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GLOBAL FINANCE, HOUSING & RESISTANCE

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- Kultur
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Christoph Trautvetter über den Berliner Wohnungsmarkt und Immobilienbesitzer, die sich in Steuerparadiesen verstecken

- Von Tom Mustroph
- 03.06.2020, 16:55 Uhr
- Lesedauer: 5 Min.

Herr Trautvetter, Investmentfonds gelten weltweit wegen ihrer Renditeinteressen als besondere Treiber von Mietpreisen. Sie haben mit Ihrer Studie »Keine Transparenz trotz Transparenzregister« die Eigentümerstruktur am Berliner Immobilienmarkt analysiert. Wie hoch ist dort der Anteil dieser Art von Investoren?

Es gibt keine perfekten Zahlen dazu. Aber die institutionellen Investoren handeln meistens große Wohnungspakete. Darüber gibt es in der Fachpresse Informationen. Wir gehen von fünf bis sieben Prozent aus, die von Fondsgesellschaften und Private Equity Fonds gehalten werden.

Das klingt nach nicht so viel.

Es handelt sich immerhin um 125 000 bis 150 000 Wohnungen in Berlin.

Wie lange verbleiben die Häuser gewöhnlich in der Hand dieser Fonds?

Spekulative Investoren bleiben im Schnitt vier bis zehn Jahre, einige noch kürzer. Natürlich gibt es auch Fonds mit längeren Investitionshorizonten.

Haben Sie eine Korrelation zwischen der Mietpreisentwicklung und dem Zeitpunkt der Verkäufe feststellen können? Fonds versprechen ja Renditen von fünf oder zehn Prozent.

Sie versprechen sogar mehr. Blackstone etwa geht von 15 Prozent aus. Aber solche Renditen erzielen sie nur zu einem geringeren Teil über die Miete. Der größere Teil geht über die Wertsteigerung.

Also die Gewinne beim Weiterverkauf.

Genau. Wir haben uns beispielsweise ein Haus in der Zossener Straße über einen Zeitraum von vielen Jahren genauer angeschaut. Das wurde 2012 im Paket von einem Investmentfonds gekauft zu einem Preis von etwas mehr als 1000 Euro pro Quadratmeter. 2018 wurde das Haus dann für knapp 3500 Euro an den nächsten Investor, in diesem Fall Blackstone, weitergereicht. Der Verkäufer konnte so eine zweistellige Rendite erzielen, davon - beim Gesamtpaket - etwa 250 Millionen Euro allein durch die Wertsteigerung. Die Mieteinnahmen lagen hingegen bei etwa 70 Millionen Euro.

Und wie will Blackstone nun bei dem vergleichsweise hohen Kaufpreis seinerseits die 15 Prozent Rendite einfahren? Über die Miete allein wohl kaum?

Sicher nicht, obwohl direkt nach dem Kauf eine neu angebotene Wohnung für 18 Euro pro Quadratmeter vermietet werden sollte. Wir kennen die Exit-Strategie nicht. Ein beliebtes Verfahren ist aber die Aufteilung in Eigentumswohnungen. Und die werden dann teurer weiterverkauft.

Wie gut oder wie schlecht lässt sich die Eigentümerstruktur dieser Fondsgesellschaften einsehen?

Die Struktur ist recht gut einsehbar. Die Investoren lassen sich aber so gut wie nie finden. Meist sind die Fonds ähnlich strukturiert: Der Fonds ist auf den Cayman Islands registriert, darunter eine mehrstöckige Struktur aus Objektgesellschaft, Holdinggesellschaft und weiteren Zwischenebenen in Luxemburg. Bisher findet man in allen Registern - selbst im Transparenzregister - nur die Manager. Deswegen fordern wir Transparenz auch bei den Vermögensanlagen. Die Daten dafür gibt es schon. Clearstream, eine Tochtergesellschaft der Deutschen Börse AG, sammelt sie. Der Staat, also die Finanzämter und Ermittlungsbehörden, haben aber keinen Zugriff darauf.

Nun verstecken nicht nur Fondsgesellschaften die Namen ihrer Einleger und Gesellschafter gern in Offshore-Gesellschaften. Auch Dax-Konzerne sind dafür berüchtigt. Wie hoch ist der Anteil von Eigentümern, die ihren Immobilienbesitz aus Berlin auf den Cayman Islands und anderen Steuer- und Geldwäsche-Paradiesen verstecken?

Bei etwa der Hälfte der Eigentümer ist das sicher nicht der Fall. Das sind zum einen die öffentlichen Gesellschaften und Genossenschaften, die etwa ein Viertel des Bestands haben, und bei Privatleuten mit überschaubarem Wohneigentum ist es ebenfalls etwa ein Viertel. Dann gibt es aber auch Privatleute, die noch andere Gesellschaften vorgeschaltet haben, zum Teil auch in Steuerparadiesen. Bei den institutionellen

Anlegern, ebenfalls etwa ein Viertel, handelt es sich zum Teil um die oben beschriebenen Fondsgesellschaften und zum anderen Teil um börsennotierte Unternehmen, deren Anteilseigner aber ebenfalls zum Teil auf den Cayman Islands sitzen. Insgesamt würde ich schätzen, dass die Spur bei etwa einem Viertel der Berliner Wohnungseigentümer auf die Cayman Islands und andere Steuerparadiese führt.

Wie viel Steuereinnahmen entgehen dadurch Berlin?

Auch das ist schwer zu schätzen. Zum einen gibt es die Grunderwerbssteuer...

Die brachte 2019 etwa 1,4 Milliarden Euro in die Berliner Stadtkassen.

Die wird aber durch die umstrittenen und viel diskutierten Share Deals umgangen. Selbst darüber, wie hoch der Anteil von Share Deals bei den Berliner Immobilienverkäufen ist, gibt es aber noch keine verlässlichen Schätzungen. Dann gibt es die Besteuerung der Wertsteigerung. Die entfällt bei Privatpersonen, wenn sie die Immobilie länger als zehn Jahre behalten, und bei professionellen Investoren über Share Deals im Ausland. Viele Unternehmen rechnen sich außerdem künstlich arm, indem sie sich aus den Cayman Islands und Luxemburg selbst teure Kredite geben. So fließt das Geld aus Deutschland ab. Insgesamt gehe ich von einem einstelligen Milliardenbetrag pro Jahr aus, allein für Berlin.

Das ist enorm. Was erhofften Sie sich von der Berliner Konferenz des Disruption Network Lab?

Zum einen geht es darum, die besondere Berliner Problemlage international bekannt zu machen. Berlin ist zu 85 Prozent Mieterstadt und damit der Finanzialisierung des Immobilienmarkts besonders ausgesetzt. Andererseits können wir von den Beispielen der anderen Städte lernen. Wie die Investmentfonds in Barcelona vorgingen zum Beispiel. Auch die Untersuchung »Dubai Sands« zur Aufdeckung des in Immobilien angelegten Schwarzgeldes in Dubai, dem globalen Zentrum von Anonymität und Finanzkriminalität, ist lehrreich. Und von London, selbst zwar Zentrum des Finanzkapitals, kann man Transparenz lernen. Dort ist das Grundbuch frei zugänglich.

Alle Beiträge der Konferenz unter: www.disruptionlab.org

Dieser Artikel ist wichtig! Sichere diesen Journalismus!

Besondere Zeiten erfordern besondere Maßnahmen: Auf Grund der Coronakrise und dem damit weitgehend lahmgelegten öffentlichen Leben haben wir uns entschieden, zeitlich begrenzt die gesamten Inhalte unserer Internetpräsenz für alle Menschen kostenlos zugänglich zu machen. Dennoch benötigen wir finanzielle Mittel, um weiter für sie berichten zu können.

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June Chua

March 25, 2020

World

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"I'm a gentrifier," admits Yonatan Miller from his apartment in Friedrichshain, Berlin. Miller is typical of what locals see as an invader of their neighbourhood: a skilled, high-tech worker from abroad coming to live a fun life of culture in Germany's capital.

But Miller, who hails from New York and moved to Berlin four years ago, represents a new wave of "gentrifiers" -- concerned tech workers who want to deal with socio-political issues such as housing, worker's rights as well as sexism and racism in their environments.

"Everyone thinks of tech workers as a group of white, wealthy men earning \$200,000, and they do exist," but in San Francisco, said Miller, an organizer with the Berlin Tech Workers Coalition. "But these tech workers are also immigrants from places like India,

the Middle East and coming to Germany to work in UX design or quality assurance. We also represent warehouse and call centre workers, all kinds of people."

Miller said when his organization held its first meetup last June, they did an overview of salaries and discovered the 20 workers in attendance earned between 38,000 to 78,000 euros (C\$58,000 to \$120,000) per year. In a city where groceries and recreational activities are low-priced, it's still a great salary that affords a comfortable life, but far from the stereotype of extreme wealth.

"These are not the people speculating on real estate," noted Miller. As Miller goes on to describe how large real-estate concerns are buying up apartments, he mentions that local venture capital firm Rocket Internet just invested \$100 million in real estate, as speculators are expecting the city to become Europe's Silicon Alley (*Silicon Allee* in German).

"It's one of the safest investments around," said Miller. "I think I speak for many workers in tech: I am concerned about the housing crisis; it's a difficult market. I understand why the locals here are upset. I want them to know we also have the same concerns."

Recent data from Immowelt (a German rental and real estate company) found that rents in Berlin had doubled between 2009 and 2019. Rents are also exploding in Hamburg, Munich and Frankfurt. Rent offers in 80 major German cities were scanned, and in 77 the rent increases exceeded inflation. Rental prices are a huge matter in Germany, a nation where half the residents are renters.

At the heart of the fight in Miller's neighbourhood is the construction of a massive tower (EDGE East Side Berlin, in the works since 2004) -- where Amazon will be the main tenant. The company has several offices in Berlin, most of which will be consolidated in the new building. Miller points out the tower will also be used for Amazon's cloud services, not a giant warehouse for goods to be shipped out. Those warehouses are in Poland and outside of Berlin. The tower will be 140-metres high, one of the tallest buildings in the city. Many residents have already started protesting against Amazon and the building, which will house up to 3,400 workers.

Miller says Amazon's other business is in cloud computing, a service it provides to governments as well as police services. Miller described this as a "massive concern for those of us working in tech."

"It's about surveillance. Amazon provides cloud computing for the U.S. government, the military [and] the CIA," Miller said.

It's one of the major issues, besides the incursion of Amazon into Friedrichshain, that weighs on Miller's group.

"We want to build solidarity through our differences ... we're not about improving the brand image of tech workers; we want to join up with local people on the issues we all care about."

Evicted by greed

Miller is one of several notable speakers at an upcoming Berlin conference on the world housing crisis. The conference, titled "Evicted by Greed" and hosted by the Disruption Network Lab, was to take place around the European Day of Action on Housing on March 28. However, due to the COVID-19 crisis, it's postponed to the end of May. The conference, which will be streamed, will also screen the 2019 documentary PUSH (directed by Fredrik Gertten) and feature a conversation with the main protagonist of the film, Canadian Leilani Farha, the UN special rapporteur on adequate housing.

"I think the film is helping to break down isolation around housing," wrote Farha in an email to *rabble.ca*. "A lot of people feel like their housing situation, as precarious as it is, is a result of personal failings, and the film has helped people understand that this is actually, a structural issue or a structural issue coinciding with personal circumstances."

In fact, both Gertten and Farha have been active on social media of late due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the issue of evictions and the ending of contracts by real estate conglomerates during a time of economic hardship for many.

Farha says she's seeing more being done politically to tackle the problem: "In Canada, we now have the National Housing Strategy, which means that for the first time in this country, the housing policy recognizes that housing is a fundamental human right. And it appoints a federal housing advocate who will be responsible for identifying and addressing systemic barriers for housing in Canada, bringing these to the attention of the Minister."

Indeed, the rising cost of housing is affecting everyone everywhere. Toronto is perched high on the list of the 10 most expensive cities in the world, with the average one-bedroom apartment costing \$2,300 per month. Toronto city council recently approved a 10-year housing plan calling for the construction of 40,000 new affordable rental homes. The city has committed \$8.5-billion to the plan and is waiting for \$14.9-billion from the province and Ottawa to carry it out.

Yet, Farha points out, it's still not enough on the affordable housing front.

"There's lots of units being built. It's just clear that those are luxury units," she emphasized. "So, there's this still these bleak contrasts in many cities, not just Toronto - - around the world. Building continues to be for those who are affluent and not for those who are homeless, who are living with low incomes or in poverty."

Meanwhile, Berlin's left-leaning government has begun a program of buying back public housing that it sold at a pittance to developers more than 20 years ago. The city is also freezing the rents of 1.5 million apartments built before 2014 for the next five years.

If tenants think their rent is over-priced, they are urged to ask their landlords for a reduction in rent. In Miller's neighbourhood, average rent for a 100-square-metre property is 1,663 euros (C\$2,525) per month.

"We are against the tower," stated Miller. "This area is already built up along the Spree [river] with the likes of Zalando establishing itself there and RAW being bought up." RAW is a rag-tag set of buildings re-purposed as a site for all kinds of Berlin-style activities: clubs, a climbing gym, cafes, a cinema, markets and general nightlife.

"These companies on their sites always say 'Come work with us in Berlin, enjoy the perks of the social life here,' but in the end, these companies don't actually contribute to local culture in a meaningful way."

While Miller and his colleagues have banded together to fight this issue and others, Farha also recommends people start thinking about their own role in the financial world that has sparked the crisis.

"Financial actors are getting their money in large part from pension funds, so people could start questioning their pension funds and ask whether they're investing in residential real estate that is resulting in increased evictions and escalating rents," she explained.

"And people could be demanding human rights legislation that requires pension funds to take into consideration human rights concerns before investing. On an individual level, I think people could think twice before renting with Airbnb in a city that doesn't regulate short-term rentals -- which is most cities."

June Chua is a Berlin-based journalist who regularly writes about the arts for rabble.ca.

Image: [K.H. Reichert/Flickr](#)

Editor's note, March 30, 2020: This story has been updated to include the official name of "EDGE East Side Berlin," in addition to noting that Amazon will be the main tenant in that building, and that construction of the building has been planned since 2004.

A previous version of this story incorrectly stated that all of Amazon's Berlin offices will be consolidated in the EDGE building. A representative from Amazon confirmed that some of the company's Berlin offices will not be consolidated in the building. The story has been corrected to indicate that most, not all of Amazon's Berlin offices will be consolidated in the building.

A previous version of this story incorrectly stated that 3,400 employees would be housed in the EDGE building. In fact, reports indicate the building will house up to 3,400 employees. The story has been corrected.

Editor's note, March 26, 2020: A previous version of this article misspelled the names of Leilani Farha and Fredrik Gertten . She is Leilani Farha, not Farhi. He is Fredrik Gertten, not Gerttan.

This piece has also been updated to clarify Yonatan Miller's view that "white, wealthy men earning \$200,000," working in tech exist specifically in San Francisco.

A previous version of this article included a quote from Miller incorrectly suggesting that 50 per cent of Amazon's business is cloud computing. That quote has been removed.

The piece has also been updated to note that the "Evicted by Greed" conference will be streamed.

Related Items

[Housing activists continue Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for justice](#)

Moms 4 Housing, a collective of homeless and marginally housed mothers, are fighting against real estate speculators and profiteers in the San Francisco Bay Area.

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Cities across the country are evicting people from outdoor tent encampments. Without a national housing program or municipal support for shelters, the homelessness crisis has become an emergency.

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Tenants in Ottawa are organizing and demanding landlords are held accountable for dilapidated homes.

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 transparency.org/en/blog/who-owns-our-cities



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The week in corruption, 15 May 2020



Image by [Massimiliano Morosinotto](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Stay at home orders during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have put a spotlight on an often-ignored crisis – homelessness.

According to the [latest estimates](#), 150 million people worldwide don't have a place they can call home. Another 1.6 billion lack adequate housing.



Housing has become the front line defence against the coronavirus. Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation.

Leilani Farha UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing



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There are many factors and policy failures that reduce the availability of adequate and affordable housing. At Transparency International, we [focus on the mechanisms](#) that allow corrupt individuals to steal from taxpayers in one country and secretly launder that money in [real estate markets](#) in other parts of the world, often driving up prices and fuelling property speculation.

This week, we took a close look at the **United Arab Emirates**, whose booming real estate sector is a major piece in the global money laundering puzzle. A plethora of cases have shown how high-end real estate in Dubai in particular provides an opportunity to park large sums of money without disclosing its origin. Investigations have shown that public officials from Armenia, Namibia and Nigeria have invested suspicious funds in the Emirates' property market.

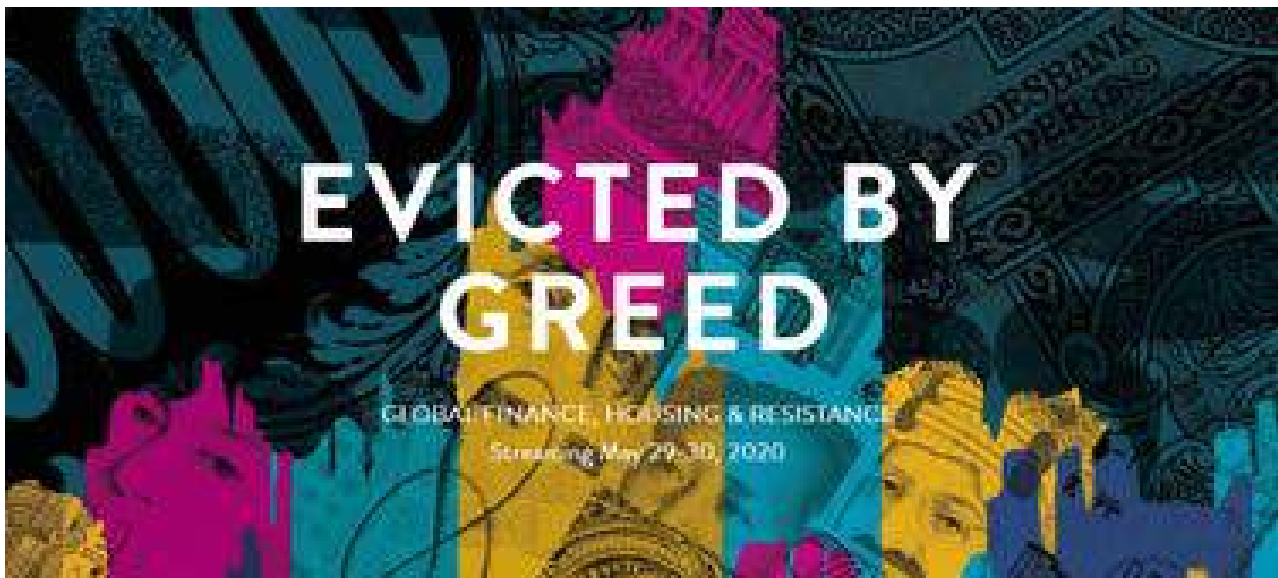
The UAE was recently warned by the Financial Action Task Force – the global anti-money laundering body – for these unacceptable risks and given one year to close the loopholes that seem to have turned it into a global money laundering hub.

