 more than 26.000 people have drowned in the Mediterranean Sea. They have been attended to as "border death" (Last & Spijkerboer 2014), crucially, drawing attention to the militarization of Europe's borders and its migration policy. But what if we would make a decolonial move and cross the Mediterranean, move from Europe to Africa? What if we would attend to death, not in relation to borders that kill, but in relation to life and livelihood?

The starting point for this talk are the beaches of Zarzis, a southern Tunisian harbour town, where dead bodies have been washing ashore since the mid-nineties. I ask, "how did these bodies end up here?" A forensic question that will not engage in any self-evident way. I reconfigure forensics, from an art of finding evince and closure, to an art of paying attention. A mode of opening up and articulating complex entanglements.

Inspired by forensics, its attention to materialities and temporalities as well as its tenet of following heterogeneous traces, I query the relation between death and the possibilities for life and livelihood by trailing what I call vital elements; materialities that are crucial for fostering live or causing death in their absence. Think of phosphorus, salt, water, or, sea sponges. Moving with, and being moved by these materialities and the way they have been part of extractivist practices, I will tell two stories to attend to the durability of unequal, (post)colonial relation, (1) underscoring what can flow easily between Europe and Africa and what is being stopped, (2) contributing to a conceptualization of neglect.

19:30 Taxi/ Walk to Dinner Location

20:00 Conference Dinner

Venue: Mälzer Brau- & Tafelhaus, Heiligengeiststraße 43,
21335 Lüneburg

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24 October 2024

|| Workshop

Venue: Room C40.530, Central Building (C40), 5th Floor,
Leuphana University

09:00-09:30 Arrival and Coffee

09:30 Welcome and Introduction

10:00-11:30 Session 1: Theoretical Sensibilities in Science and Technology Studies

The first part of the workshop will be dedicated to a discussion of the theoretical sensibilities in established and emerging STS scholarship. We will also discuss the inconsistencies and contradictions found between and within different approaches. Rather than focusing on project-based presentations, the discussion will focus on epistemological and ontological assumptions and uncertainties. Participants are invited to prepare 5-7 minute contributions, formulated as statements or inquiries with open questions.

- How can we understand socio-materiality? What do different understandings emphasize? What are widespread theoretical assumptions shared within STS?
- What are the implications of framing technologies as networks, assemblages, epistemes, cultures, or (knowledge) practices? What are the implications of choosing certain frames, and what preconceptions do we make?
- What distinguishes traditional ethnographic or poststructuralist approaches from post-ANT approaches? To illustrate, how do performativity, relationality, and ontological politics differ from discursive formation, positionality, and the power/knowledge nexus? What do we gain or lose by shifting our theoretical vocabulary to these concepts? What are similarities between these approaches?

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- Is there a core set of theoretical assumptions or sensibilities that make up science and technology studies or post-ANT scholarship considering the similarities between different approaches? If so, what are these assumptions or sensibilities? If not, what are the implications?
- Post-ANT approaches emphasize the performative and reality-generating effects of (always partial and incomplete) knowledge production and invite us to pay close attention to our own situatedness. How should we understand self-reflexivity in research from such epistemological standpoints?

Sulfikar Amir (Nanyang Technological University) - **Disentangling SocioDigital Life and Infrastructures**

Rapid digitalization, especially in the urban space, entails a techno-institutional transformation of people and cities in which information technology and digital platforms become the principal infrastructure and the basis for providing essential services to the livelihood of urban communities. In rapidly growing Asian megacities, urban digitalization is manifested in the organized utilization of various digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and Internet of Things that transform a wide range of public sectors, including transportation, finance, security, food, and healthcare. Two trends are unfolding in such an increasingly virtual life. One emerges from the process of urban digitalization, which is deeply intertwined with the structural conditions of the city, shaped and influenced by social, economic, and political circumstances of urban space characterized by complex interactions between different actors. As a result, the pattern of urban digitalization follows the logics of urban politics where various forms of social force come to determine the construction of digital platforms. Another one brings in a change in structural relationships between authorities, communities, and capital that form dependent structures where human interactions become increasingly vulnerable due to the complexity of digital networks (Bijker 2010). Out of this point of view is a notion of sociodigital life tightly embedded in digital infrastructures. My short talk will touch on the elements that build sociodigital life as part of our digital consciousness.

