



“Digitizing Peoples in Uncertain Times” seminar

On May 13th and 14th 2021, the Processing Citizenship ERC project organizes the seminar “Digitizing peoples in uncertain times: Interface methods for interventions on populations”. This two-day seminar is intended to address the emergent methods used to create data about populations, as well as the interventions we as social researchers can develop to create alternative epistemic forms about vulnerable, dispersed, invisible or just emergent populations.

The production and circulation of data for counting populations is never neutral, but performative of politics and of the populations it claims to represent. The performative potential of data about populations is even more evident since the digitized knowing of people emerged some decades ago as a key development to improve population management in administration, health, security, education, national and trans-national mobility. The COVID-19 pandemic is the last source of uncertainty demanding even more digitization of population data.

The combination of performative potential and non-neutral character of data about populations brings to the foreground the key role of the methods through which knowledge about populations is created. Second, it calls for interventions at the interface of social research and social action. These two directions of investigation promise to turn out strategic in the post-pandemic sociotechnical research landscape.

During the seminar, invited researchers and selected panelists will exchange and debate around some main questions: which methods of knowing populations are being introduced to cope with new uncertainties? Shall these methods aim at universality – a common claim when it comes to Big Data, or should they come to terms with some forms of invisibility? Which new regimes of inclusion/exclusion do they introduce? What should fair and just ways of knowing populations in security, health, mobility, education, or pandemics encompass? On the other hand, what is the role of social scientists, especially those engaged with sociotechnologies, in dealing with those methods? To what extent can methods for social research and methods for social action overlap? Do we need alternative methods, or maybe we’d better combine existing digital and analogue, qualitative and quantitative methods in new ways? Which forms of intervention are more suitable to achieve fair and just enactment of populations? How can we deploy the principles of situated interventions in empirical and often sensitive fields?

Confirmed Keynotes

Noortje Marres, Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, University of Warwick.
Teun Zuiderent-Jerak, Associate Professor of Interactive Governance of Health Interventions, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Event organized with the patronage of the [Alma Mater Research Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence](#)

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 714463