But many countries are susceptible to money laundering in their real estate sectors. In **Germany**, for example, around US\$30 billion of money with unclear origins entered the real estate market in 2017 alone. Several countries in the European Union encourage high-risk individuals to invest in their property markets through shady 'golden visa' schemes.

Identifying corrupt investors in property is often difficult because complex corporate structures and secrecy jurisdictions help them cover their tracks. A study published this week has found that almost a third of companies owning real estate in Berlin remain anonymous, despite new transparency laws.

Housing is a fundamental human right and a social justice issue.

Later this month, we're partnering with the Disruption Network Lab to organise a very timely conference, Evicted by Greed.



Evicted by Greed: Global Finance, Housing & Resistance

Join us on 29-30 May to hear about the structural problems contributing to the housing crisis and to debate possible solutions with researchers, investigative journalists and activists!

[Check out the line-up](#)

News from Transparency International



By the normal standards of the Financial Action Task Force, a recent report into attempts by the United Arab Emirates to combat money laundering and terrorist financing is damning, to say the least. Here, we take a look at the shameful role of the UAE, and in particular Dubai, in some of the biggest scandals of recent years.

[The United Arab Emirates: A key piece in the global money laundering puzzle](#)



While COVID-19 takes a greater hold across the region, concerns about the misuse of funds, particularly those from international donors and development agencies, continues to grow.

Corruption risks in Southern Africa’s response to the coronavirus



With the United States government spending unprecedented amounts to counter the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, a comprehensive package of oversight and anti-corruption measures has been introduced to ensure that funding appropriated by Congress is properly and effectively spent.

[Five ways the CORE Act would excise corruption from the US government's response to the coronavirus](#)



A recent increase in funding has the potential to greatly support efforts to develop COVID-19 technologies. However, good intentions don't always lead to the desired outcomes and there are still many unknowns around money pledged by governments. Here, we highlight six key questions.

First, do no harm: spending the Global Coronavirus Response pledges properly
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Tech-Worker über Berlin vs. Amazon: „Amazon greift nach Grundrechten“

taz.de/Tech-Worker-ueber-Berlin-vs-Amazon/!5685279/

May 28, 2020

Alexa, überwachst du uns? Amazon will in Berlin ein Zentrum für Abhörtechnik aufbauen. Der Software-Entwickler Yonatan Miller protestiert dagegen.



„Alexa, niemand will dich in Berlin!“ – an der Warschauer Straße wird Abhörtechnik installiert Foto: Edge Technologies, AFLO/imago, [Montage taz]

Herr Miller, Sie sind Mitinitiator der Kampagne Berlin vs. Amazon, einem Zusammenschluss von Gentrifizierungsgegner:innen, Künstler:innen und Tech-Arbeiter:innen. Was bedeutet die Pandemie für Amazon?

Yonatan Miller: Amazon ist eine der wenigen Firmen, die während der Coronakrise extrem profitieren: Der Konzern will 200.000 neue Arbeiter in Logistikzentren einstellen. Amazon-Chef Jeff Bezos hatte schon vor der Krise ein Vermögen von über 100 Milliarden Dollar. Mittlerweile wird es auf über 200 Milliarden Dollar geschätzt und es gibt Spekulationen, dass Bezos der erste Billionär der Welt werden könnte. Während der Pandemie gab es weltweit verschiedene Streiks und Proteste, die Vergeltungsaktionen von Amazon nach sich zogen. Wir sind in Kontakt mit kritischen Mitarbeitern im Logistik- und Tech-Bereich wie Chris Smalls und Emily Cunningham.

Smalls hatte in den USA Streiks gegen Amazon organisiert und Cunningham von Amazonians for Climate Justice hatte die Arbeitsbedingungen kritisiert. Beide wurden entlassen. Kann sich Amazon während der Pandemie weniger erlauben?

Als die Coronapandemie begann, versuchte Amazon öffentlicher Kritik mit kleinen Gehaltserhöhungen von zwei Euro entgegen zu wirken. Das wollen sie ab dem 1. Juni aber schon wieder einstellen. Das wird den Ärger von Arbeitern weltweit nach sich ziehen. Es bleibt also turbulent bei Amazon.

In Berlin will Amazon den bald größten Turm der Stadt beziehen – den Edge Tower am Bahnhof Warschauer Straße. Der wird gerade als finaler Baustein des Projekts Mediaspree vom niederländischen Investor Edge Technologies hochgezogen. Hauptmieter soll Amazon werden. Hat Corona irgendwas an den Plänen verändert?

Nein, aus unserer Perspektive gibt es keine Planänderungen oder Verzögerungen. Der Bau geht voran. Allerdings wissen immer mehr Menschen um Amazons Verhalten und haben Angst vor Verdrängung. In allen Städten, in denen Amazon Standorte aufbaut, kann man beobachten, dass die Miet- und Immobilienpreise in die Höhe schießen. In Seattle, wo das Hauptquartier von Amazon sitzt, gibt es nicht ganz zufällig die US-weit dritthöchste Rate an Obdachlosen.

im Interview:

Yonatan Miller

Foto: privat

26, lebt und arbeitet als Software-Entwickler in Berlin. Er gründete die [Tech Worker Coalition](#) in Berlin und initiierte die Kampagne [Berlin vs Amazon](#). Twestert unter [@shushugah](#)



Aktivist:innen haben in Berlin bereits verhindert, dass Google sich in Kreuzberg ansiedelte. Warum glauben Sie, dass das auch mit Amazon klappen kann?

Ich würde lügen, wenn ich sagen würde, es wird einfach. Amazon ist eine unglaublich mächtige Firma. Und im Gegensatz zu Google schert sich Amazon nicht allzu sehr um seine Außenwirkung. [Google hatte sogar „Don't be evil“ als Motto](#) auserkoren – Amazon ist es gewöhnt, heftig kritisiert zu werden. Ich glaube, wir werden dennoch erfolgreich sein, weil die EU die parasitären Verhaltensweisen von Tech-Riesen aus dem Silicon Valley genau auf dem Schirm hat. Zudem geht es nicht nur um Arbeitsrechte oder Steuervermeidung. Viele Menschen haben noch gar nicht verstanden, was Amazon in Berlin vorhat.

Was denn?

Die meisten Leute denken bei Amazon an einen Onlinestore, in dem man Bücher und Videospiele kaufen kann. Aber der Edge Tower in der Warschauer Straße steht für etwas ganz anderes: Dort soll Alexa Service einziehen – Abhörtechnologie. Von hier aus soll nicht nur der deutsche Markt, sondern der globale Markt für Natural Language

Processing (*NLP – maschinelle Verarbeitung natürlicher Sprache, Anm. d. Red.*) vorangetrieben werden. Das ist sehr viel komplexer als Gentrifizierung, aber ebenso wichtig. Es gibt einen großen gesellschaftlichen Bedarf an Regulierungen von großen Unternehmen, die gegen die Privatsphäre und Datenschutz verstoßen. Amazon greift nach unserer Grundrechten, das reicht weit über Gentrifizierung hinaus. Wir wollen die Themen verbinden und so breiten Protest auf die Beine stellen.

Sie sind selbst Programmierer. Welche Bedeutung hätte ein Standort in Berlin von Alexa Services für Datenrechte?

Wenn Sie ein Alexa- oder ein Echo-Gerät von Amazon haben, kann man diesen Geräten sagen, dass sie ein bestimmtes Lied spielen sollen. Was viele Leute sich allerdings nicht klarmachen ist, dass das Gerät auch private Gespräche mit den engsten Angehörigen belauscht. Von künstlicher Intelligenz gesteuerte Algorithmen verarbeiten größtenteils diese Daten, aber es gibt auch echte Menschen, die sich die Aufzeichnungen anhören. Nämlich Data-Trainer, die die Algorithmen verbessern sollen. Gerade kürzlich wurde ein Apple-Mitarbeiter in Frankreich zum Whistleblower bei dem ähnlichen Dienst Siri. Dort wurden klare Verstöße gegen die DSGVO festgestellt.

Sollte diese Datenschutzgrundverordnung nicht genau so etwas verhindern?

Sie ist auch ein gutes Werkzeug, aber sie geht nicht weit genug. Die Profite von Amazon und Apple bauen auf Überwachungstechnologie auf. Zu ihren Kunden gehören Überwachungsfirmen wie Palantir, eine private Firma aus den USA, die sich auf die Analyse großer Datenmengen spezialisiert hat und 2004 von Peter Thiel gegründet wurde. Während der Corona Krise erfassen sie Daten für das britische Gesundheitssystem. Die Cloud, die das wiederum hostet, gehört Amazon. Und wir reden hier nicht nur über individuelle und intime Kommunikation, sondern auch wirklich sensible Informationen wie Krankenakten.

Internationale Konferenz der Mietenbewegten

„**Evicted by Greed**“ Am Freitag um 16 Uhr startet internationale Konferenz von Aktivist:innen und Expert:innen über Wohnraumpolitik, Finanzflüsse und Widerstand. Wegen Corona laufen alle Veranstaltungen online – bis einschließlich Sonntag.

Sprecher:innen Teilnehmen werden neben Miller auch Leilani Farha (UN-Sonderberichterstatterin für das Menschenrecht auf Wohnen), Christoph Trautvetter (Netzwerk Steuergerechtigkeit), Volkan Sayman (Deutsche Wohnen & Co. enteignen) und Marco Clausen (Prinzessinnengärten) sein. (*gjo*)

Was passiert mit den Daten? Werden die bloß für Werbung verramscht oder leben wir bald in einer dystopischen Zukunft nach George Orwell?

Ob sie nun einen Überwachungsstaat aufbauen wollen oder gezieltes Marketing betreiben: Die Infrastruktur, die Sie dafür brauchen, ist die gleiche. Derzeit gibt es

beides: Die Firma Palantir benutzt künstliche Intelligenz, um Flüchtlinge zu erfassen und abzuschieben. Aber es gibt auch Fälle von Werbung, die einem ausgespielt wird, nachdem man sich mit einem Freund über etwas Bestimmtes im Beisein von Alexa unterhalten hat. Die Gefahr von Letzterem ist nicht so offensichtlich, aber das Risiko bleibt das Gleiche, weil die Infrastruktur beides ermöglicht.

Sie wohnen seit 2015 in Berlin. Was bedeutet die Ansiedlung von 3.500 Tech-Angestellten von Amazon für Sie als Berliner?

Mehrere tausend Tech-Angestellte in Friedrichshain sind natürlich ein konkretes Risiko für alle, die dort wohnen. Friedrichshain leidet jetzt schon unter hohen Mieten. Die Media spree hat die Region komplett verändert. Und es gibt ja auch in Mitte vergleichbare Projekte wie die Silicon Allee. Viele wollen Berlin zu einem Tech-Hub machen. Wenn Amazon wirklich an die Warschauer Straße kommt, wird dieser Status weiter ausgebaut und zementiert. Und viele Technikfirmen würden nachziehen.

Wie sieht denn Ihre Strategie für die nächsten Monate aus, werden Sie sich ohne größeren Protest organisieren können?

Wir organisieren uns weiter online. Dieses Wochenende gibt es die internationale Konferenz Evicted by Greed. In zwei Wochen organisieren wir eine Debatte zum Thema. Außerdem haben wir vor, an Conference-Meetings von Edge Technologies und Amazon beizuwohnen. Vielleicht sollten wir für unseren Protest beim Bauunternehmer Edge Technologies ansetzen. Sie haben schließlich am meisten Einfluss darauf, wer bei ihnen in den Turm zieht. Und Edge ist – im Gegensatz zu Amazon – auf seinen guten Ruf bedacht. Wenn Edge den behalten will, sollte das Unternehmen seinen Turm vielleicht nicht an Amazon vermieten. Sonst müssen wir vielleicht ein bisschen Werbung für sie machen: Interessant ist etwa auch, dass Edge Technologies sich als umweltfreundliches Unternehmen präsentiert, im Gegensatz dazu aber den dreckigsten Cloud-Provider der Welt einziehen lassen will: Amazon.

Who owns Berlin?

EXB [exberliner.com/features/people/who-owns-berlin/](https://www.exberliner.com/features/people/who-owns-berlin/)

By Ruth
Schneider

May 29, 2020

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You might be surprised in whose account your rent money ends up. As we heard from anti-corruption campaigner Christoph Trautvetter, it's hard to find out who exactly owns each slice of Berlin real estate. (Photo by Peter Barnes.)

Ever wondered who really owns your flat? Anti-corruption expert and wealth campaigner Christoph Trautvetter tells Exberliner about his painstaking foray into the world of Berlin real estate – a market he sees dominated by anonymous billionaire landlords and so badly lacking transparency that it's turned Germany into a hotbed of money laundering.

For the past three years, you have been researching the inner-workings of Berlin's property market, and who owns what. What got you involved?

My expertise is in illicit financial flows and tax havens, but in 2017 I was approached by a local journalist investigating the Büchertisch, a sort of social book exchange being pushed out of Mehringhof in Kreuzberg by some investor. We discovered an investment fund from Jersey had bought the house in 2005 and that Lehman Brothers were involved. We ended up writing an article about it for the *Tagesspiegel*. In 2018, the building was sold to Blackstone, a big US private equity firm that recently bought close to 5000 apartments in Berlin. I thought it was a very interesting story and wanted to know more about who owns what in the city. In total, there are about two million flats in Berlin and more than a quarter are owned by private companies. I thought people should be able to know whose bank account their rent really goes into. But in many cases it's impossible – not even the city knows.

What do you mean by ‘not even the city knows’?

In Germany the land register isn't public, but surely transfers of ownership must be listed... In the real estate register you just find a load of subsidiaries. Deutsche Wohnen (DW), for example, has more than 100 companies that own their apartments. To find out how many apartments they own, you have to take this list to each of Berlin's registry offices. Whether they actually give you the information is up to them. And, again, big players like the Pears brothers from the UK don't appear on the registers at all. They have about 50 companies in Luxembourg who own around 6000 apartments in Berlin and the link between these companies is hidden behind shell companies in Cyprus and the British Virgin Islands.

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Deutsche Wohnen artwork (left) by the Disruption Network Lab collective, which is hosting an panel called Evicted By Greed from May 29 - 31 that explores Berlin's shady real estate structures.

Tax policy specialist Christoph Trautvetter (right) works with The Tax Justice Network and leads the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's project Who Owns The City?

Your study puts 12 top companies that own real estate in the city. The biggest one is Deutsche Wohnen, right?

Yes, with nearly 120,000 apartments, they are by far the biggest. But in a way DW are very transparent – they publish annual and even quarterly reports with several hundred pages of information on their apartments, average rents, profits and much more. Their biggest shareholder is Blackrock, but there are lots of other institutional investors that invest money from pension plans, life-insurance policies, etc. like the Ärzteversorgung Westfalen (Pension Fund of the Doctors of Westphalia). Usually they own more than half of the shares of big companies. But not even DW knows everyone who owns their stock. So if you are a dictator's son and you stole €1 billion and moved it around different banks and from there into a fund and into DW, they are not going to know.

Later this month, you're speaking at a Disruption Network Lab conference and giving a guided tour of some of the Berlin realestate owned by "anonymous investors" – who are they?

When you think of anonymously owned real estate, what comes to mind are these stories of letterbox companies secretly owned by oligarchs and kleptocrats, or billionaires wanting to evade tax. Or you think of the local criminal or the mafia strawmen buying real estate. You definitely find some of these in Berlin, but they make up just a small share of dirty money. If you have bigger amounts to invest, things usually get more complicated.

One element is the use of cash. In Italy it is forbidden to buy anything for more than €1000 in cash. But in Germany, you can bring suitcases full of cash and buy a house.

Then you might use one of the investment funds that own five to 10 percent of Berlin apartments for example. These funds are very difficult to trace and often completely anonymous. Especially those that operate via the Cayman Islands, Jersey, the Isle of Man, Gibraltar or any other of the many secrecy jurisdictions. There's no way to find out who's behind them. Transparency International exposed the German real estate market as a hotbed of money laundering, especially favoured by the Italian mafia.

Why is that and who is involved?

One element is the use of cash. In Italy it is forbidden to buy anything for more than €1000 in cash. But in Germany, you can bring suitcases full of cash and buy a house. And obviously the mafia has a lot of cash, right? Another reason is that if you are a drug dealer and have €1 billion worth of assets you don't want to buy real estate in Italy,

because there is a good chance that the Guardia di Finanza is going to come and take it away. In Germany no one's going to ask questions – there's no transparency of real estate ownership, no checks. In 2018 there was a case where 77 flats worth €10 million were seized from a Neukölln family clan. They had bought them with criminal cash and were only found out much later. There's very little control. We have the same rules that the whole world has: when someone comes to a car dealer or estate agent with a suitcase full of cash and they find it suspicious, they have to report it. But the enforcement is really weak. Take the guy who worked as security at Bode Museum and helped to steal the 100kg gold coin two years ago: he never had any money and then suddenly comes with a bag full of cash to buy an apartment and no one led a suspicious transaction report!

In Germany no one's going to ask questions – there's no transparency of real estate ownership, no checks. In 2018 there was a case where 77 flats worth €10 million were seized from a Neukölln family clan.

But what about Germany's new anti-money laundering measures? Notaries are supposed to report suspicious transactions and carry out background checks, from now on including that foreign companies are registered with the German transparency register. Why isn't it working?

Take the Pears brothers from the UK. They invest through two companies from the British Virgin Islands but they use intermediaries in Luxembourg and Cyprus. So they don't have to register because EU companies are excluded from that duty. In theory that's fine because all EU countries are supposed to have open public registers listing the companies' beneficial owners. So in Luxembourg everyone can now see that those companies belong to the Pears brothers. But Cyprus hasn't implemented the law yet and there are still many other ways around registration. At least now the Berlin government has hired three people to check on the notaries.

But how can investors still manage to stay anonymous despite these new controls?