Johannes Beetz (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) - **Materialities and Materialism in Science and Technology Studies**

Over the past two decades or so, different kinds of materialism have seen a veritable revival and there has been a renewed concern for things, matter, and materiality in the social sciences and humanities. What unites the contemporary approaches concerned with materialism and materiality in their differences is a shared interest in how material things and instances partake in the constitution of the social, how humans and non-humans are

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entangled, and how different material instances shape the social relations and processes we enter and are part of. The heterogeneous field of Science and Technology Studies – and actor-network theory and its successors in particular – have played a major role in this 'material turn'. What counts as 'material' is no settled matter, however. Not only solid matter and bodies but also social relations, discourses, digital technologies, practices, and processes can be conceptualized as having a material existence. Approaches in STS in proximity to ANT as well as neighbouring fields in the social sciences and humanities are mostly in agreement that materiality is not reducible to tangible solid matter or matter in motion. I will argue that different modalities of materiality can be found in these approaches and that the (intangible, relational, processual, etc.) materialities we encounter in their descriptions have implications for our understanding of (socio-)materiality and beyond.

Christian Bueger (University of Copenhagen) & Andrew Neal (University of Edinburgh) - **Ruins and Futures: An adventure in infrastructure in Shetlands**

Shetland is a group of 100 islands at the edge of the North Sea. Within the same distance are the Danish Faroe Islands, Bergen in Norway and the Orkney Islands – Scotland's other Northern archipelago. The islands have been inhabited since the stone age, and generations of infrastructures have fundamentally transformed it over the centuries. In this story, we follow Arthur as he explores the infrastructures of the islands and how they are entangled - over time, space, visually, transnationally, across communities and big capital.

Huib Dijstelbloem (University of Amsterdam) - **Sensitivities: immobile people and emerging publics**

The theoretical sensitivities and the epistemological and ontological assumptions and uncertainties in relation to the work with Science and Technology Studies that I would like to discuss are the following:

The first concerns the notions of mobility and immobility. To a certain extent, STS can be seen as aligned with the so-called 'mobility turn' in the social sciences. STS research displays a strong focus on circulation, on movement, on the changeability and transformative capacity of all kinds of human-non-human configurations. However, there is a risk that STS undervalues the notion of immobility. In the case of climate change, for example, there is a strong focus on those who will have to migrate, whereas many people do not or cannot move. There is also a risk that STS research follows the (neo)liberal and capitalist paradigm of circulation or uncritically reproduces the paradigm of movement in modern science. The question is: how to address immobility in STS-research? A second and quite different topic concerns the notion of publics. STS, and in particular ANT approaches, but also research inspired by the material turn, have engaged with the notion of publics as developed by the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. The notion of publics offers an alternative to the inclusion/exclusion dichotomy and relates well to the symmetrical socio-technical approach in STS. There are other avenues to explore, such as the formation of eco-publics in the context of climate change. However, it still seems complicated to relate STS approaches

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using the notion of publics to political theory approaches and particular notions of democracy.

Ronja Trischler (Technical University Dortmund) - **Materializing digital objects**

What do we learn about 'the digital' when we examine it through its objects? Against the backdrop of recent interdisciplinary conceptualizations of "digital objects", my contribution revisits STS concepts of objects to examine the relationships between the digital entities we encounter in empirical research (such as data, code, hard drives, or algorithms) and the concepts we use to analyze them. This is seen as a historical continuation: STS have been concerned with the materiality of technology from the beginning, informing concepts like "immutable mobiles" (Latour), "boundary objects" (Leigh Star) or "knowledge objects" (Knorr Cetina), and 'putting materiality on the map' of sociological theorizing, by studying epistemic practices through their heterogeneous elements and their practical relations. While considering the diverse and multiple forms of matter from this perspective, how the digital is material and with what effects, remain empirical questions, they are also questions of methodology (Ribes; Adams & Thompson; Bailey et al.) and theorizing. In STS, practices and processes of materialization are put central: ontologically, objects are seen as relational, hybrid and multiple, or "decentered" (Law). Generally, the same applies to digital objects. Furthermore, different qualities of such "complex and messy objects" (Law & Singleton) are contrasted concerning their topologies as network, region, fluid and fire (Law & Mol). On this basis, the input argues for theorizing digital objects by asking with what (object) and for what (object) they materialize.

