Migration and Technologies of Un/Bordering

Final Workshop Report

Workshop Summary

This workshop aimed to explore current developments in the intersection of technology, borders, and human mobility to provide macro-meso-micro level understandings of the processes and implications of bordering across levels, scales and practices of resistance. Understanding and addressing the complex role of technology is vital for those who seek to dismantle systemic injustices while fostering inclusive and equitable societies. Our workshop invited participants to engage in discussions that explored the following themes:

Physical, temporal, symbolic and techno borders
AI in the making of the Digital border
Creative, ethical and collaborative methodologies for the study of borders and technology
Decolonial approaches to studying migration, mobility and borders

Event themes

The event began with a keynote talk on 'Crossing Digital Borders in Greece: Then and Now', which presented a historical overview of the evolution and transformation of borders with a focused case study on Greece.

The rest of the workshop was organised in four panels exploring the following interrelated and complementary themes.

The first panel, titled *Digital and Datafied Borders: Evidence from Europe,* explored ongoing developments around digitalisation and datafication of the European bordering regime. It highlighted connections between various countries, including Cyprus, Greece, Italy and the UK, emphasising their key roles as border and transit countries or final destinations.

These discussions led to the second panel, titled *Surveillance, Human Rights and Border Resistance: Global Perspectives,* that examined the interrelations between borders in their various manifestations and their implications for migrant mobilities and safety. Within that context, presentations also explored elements of resistance,

occurring both through organised efforts and spontaneous actions. Focusing on the idea that borders are not monolithic entities but extend across and within the social, cultural and political domain, we similarly argued that unbordering and mobility should also be examined beyond the crossing of borders.

In that mindset, the third panel, titled *Transnational Connection, Diasporic and Community Identity Through Technology and Culture,* highlighted the processes of building community cohesion, preserving, and indeed advancing, identity despite displacement and exclusion, in particular with the assistance of new as well as older technologies and traditional media, such as the radio, which continue to occupy important spaces in the everyday routines of diasporic groups.

Finally, the fourth panel, titled *Decolonisation and Debordering: Notes on Methods and Practices,* was dedicated to important and timely issues around methodologies and ethics in/when and after doing research with migrant populations. Prevalent themes in this critical panel emphasised the importance of researchers' reflexivity, the need for co-creation with participants and the value of creativity as practices of contesting borders but also, very importantly, in widening inclusionary spaces and relations of horizontality within academia too.

The final part of the day was a roundtable discussion on the topic of *Solidarities and Technologies Towards Border Abolition*, featuring four invited speakers from academia, the third sector and the arts. Recognising that borders exist everywhere and are implemented in different ways and by various actors, it is logical to approach border abolition in a similar vein. Therefore, our roundtable focused on how borders impact diverse populations, including our invited speakers, as members of marginalised and racialised communities in combination with personal circumstances. In addition, we discussed the role that each field (art, third sector) plays towards researching, educating and organising around borders. A central theme from this discussion was the need to reflect on the spectrum of activist tactics that can be employed in the struggle towards debordering and, crucially, the importance of considering our positionality, privileges and limitations when engaging in or even leading activist abolitionist work.

In terms of organisation, all participants were invited to submit a poster or photo that best represented their work, which was subsequently followed by an oral presentation. Our decision to host a poster session as opposed to the conventional PowerPoint presentations, was grounded in various considerations. Firstly, our ambition was that participants would exercise their creativity and select the most powerful visual element of their work. Likewise, considering the sensitivity and affective impact of the themes we explored, we wanted to allow space for artistic and emotive representations instead of limiting the presenters to standardised, text dominated presentations. Having the

printed posters displayed in the room, in addition to them being virtually projected during each presentation, offered the opportunity to revisit an image or poster before, during and after its presentation and engage deeper with it.

Ultimately, the workshop, initiated interdisciplinary discussions from the areas of critical migration studies, media and communications, geography, human rights, law and others.

Next steps - Outcome
Following a successful and productive day of interactions, this event has led to two main outcomes. Firstly, the creation of a network including academics, practitioners and activists whose work focuses on migration, borders, technologies, solidarities and resistance. Secondly, the production of a Special Issue on 'Migration and Technologies of Un/Bordering'. We have contacted two different Journals in the areas of Human Geography and Interdisciplinary Geopolitics and are currently exploring possibilities for publishing all the papers in one of these journals.

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Quotes

'The event was extremely interesting, with a diversity of speakers, research projects, and ideas. Everything went smoothly and it was very well organised. Although it is not my area of research, I feel I gained a lot from the whole day and the debates.'

Dr Paula Rosa, Lecturer in Criminology, Northumbria University

'Surrey's event was not a typical conference. It allowed for the fostering of a community, one that supports, and listens, not only to each other, but to the ever-developing needs for collaboration.'

Phevos Simeonidis, PhD Candidate SGIA, Durham University