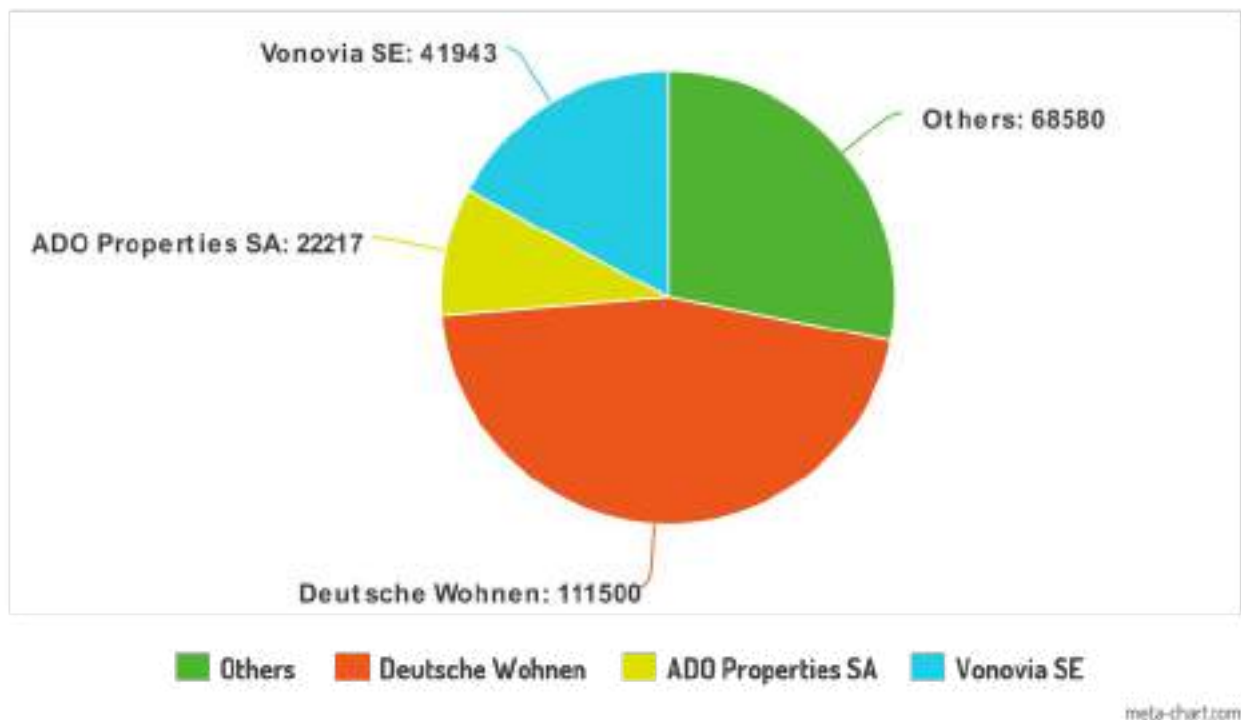
For example, what you can do is open an investment fund in the Cayman Islands, where the investment manager will mix the money of nine legitimate clients with your non-legitimate money, put it into the investment fund and no one will ever know you invested. If this investment fund then buys something, in the transparency register you would just see the name of the investment manager. And he will say there is no official owner – because only those who own more than 25 percent have to register – so the investment manager will say that ownership is split between many people and that he is the one who makes the decisions. So his name will be there and the notary will say that it's perfectly fine.

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THE TOP 12 COMPANIES OWNING 3000+ BERLIN APARTMENTS

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2019



Berlin apartments graph

How do you spot real estate that's being used to 'store' money?

There's the story of The Bishops Avenue in London with Russian oligarchs buying fancy villas left empty. We have a few notorious housing blocks here in Berlin: for example around Alexanderplatz or in Mehringhof several apartments are left empty and decaying. Some anonymous investors of dirty money just rent out apartments at the normal rate, not wanting to make a huge profit and cause any trouble. But very often, once you give your money to a professional money launderer, he will also take care of making a good profit. Sometimes the dirty money is greedy and sometimes it's not.

So you're saying the greediest landlords are not necessarily the criminal ones, right?

Private equity funds are probably the worst. Blackstone, Carlyle and smaller investment funds promise their investors an annual return of 10 to 15 percent and to make this money quickly – usually in less than 10 or even four years. To make this amount of money from real estate in Berlin so quickly you have to be really aggressive.

What strategies do they use to maximise profit? In Germany you can't just raise rents the way you like, or evict tenants...

There are different strategies. Some like to buy cheap apartment blocks and social housing, let them get run-down, don't invest in upkeep, and just make money from the rent. That's one approach. Another popular approach in the past decade has been to buy

an apartment building, renovate, add a lift or balcony, and then increase the rents to a level the tenants can't afford. When the old tenants are gone, they bring in new people who pay three times as much.

Another popular approach in the past decade has been to buy an apartment building, renovate, add a lift or balcony, and then increase the rents to a level the tenants can't afford. When the old tenants are gone, they bring in new people who pay three times as much.

Sometimes they'll offer tenants €10,000 or more to leave and then rent out the same apartment for €15/sqm. You can find some of the Blackstone apartments in Kreuzberg – not even in the nicest streets – for rent at €18 and above! Others rent small rooms, furnished and serviced apartments for more than €40/sqm. Or they turn first-floor shops into homes for refugees, with the city paying comfortable rents. And last but not least there's the strategy of splitting up buildings and selling the individual apartments for twice the price.

Do you think the Mietendeckel will mean anything to these investors?

For some it could spell real trouble. For example, Akelius owns more than 50,000 apartments around the world, nearly 14,000 here in Berlin. Akelius is specialised in renovating apartments and renting them out for €16/spm or more. Considering that one third of Akelius's apartments are already modernised and charging these kinds of rents, they might have a big problem. Do you think the rent freeze is a good idea? I think it's a very good idea. Many landlords don't have any need or reason to increase rents. Most of them bought their apartments 10 to 20 years ago for €1000-2000/sqm, and so with a rent of €6/sqm, they can already make a very decent profit. If they charge €9/sqm or more they are making profits that are completely unreasonable considering the low level of risk: like eight to 10 percent on a very safe investment. Look at the property market: until 2012, Berlin property sold for €1000/sqm, now it's more than €3000/sqm. Within six or seven years, anyone who owned real estate made a profit of 300 percent! My opinion is that no one should make this kind of profit. Germany is a very unequal country in a world that is extremely unequal. We need to regulate and redistribute this wealth.

So how do you suggest wealth should be redistributed?

It will have to be a package of different solutions. You have to make speculation less profitable, through regulating rents, and possibly a tax on transactions. You also need to work on making it harder for dirty money to invest in real estate, which would already make the demand a bit smaller. You can redistribute using a mix of a wealth tax and taxing gains also for private individuals or by expropriating at historical values, basically the expropriation model the Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignung campaign is calling for: to buy back apartments from any company owning more than 3000 apartments in the city at 2012 prices.

How do you see the Berlin property market developing in the next 10 years?

That's impossible to predict but it might look very different. At the moment we have a peak of demand for housing, because of ageing babyboomers, which means many single pensioners living in apartments that are far too big – and you can see that the average square meter per person is increasing.

The wealthy people in Germany – the few very wealthy families – are allergic to transparency for an obvious reason. Because the only way to sustain such an unequal system is by hiding it.

Meanwhile their children and many young people have been moving here looking for their own flats. Give it another five years and this peak will be over. Meanwhile all that construction being launched at the moment will have come to market.

So we might even end up with too many flats. Everyone says “We need to build more”. You're saying don't, we'll end up with too many flats?!

I think the blind focus on building is completely misplaced. It would be great to have 100,000 or 200,000 more right now, because now we have excess demand. But in five years the situation might already be different. We'll still need many more small and affordable apartments but that's not really what is being built at the moment.

So who owns Berlin?

The Real Estate lobby likes to say that 50 percent of flats are owned by small people: nice old ladies or the baker who bought an apartment for his retirement. It's true that 50 percent are privately owned, but many of them by the lords and dukes, the billionaires and multi-millionaires who own hundreds of them. The Pears brothers are perfect examples, but there's also that local politician who owns Berlin real estate worth €100 million, or Mr. Berggruen the billionaire who used to own Karstadt and has plenty of apartments in Kreuzberg; or the Rocket Internet Samwer brothers... There are many more we don't know about. It's huge work to collect all this data and we're already making progress. But we will only really know the full truth once we have an open land register, which I think will take at least another 10 years.

Why so long?

The wealthy people in Germany – the few very wealthy families – are allergic to transparency for an obvious reason. Because the only way to sustain such an unequal system is by hiding it. We are living in a democracy and if it comes down to taking away from 10,000 people to redistribute to 10 million, you will always find a majority for that. So that's why they are fighting tooth and nail against anything that brings transparency because it will create the public pressure to change something. By doing so they allow the crooks and criminals to hide using the same tools.

Glaspaläste zu Wohnraum

 taz.de/!5686176/

Tom Mustroph

June 2, 2020

5686176

Von Büroflächen, Geldwäsche und geleakten Recherchen: Die Konferenz „Evicted by Greed“ verband die Menschenrechtsperspektive auf Wohnen mit dem Kampf gegen globale Immobilienspekulation

Braucht Berlin in Zeiten des Homeoffice tatsächlich so viele Bürogebäude wie das Cube am Hauptbahnhof? Foto: Sabine Gudath/imago

Von Tom Mustroph

Leilana Farha, bis April 2020 UN-Sonderberichterstatterin für das Menschenrecht auf angemessenes Wohnen, holte die Aktivist*innen des Häuserkampfes aus dem Covid-19-Dämmerzustand. Auf der Videokonferenz „Evicted by Greed“ des Berliner Disruption Network Lab betonte sie, dass jetzt der richtige Zeitraum sei, um Obdachlosigkeit weltweit als Problem zu beseitigen. „Die aktuelle Pandemie bewirkt, dass weltweit Büroflächen eingespart werden. Die Tech-Firmen im Silicon Valley haben schon angekündigt, dass sie permanent Homeoffice für ihre Angestellten einführen wollen. Viele Branchen werden nachziehen. Die frei werdenden Büroflächen sollten in Wohnraum umgewandelt werden“, sagte Farha von ihrem Homeoffice im kanadischen Ottawa aus.

Natürlich lebt nicht jede*r Obdachlose in der Nähe der Glaspaläste der Konzerne und des Co-Working-Archipels. Dennoch hat Farha recht, den wohl abnehmenden Bedarf an Büroflächen mit den aktuellen Wohnungsnot zu zusammendenken. Sie brachte mit ihrem Statement auch die Kämpfe der Mieterinitiativen, die vor allem die Sorge um zukünftige eigene Abgehängtsein antreibt, mit den Nöten der längst Abgehängten zusammen. Zugleich erinnerte sie an Wohnen als Menschenrecht – und wie toxisch es ist, mit einem Menschenrecht Profit zu machen.

Das war das überraschendste Statement auf dieser virtuellen Konferenz. Sie litt darunter, dass die Vorträge oft per Videokonferenz erfolgten, die Diskussion vor allem eine Videokonferenz mit bestenfalls einer Handvoll zugeschalteter Teilnehmer*innen war und Zuhörer*innen sich lediglich über Chat-Fragen einbringen konnten.

All die Pausengespräche, die der weiteren Vernetzung helfen und spezielle Themen noch besonders vertiefen, fanden so nicht statt. „Ich hoffe, wir werden uns real wiedersehen, wenn dies möglich ist“, meinte Farha. Sie sagte auch, dass die schon für den März geplante, wegen Covid-19 aber zeitlich verschobene und ins Netz verlagerte

Konferenz des Disruption Network Labs ihr „wichtigster Termin in diesem Jahr“ gewesen sei. Das ist Bestätigung für die Relevanz der Arbeit des Teams um die Informations- und Medienwissenschaftlerin Tatiana Bazzichelli.

Gewöhnlich versammelt das Disruption Network Lab Hacker und Aktivist*innen, Wissenschaftler*innen und Ex-Geheimdienstler*innen zu einer Bandbreite von Themen, die von Propaganda über Krieg und Folter bis Überwachung gehen – und jetzt eben den globalen Finanz- und Immobiliensektor im Fokus hatten.

Bei einem Viertel aller Berliner Wohnungen lässt sich der Eigentümer nicht herausfinden: er bleibt versteckt

Geleakte Daten spielten erneut eine Rolle. Nur auf der Basis von geleakten Eigentümerdaten konnte das Recherchenetzwerk OCCRP offenlegen, wie stark international gesuchte Kokaindealer wie Othman El Bal louti oder der international mit Sanktionen belegte Helfer von Syriens Herrscher Baschar al-Assad, Suleiman Marouf, an den in den Himmel schießenden Wüstenbauten in Dubai beteiligt sind. OCCRP-Mitarbeiterin Karina Shedrovsky sah als Ursache für solche Investments vor allem den leichten Zugang zu Dubais Goldmärkten an. Zweiter Faktor: Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen und Visa sind leicht über den Erwerb von Grundstücken und Immobilien erhältlich. In Beton zu investieren ist also sogar ein Anreiz für Geldwäsche. Und Auskünfte über Eigentümer gibt es in der Regel nicht. Außer sie werden geleakt.

Ein weltweites Transparenzregister ist daher auch das Anliegen vom Politik- und Wirtschaftswissenschaftler Christoph Trautvetter. Er hat in der aktuellen Studie „Keine Transparenz trotz Transparenzregister“ die Eigentümerstruktur der Berliner Wohnimmobilien untersucht. Bei etwa einem Viertel aller Wohnungen lässt sich der Eigentümer nicht herausfinden, er versteckt sich hinter einem Geflecht aus Firmen in Luxemburg und Offshore-Steuerparadiesen wie den Cayman Islands. Transparenz über Eigentümerstrukturen stellt den ersten Schritt dar, um dem Kapital, das mit dem Menschenrecht auf Wohnen seine Geschäfte macht, Grenzen zu setzen. Die Eigentümerstrukturen selbst zu ändern, wäre der zweite Schritt. Perspektiven dazu erläuterte Volkan Sayman von der Initiative „Deutsche Wohnen & Co Enteignen“.

Die Konferenz brachte lokal, national und international agierende Aktivist*innen zusammen. Genau das ist auch nötig, um dem international operierenden und lokal in die Lebenswelten eingreifenden Finanzkapital ein Gegengewicht zu bieten.

der Freitag

Die Wochenzeitung



Ein Bild aus dem letzten Jahr – die Botschaft jedoch bleibt die gleiche: Mietenproteste in Berlin

Foto: Steffi Loos/Getty Images

Es ist noch nicht allzu lange her, da war man sich – angesichts steigender Mieten, Verdrängung und sich verändernder Städte – quer durch das Parteienspektrum und auf allen politischen Ebenen einig: Wohnen sei die Soziale Frage unserer Zeit. Noch Anfang des Jahres – es scheint wie aus einer anderen Epoche – sorgte der beschlossene Mietendeckel für große Aufmerksamkeit. All diese Veränderungen waren und sind auch ein Erfolg der Mieter*innen-Bewegung, die in den letzten Jahren immer größer geworden ist. Vergangenes Jahr demonstrierten laut Veranstalter*innen etwa 40.000

Menschen gegen hohe Mieten, Verdrängung und Privatisierung. Und auch in diesem Jahr hätten am 28. März, dem „Housing Action Day“ weltweit in über 50 Städten Kundgebungen stattfinden sollen.

Doch in Zeiten der Corona-Krise ist alles anders. Angesichts von Ausgangsbeschränkungen oder -sperren finden auch die geplanten Demonstrationen nicht statt, stattdessen bleiben die Menschen zu Hause. Zumindest jene, die ein Zuhause haben. Denn in der Krise werden Ungleichheit und Ausgrenzung umso deutlicher sichtbar, fürchten sich jene, die ohnehin schon mit hohen Mieten kämpfen vor den Folgen von Kurzarbeit, Arbeitslosigkeit oder ausbleibenden Aufträgen. Die Wohnungsfrage, sie bleibt nach wie vor eine zentrale Soziale Frage. Darum haben wir bei Mietenaktivist*innen nachgefragt.

„Wer soll das alles bezahlen?“

*Lisa Vollmer ist wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar mit dem Forschungsschwerpunkt Wohnungspolitik . Sie hat jüngst mit über 150 Wissenschaftler*innen in einem offenen Brief einen anderen Umgang mit Mieter*innen in Zeiten der Corona-Krise gefordert. Darüber hinaus ist sie bei der Berliner Initiative „Stadt von Unten“ aktiv.*

Die Corona-Krise macht einiges möglich: Stand die schwarze Null gerade noch wie eine Eins, ist die Schuldenbremse nun ausgesetzt und Milliarden-Hilfspakete werden geschnürt. Die wirklich relevante Frage ist noch ungeklärt: Wer wird an den Kosten der Krise wie beteiligt? Kehren wir einfach zu einer – dann verschärften – Austeritätspolitik zurück oder gelingt es die Krise zum Umbau hin zu einer Gemeinwirtschaft zu nutzen?

Bei der Wohnraumversorgung werden diese Fragen ganz deutlich: Für Corona-bedingten Mietausfall zwischen April und Mai können Mietverträge zwar nicht gekündigt werden, aber woher sollen Wohn- und Gewerbemieter*innen das Geld nehmen, um Mietschulden zurück zu zahlen? Bei einer Übernahme der Mietschulden durch einen staatlichen Hilfsfonds wäre zwar den Mieter*innen geholfen, allerdings würden die Kosten von der Allgemeinheit getragen, während die Immobilienwirtschaft fein raus wäre. Ganz in der Tradition der (west-)deutschen Wohnungspolitik: Rendite mit der Miete werden staatlich garantiert. Jetzt ist die Zeit Alternativen zu formulieren und durchzusetzen.

„Möglicherweise entsteht aus den Corona-Solidaritätsgruppen etwas Neues“

Tim Lenau ist Mitglied des Mietenwahnsinn-Bündnisses

Es ist sehr schade, dass wir unsere Demos und die Aktionswoche verschieben mussten. Wir alle brauchen diese ermächtigenden Momente gegen den alltäglichen Mietenwahnsinn. Der geht derzeit unvermindert weiter und wird durch die kommende Wirtschaftskrise noch verschärft. Innerhalb von zwei Wochen hat die Politik mehrere

hundert Milliarden Euro in die Wirtschaft gepumpt, aber nicht eine einzige obdachlose Person in einer Wohnung untergebracht. Wir brauchen Wohnungen für alle und die sofortige Auflösung von Sammelunterkünften, „Ankerzentren“ oder sonstigen Lagern. Zwangsräumungen müssen abgeschafft werden! Dass alle Menschen zu Hause bleiben sollen, zeigt wie dringend jeder Mensch ein solches zu Hause braucht – auch nach der Corona-Pandemie.