Chair: Salah El-Kahil (Leuphana University)

11:30-12:00 Coffee Break

12:00-13.30 Methods, Methodologies, and Comparative Research in Science and Technologie Studies

In the second part of our workshop, we will explore the methodological implications of different understandings of materiality and technology and discuss how to compare case studies that make different theoretical assumptions. While many research projects, including our own, frame their methodology as field research or ethnographies, some scholars argue that the theoretical sensibilities prevalent in STS should be reflected in methodological choices. Another central question raised by the insistence of STS-inspired research on radically situated case studies is how to achieve

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comparability between ethnographic accounts. Although comparisons in the social sciences have traditionally been based on positivist and essentializing assumptions, there has been some attention in recent years to how it is possible to engage productively in comparisons within and between ethnographic accounts. Building on these discussions, we aim to further investigate the potential for STS research to be compared when situatedness, multiplicity, and performativity are used as central concepts. Participants are invited to prepare short contributions, that present collaborative research within STS, research that compares different ethnographic accounts, or contributions that consider the methodological consequences of certain theoretical assumptions.

- How do our conceptual assumptions translate into specific methodologies and vice versa?
- How can or should ethnographies in STS differ from other ethnographic approaches?
- How do we think about comparisons when STS ethnographies are seen as radically situational and/or methodologies differ? Is commensurability a necessary condition for comparability across STS studies? If so, how can it be achieved? If not, how should we deal with incommensurability? Is there a space in between that we can work with to achieve comparability?
- How should we think about the co-production of ethnographic accounts by the researchers themselves? What reflexive practices should we engage in when comparing accounts that are situated in this way?
- How can we compare situated accounts in transnational contexts? How should we deal with interdisciplinarity when comparing?

Nina Amelung (University of Lisbon) - **Two remarks on the “mischievous spirit” of comparison along country cases and methodology being “disobedient”**

In my short input I will, first, revisit Madeleine Akrich and Vololona Rabearisoa's (2016) text “Pulling Oneself Out of the Traps of Comparison” to look into their reflection on how comparison got an agency of its own when popping up like a “mischievous spirit” throughout their EU project on patient organizations. The experience they share is an instructive example on how the comparative imperative is practiced and takes multiple forms from research proposal writing, designing and implementing research and work plans, to collaboratively making sense of research findings with “comparators” and writing “comparative” papers. Second, I will open up to more fundamental methodological questions with Katherine McKittrick's book (2021) “Dear Science and Other Stories”. The feminist and black studies, and science and technology studies scholar invites us to engage in creative and disobedient ways

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of knowing and method-making in an unkind world. She takes the asymmetric relations between prevailing and alternative knowledge systems, and disciplining and disruptive methodologies in academia as a starting point. By engaging with relations between songs, poems, conversations, theories, debates, memories, arts, geographies, curiosities she leaves us with inspirations of how to open up unexpected and surprising ways to reflect on knowledge, race, gender, liberation, and blackness. These two remarks may first appear disconnected, but I do hope that the discussion may provide the space to collectively reflect on the lessons to learn and fruitful connections to continue (re)inventing and (un)disciplining methodologies in STS.

Michael Guggenheim (Goldsmiths, University of London) - **From Ethnography to Complex interventive translation chains: Towards an STS practice that learns from STS**

As the organisers point out, some STS scholars claim that "theoretical sensibilities prevalent in STS should be reflected in methodological choices": But what are the first, and how do they translate into the latter? At least for my case, I suggest that two insights matter: a) that research means to translate the world into representations. This process is a practice, for which researchers need to take responsibility, and which always, by definition, implies that the translation process transforms, reduces, changes and adds to the world. b) that if STS takes its own observations of the power of science seriously, then it follows that long translations, translations based on visual media in general (drawing things together), mechanical reproduction media (films, photos), automated translation chains (computerised image taking), complex translation chains (images into colour codes) and most importantly, active manipulations of the world (experimental setups).

Comparison then, is not hampered by "situatedness", because, as STS teaches us, any research is situated. The role of the comparator is to produce the work to make the world comparable, not through unsituating it, but through creating machines that allow to bring disparate elements together somewhere else and somehow different: This also includes the blind spot of STS that the most "situated" ethnography radically, but uniformly desituates its object as conference presentation or research article, thereby undermining its own aim of situatedness. A proper "un/situated" STS could start by far more radically assuming its transformative and translational power, both at the level of the making of comparative objects as well as at the level of returning these representations to the world.

Mathias Leese (ETH Zurich) - **To compare or not compare? A practice approach to ethnographic project design**

In ethnographic and other post-positivist approaches that rely on deliberately unstructured in-depth exploration of a social setting that comes into being in interactionist ways through the researcher themselves, the question whether to compare or not to compare is a tricky one. This workshop contribution suggests that a practice approach can be helpful to think about the connection of ethnographic cases that goes beyond notions of formal comparison.