Mieter*innen, denen ihre Einkommensquelle weggebrochen ist, sollen nicht auf ihren Mietschulden sitzen bleiben. Das wäre auch kein Problem, wenn Wohnen keine Ware wäre. Der Staat soll jetzt nicht die Gewinne der Immobilienkonzerne garantieren. Stattdessen wäre es an der Zeit die Wohnungswirtschaft zu vergesellschaften. Ansonsten könnte uns das Schicksal von New Orleans ereilen. Nach dem Katrina-Hochwasser kam erst die Solidarität der Menschen und dann die große Stunde der Immobilienwirtschaft.

Die klassischen Plena, Haus- und Kiezversammlung der Mieter:innenbewegung funktionieren derzeit nicht. Möglicherweise entsteht aus den Corona-Solidaritätsgruppen aber ein neuer Akteur, der den notwendigen politischen Druck aufbaut, um die Krise nach der Krise zu meistern. Ob Großdemos, Streiks oder andere Formen – die gesellschaftliche Antwort auf die derzeitige Umverteilung ist schwer vorauszusagen.

„Hotels und Ferienwohnungen – rein da!“

Stefan Schneider koordiniert die *Selbstvertretung wohnungsloser Menschen*

Aus der Sicht wohnungsloser Menschen sind Bündnisse sehr wichtig – gerade mit Mieterinnen und Mietern, die selbst oft Angst vor Wohnungsnot und Wohnungslosigkeit haben. Deswegen haben wir uns auch am Aufruf zum Housing Action Day beteiligt. Denn er enthält auch die Forderungen der Selbstvertretung: Wohnungslose Menschen gehören wieder in Wohnungen und nicht in irgendwelche Wohnungslosenhilfen oder Notübernachtungs-Zwangsgemeinschaftsangebote.

Uns geht es um einen Schulterschluss zwischen Wohnungslosen und Wohnenden. Hätte die Demonstration stattgefunden, hätten wir gehofft, dass wir in Berlin wenigstens mit einem kleinen Block präsent sind. Denn es ist nicht so einfach, obdachlose Menschen zu mobilisieren, weil sie um ihr Überleben arbeiten und ackern müssen. Gerade im Moment ist die Situation insgesamt verzweifelt. Zwar versuchen ein paar Nachbarschaftsinitiativen, Gabenzäune aufzustellen. Aber viele Angebote machen zu, Tafeln und Essensausgaben schließen, das Spenden geht zurück, das Flaschensammeln ebenso.

Die Politik könnte handeln: Hotels und Ferienwohnungen stehen leer, genauso wie Airbnb-Wohnungen. Man müsste jetzt sagen: Rein da, wir übernehmen die Kosten. Immerhin hat sich der zuständige Senator in Berlin dazu durchringen können,

Zwangsräumungen auszusetzen – eine ganz alte Forderung von uns. Doch es muss erst die Corona-Krise geben, damit das umgesetzt wird. Interessant wird es, das dann in Zukunft zu diskutieren.

„Das ist alles kein Naturgesetz“



Foto: imago images/Christian Thiel

Rouzbeh Taheri von „Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen“

Die explodierenden Mieten haben in den letzten Jahren zu einer verstärkten Umverteilung von unten nach oben geführt. Die Immobilienbesitzer*innen haben enorme Vermögenszuwächse und die Mieter*innen zahlen einen immer größeren Anteil ihres Einkommens für die Miete. Und trotzdem müssen sie um ihre Wohnung fürchten. Das alles ist kein Naturgesetz, die Rahmenbedingungen für die Mietenpolitik werden vom Staat gesetzt und können auch geändert werden. Wir brauchen zwei

Maßnahmenstränge, um diese Tendenz umzukehren: Einen bundesweiten Mietendeckel, damit die Menschen eine Atempause bekommen, und eine Ausweitung des Bestandes an bezahlbaren Wohnungen durch Neubau und Vergesellschaftung großer Immobilienbestände.

Wir engagieren uns mit unserer Initiative im Bereich Vergesellschaftung in Berlin. Durch die Corona-Krise muss aber einiges neu gedacht werden. Wir fordern zum Beispiel einen sofortigen Stopp der Mietzahlungen für die von Einkommensausfällen betroffenen Haushalte. Hier sollten ab sofort nur die tatsächlichen Kosten durch den Staat übernommen werden (Kostenmiete), der Gewinnanteil der Immobilienbesitzer muss entfallen. Es darf zusätzlich keine öffentlichen Hilfgelder für Immobilienkonzerne geben, die in den letzten Jahren fette Gewinnen erwirtschaftet haben.

„Die Fristen für Eigenbedarfskündigungen laufen vielerorts weiter“

Coni Pfeiffer ist Mitglied des Netzwerks der #200Häuser

Für das #200Häuser-Netzwerk steht die Umwandlung von Miet- in Eigentumswohnungen und die daraus resultierenden Folgen im Mittelpunkt: Eigenbedarfskündigungen sind eine der drängendsten Fragen unserer Stadtgesellschaft, viele Mietende haben deswegen schlaflose Nächte. Eine unserer Hauptforderungen ist ein sofortiges Umwandlungsverbot in angespannten Wohnlagen. Die aktuellen Gesetze auf Bundesebene führen in der Regel zu zeitverzögerter Verdrängung der angestammten Wohnbevölkerung, Zerstörung der Kiezkultur und Veränderungen der Stadt, die nicht von den Bewohnenden selbst mitgestaltet werden können.

In diesem Zusammenhang setzen wir uns für eine Informationspflicht gegenüber den Mietenden zum jeweiligen Status ihrer Wohnung, gegen Eigenbedarfskündigungen und Verdrängungsmodernisierung, für ein Transparenzregister sowie gegen Share-Deals im Immobiliensektor ein.

#200Häuser bietet eine erste Anlaufstelle für Menschen umgewandelter Häuser, berät zur aktuellen Situation, bietet Hilfestellung beim Entwickeln individueller Proteststrategien, unterstützt bei der Eigentümer-Recherche. Der Austausch mit weiteren Betroffenen, die diese spezifischen Situationen teilweise schon durchlebt haben, ist immer wieder hilfreich.

Durch die Corona-Krise lässt sich ein zukünftiger temporärer Rückgang des Umwandlungsgeschehens nur vermuten. Sobald sich die Wirtschaft wieder erholt, wird voraussichtlich die gleiche Umwandlungsdynamik wieder weiter an Fahrt aufnehmen. Davon unbenommen laufen vielerorts Fristen für u.a. mögliche Eigenbedarfskündigungen weiter.

Halten Sie mit Abstand zusammen – Bleiben Sie gesund!

„Geflüchtete in prekären und beengten Gemeinschaftsunterkünften sind jetzt besonders gefährdet“

Kölner Flüchtlingsrat e. V.

Die Großdemonstrationen am 28.03.2020 unter dem Motto „Wohnen für Menschen statt für Profite“ wurden aufgrund der Corona-Pandemie verschoben. Aktueller denn je sind jedoch die Forderungen für eine solidarischere Stadtentwicklung, für mehr bezahlbaren Wohnraum im gesamten Stadtgebiet, für eine Sensibilisierung gegen Diskriminierung auf dem Wohnungsmarkt, für mehr Wohnungen auch für große Familien und eine menschenwürdige Unterbringung für Alle! Es zeigt sich in der momentanen Situation, wie wichtig Wohnraum als Schutzraum für die physische und psychische Gesundheit ist. Insbesondere Geflüchtete, die in prekären und beengten Gemeinschaftsunterkünften leben, sind aufgrund mangelnder hygienischer Bedingungen, gemeinschaftlich genutzter sanitärer Einrichtungen und Küchen sowie des fehlenden Zugangs zu gesundheitlicher Versorgung, und auch durch mangelnde Informationen jetzt besonders gefährdet!

Die Lebensumstände in, und die häufigen Transfers zwischen den Unterkünften waren bereits vor dem Ausbruch von COVID-19 eine enorme Belastung. Der angespannte Wohnungsmarkt und die seit Jahrzehnten verfehlte Wohnungspolitik verhindern seit längerer Zeit eine konsequente menschenwürdige und dezentrale Unterbringung von Geflüchteten. In der aktuellen Situation werden die Umstände zur lebensbedrohlichen Gefahr!

Daher fordern wir die sofortige drastische Reduzierung der Anzahl von Personen in Gemeinschaftsunterkünften, sofortige Verteilung besonders gefährdeter Personen in dezentralen Unterkünften, die Sicherstellung von hygienischen Standards und Zugang zu gesundheitlicher Versorgung, die Gewährleistung des Informationsflusses für Geflüchtete und keine pauschalen Besuchsverbote in Unterkünften.

„Wie soll jemand auf Kurzarbeit das wuppen?“

Markus Kammermeier, aktiv bei „Bizim Kiez – Unser Kiez“

Bizim Kiez hat von Anfang an in Berliner Demo-Bündnissen mitgearbeitet. Nur gemeinsam bekommen wir einen echten Kurswechsel in der Wohnpolitik hin! Den Mietendeckel sehen wir als Erfolg solcher Zusammenarbeit. Aktuell brennt es bei der Umwandlung von Miet- in Eigentumswohnungen und den horrenden Mietsteigerungen für kleine Läden und Soziales.

Jetzt in der Corona-Krise wird klar, wie elementar das Menschenrecht auf Wohnen ist. Die Corona-Maßnahmen der Bundesregierung zum Mieterschutz sind völlig unzureichend. Knapp 40 Prozent der Berliner Haushalte geben über 30 Prozent ihres Einkommens für die Kaltmiete aus. Wie soll jemand auf Kurzarbeit das wuppen? Wie danach die nur gestundeten Mietschulden zurückzahlen? Wir fordern Mietensenkung

und Mietschuldenerlass. Ja, Immobilienunternehmen müssen auf Gewinne verzichten. Es darf nicht sein, dass die Allgemeinheit steuerfinanziert die Rendite der Immo-Branche garantiert, während Geringverdienende die Krisenlast schultern. Wir brauchen Sonderabgaben der Profiteure des Immobilienbooms. Sie sollen zu einem Hilfsfonds beitragen. Für Menschen, die auf der Straße, in Sammelunterkünften und gefährdenden Wohnverhältnissen leben, müssen zum Schutz vor COVID-19 endlich Hotels und Ferienwohnungen geöffnet werden.

„Etlichen wird eine Rückzahlung bis zum 30. Juni 2022 nicht gelingen“

Franziska Schulte arbeitet für den Berliner Mieterverein

In der derzeitigen Lage zeigt sich einmal mehr, welche teils fatalen Folgen die neoliberale Wohnungspolitik der vergangenen zwei Jahrzehnte haben kann. Zahlreiche Freiberufler*innen, Kurzarbeiter*innen und Solo-Selbstständige sind betroffen von akuten Einkommenseinbrüchen, die nicht selten zu einem Mietzahlungsverzug führen. Momentan sind die Juristen im Berliner Mieterverein auch mit solchen Corona-Notfällen beschäftigt und versuchen individuell und schnell Hilfe zu leisten.

Die Bundesregierung hat vergangenen Mittwoch ein Kündigungsmoratorium beschlossen. Diese rasche Entscheidung ist sicher zu begrüßen, muss aber in ihrer jetzigen Form dringend nachgebessert werden. Viele Mieter, deren Einkommen jetzt wegbrechen, werden auch nach Abklingen der Krise nicht sofort wieder finanziell auf die Beine kommen, etlichen wird eine Rückzahlung bis zum 30. Juni 2022 nicht gelingen. Nach Ablauf dieser Frist ist eine Kündigung jedoch möglich. Zudem laufen Verzugszinsen in Höhe von sechs Prozent auf. Es kann nicht sein, dass Vermieter in Krisenzeiten weiterhin ihre überhöhten Forderungen durchsetzen können. Der zu Recht geforderte „Sicher-Wohnen-Fonds“ von Deutschem Mieterbund und dem Spitzenverband der Wohnungswirtschaft (GdW) bedarf einer solidarischen Ausgestaltung, die keineswegs die Gewinnerorientierung einiger Eigentümer unterstützen darf. Vielmehr müssen hier auch Vermieterverzichte und krisenregulierte Mietobergrenzen festgeschrieben werden.

Denn Wohnen ist kein Konsumgut, Wohnen ist Grundbedürfnis eines jeden Menschen. Viele dieser Menschen haben sich in bundesweiten, europaweiten oder kleinen, lokalen Aktionen zusammengeschlossen und protestieren gegen Vermieterwillkür, Verdrängung und Spekulation. Das sind Leute, die sich neben Job, Kindern und Alltag daran beteiligen. Es ist lange her, dass eine Mieter*innen-Bewegung so stark war und die europaweite Vernetzung der Initiativen und Stadtbewegungen so hervorragend funktioniert hat – wenn es das überhaupt jemals so gab.

„Bezahlbarer Wohnraum für die Vielen muss die Maxime für öffentliche Unternehmen sein“

Alexis J. Passadakis aktiv für den Mietentscheid Frankfurt und bei Attac

In Frankfurt haben 68 Prozent der Mieterhaushalte Anspruch auf geförderten Wohnraum. Wir gehen davon aus, dass die sich jetzt zuspitzende ökonomische Krise diese große Zahl noch weiter eskalieren lässt. Gegen den Mietenwahnsinn in Frankfurt haben wir für unser Bürgerbegehren 25.000 Unterschriften gesammelt. Auf diesem Weg wollen wir einen Strategiewechsel des öffentlichen Wohnungsunternehmens ABG einleiten. Wir fordern, dass die ABG mit ihren 50.000 Wohnungen ihre Mieten auf das Niveau des geförderten Wohnungsbaus absenkt und in Zukunft zu 100 Prozent gefördert baut. Die regierende Koalition aus CDU, SPD und Grünen lehnt unsere Initiative direkter Demokratie politisch und mit vorgeschobenen rechtlichen Gründen ab. Nicht Gewinn, sondern bezahlbarer Wohnraum für die Vielen muss die Maxime für öffentliche Unternehmen sein.

Gemeinsam mit anderen fordern wir aktuell, dass alle leer stehenden Unterkünfte und Ferienwohnungen beschlagnahmt werden, um allen Menschen ein Zuhause bieten zu können!

„Die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche werden wieder aufbrechen“

Anna Weber vom Bündnis Zwangsäumung Verhindern

Das Bündnis Zwangsäumung verhindern – politische Aktivist*innen, Nachbar*innen, von Zwangsäumung Betroffene oder Ex-Betroffene – kämpft seit 2012 gegen Zwangsäumung und Verdrängung. Wir machen Öffentlichkeits- und Pressearbeit, Demonstrationen, Kiezversammlungen, Go-Ins und Blockaden.

Mit vielen anderen stadtpolitischen Gruppen organisieren wir die dritte Mietenwahnsinn-Demonstration, diesmal bundes- und europaweit vernetzt. Wegen der Corona-Pandemie verschieben wir die Demonstration und rufen zu „Corona-sicheren“ Aktionen auf.

Einige unserer Forderungen wie ein Kündigungs- und Zwangsäumungsstopp wurden mittlerweile umgesetzt, aber nur teilweise und zeitlich befristet. Spätestens wenn es darum geht, wer die Krisenfolgen bezahlen soll, werden die gesellschaftlichen Widersprüche wieder aufbrechen. Wir werden dann mit den Vielen, die die soziale Frage thematisieren, wieder auf die Straße gehen – für eine Stadt jenseits der kapitalistischen Verwertungslogik.

„Den Kampf gegen Immobilienspekulation führen wir weiter – analog und online“

Tatiana Bazzichelli ist Gründerin und künstlerische Leiterin des Disruption Network Lab e. V.

In Zeiten des Coronavirus ist es noch wichtiger, systematische Ausbeutung und Verdrängung von Mieter*innen durch Aktionen wie den Housing Action Day anzuprangern, Akteur*innen zu vernetzen und gemeinsam aktiv für den Wandel zu kämpfen. Wir werden unsere Arbeit mit allen Mitteln online weiterführen, und unsere Konferenz EVICTED BY GREED vom 29. – 30. Mai als gestreamte Online-Konferenz veranstalten. Aktivist*innen, Journalist*innen und Expert*innen werden zusammengebracht, um die Verknüpfungen zwischen Steueroasen, globalen Finanzströmen, überhitzten Immobilienmärkten und der Verdrängung durch steigende Mieten ganz konkret aufzudecken. Darüber hinaus geht es uns um Antworten, die die Zivilgesellschaft bereits anwendet und solche, die wir gemeinsam finden können. Den Kampf gegen Immobilienspekulation und Zwangsräumungen führen wir weiter, analog und online.

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Furtherfield

 furtherfield.org/evicted-by-greed-global-finance-housing-resistance/

July 15, 2020



On May 29, 2020, the Disruption Network Lab opened its 19th conference, “Evicted by Greed: Global Finance, Housing & Resistance”. The three-day-event was supposed to take place in Berlin in March, on the days of the global call for the Housing Action Days. Instead, it took place online due to ongoing safety concerns relating to the coronavirus pandemic.

Chaired by Tatiana Bazzichelli and Lieke Ploeger, programme and community director of the Disruption Network Lab, the interactive digital event brought together speakers and audience members from their homes from all over the world to investigate how speculative finance drives global and local housing crises. The topic of how aggressive speculative real-estate purchases by shell companies, anonymous entities, and corporations negatively impacts peoples’ lives formed the core conversation for the presentations, panel discussions, and interactive question and answer sessions. The conference served as a platform for sharing experiences and finding counter-strategies.

In her introductory statement, Bazzichelli took stock of the situation. As the pandemic appeared, it became clear worldwide that the “stay-at-home” order and campaigns were not considering people who cannot comply since they haven’t got any place to stay. Tenants, whose work and lives have been impacted, struggle to pay rent, bills, or other essentials, and in many cases had to leave their homes or have been threatened with forced eviction. People called on lawmakers at a national and local level to freeze rent requirements as part of their response to the pandemic, but very few measures have been put in place to protect them. However, scarce and unaffordable housing is neither a new, nor a local problem found in just a few places.



Lieke Ploeger, Community Director of the Disruption Network Lab (left), and Tatiana Bazzichelli, Founder and Programme Director of the Disruption Network Lab

Christoph Trautvetter, public policy expert and German activist of Netzwerk Steuergerechtigkeit (Network for Tax Justice) and Wem gehört die Stadt (Who Owns the City) of the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation, and Manuel Gabarre de Sus, Spanish lawyer and activist from the Observatory Against Economical Crime, delivered the opening keynote “Anonymous & Aggressive Investors: Who owns Berlin & Barcelona?” moderated by Eka Rostomashvili, advocacy and campaigns coordinator at Transparency International.

In the last decade waves of private equity real estate investments have reshaped the rental housing markets in cities like Berlin and Barcelona. Housing and real estate have been deformed by global capital markets and financial excess, treated as a commodity, a vehicle for predatory investment and wealth rather than a social good reflecting a human right. This led to evictions, discriminations in the housing sphere, and lack of access to basic housing-related services, all put in place by aggressive real estate investors.