To do so, it builds on the approach pursued by the CURATE project that investigates data quality practices in European law enforcement and border control cooperation, i.e. the ways that diverse actors seek to ensure that data that are being pooled and redistributed through centralized European information infrastructures are trustworthy and reliable.

The project starts from the concept of data journeys, i.e. the fact that data are produced locally and subsequently travel through different institutions and use cases until they eventually end up in systems such as SIS or Eurodac. Tracing these journeys enables us to identify the practices that data are subjected to in different contexts. Thick descriptions of these practices can then be juxtaposed across different domains, types of data, regulatory levels, countries, etc.

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Stefania Milan (University of Amsterdam)

Jasper Van der Kist (University of Antwerp) - **Examining multi-sited imaginaries in a world of borders and boundaries**

Haraway famously noted that the way we represent things matters. Drawing on my research on the chain of country knowledge production in European asylum governance, this presentation explores and problematises multi-sited ethnography as it has been offered in STS. In order to map the trajectory of knowledge production, Bruno Latour's ethnographic studies of the circulating references of science were necessarily 'multi-sited' (Latour 1999; Marcus 1999). This multi-sitedness should not be understood in the context of comparative politics, for example, through the comparison of sites. As Christine Hine (2007) notes, comparative studies can only be multi-sited in a straightforward sense, but this 'does not capture the spirit of the multi-sited imaginary'. In this paper I ask two questions: first, what is the multi-sited imaginary? And what are its limits? Using examples from my research on migration knowledge politics, I raise a number of methodological issues related to representing a world of mobilities, networks and fluidities. I argue that in contrast to the scientific practices described in STS, boundaries, divisions or structural inequalities continue to play a rigid role in knowledge-based asylum politics.

Chair: Stephan Scheel (Leuphana University)

13:30-14:30 Lunch

Venue: Klippo Cafeteria, Central Building (C40), Groundfloor

14:30-16:00 Session 3: Research Puzzles in Group Sessions

For the final part of the workshop we organize an open space, where methodological challenges, research conundrums, reflections on fieldwork, field reports, and (dis-)orientations in research practice will be discussed in relation to science and technology studies. The DigID Team will present first insights from the field but we explicitly invite others to do so as well. For this, we want to move away from the common formats of academic workshops and to give space to the questions and difficulties that arise from ongoing research. Rather than pre-determining the topics to be discussed, we invite participants to present research in progress, early theorizations, or other challenging steps in scholarly work to a small group of participants.

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Group A:

Vasileios Thomas Argyriou (ETH Zurich) - **Data quality and datafication of the 'unknown' in irregular migration governance**

The presentation will focus on preliminary findings and reflections from the first phase of multi-sited fieldwork conducted at Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCACs)/Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), the Directorate of Reception and Identification Services of the Ministry of Migration, and the International Police Cooperation Division in Greece. The research aims to: 1) Investigate data quality dimensions, practices, and control 'in action'; 2) Understand the creation of data doubles for 'unknown' people on the move, serving as markers of identity and eligibility; and 3) Map the trajectories of information from the 'grey areas' of borderlands to the central databases of eu-LISA, examining how front-line officers and back stage analysts render irregular migration knowable and governable using various devices and databases at both national (vertical) and transnational (horizontal) levels. Problematizing the 'messiness' of data practices under data quality considerations invites using mixed ethnographic methods or 'praxiographies' that help explore the 'mangle of practices', and an extended application of post- ANT to demonstrate a relational approach to 'actionable' knowledge production. This allows also for updated research and interventions on the ongoing digitization of migration management, intertwined with proof regimes, detention centres, and logistical devices operating amid uncertainty and instability. To address the issue of flat ontology- an 'inherent vice' of ANT, I will introduce notions from John Law's understanding and mobilization of Topology, which may help analyse the specificities and 'localities' of data production at borderlands and CCACs/RICs; 'exemplary' spaces that serve as information hubs for migration logistics and administrative detention and the creation and efficient circulations of (il)legitimate subjects and populations.