Trautvetter is co-author of a recent study tracing the ownership of 400 companies owning real estate in Berlin. He explained that in the city, where about 85% of the population are renters, exploding house prices and rentals have been guaranteeing investors returns far beyond 10% per year after the financial crises of 2009. Here the emergence of corporate landlords changed the city. They are entities that own and operate rental housing on a massive scale, replacing the traditional “gentle old lady” landlord. At 17.5%, Berlin has a low proportion of direct investors renting out their properties.

Activists, politicians, and organisations of tenants are trying to fight unlawful evictions and speculative investments reshaping the German capital, but often face anonymity.

Almost half of the city is in the hands of listed companies, professional investors, or indirect investors shielded by property management firms and lawyers that operate on their behalf. International private equity companies are one of the most obscure and greedy embodiments of policy failure in this context.

Gabarre de Sus focused on the problem of the opportunistic investment funds that appeared in Spain due to strong deregulation. After the global financial crisis of 2009, the rescue of the Spanish financial system ensured that hundreds of thousands of households were indirectly under public control. But the European Union and the Spanish Government decided in 2012 to sell these properties to opportunistic investors. Many say that if public ownership of these real estates had been maintained for social renting, the rent bubble of recent years would not have occurred. As a result, many vulture funds, particularly from the United States like Blackstone, Hayfin, TPG, and millionaires like the Mexican Carlos Slim, made huge profits. Since then, rent prizes have increased of more than the 50% in the main Spanish cities, more than 30 times faster than wages.

Whilst describing this process, Gabarre de Sus focused on the political and legal ties of big investment funds that invest in real estate. There are structures of political and economic interest that allow companies like Blackstone Group Inc. — one of the largest real estate private equity and investment management firms in the world declaring \$140 billion of real estate assets under management, 25% of its total assets — to scale business models in which properties are bought, renovated, and then put back on the market at rents that tenants cannot afford. These actors are influential, with economic partners at international level, including banks from the world's largest economies.

In many cases, real estate registers do not contain any information on beneficial owners or there is no way to link legal and beneficial owners, so that both authorities and citizens know very little about who owns their cities. EU legislation obliges information on real estate holders to be available to authorities and specifies that the general public shall receive access to beneficial ownership information of EU based companies. The problem is that such registers are usually maintained under self-disclosure principles based on data internally identified by the reporting entity. Access to data is often difficult and expensive. Once you get the information, it can take time to check it and find out contradictory data. Moreover, an articulated system of international shell companies, secrecy legislation, and strategic financial loopholes provides immunity and contributes to global inequality, consolidating the incessant shift of wealth from the poor to the rich.



Manuel Gabarre de Sus (top), Christoph Trautvetter and Eka Rostomashvili during the Keynote “Anonymous & Aggressive Investors: Who owns Berlin & Barcelona?”

In Berlin nearly half of the real estate investors remain anonymous and there is no certainty of how much dirty money hides behind their investments, which is something common to many places around the world. The current situation — revealed also by the Panama Papers investigation — shows that governments profit from illegal wealth from transnational money-laundering, hosting international criminal enterprises within their territories and capital cities, thus providing a grey area for illegal practices where false or inappropriate identification represents the other face of fraudulent records and corruption.

The panel “Foggy Properties & Golden Sands: Money Laundering in London & Dubai” moderated by Rima Sghaier, outreach and research fellow at the Hermes Centre for Transparency and Digital Human Rights, made clear how easy and common it is for global elites and organised criminality to open offshore companies, move assets, and buy real estate in big capital cities, with investments that integrate illegal funds into the financial system and legitimate economy.

Sam Leon, data investigations lead at Global Witness, referred to the relations between satellite fiscal havens such as the Virgin Islands, the Cayman, and the Channel Islands, and the City of London. These countries are linked through commercial and legal ties with high probabilities for dark money to flow through the UK’s Overseas territories and Crown Dependencies undetected.

The UK has a public land registry, but it is difficult to effectively scrutiny data. Companies are obliged to file good quality information, but many do not and authorities are not able to check it accurately. Britain is defined by detractors as the world’s greatest enabler of corporate tax avoidance. Considering real estate, Leon explained that tens of thousands of tenants in England and Wales are in the hands of unscrupulous owners,

who hide behind anonymous companies and trusts.

One loophole real estate investors use is acquiring shares in a company that owns real estate, rather than the real estate itself; the property can be then sold by selling the shares in the company with no UK corporate tax. If the company is registered in a country that guarantees secrecy and free hands, no name appears. According Global Witness in England and Wales 87,000 properties with an estimated value of more than 1 billion pounds are owned by companies incorporated in secrecy jurisdictions, which keep secret the information about the real owners. Scotland suffers from the same problem, and in this context Scottish Limited Partnerships are a major concern too.



Sam Leon and Rima Sghaier during the panel “Foggy Properties & Golden Sands: Money Laundering in London & Dubai”

Companies avoid inheritance tax and capital gain tax, riding fiscal loopholes. The use of firms based in countries which are known tax havens to purchase property is being observed all around the world, with concerns about how much property is owned by unaccountable offshore entities.

The analyses of Leon introduced topics covered by the second panellist Karina Shedrofsky, who presented her work as head of OCCRP’s research team “Dubai’s Golden Sands.” Recently leaked datasets of property and residency details were obtained by the non-profit group C4ADS, and provided to the international investigative journalists of the OCCRP as part of the Global Anticorruption Consortium, in collaboration with Transparency International.

International criticism of governments and independent organisations pointed out that Dubai has become an open market for money laundering and a safe haven for the corrupt at a global level, due to the lack of controls along with very profitable conditions. The United Arab Emirates are accused of weakly regulating the financial

sector, guaranteeing secrecy, and offering the world's criminals a range of services. The country's land registry is not open to the public and a lack of enforcement and oversight in the property sector is ideal to stash vast amounts of dirty money.

Shedrofsky pointed out that Dubai is an absolute monarchy ruled as a business. Several transnational investigations show that its laws seem to be a facilitator for international money laundering, corruption, and other financial crimes.

The emirate has been attracting secretive real estate purchases by foreign companies and individuals for years. Construction and real estate sector represents 20% of the country's gross domestic product (2016). In the country it is possible to move money with very little regulatory scrutiny, cash-based transactions are incentivised, and the volume of gold trafficked accounts for around 25% of global trade, with almost no questions about its origins. Wealthy investors are offered a property investment visa by an investment in real estate of minimum \$272,000 dollars, and get the benefits of light financial regulation, anonymity, and banking secrecy.

Shedrofsky explained how researchers from 8 countries worked on thousands of spreadsheets maintained by real estate professionals, in an accurate cross-border investigation that led to the publication of a hundred names of wealthy people, who have invested millions in Dubai. The non-official records from the years 2014-2016 provided more than 129,000 owner's data, which the team organised per country and verified, revealing only information that could be proven beyond doubt. A website hosting an interactive map with the detected properties is online, and anyone can check it (occrp.org/en/goldensands/).



Karina Shedrofsky during her presentation of the Dubai's Golden Sands investigation

The first day of the conference closed with filmmaker and journalist Fredrik Gertten and Leilani Farha, former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing, in a live conversation moderated by Tatiana Bazzichelli. Gertten's latest documentary investigates the factors that push people out from their own city, turning it into an unaffordable place that is more and more difficult to live in due to the extreme difference between housing prices and wage development.

From New York to Barcelona "Push: The Film" narrates how corporations and financial elites are speculating on people's lives. Renters worldwide are drowning in a sea of self-doubt, with feelings of inadequacy and fears, because they think they are unable to keep up with life. But the documentary shows that this condition is the consequence of a system intended to harm, marginalise, and discriminate them. Even if residents should be able to afford to live in their own cities, this process inexorably condemns them to move away.

The work of the speakers on the first day of the conference reinforced the idea that crowd-based and data-driven research projects, together with independent and cross-border investigations, can allow a glimpse behind the curtain of the real estate market. Anonymity and secrecy in juxtaposition to openness and transparency, obtained through collective mobilisation, collecting, sharing, and analysing data.

A depressingly similar pattern emerges in countries all over the world. Housing has been financialised and turned into an investment vehicle, which has caused an oversupply of luxury estates and empty buildings in many cities, and a chronic shortage of adequate housing for the least advantaged, for the working class, and often for the middle class too. A process often encouraged by governments.

In this context, "financialisation" refers to tendencies within the economic system characterised by the expansion and proliferation of financial markets penetrating into a range of both economic and social sectors, and consequently affecting human rights related goods — such as housing, pensions and healthcare — making huge profits out of basic needs and human sufferings.

With regard to the financialisation of housing, not just banks, corporations, and big investment funds play this ruthless game. Fraudsters, money launderers, and organised crime are very active internationally, and look for weak financial systems and a moment of crisis to speculate on the property market.



Live conversation with Fredrik Gertten (Film Director, SE) and Leilani Farha (Global Director, The Shift and Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing)

Ela Kagel, digital strategist and founder of Supermarkt Berlin, discussed collective solutions to tackle housing, social, and economic injustices with the sociologist Volkan Sayman, promoter of the campaign “Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co!”. This movement is an example of how residents can involve themselves to determine and achieve their own objectives, acting on their rights to create a space for their perspectives and needs within an urban context.

After a majority of citizens were found to be in favour of the initiative in early 2019, a city-wide referendum could be now called on the expropriation of private housing companies with more than 3,000 housing units. Local political parties have not managed to find agreement yet and, as a result, the effects of the referendum in Berlin are likely to be minor if people do not keep on supporting it. The expropriation would put 240,000 flats under public control.

As outlined, investors from the international capital market made huge purchases in Berlin’s residential and commercial real estate: the company Deutsche Wohnen alone owns 111,500 apartments in the city. Together with Vonovia, BlackRock, Akelius, Blackstone, Carlyle, Optimum Evolution, and others, these companies own almost one fourth of the city. In the early 2000s Berlin’s government sold many public housing units and areas to these companies, instead of offering them to residents as development project to focus on local communities and their needs. The Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co! community has forced large real estate companies and politicians from all parties to address the issue and successfully raised awareness among Berliners who engaged in it.

In Berlin exasperated renters successfully came together and organised themselves in several ways. They are also appealing to the local council to stop the sale of their homes,

and the “Rent Price Cap,” a new policy in force since 2020, has frozen rents on around 1.4 million homes in the German capital. The “Mietendeckel” is supposed to last for 5 years. Twelve constitutional complaints have already been filed against it.



Volkan Sayman and Ela Kagel during the talk “Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co!”

The keynote on the second day “The Human Rights Solution: Tackling the housing crisis” focused on the work of Leilani Farha, UN former Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, in conversation with Justus von Daniels, Editor-in-Chief of CORRECTIV, non-profit newsroom for investigative journalism. Opening the keynote Von Daniels presented the German crowdsourced project he runs — Who owns the city? — which is based on community-powered investigations collecting data to gain a better understanding of the German housing market.

Farha recalled that international human rights law recognizes everyone’s right to an adequate housing and living conditions. Global real estate today represents nearly 60% of the value of all global assets; with housing comprising nearly 75%. That’s more than twice the world’s total gross domestic product. The aspect to consider is that such a vast amount of wealth seems to have left governments accountable to real estate investors rather than to their international human rights obligations.

Farha criticised Blackstone Group Inc. and its subsidiaries for a practice she also confirms has become common throughout the industry in many countries around the world. These companies are targeting multi-family residences in neighbourhoods deemed to be “undervalued,” so a building or several buildings from an area of poor and low-income tenants. The former UN rapporteur described how Blackstone purchases a building, undertakes repairs or renovation, and then increases the rent driving existing tenants out, and replacing them with higher income ones.

As the speakers pointed out, there has been little attention given to the impact of

financialisation on housing, which has caused displacement and evictions, changing urban areas forever. Until the massive financial deregulation of the 1980s, housing was built and paid for locally. Governments, local savings, and loan institutions were supposed to provide the bulk of financing for housing up. Due to an ideological shift, determined by the impact of the dominance on financial markets of big investment funds, banks and corporations, housing is increasingly intertwined with flows of global capital. Housing markets are now more responsive to these flows than to local conditions becoming a global industry.

With roots in the 2008 financial crisis, the recent massive wave of investments by international corporations, banks, and big investment funds completed the shift from housing as a place to build a home, to housing as an investment, with devastating consequences for millions of people. The current real-estate cycle started in 2009 and led to significant price increases for residential property in many cities all over the world. Among several factors, the proliferation of predatory equity funds sifting through the world searching for undervalued investment opportunities and finding them in housing.

The global goal is to guarantee everybody legal security and protection against unlawful forced evictions, harassment and other threats, to make sure that personal or household financial costs associated with housing do not threaten or compromise the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs. We see instead that the needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account at all. In urban areas public spaces and social facilities disappear together with the expression of cultural identities and ways of life of the original residents.



Justus von Daniels and Leilani Farha during the keynote “The Human Rights Solution: Tackling the housing crisis”

Statistics show that many of the less advantaged are renters, not owners. And rents have

increased even faster than housing prices in many metropolitan areas. Some call for more expansion at the urban peripheries with sustainable and modern public housing projects and better infrastructures. Others call for empowering neighbourhoods and local communities to reverse the financialisation process and to improve the conditions of the areas, that are most affected by this process, building more housing for themselves, and distributing those empty ones.

The conclusive panel on the second day was moderated by Iva Čukić, cofounder of the urban development organisation Ministry of Space, set up to occupy abandoned and neglected urban spaces and fill them with projects, workplaces, housing, or alternative art galleries, to enhance everyone's right to the city. The panel brought into dialogue different modalities of fighting property speculation, and sharing tactics of resistance in the political and media landscape, and presented concrete alternatives for the urban territory.

The first panelist to speak, Marco Clausen, is the co-founder of the Prinzessinnengarten in Berlin, an island of collective gardening in Moritzplatz. The garden represents an open space to share and develop new forms of urban life, where to practice ideas of social-ecological positive transformation, in the context of privatisation and financialisation of real estate in the city.

In the 2000s Berlin was still a city with vast empty areas, dismissed military facilities and many old empty buildings. In the last 20 years over 3,000 sites in Berlin owned by public housing societies have been privatised. The garden started as a temporary project in 2009 and has been struggling since 2012 against private investors and speculation. Back then activists mobilised 30,000 people to stop the selling process to an investor, and obtained a new contract until 2018. The area around the garden was first in the hands of a Goldman Sachs fund, and later to Deutsche Wohnen. A small group fought for two years to keep the garden a collective project, managing to prolong the contract for another six years and receiving public funding to rebuild the garden as an open learning and cultural centre.

Always in Berlin, another group of activists has been mobilising to fight the Amazon tower, that is to be completed in 2023 in the area of Berlin-Friedrichshain. Yonatan Miller, tech-worker and activist from the coalition "Berlin vs. Amazon," talked about the movement that opposes the big tech company's project, that will reshape the area and impact many people's lives. On one side, over the last five years Berlin has already seen the fastest increase in housing prices globally, on the other big tech corporations are known for getting into real-estate market and make things worse for local residents, gentrifying the area. Miler discussed the challenges of the activists, presenting their strategy for the struggle ahead to replicate the success story of New York's ousting of Amazon in 2019.

The panel proceeded with the StealThisPoster collective and their online archive "stealthisposter.org" maintained by artists and activists part of a network formed around the right to housing movements of London and Rome. The group presented the

practice of subvertising, the artistic hacking of corporate and political advertisements to make counter-statements by disrupting lucrative communication of induced desires and needs and parodying of them. Inside urban areas subvertising (portmanteau of subvert and advertise) is an act of reappropriation of those public spaces that have been turned into a vehicle for intrusive and harmful commercial communications.

StealThisPoster recently supported with various guerrilla actions a community fighting against the eviction of the “Lucha y Siesta,” a space of social housing and the first inhabited by an all-female squat in Rome. Their evocative pictures of Roman monuments lit at night by the words “on sale” became viral and helped the cause. However, the existence of this independent legendary social space is still at risk. Lucha Y Siesta was put on auction by the city council of Rome on April 7 this year. The short film premiere “StealThisPoster: Artivism & the Struggle of Lucha Y Siesta” that StealThisPoster created in occasion of Evicted By Greed, focuses on this experience and introduces the practice of subvertising.

A video contribute by Penny Travlou from the University of Edinburgh concluded the panel. Travlou talked about the housing crisis in Athens and the local activists of the AARG collective, Action Against Regeneration & Gentrification, born to fight against eviction, financial speculation, and to support the rights of the refugees.

Alongside the main conference sessions, a workshop on the third day enriched the programme.

The virtual tour “Visiting the Invisible” by Christoph Trautvetter discovers the anonymous and aggressive real estate investors of Berlin, drawing on the findings of the project “Wem gehört die Stadt” of the Rosa-Luxemburg Stiftung, and including further recent studies from other collectives.



Iva Čukić ,Marco Clausen (top) and Yonatan Miller during the panel “Resisting Speculation: Ecological Commons, Subvertising & Fighting Tech Domination”

The conference “Evicted by Greed” presented experts working on anti-corruption, investigative journalists, artists and activists, who met to share effective strategies and community-based approaches to increase awareness on the issues related to the financialisation of housing and its negative effects. Here bottom-up approaches and methods that include local communities in the development of solutions appear to be fundamental. Projects that capacitate collectives, minorities, and marginalized groups to develop and exploit tools to combat systematic inequalities, injustices, and speculation are to be enhanced.

Ghostly shell companies and real estate speculators evict real people from their homes. It is not possible to state that all of these companies are acting illegally, or indeed avoiding paying taxes by being based in tax havens, but it is proven that opaque offshore firms are routinely used by criminals for systemic tax evasion, to buy property as a means to launder or stash dirty money, as well as to dodge taxes.

Open registers and open debate about these issues are very important, and not just for possible judicial outcomes. It is important to find out who the owners of real estates are and give a name to the landlords. Sometimes they might not be speculation oriented individuals and might not be aware of the consequences of their investments, but have delegated ruthless intermediates, lawyers, and investment consultants. There could be hundreds of workers who invested in a pension fund without knowing that their profit is based on aggressive speculation.

Equal and non-discriminatory access to public spaces and adequate housing is not possible without an appropriate and effective regulation. The researches, the projects and the investigations presented in this conference are all worthwhile experiences with proven benefits, but ultimately, they may not be enough to alter the structural forces in

play. The pandemic has shown that speculators all over the world wait for moments of crisis to purchase new real estates for a lower price, taking advantage of the financial difficulties that many people are experiencing. A growing number of property investors are preparing for what they believe could be a once-in-a generation opportunity to buy distressed real-estate assets at bargain prices. The system facilitates the concentration of real states in the hands of big international landlords and governments remain inert.

The solution cannot be found in one simple formula, or by asking people to buy real estate and become direct investors and new owners, in a deregulated system based on speculation, where most of the individuals struggle to make a living. The global economic system is based on banks holding massive amounts of loans to companies based in tax havens, speculative real estate investments and a small economic elite that makes and escapes rules, defending financial deregulations and feeding social injustice.



Tatiana Bazzichelli, Founder and Programme Director of the Disruption Network Lab.

Videos of the conference are also available on [YouTube](#).

In-depth video contributes by the speakers recorded before the conference are available here: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/evicted-videos>

For details of speakers and topics, please visit the event page here: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/evicted-by-greed>

The 20th conference of the Disruption Network Lab curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli & Mauro Mondello is DATA CITIES: SMART TECHNOLOGIES, TRACKING & HUMAN RIGHTS. It will take place on September 25-27 at Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin. More info: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/data-cities>

SEPTEMBER
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DISRUPTION
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DATA CITIES

SMART TECHNOLOGIES, TRACKING
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Jonas Wahmkow

September 13, 2020

Berlins Weg zur digitalisierten „Smart City“ wirft Fragen auf – für Bürger*innen ebenso wie für die Politik: etwa, wem die gesammelten Daten gehören.



Laterne lädt E-Auto auf dem EUREF-Campus in Berlin-Schöneberg Foto: Wolfgang Borrs

Da spielen wir jetzt ein wenig Zukunftsmusik.“ Rene Wetzel steht neben einer Straßenlaterne auf dem Euref-Campus in Berlin-Schöneberg. Eigentlich wäre der Senior Manager heute im Homeoffice, aber für den Pressebesuch komme er gern auf den Campus, um das Start-up, für das er arbeitet, vorzustellen. „Mit Smart Charging lässt sich der Anteil erneuerbarer Energien deutlich erhöhen“, fährt der lässig gekleidete Wetzel hörbar begeistert fort.

Die Laterne, neben der Wetzel steht, ist der eigentliche Mittelpunkt der Präsentation: Etwa auf Hüfthöhe ragt aus dem Mast ein Ladekabel hervor, dessen anderes Ende in einem Elektroauto steckt. Ubitricity, so heißt das Start-up, für das Wetzel arbeitet, und baut Straßenlaternen zu Ladestationen für Elektro-Autos um.

Wetzel und seine Mitstreiter*innen wollen nicht nur E-Mobilität attraktiver machen, indem sie mit minimalem Aufwand flächendeckend Ladestationen verfügbar machen. Sie wollen auch dazu beitragen, die Idee einer „grünen“ Stadt zu verwirklichen, die ausschließlich mit erneuerbaren Energien betrieben wird.

Das Problem bei Solar- und Windenergie sei vor allem die Unregelmäßigkeit bei deren Erzeugung, erklärt Wetzel: Wie viel Strom gerade zur Verfügung steht, hängt eben davon ab, ob der Wind weht oder die Sonne scheint. Viele Elektroautos, die den

längsten Teil des Tages geparkt herumstehen, könnten durch intelligentes Laden diese Unregelmäßigkeiten ausgleichen und so die Netzspannung konstant halten – smarte Technologie.

Schlaue Stadt

Der Begriff „Smart City“ hat keine klare Definition (*siehe Interview rechts*). Oft sind technische Lösungen für urbane Probleme gemeint. Mit Digitalisierung und Vernetzung soll die Effizienz der Energieversorgung, des Verkehrs oder der Verwaltung erhöht werden. Die nötige Voraussetzung für viele Smart-City-Produkte sind allgegenwärtige Sensoren, die permanent Daten sammeln und übermitteln, die von künstlicher Intelligenz ausgewertet werden, die dann die Prozesse in Echtzeit steuert. So können etwa Staus verhindert werden, indem der Verkehr umgeleitet wird.

Strategien für Berlin Am Dienstag bekam Berlin den Zuschlag des Bundesförderprogramms „Modellprojekt Smart City“. Das 17,5 Millionen Euro schwere Fördervolumen soll unter anderem dafür genutzt werden, eine neue Strategie zu erstellen und fünf Modellprojekte auf den Weg zu bringen. Parallel dazu wird unter Anleitung der Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Energie und Betriebe ressortübergreifend eine weitere „Digitalisierungsstrategie“ erstellt, die Handlungsorientierung für sämtliche Bereiche der Digitalisierung geben soll. Eigentlich sollte die Strategie bereits vorliegen, hat sich aber aufgrund „komplexer und senatsübergreifender Fragestellungen und Corona“ verzögert, so der zuständige Staatssekretär Christian Rickerts. (*taz*)

„Das Stromnetz kommuniziert mit dem Auto“, erklärt Wetzels und macht damit deutlich, was er mit „Zukunftsmusik“ meint. Ein Algorithmus bestimme anhand des Ladestands, des Strompreises und des zu erwartenden Nutzungsverhaltens, ob und wie viel Strom das Auto lädt. „Es wäre sogar denkbar, dass die Autos Strom wieder zurück ins Netz einspeisen“, erklärt Wetzels: wenn zum Beispiel gerade Flaute ist und weniger Strom erzeugt wird als benötigt. Das smarte Auto wisse dann anhand gesammelter Daten von selbst, wann eine*e Nutzer*in wieder fahren will und wie viel Batterieleistung dafür benötigt werde, erläutert Wetzels die Vision des Start-ups.

Zukunftsmusik wird auf dem Euref-Campus nicht nur bei Ubitricity gespielt. Das „Europäische Energieforum“, so der volle Name, ist einer von elf ausgewiesenen „Zukunftsorten“ Berlins. Auf dem 5,5 Hektar großen Areal rund um das ikonische Gasometer-Gebäude arbeiten und forschen 150 Unternehmen mit rund 3.500 Mitarbeitenden an ihrer Version der „Stadt von Morgen“.

Der Campus selbst ist dabei eine Art Testlabor für Smart-City-Technologien: Bis vor Kurzem fuhren hier noch autonom fahrende Busse und Autos, die sich selbstständig auf induktiven Ladestationen kabellos geladen haben. Die Testphase ist mittlerweile erfolgreich abgeschlossen. An den aufgeräumten Fassaden der modernen Bürogebäude, die rund um das Gasometer Platz für Start-ups und etablierte Großunternehmen bieten,

hängen durchsichtige Röhren mit grünlich schimmerndem Wasser, in denen essbare Algen gezüchtet werden. Auf den Dächern produzieren Photovoltaikanlagen Strom für die vielen elektrischen Autos auf dem Gelände.

Im Idealfall sind die erprobten Technologien dann bereit für den Einsatz auf größerem Feld: „Wir freuen uns, wenn etwas im Stadtgebiet Anwendung findet“, sagt Euref-Vorstand Karin Teichmann während einer Präsentationstour über den Campus.

Die verheißungsvolle Smart City, sie wird hier ein wenig greifbar. Der Trendbegriff hat zwar etwas an Strahlkraft verloren, geistert aber immer noch durch Berlins Stadtpolitik, Zivilgesellschaft und nicht zuletzt aufstrebende Digitalwirtschaft. Ursprünglich vom IT-Riesen IBM als Marketingbegriff entwickelt, kann Smart City fast alles sein, was sich in der Schnittmenge zwischen städtischem Raum und Digitalisierung befindet.

Der Markt für Smart-City-Produkte wie Echtzeit-Verkehrsregulation oder intelligente Müllentsorgung boomt. So sagt der Verband für Internetwirtschaft Eco in einer Studie für das Jahr 2022 einen Umsatz von 43 Milliarden Euro voraus bei einem jährlichen Wachstum von über 16 Prozent – und das allein in Deutschland. Das Marktforschungsunternehmen Frost & Sullivan prognostiziert ein Anstieg des Umsatzvolumens des globalen Marktes auf 2 Billionen US-Dollar bis 2025.

Ein lukratives Geschäft, auch für den komplett privaten Euref-Campus. „Wir haben nie Fördergelder bekommen“ erklärt Managerin Teichmann stolz, „das Ganze ist auch profitabel, obwohl die entwickelten Lösungen bezahlbar sind.“

Angesichts solcher Gewinnaussichten ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass die Privatwirtschaft bislang als eine der größten Treiberinnen der Digitalisierung in Städten auftritt. Smart City wurde vom Marketingbegriff zur eigenständigen Erzählung, die immer wieder in Hochglanzbroschüren und auf Smart-City-Konferenzen erzählt wird. Ausgangspunkt dieser Erzählung ist der Trend, dass weltweit immer mehr Menschen in Städte ziehen. Das rasante Wachstum bringt Probleme mit sich, die nur mittels Effizienzsteigerung durch digitale und smarte Technologien gelöst werden können. Gleichzeitig bedeutet die Verlagerung in die Städte, dass die wichtigsten Fragen der Menschheit dort entschieden werden.

Im Jahr 2050 würden voraussichtlich noch 2,5 Milliarden mehr Menschen in Städten leben, prophezeite Siemensvorstand Cedrik Neike Anfang September bei der Wirtschaftskonferenz Urban-Tech-Summit in Spandau. „Was heißt das für Energie, für Verkehr und für den CO₂-Ausstoß? Das ist eine der größten Fragen, die wir uns heute stellen müssen“, so Neike.

Und praktischerweise brachte Siemens die richtigen Antworten auf diese Fragen gleich mit. Realisieren will der Großkonzern sie in dem geplanten smarten Stadtquartier Siemensstadt 2.0: hocheffiziente, mit Sensoren ausgestattete Gebäude, neue Verkehrskonzepte, digitalisierte Industrie.

Der Berliner Forscher und Publizist Evgeny Morozov, der sich mit dem

Digitalkapitalismus auseinandersetzt, hält das Smart-City-Narrativ für eine Wiederkehr altbekannter naiver Technikgläubigkeit. „Lässt man alle Politik beiseite [...], zelebrieren diese Erzählungen den unaufhaltbaren Siegeszug des Fortschritts und der Innovation, massiv beschleunigt durch die Genialität und den Erfindungsgeist des privaten Sektors“, so Morozov in der Studie „Rethinking Smart Cities“ der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung. Dass dies schon bei etlichen utopischen Visionen der Vergangenheit nicht geklappt hat, bleibe in den Smart-City-Broschüren aber unerwähnt.

Die Rolle der Stadtverwaltungen in dieser zutiefst neoliberalen Smart-City-Erzählung ist es vor allem, für gute Bedingungen für die Unternehmen zu sorgen

Die Rolle der Stadtverwaltungen in dieser zutiefst neoliberalen Smart-City-Erzählung ist es vor allem, für gute Bedingungen für die Unternehmen zu sorgen – den Rest erledigt der Entrepreneurgeist sozusagen von alleine.

Dementsprechend liest sich Berlins erste Smart-City-Strategie, die vor fünf Jahren vom damals noch schwarz-roten Senat entwickelt wurde, vor allem als Versuch, Berlin für die Digitalbranche attraktiver zu machen: Ein Smart-City-Konzept biete zusätzliche Impulse, „sich im internationalen Wettbewerb angesichts von Urbanisierung, Globalisierung und Digitalisierung zu profilieren“, heißt es dort, „zugleich erschließt sich hier ein potenzieller Markt für spezifische Lösungen und Technologien.“

„Die Strategie ist Schrott“, kritisiert Katalin Gennburg, die Sprecherin für Smart City der Linksfraktion im Abgeordnetenhaus, scharf. „Smart City wird dabei vor allem als Wirtschaftsförderung gedacht.“ Dabei folge die Strategie dem Prinzip der „unternehmerischen Stadt“, das die Städte in einem Wettkampf um die Ansiedlung von Tech-Kapital sehe.

Dass Berlin mit seinem alternativen Flair schon vor den Bemühungen des Senats attraktiv für Start-ups war, beweist der lange vor dem Smart-City-Hype gegründete Euref-Campus.

„Die Ansiedlung von Start-ups ist unser Erfolgsmodell“, erklärt Euref-Vorstand Teichmann bei einem Kaffee in einem der Restaurants auf dem Gelände. „Es gibt hier viele Orte für Begegnungen und informellen Austausch.“ Damit Start-ups gedeihen können, brauchen sie die richtige Umgebung, ein so genanntes „Ökosystem“ aus etablierten Großunternehmen, Forschungsinstitutionen, anderen Start-ups und Wagniskapital – und eine lebenswerte Umgebung, die junge, gut ausgebildete Fachkräfte anzieht. In den „Zukunftsorten“, die bisher einen großen Teil von Berlins Smart-City-Bemühungen ausgemacht haben, sollen all diese Faktoren ermöglicht werden.

So soll, vermutlich mit Euref als Blaupause, auf dem stillgelegten Flughafen Tegel die „Urban Tech Republic“ entstehen: ein Smart-City-Campus, der Forschung, Arbeiten und Wohnen kombiniert. In Spandau will Siemens, vom Senat mit Millionenanreizen hofiert, seinen alten Produktionsstandort Siemensstadt zum Smart-City-Campus

ausbauen. Gerade private Großprojekte wie Siemensstadt 2.0 sieht Gennburg kritisch: „Tech-Konzerne wollen sich dabei vor allem öffentlichen Raum aneignen und kapitalisieren.“

Dass Tech-Unternehmen nicht nur als Heilsbringer für die Probleme wachsender Städte gesehen werden, zeigen die Proteste gegen den dann gescheiterten Google-Campus in Kreuzberg vor zwei Jahren und gegen den geplanten „Amazon-Tower“ in Friedrichshain. Aktivist*innen fürchten, das die gut bezahlten Tech-Jobs auch die Mieten weiter in die Höhe treiben werden. Angestammte Bewohner*innen und Geschäfte würden aus den Kiezen verdrängt.

Doch nicht nur die Angst vor Gentrifizierung bringt Gegner*innen auf die Barrikaden, sondern auch das unternehmerische Verständnis von „Smartness“, das der Vision zugrunde liegt. „Das ist eine Digitalisierung von oben, die eine reine Konsumorientierung hat“, kritisiert Gennburg. In erster Linie ginge es dabei um Technologieverkauf, die versprochene Effizienzsteigerung und der Nachhaltigkeitsgewinn würden dabei selten erreicht.

EUREF-Gasometer in Schöneberg Foto:
Wolfgang Borrs

Generell müsse man sich die Frage stellen, ob Digitalisierung überall notwendig sei: „Es macht keinen Sinn, die ganze Stadt mit technischen Artefakten vollzuknallen“, so Gennburg. Selbstfahrende elektrische Autos seien zwar schwer im Trend, würden aber kaum Verkehrsprobleme lösen. Der Nachhaltigkeitsgewinn sei bei solchen Lösungen oft nur minimal, besonders wenn man den hohen Ressourcenverbrauch durch Sensoren, Serverkapazitäten, Akkus und IT-Technik mit einbeziehe.

„Die Frage ist, wessen Bedürfnisse hier befriedigt werden und wer diese Bedürfnisse ermittelt“, sagt auch Elizabeth Calderón Lüning, die am Berliner „Weizenbaum Institut für die vernetzte Gesellschaft“ zum Thema Digitale Souveränität und Ungleichheit forscht. „Wenn das Problem Verkehrswende heißt, lautet die Antwort eher Fahrradweg- und ÖPNV-Ausbau, nicht E-Scooter oder selbstfahrende Autos“, so Calderón Lüning.



Die Allgegenwärtigkeit Daten sammelnder Sensoren im öffentlichen Raum wird auch aus datenschutzrechtlichen Gründen zum Problem. „Die Gefahr des Missbrauchs und der Zweckentfremdung von Daten gibt es immer, vor allem wenn private Unternehmen involviert sind, weil hier Transparenz und Rechenschaft schwerer zu fordern sind“, befürchtet Calderón Lüning.

Im digitalen Kapitalismus sind Daten nicht nur Mittel, um den Kunden Services bereitzustellen, sondern auch eine unverzichtbare Ressource, die – zum Beispiel in Form von personalisierter Werbung – in Profit umgewandelt werden kann. Gleichzeitig sind Daten die Basis für selbstlernende Algorithmen und künstliche Intelligenz, welche die Grundlage vieler Smart-City-Lösungen bilden. Wer den Zugang zu den meisten Daten hat, hat den größten Vorsprung gegenüber seinen Konkurrenten.

Plattformen wie Airbnb und Uber oder auch E-Scooter-Anbieter sammeln bereits Unmengen an Daten über ihre Nutzer*innen, so Calderón Lüning. Was sie dann damit machten, sei unklar. Die europäische Datenschutzverordnung DSGVO reiche nicht aus, um vor Missbrauch zu schützen, und schiebe die Verantwortung oft auf das Individuum.

Die Aufgabe der Politik

Auch Ubictricitys Smart-Charging-Konzept würde darauf hinauslaufen, dass Laternen, Autos und auch die Smartphones der Nutzer*innen permanent Daten sammeln und auswerten, um möglichst genau die Entwicklungen des Strompreises und das Nutzungsverhalten der Kund*innen vorherzusagen. Die Digitalisierung des städtischen Raums in geregelte Bahnen zu lenken sei daher Aufgabe der Politik, fordert Calderón Lüning: „Berlin muss Gestalter von Digitalisierung werden.“

Auch im Berliner Senat setzt sich mittlerweile die Überzeugung durch, sich in Sachen Digitalisierung nicht nur auf die Privatwirtschaft zu verlassen. „Die alte Smart-City-Strategie ist mehr als überarbeitungsbedürftig“, sagt Frank Nägele, Staatssekretär für Verwaltungs- und Infrastrukturmodernisierung in der Senatskanzlei. Vor allem würde es an partizipativen Ansätzen für Bürger*innen und Zivilgesellschaft fehlen. Nägele verspricht, dass die Ausarbeitung einer neuen Strategie noch in dieser Legislaturperiode erfolgen soll.

Calderón Lüning, die auch im zivilgesellschaftlichen Bündnis „Digitales Berlin“ aktiv ist, fordert, dass sowohl die Strategieerstellung als auch die Projekte mit institutioneller Beteiligung der Zivilgesellschaft erfolgen sollen: „Digitalisierung betrifft alle, auch die, die nicht digital unterwegs sind.“ Durch frühe Beteiligung von Bürger*innen und Zivilgesellschaft könnten Problemlagen erkannt werden. „Bevor wir Lösungen anbieten, müssen wir erst einmal herausfinden, was wir brauchen“, so Calderón Lüning. Die Zivilgesellschaft strebt eine „Digitalisierung von unten“ an, die Smart City neu versteht.