Salah El-Kahil (Leuphana University) - **Protesting identity wallets? A material semiotic approach to digital identification beyond nation states**

As nation-states around the world implement and develop digital identity systems, academics, civil society and human rights organisations warn that these systems often reinforce or even amplify the fundamental mechanisms of exclusion inherent in the centered model of identification. Rather than limiting their protests to raising public awareness, some statelessness activists and networks are therefore taking direct action by developing their own identification infrastructures, which are designed to be 'decentralised', 'self-sovereign' and 'independent'. Drawing on critical citizenship studies literature, I aim to understand the design, implementation and use of these systems as 'acts of citizenship' (Isin 2008), as practices of protest that aim to disrupt established orders by creating a fundamental rupture and thereby materialising rights that did not previously exist. This literature tends to foreground the processes and conditions through which human subjects are constituted and act as citizens. From science and technology studies, however, we learn that technical objects and infrastructures can also be understood as actors who participate in the enactment of certain realities (Latour 2005). This raises the question of how identity wallets and other models of identification take part in performing 'acts of citizenship'. In this session, I would like to mainly discuss two aspects of understanding non-state identification models from this perspective: 1) What are the theoretical challenges of describing identity wallets as protesting citizens? For example, how should we understand and describe subjectivities in the context of identity wallets that act? 2) What are the empirical realities that might contradict this idea? For example, how might this perspective uncritically adopt the positions of organisations and individuals caught up in self-preserving fundraising activities?

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Group B:

Oisin O'Brien (Leuphana University) - **Entering the field with an STS framework: Challenges and potential approaches to following Trust relations**

Within the DigID project, I aim to study how trust relations are formed/maintained between citizens and the state of Estonia regarding digital identification. Empirically I will account for multiple perspectives from citizens of all ages as well as stakeholders in the field of digital ID. I follow acts of trusting with digital technologies serving as a passage between human and non-human actors in a socio-technical network. Acts of trusting"(Broch-Due & Ystanes,2016) acknowledge the messy entangled webs of trust relations incorporating rationality and affective dimensions. This goes beyond the intimate ties of one's network and extends outwards towards community. The digital spaces in this field are messy, entangled and difficult to follow. With digital actors being constantly enacted, materially related and situated entities, how can we observe them in the field? Is it still productive to approach the field with intentions of immersion or can we find new ways to acknowledge the interventions of technical devices?

In this session I want to sketch out the project I am doing before I enter the field and posit ideas about how to translate conceptual frameworks into empirical strategies for data collection.

Sindhunata Hargyono (Leuphana University) - **Servis KTP: Unsuspending Right-Claiming Capacity through Informal ID Card Cosmetic Repair**

The Indonesian government introduced Kartu Tanda Penduduk Elektronik (Electronic Population Identification Card/KTP-El) in the early 2010s. KTP-El is a plastic card embedded with a chip containing biographical and biometrical details of individuals. Database-based ID verification using NIN, chip card readers, and biometric readers has been limited to certain public and private institutions, possibly due to the major corruption scandal surrounding the KTP-El project in the mid-2010s. Consequently, the cosmetic integrity of KTP-El is crucial for the more widely-practiced document-based ID verifications. Perhaps, due to the corruption, KTP-El appears to have built-in obsolescence as it easily fades, fractured, and peeled off despite being valid for life. People with cosmetically damaged KTP-El often have prolonged suspension on their ability to perform right-claiming activity since its free replacement from administrative offices takes uncertain time due to declining procurement volume and heavily centralized distribution of KTP-El blanks. Studies on the materiality of bureaucracy and informality often focus on either the role of documents in mediating political patronage that reproduces differentiated structure of citizenship or the creative (and informal) appropriation of the state's documentary genre and forms to challenge such structures. However, KTP-El repair neither reproduces unequal citizenship structures nor represents a creative repurposing of state documentary instruments. Instead, it is a simple informal exchange that allows individuals to unsuspend their right-claiming capacity through repair. The repair work aims not to restore damaged KTP-El to mint condition, but rather to create an appearance of acceptable legality that is sufficiently legible for the gaze of both humans and machines in formal and informal ID verification processes.

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Group C:

Laura Lambert (Leuphana University) - **Justices of the Peace in Sierra Leone's Digital Identification Project: For an STS-inspired Anthropology of the State?**

Within the DigID research project, I focus on actors' practices that constitute digital identification in Sierra Leone. Some relevant practices and relations have typically been described by the anthropology of the state in West Africa (including the implementation gap between policies and practices, colonial legacies, brokers or practical norms). These concepts help to explain practices in the digitizing state, but their vocabulary and underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions may differ from STS frameworks. I will present first some material on the "Justices of the Peace" who deliver affidavits to citizens to have them enroll in the civil register. From an anthropology of the state perspective, they constitute state-sanctioned brokers between the state and citizens who distribute citizenship rights. From an STS perspective, they may be seen as a step in the translation process that leads to the delivery of an ID card. How can the anthropology of the state and STS be productively bridged to deepen an understanding of the Sierra Leonean case and brokerage/intermediation more generally? Do STS need to be a relatively bounded, separate framework? If not, what does this relative openness mean for academic writing styles and the standpoint of critique?