Partizipative Ansätze

„Für mich ist Smart City eine Stadtgesellschaft, die sich selber besser organisiert“, erklärt Nicolas Zimmer, Vorstandsvorsitzender der Technologiestiftung Berlin, gegenüber der taz. Die Stiftung hat im vergangenen Jahr mit Förderung des Senats das

Innovationslabor CityLab am Platz der Luftbrücke eröffnet – heute das Aushängeschild des Senats für partizipativere Smart-City- Ansätze.

Das CityLab veranstaltet regelmäßig Workshops und Diskussionsveranstaltungen, bietet Raum für Start-ups und jeden, der eine Idee hat und gern ein Projekt umsetzen möchte. Zu den Vorzeigeprojekten gehört etwa die App „Gieß den Kiez“, die basierend auf den Daten des Baumkatasters die Berliner Stadtbäume visualisiert und ihren Wasserbedarf berechnet. Nutzer*innen können Daten beisteuern, indem sie in der App vermerken, wann sie welchen Baum zuletzt gegossen haben. Der Quellcode ist offen, die Daten sind es auch.

„Ein Kernziel des CityLabs ist Datensouveränität“, erklärt Zimmer. „Daten, die in der Stadt erhoben werden, sollen auch in der Stadt verwendet werden.“ Derzeit sei es oft so, dass viele private Unternehmen die von ihnen gesammelten Daten nicht teilen würden. Ein Beispiel seien Anbieter von Leihfahrzeugen. Die Bewegungsdaten von E-Scootern und Leihfahrrädern könnten wertvolle Informationen für Verkehrsplaner*innen liefern, die sonst über umständliche Verfahren erhoben werden müssten. „Warum werden diese Daten nicht genutzt?“, kritisiert Zimmer.

Besonders bei öffentlichen Aufträgen sei dies problematisch: „Was aus öffentlichen Geldern bezahlt wird, soll auch der Öffentlichkeit gehören“, so Zimmer. Deswegen solle bei Ausschreibungen darauf geachtet werden, dass die erhobenen Daten offen zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Da die Rolle von Daten und die Fähigkeit, diese effektiv zu verarbeiten, gerade bei städtischer Infrastruktur immer wichtiger werde, drohe sonst eine schleichende Privatisierung städtischer Infrastruktur. „Was nicht passieren darf, ist, dass wir als Stadt nicht mehr in der Lage sind, diese Lösungen zu verstehen und selber zu entwickeln.“

Der effektivste Weg, Digitalisierung und Smart City selbst zu gestalten, sei daher, eigene Plattformen zu entwickeln, die konsequent auf offene Daten und offene Codes setzten. „Viel lieber ist mir, wir würden eigene Lösungen finden“, so Zimmer. Zwar hätten Städte nicht dieselben Ressourcen wie internationale Großunternehmen, dafür könnte ein Netzwerk aus Städten gemeinsam Lösungen entwickeln. Ob die Straßenlaterne der Zukunft unsere Stadt wirklich lebenswerter macht oder am Ende eine Datensammel- und Überwachungsstation wird, ist also noch nicht entschieden.

Il Disruption Network Lab presenta DATA CITIES, sulle città del futuro. Lucia Conti modererà il keynote su Intelligenza Artificiale e fantascienza critica

[M ilmitte.com/2020/09/il-disruption-network-lab-presenta-data-cities-sulle-citta-del-futuro-lucia-conti-moderera-il-keynote-su-intelligenza-artificiale-e-fantascienza-critica/](https://ilmitte.com/2020/09/il-disruption-network-lab-presenta-data-cities-sulle-citta-del-futuro-lucia-conti-moderera-il-keynote-su-intelligenza-artificiale-e-fantascienza-critica/)

September 17, 2020



DATA CITIES

Dal **25 al 27 settembre** avrà luogo a Berlino “**DATA CITIES – Smart technologies, tracking & human rights**“, la 20esima conferenza del **Disruption Network Lab**.

L’evento è a cura di **Tatiana Bazzichelli** (Fondatrice e Direttrice artistica del Disruption Network Lab) e **Mauro Mondello** (giornalista investigativo, scrittore e documentarista, al momento parte del prestigioso Yale World Fellows Program).

La riflessione sarà incentrata sul modo in cui le **smart technologies** e le **tracking apps** stanno influenzando la nostra vita in modo strutturale, non solo durante questo periodo di pandemia, ma nella costante evoluzione di una società plasmata dall’innovazione e dal progresso tecnologico.

Questo impone una riflessione sull’utilizzo dei dati personali, sulle politiche di monitoraggio e sorveglianza di una società sempre più legata alla circolazione di informazioni disponibili, sulla ridefinizione del concetto di privacy e sull’immagine stessa della cosiddetta **smart city**.

Città molto vicine a quelle che noi chiamiamo “del futuro”, e che di fatto includono un sistema di tecnologie integrate in grado di gestire in modo avanzato infrastrutture, servizi idrici ed elettrici, trasporto e molto altro, sono già una realtà in Paesi come la Cina, l’Arabia Saudita, l’India, il Kazakistan, la Giordania, Singapore e l’Egitto. Ma quali saranno i vantaggi di questa operazione e quali sono i rischi?

L’intelligenza artificiale sarà, senza ombra di dubbio, il grande motore di questa evoluzione, “the end of the game” della ricerca scientifica, com’è stata definita.

Solo l’intelligenza artificiale, infatti, potrà elaborare la massiccia quantità di dati che saranno il vero cemento delle nuove città, e questo includerà l’uso di piattaforme interconnesse in grado di unire dispositivi, sistemi, apparecchiature, e prodotti tangibili, in una parola i cosiddetti **smart objects**, in un mondo elettronico che conferirà un’identità definitiva ad ambienti e persone fisiche.

Il **keynote del 26 settembre** sarà moderato dal direttore del Mitte, **Lucia Conti**, e avrà come focus proprio l’**Intelligenza Artificiale** e la **fantascienza critica**.

I panelist che intervengono saranno **Liam Young**, **Tonje Hessen Schei** e **Anna Ramskogler-Witt**.



Liam Young è un architetto e regista definito dalla BBC come “l’uomo che progetta il nostro futuro”, lui si definisce invece come un “architetto speculativo”.

Di fatto Young anticipa con la sua **design fiction** gli spazi e gli edifici del futuro, collocandosi tra l'architettura, la tecnologia e i media e dando forma a immagini che non soddisfano soltanto ambizioni estetiche, ma vogliono produrre un dibattito critico sullo sviluppo iper-tecnologico.

Già docente a Princeton, Liam Young attualmente insegna "Fiction and Entertainment" presso il **Southern California Institute of Architecture**, a Los Angeles.



Tonje Hassen Schei è invece una regista norvegese, pluripremiata per i suoi documentari che investigano le implicazioni sociali e politiche di una società sempre più influenzata dalle grandi aziende tecnologiche.

Il film **iHuman**, che verrà proiettato il 25 settembre, giorno precedente al keynote con la regista, parla anche e proprio di questo, presentando testimonianze importantissime che gettano una luce di speranza, ma anche un'ombra di timore, sulle potenzialità delle nuove tecnologie.



Anna Ramskogler-Witt è invece la direttrice artistica del **Festival sui Diritti Umani di Berlino**, che avrà luogo dal **30 settembre** al **10 ottobre 2020**.

Per dare un'occhiata a tutte le informazioni e al **programma completo dell'evento**, che include anche diversi workshop e incontri con importanti protagonisti del dibattito sul digitale, basta consultare **il sito ufficiale del Disruption Network Lab**.

Questo appuntamento rilancia il valore della tecnologia in un momento in cui potrebbe aiutarci a uscire dalla crisi, ma al tempo stesso pone come inderogabile la questione della responsabilità, di fronte a ogni nuova scoperta e a tutte le sue possibili applicazioni.

*Può interessarvi anche: **Internet Archive e altre forme di resistenza digitale contro il tempo***

Il potere degli algoritmi nei social

WDR: www1.wdr.de/radio/cosmo/programm/sendungen/radio-colonia/il-tema/algoritmi-facebook-100.html

Neuer Abschnitt

[Audio starten, abbrechen mit Escape](#)



Ascolta l'intervista a Salvatore Romano

COSMO Radio Colonia - Beitrag. 24.09.2020. 06:10 Min. (Minuten). Verfügbar bis 24.09.2021. COSMO.

[Audio Download . RSS: Podcast .](#)

di Vincenzo Savignano e Luciana Caglioti

Quello che vediamo su Facebook, Youtube and co. è filtrato e personalizzato da algoritmi segreti delle compagnie, basati sui dati raccolti dalla nostra attività in rete. Perché è un problema e come difenderci? Ce lo spiega Salvatore Romano di tracking.exposed, a Berlino per la conferenza "Data cities - Smart technologies, tracking and human rights".

Neuer Abschnitt



Quanto i social media influenzano la nostra vita?

Neuer Abschnitt

Salvatore Romano è membro del progetto "Tracking Exposed", che si potrebbe tradurre con "tracciamento svelato". Esperto di informatica e di social media, cerca di spiegarci in parole semplici un tema decisamente complicato. "Il problema di Facebook e di altre piattaforme è che non rendono accessibili gli algoritmi sulla base dei quali selezionano i contenuti che poi vengono presentati a tutti gli utenti".



Il logo della conferenza di Berlino

Questi algoritmi, spiega Romano, determinano i modi e i tempi in cui le informazioni che consumiamo sui social vengono diffuse. Ogni utente vede quindi solo una parte dei contenuti pubblicati dai canali e dalle pagine che segue, e questa scelta limitata e pilotata può influenzare decisioni e preferenze. L'obiettivo finale, aggiunge Romano, "è tenerci incollati il più possibile alle piattaforme", per farci consumare la pubblicità con cui le compagnie si finanziano.

Per questo alcuni esperti come lui stanno studiando questo meccanismo, che è giusto conoscere per poter utilizzare al meglio i social media. Il problema è la mancanza di trasparenza sulla raccolta dati e sugli algoritmi da parte delle ditte, che sono, sì, private, ma gestiscono ormai delle piattaforme su cui moltissime persone si informano e si formano un'opinione, e influenzano quindi la nostra società. Per farlo forniscono degli

strumenti agli utenti per rendere trasparente la raccolta dati, e quindi analizzarla.
Nell'ambito della conferenza "Data cities - Smart technologies, tracking and human rights" del Disruption Network Lab, Salvatore Romano terrà un workshop con Leonardo Sanna (entrambi di [tracking.exposed](#)) domenica 27 settembre a Berlino dal titolo "Smash your filter bubble!".

[Il sito del Disruption Network Lab](#) | **mehr**

Neuer Abschnitt

La conferenza si può seguire gratuitamente in streaming a partire da venerdì 25 settembre alle 16. Invece i biglietti per seguirla di persona al Kunstquartier Bethanien di Berlino sono esauriti, ma c'è una lista d'attesa. I seminari invece sono riservati a chi partecipa di persona, e ci sono ancora posti per il workshop di Felipe Schmidt Fonseca: "Hacking waste management for the smart city". Trovate tutte le informazioni sul sito del Disruption Network Lab.

Neuer Abschnitt

Stand: 24.09.2020, 18:05

Data Cities: Wie Hacktivist*innen Smart-City-Konzepte unterwandern

 [heise.de/news/Data-Cities-Wie-Hacktivist*innen-Smart-City-Konzepte-unterwandern-4913295.html](https://www.heise.de/news/Data-Cities-Wie-Hacktivist*innen-Smart-City-Konzepte-unterwandern-4913295.html)

Bots, die vor Ticket-Kontrolleuren warnen, Online-Karten für genderneutrale Toiletten und Projekte gegen Videoüberwachung gehören zur Smart-City-Gegenkultur.

(Bild: Shutterstock/Pavel Chagochkin)

26.09.2020 12:58 Uhr

Von

Stefan Krempl

Intelligente Städte sind laut PR-Broschüren von Systemanbietern sicher, sauber und grün sowie die ersten Aspiranten auf autonome Fahrzeuge und Flugtaxis. Gleichzeitig sind sie darauf ausgerichtet, dass die gläsernen Bewohner möglichst viele Daten von sich preisgeben und "nichts zu verbergen" haben. Forscher, Hacker und Medienkünstler suchen daher nach Wegen, um die Privatsphäre der Bürger zu retten und die von Smart Cities profitierenden Techkonzerne mit eigenen Waffen zu schlagen.

Twitter-Bot sammelt Hinweise auf Fahrscheinkontrolleure

Auf Crowdsourcing und digitalen Kiezen basierende Projekte für eine "datengetriebene Propaganda" von unten stellte in diesem Sinne die Web-Entwicklerin River H. am Freitag zum Auftakt der Konferenz Data Cities des Disruption Network Lab in Berlin vor. Sie hat mit Avoid Control einen Twitter-Bot programmiert, der Hinweise auf Fahrscheinkontrolleure in der Hauptstadt von menschlichen Nutzern sammelt und über das Konto TicketlosBerlin weiterverbreitet. "U6 Friedrichstraße, 6 Kontrolleur*innen Richtung Alt Tegel" ist dort dann etwa zu lesen.

Die nächsten Schritte hat die "anti-kapitalistische Tech-Aktivistin" bereits vorbereitet. So nutzt sie eine Erkennungssoftware für natürliche Sprache, um aus den Tweets wiederkehrende Informationen über kontrollierte Linien und die Fahrtrichtungen zu extrahieren. Der von ihr programmierte Bot baue diese Punkte in eine Datenbank ein und erstelle einen auf Geodaten basierenden Objekteintrag. Der nächste Online-Agent kläre die Nutzer dann über die am stärksten kontrollierten Bahnhöfe und Bezirke auf. Das Register enthalte derzeit 700 Datenpunkte. Nun gehe es darum, diese zu visualisieren, eine Trendanalyse durchzuführen und eine entsprechende Online-Karte zu erstellen.

Sichere Fußwege in Städten

Persönlich sei sie der Auffassung, dass der öffentliche Nahverkehr für die Fahrgäste kostenlos sein sollte, erläuterte River H. Der Grund für die Aufnahme der Arbeit an dem Warnsystem seien aber Erfahrungen gewesen, dass Kontrolleure ÖPNV-Nutzer oft herablassend behandelten. Es sollte daher allen möglich sein, solche sich auf einem "Power-Trip" befindlichen Leute zu vermeiden. Generell träfen die Sanktionen gegen Mitfahrer ohne Ticket vor allem sozial Schwache, die so noch tiefer in einen Kreislauf von Kriminalisierung und Armut gerieten.

Andere Community-basierten Datenprojekte, an denen die Programmiererin beteiligt war, sind Refuge Restrooms und Brightpath. Über die erste Initiative und eine zugehörige Online-Karte lassen sich ihr zufolge "genderneutrale, barrierefreie und einzelne, abgetrennte Räume aufweisende Toiletten auf der ganzen Welt" finden. Bei der zweiten zeige ein Algorithmus den kürzesten sicheren Fußweg von einem Punkt zum nächsten in Städten wie San Francisco auf.

Verdächtiges Verhalten von Beobachteten

Praktische Einblicke in die Funktionsweise von Algorithmen, mit denen "intelligente Videoüberwachung" verdächtiges Verhalten von Beobachteten gewahren soll, gibt derzeit die Initiative Suspicious Behavior der Medienkünstlergruppe KairUs. In einer Art Online-Spiel muss man dort als "Clickworker" Situationen in Videos aus Überwachungskameras begutachten und binnen zehn Sekunden entscheiden, ob darauf alleinstehende Gegenstände oder Menschen zu sehen sind, die etwas im Schilde führen könnten.

Es werde rasch klar, welche große Verhaltensreduktion für so eine Bewertung nötig sei, erläuterte Linda Kronman von KairUs den Ansatz. Es sei schwierig, gezeigte Handlungen mit künftigem Verhalten zu korrelieren und dabei gegebenenfalls noch kulturelle Unterschiede zu berücksichtigen. Unvermeidlich sei so, dass sich Vorurteile in die Sets an solche Trainingsdaten für Künstliche Intelligenz einschleichen und mit dem Ergebnis ebenfalls beispielsweise bereits marginalisierte Bevölkerungsgruppen weiter diskriminiert würden.

Data Cities · Day 1 · Sept 25 2020 · Smart Technologies, Tracking & Human Rights · #DNL20

Smart Cities – Überwachung und schlecht abgesicherte Informationen

Überwachung bis hinein in Wohnungen sei ein fester Bestandteil vieler Smart-City-Unterfangen, spannte Kronmans Kollege Andreas Zingerle den Bogen weiter. Mit Projekten wie Panoptcities und Insecure by Design mache KairUs daher darauf aufmerksam, dass die dabei eingesetzte Technik von den Kameras bis hin zu den Servern in den Kontrollräumen meist gar nicht bis schlecht abgesichert und leicht fremdzusteuern sei. Einige Hersteller nutzten die gleichen Einstellungen für alle Geräte und einfachste Passwörter, der Datenverkehr werde zudem nicht verschlüsselt. Das Material könne so etwa auch einfach genutzt werden, um eigene Algorithmen zu trainieren.

Trotz solcher Schwächen sehe sich vor allem Südkorea als Testbett für Smart Cities inklusive RFID-Chips und Zensurnetzwerken, berichtete Zingerle. Techkonzerne des Landes wie LG, Samsung, SK Telecom oder Korea Telecom hätten spezielle Kits für den Export solcher Vernetzungsprojekte für Städte vor allem für den Export in Entwicklungsländer entwickelt. Auf der Insel selbst werde Sejong City als neues Verwaltungszentrum auf dem Reißbrett entworfen und als ideale Plattform für künftige Technologien sowie "Happy People" beworben. Bei dem bereits etwas in die Jahre gekommenen Vorgängermodell Songdo sei der Lack dagegen inzwischen ab: dort grassiere die Immobilienspekulation, viele der neu errichteten Hochhäuser und Malls stünden leer, das angeblich innovative Müllschlucksystem funktioniere nicht.

Bürger als Ressource

Erfunden habe das Konzept der Smart City IBM, ergänzte die britische Datenschutzforscherin Eva Blum-Dumontet. Es gehe dabei um die IT-Integration und vor allem ums Datensammeln. Neben Big Blue habe sich auch Huawei zu einem großen internationalen Akteur auf diesem Feld entwickelt, wobei die Technik und zugehörige Dienste oft an die Stadtverwaltung für ein Jahr kostenlos vergeben würden. Schwachpunkt der meisten einschlägigen Konzepte sei, dass die Bürger nur als Ressource wie Wasser oder Energie aufgeführt und nicht in den Mittelpunkt gestellt würden.