Ildikó Z. Plájás (University of Amsterdam) - **Flying across borders: lessons from bird surveillance**

Animals, particularly birds, play a crucial role in the development of computer vision technologies. Having long been used both as agents and subjects of surveillance, birds actively shape algorithmic systems used in automated identification, aerial surveillance and bordering technologies. In my current research I propose to examine what happens to automated identification technologies, such as image recognition algorithms, as they leave the computer science labs where they are developed and start to circulate among sites of security, bordering and ecological governance. The questions I am grappling with: What happens when, for instance, the same technology is used to follow migratory birds and to track people's movements across borders? How does travelling with these technologies unsettle both the politics of automated identification systems but also our own critical scholarship? How do lessons from multispecies entanglements inform studies of bordering technologies? By bringing careful ethnographic attention to the situated practices in which technologies are developed and deployed, I also reflect on the performativity of methods in STS research. I am interested in the affordances of multimodal experimentations and, in particular, the use of film to foster co-laborative spaces in order to disrupt hegemonic discourses about techno-solutionist/dystopian AI futures.

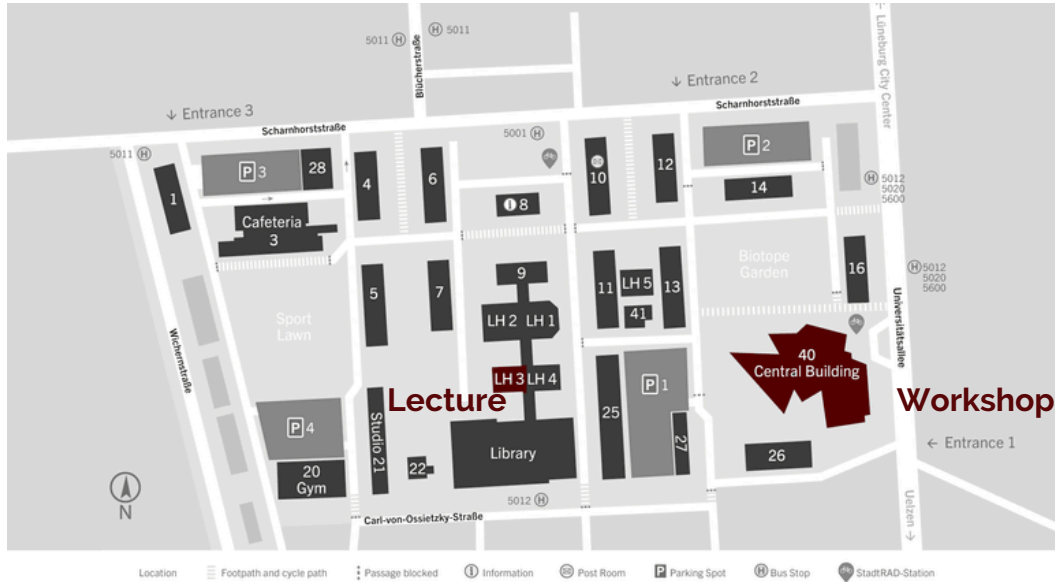
16:00-16:30 Final Discussion

18:00 Get-Together and Individual Departure

Venue: September, Auf dem Kauf 13, 21335 Lüneburg

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Our Venues at Leuphana University



Transportation to the University

From Lüneburg train station you can take public buses (5001, 5011, 5012, 5600) to Leuphana University. See schedules on: <https://www.hvv.de/en>
For more travel directions to the university, see: <https://www.leuphana.de/en/university/maps/travel-directions.html>

For cabs call: Citycar Röhlig (04131/2222), Taxi Zentrale Lüneburg (04131/52025), LG Taxi (04131/2230200). Please note that we can only reimburse cabs in exceptional cases and for short distances only.

Please keep all original receipts and submit them to us for reimbursement after the workshop.

Hotel

You are hosted at "Dormero - Altes Kaufhaus", Kaufhausstraße 5, 21335 Lüneburg. Reception is daily available from 01:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Check-in is after 3pm, check-out until 12noon. For arrival information please check the following link: <https://www.dormero.de/hotel-altes-kaufhaus>

WiFi

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User name: cdcwork

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