Dies sei auch der Fehler der Google-Tochter Sidewalk Labs bei dem im Mai aufgegebenen Waterfront-Prestigeprojekt in Toronto gewesen, schlug Julia Kloiber vom Superr Lab in die gleiche Kerbe. Die Firma habe nie die Frage beantwortet, wem die anfallenden Daten gehören und wie das Vorhaben ethisch reguliert werden solle. Sie habe daher Widerstand heraufbeschworen. Es gelte daher, Graswurzel-Projekte für Open Data und Open Source im städtischen Verwaltungsumfeld zu stärken und dabei auch die Vorurteile zu berücksichtigen, die sich rasch in das Datenmaterial einschleichen könnten.

Bereits verbaute Technik umfunktionieren

Der Haktivist Denis "Jaromil" Roio, der sich auf digitale soziale Innovationen spezialisiert hat, appellierte ans Publikum, die Smart City wiederzuerobern. Er begrüßte es daher, dass bereits zahlreiche Städte das Manifest der Kommunalmanagerin Francesca Bria aus Barcelona für offene intelligente Gemeinden unterstützten. In Brechts Sinne müsse die bereits verbaute Technik umfunktioniert werden im Sinne des Gemeinwohls. Programmierer und ethische Hacker, die eine Elite von rund einem Prozent der Gesellschaft ausmachten, sollten sich dabei auf kleine Komponenten mit freier Software wie die von ihm mit ins Leben gerufene und etwa in Amsterdam mit einfachen Lösungen für Verschlüsselung umgesetzte Initiative Zenroom konzentrieren und so Stück für Stück das Betriebssystem von Städten bauen. Prinzipien zur Datenminimierung müssten dabei immer beachtet werden.

(bme)

Denis “Jaromil” Roio, hacker etico: come evitare di essere manipolati dalla tecnologia

M ilmitte.com/2020/10/denis-jaromil-roio-hacker-etico-come-evitare-di-essere-manipolati-dalla-tecnologia/

October 6, 2020



Denis "Jaromil" Roio. Credits: Alexander Klink

Denis “Jaromil” Roio, hacker etico: come evitare di essere manipolati dalla tecnologia

di Lucia Conti

*Ho conosciuto Jaromil a fine settembre, in occasione di una conferenza organizzata dal **Disruption Network Lab** e chiamata **DATA CITIES – SMART TECHNOLOGIES, TRACKING & HUMAN RIGHTS**.*

*Abbiamo partecipato entrambi all’evento, io ho moderato un **keynote su intelligenza artificiale e fantascienza critica**, Jaromil è stato invece ospite di un panel chiamato “*Riappropriarsi delle città digitali, il futuro che vogliamo davvero*”.*

Non avevo mai incontrato un hacker etico, prima. Avevo già incontrato degli hacker, ma erano “semplicemente” persone di talento, senza una visione morale della società e senza la voglia di cambiare il mondo attraverso le loro capacità.

Jaromil e io abbiamo chiacchierato in una giornata di pioggia, di tecnologia, di pandemia. Seduti a distanza e davanti a un caffè poco italiano, prima che lui ripartisse per Amsterdam, dove vive e lavora da tempo. Abbiamo parlato molto, ma avrei voluto parlare molto di più.

Adesso so cos'è un hacker etico.

Partiamo dalla domanda più semplice: che cos'è un hacker etico?

Ci sono varie definizioni, io tendo a usare quella che si rifà al movimento del software libero, fondato già nel 1984 da Richard Stallman. Il tutto nacque poi da un aneddoto.

Quale?

Nel laboratorio di Stallman, un giorno si ruppe una stampante. Il guasto non era meccanico, la carta c'era, il toner c'era, il rullo girava, i meccanismi si muovevano. Dopo un po' Stallman scoprì che il guasto era nel chip, nel software, cioè nel codice che si scrive per dire a una macchina cosa debba fare. E il codice di quella stampante aveva un bug. Ma quel codice era in un formato non modificabile e quindi l'errore non poteva essere corretto.

Stalman si rivolse alla casa madre, chiedendo il permesso, ma il permesso gli venne negato insieme al codice sorgente. La cosa lo fece infuriare, ma la sua rabbia di quel giorno ispirò in seguito il movimento del software libero.

Possiamo quindi dire che il movimento del software libero è nato da una stampante rotta e da una casa madre poco flessibile. E poi ha fatto moltissima strada...

Ad oggi Richard Stalman è stato chiamato nei parlamenti di tutta Europa, inclusi quello italiano e tedesco, a parlare del valore del software libero. E attorno a lui si sono aggregate molte altre persone che hanno dato al movimento un'impronta importante, basti pensare a Eben Moglen, Professore di legge e storia legale presso la Columbia Law School di New York. Secondo me questo è l'esempio più interessante di etica dell'hacking.



Quali sono i valori cardine del discorso sul software libero, fondamentale per comprendere l'hacking etico e quindi gli hacker etici?

Più che un discorso è una vera e propria letteratura, che si sviluppa attorno a 4 punti fondamentali: 1) la libertà di far o non far girare il software 2) la libertà di studiarlo e quindi capirlo, accedendo al codice sorgente 3) la libertà di duplicarlo e quindi di passarlo ad altri 4) la libertà di modificarlo.

Qual è la visione che ne emerge?

La visione è che il software è un'infrastruttura e questa infrastruttura deve poter essere studiata, migliorata, compresa, appropriata e tramandata in modo aperto.



Facciamo un passo indietro e recuperiamo la tua storia personale. Come sei diventato un hacker? E come sei diventato un hacker etico?

L'hacking è il “voler mettere le mani dentro qualcosa”, “smanettare”, come si dice in gergo, essere uno che vuole “aprire la scatola nera”.

Ricordo che da bambino, in preda a una sorta di feticismo, aprii un vecchio telefono della SIP per vedere cosa ci fosse dentro. Purtroppo poi non sono stato in grado di ricostruirlo e i miei si sono alquanto adirati. E allora ho capito che un hacker, soprattutto etico, deve anche saper ricostruire le cose che smonta, in modo che gli altri le possano usare!



Denis “Jaromil” Roio. Credits: L.G. Colarullo

Hai cominciato ad appassionarti ai computer molto presto, immagino...

Ho iniziato a interagire con i computer quando avevo sei anni, avevo uno Spectrum ZX. Mia madre mi permetteva di giocarci, ma non mi faceva digitare per caricare i giochi... in realtà io volevo “metterci le mani sopra”. Sarà stato un complesso edipico?

“Metterci le mani sopra”, torna la sostanza dell’hacking. Ed è incredibile come questo tipo di talento emerga presto...

Gli hacker iniziano giovanissimi, spesso anche a 12 o 13 anni. E la precocità del loro talento spesso li espone al rischio di avere molto potere molto presto e questo può essere pericoloso, per un adolescente.



In che modo?

Nel momento in cui un giovane comincia a tastare i confini del proprio potere e fa una o due mosse false in termini di hacking, può arrivare a fare seri danni e di conseguenza a pagare un prezzo molto alto per i suoi errori.

Ma è importante comprendere che la pena inflitta all’adolescente che sbaglia dovrebbe essere proporzionata alla spesa investita in agenzie di sicurezza, che dovrebbero sventare pericoli molto più grandi di quello rappresentato da un ragazzino di 16 anni.



È in effetti molto inquietante pensare che sistemi tanto sofisticati possano essere al tempo stesso così fragili...

Vorrei vedere molta più responsabilità, a livello industriale, sulle falle oggettive dei sistemi di sicurezza.

Perché poi magari prendiamo un sedicenne che ha “bucato” questi sistemi e ne facciamo un capro espiatorio, ma la domanda che mi faccio io è: come ha fatto un ragazzino ad avere la meglio su sistemi che paghiamo milioni e milioni all’anno? Forse a monte c’è chi non ha fatto bene il suo lavoro.

Parliamo di un argomento che è importantissimo, per capire l’evoluzione tecnologica della società. Quali sono gli algoritmi che rischiano di dominarci senza che ce ne rendiamo conto?

Ci sono vari algoritmi. A me piace portare l’esempio molto lampante di Pokémon GO, per chi lo conosce. È stato un giochino che ha condotto orde di adolescenti, ma anche persone più adulte, ad affollare entrate di uffici, ad attraversare binari, ad avvicinarsi a zone pericolose e tutto perché un algoritmo scritto in Giappone, e non al corrente degli spazi reali in cui veniva adottato, aveva deciso che c’erano degli incentivi per raggiungere determinati punti della città e raccogliere i Pokémon.

Al tempo sia la polizia che le autorità, in tutto il mondo, in Germania, a New York, e anche in Italia, dovettero allertarsi e mobilitarsi perché si potevano vedere ovunque adolescenti con il naso nel telefonino che magari attraversavano con il rosso. Una situazione quasi distopica.



Photo by IainStars

Quindi un possibile pericolo è che un algoritmo possa indurre dei comportamenti condizionati?

Esatto. L'algoritmo pervade talmente tanto la nostra vita che sta entrando nel nostro spazio decisionale, affettivo e politico.

Come l'algoritmo di Pokémon GO poteva incentivare degli adolescenti a fare cose che andavano oltre la loro consapevolezza, così un altro algoritmo potrebbe convincerci che la nostra relazione non è quella giusta o che dovremmo votare per un altro partito rispetto a quello che votiamo ora o che dovremmo scegliere un'altra carriera.

*(37:02–1:53:42, intervento di Denis “Jaromil” Roio nell’ambito dell’evento “DATA CITIES – Investigating future smart cities and how tracking & surveillance impact us all”, organizzato a Berlino dal **Disruption Network Lab**, dal 25 al 27 settembre)*

E come potrebbe farlo?

Sui social network, per esempio, noi produciamo molti contenuti e diamo molte informazioni personali su noi stessi e queste informazioni vengono elaborate per poi esserci riproposte, come per esempio nel caso delle memories di Facebook. Questo spesso ci spinge alla ricondivisione dei nostri vecchi contenuti.

Ecco, questo non è semplicemente un servizio. Io vi chiedo: quanto potere avrò, su di voi, se sarò in possesso delle vostre foto, a cui siete sentimentalmente legati e che avete condiviso, avendo la possibilità di riproporvele in qualsiasi momento io decida? A quel

punto, producendo un'emozione, potrò collegare quel contenuto a qualcos'altro e in generale avrò un controllo molto profondo su di voi, sui vostri affetti e sulle vostre reazioni emotive.



Hai parlato anche di infiltrazioni dell'algoritmo nello spazio politico...

Qui entriamo nel campo delle cosiddette *fake news*, che sono la strategia di comunicazione di cui in Italia si stanno purtroppo avvalendo molti politici populistici. Sono usate per scatenare nelle persone determinate emozioni e per indirizzarle verso una direzione stabilita da altri. D'altra parte, quando quando siamo emotivamente travolti, non prendiamo decisioni lucide.

Questo è l'aspetto più attuale del pericolo che rappresentano gli algoritmi, se non vengono governati in modo consapevole. Gli algoritmi sono una letteratura, lo sostengo da programmatore e da scienziato, e noi dovremmo conoscerla il più possibile, per comprendere come gli algoritmi vengono usati su di noi. Sono semplicemente uno strumento, e quindi potrebbero facilitare la nostra vita o rovinarcela.



Photo by mikemacmarketing

Come può chi non ha un background tecnico stare al passo con i pericoli e le opportunità dell'evoluzione tecnologica ed evitare il rischio dell'analfabetismo di ritorno e della tecnocrazia?

Credo che l'alfabetizzazione in questo senso sia un compito da affidare al settore pubblico e ho sostenuto a lunga questa linea, in nord Europa, nell'ambito del mio lavoro.

Storicamente è già stato così, se per esempio pensiamo al compito di far condividere un linguaggio comune in un'Italia un tempo dominata solo dai dialetti e dalle realtà regionali.

Non si trattava di eliminare le tante particolarità della penisola, ma di creare un'infrastruttura cognitiva, un canale di scambio e comprensione rispetto a leggi, e relazioni di ogni tipo.

Penso che i codici e gli algoritmi debbano essere visti in modo simile. Non è detto che tutti li debbano comprendere nel dettaglio, ma che almeno ci sia uno sforzo nel renderli trasparenti, nel far comprendere i loro meccanismi, perché questo condiziona molto anche le scelte delle persone.



Puoi farci degli esempi del modo in cui gli algoritmi condizionano scelte importanti per la nostra vita?

Per esempio la tassazione è un algoritmo, come il fatto che qualcuno possa ricevere un sussidio, e sulle condizioni della tassazione o di un sussidio una persona o una famiglia faranno scelte anche molto importanti, di medio e lungo periodo. Per questo è essenziale che le regole siano chiaramente comunicate.

Un altro esempio. In Italia purtroppo abbiamo una lunga tradizione di corruzione negli appalti. In quanti conoscono effettivamente le regole che ci sono dietro? Conoscerle potrebbe portarci a verificare quanto siano dibattibili in ambito politico, ove volessimo democraticamente cambiarle per favorire, ad esempio, e questo a mio parere è un problema da risolvere in Italia, un ingresso maggiore per la piccola e media impresa, invece dei soliti conglomerati.

Insomma, per me è importante che ci sia un'alfabetizzazione anche su queste cose, ma purtroppo non vedo grossi sforzi in questa direzione. Vedo molto marketing di oggetti, di nuovi giocattoli, e poco approfondimento di quello che c'è veramente dietro.



Non si può prescindere dal settore pubblico, insomma

Sta a tutto l'apparato pubblico capire queste cose. Ci sono sicuramente iniziative private di festival, anche di successo, come **Codemotion** (***supportato anche dal Mitte, ndr***), ed eventi che hanno saputo mobilitare una massa giovane diversa, facendo anche attenzione all'inclusione e alla promozione dell'uguaglianza di genere, oltre ad portare avanti un discorso di approfondimento, anche giocoso, sul codice e sugli algoritmi.

Ci sono insomma degli esempi e delle pratiche assai virtuose. Spero però che ci sia anche una sensibilità sempre più alta a livelli decisionali... oppure che le sfere in cui si decide si avvicinino sempre di più a chi pratica!

dyne.org

Come possiamo aiutarti nell'ambito delle tue iniziative, volte a promuovere un aumento di consapevolezza rispetto alla trasformazione digitale?

Ti ringrazio, questa è una bella domanda. Come giornale mi state già aiutando, dando visibilità non solo a me, ma anche alla mia fondazione, **dyne.org**. Il nome viene da una parola greca che si lega al pensiero di Eraclito.

La fondazione è una piccola idea che ho avuto 20 anni fa, ispirato dalle comunità di hacker che fanno capo a tante tradizioni che attraversano la nostra penisola. Abbiamo una bella comunità hacker in Italia. Ho pensato quindi di mettere i software che scrivevo sotto una bandiera, che poi è diventata collettiva.

Questo è un po' il mio tentativo di mantenere un filo conduttore, nello sviluppo di pratiche legate alla mia visione, e al tempo stesso di far crescere delle comunità che tramandino questa consapevolezza. Alla base c'è sostanzialmente l'idea del software libero, in vari campi.



Cosa fa la fondazione, oggi?

Dalla nascita della fondazione abbiamo fatto streaming, piattaforme di libera informazione, crittografia per la protezione dei dati, di tutto e di più.

Ad oggi ci troviamo da sei anni, a lavorare con la Commissione Europea in ambiti di ricerca su democrazia partecipativa, uso di monete complementari in determinati casi economici, comprensione degli algoritmi e gestione corretta dei dati. Abbiamo partecipato molto da vicino a tutta quella che è stata la nascita del nuovo *Gdpr*, il Nuovo regolamento europeo per la tutela della privacy.



Foto dello staff del Museo Interattivo di Archeologia Informatica (MIAI) di Cosenza

Chi fa parte della vostra rete?

Moltissimi professionisti, molti sono italiani e del sud Italia. Abbiamo anche due collezioni da museo, **una a Cosenza**, temporaneamente ospitata presso l'Università cittadina, con cui speriamo di arrivare a un contratto, per avere veramente una funzione museale, e una che molto deve all'entusiasmo di uno dei "vecchi agitatori" della nostra rete, Gabriele Zaverio, che ha collezionato molti computer antichi. Quest'ultima collezione si trova a **Palazzolo Acreide**.



Photo by Kyra Rehn ♡

Perché è importante un museo di computer antichi?

Usiamo i computer antichi per insegnare ai giovani come funzionino, perché quelli moderni spesso e volentieri nascondono troppo i loro processi. In Italia sarebbe molto utile avere un luogo in cui radunare la nostra collezione di computer, dove far andare avanti delle **iniziative di divulgazione del sapere sulla tecnologia**.

Per ora è stato molto episodico, troverete anche dei servizi della Rai che parlano di noi, ma nessuno si è mosso a livello istituzionale per darci un aiuto concreto e una stabilità che del resto serve, perché trasportare questi equipaggiamenti è un onere e un rischio.



E in che modo la fondazione potrebbe restituire l'eventuale supporto ricevuto?

Intendiamo dare all'Italia ed all'Europa un patrimonio di sapere e di ricerca che è anche internazionale e potrebbe avere un suo formato molto adatto alle scuole proprio nella forma museale. La mia fondazione, dyne.org, è inoltre molto aperta a collaborazioni sia di consulenza che di sviluppo in partenariato.

La nostra attività poggia su tre pilastri: lo sviluppo di software libero e open source, il rispetto per l'ambiente nell'uso della tecnologia e l'interdisciplinarietà, che trovo molto importante, perché spesso noi tecnici andiamo avanti senza comprendere il valore di quella che è la specializzazione di altri campi.



Julian Assange. Photo by espenmoe

Insomma, non intendiamo insegnare a tutti né dominare nulla, semplicemente sviluppiamo componenti e ci piace inserirli in una narrativa condivisa, perché sappiamo che gli hacker saranno stati gli eroi degli ultimi dieci anni, anche con sacrifici eroici, come quello di Julian Assange, ma non penso che sarà un eroe a salvare il mondo.

A salvare il mondo sarà un processo collettivo e dobbiamo essere in grado di avviarlo in tutti i verticali, nell'industria, nei servizi pubblici e così via.

Un'ultima domanda, perché “Jaromil”?

Quando avevo 14 anni ho cominciato a leggere Milan Kundera e in particolare un libro che si chiama “La vita è altrove”. Il protagonista era rappresentato un po' come un poeta maledetto che mi ricordava Arthur Rimbaud e Majakovskij, e attraversava una parabola di vita interessante. Era un bel personaggio, molto combattuto. Si chiamava Jaromil.

Furtherfield

furtherfield.org/data-cities-smart-technologies-tracking-human-rights/

November 26, 2020



On September 25, 2020, the Disruption Network Lab opened its 20th conference “Data Cities: Smart Technologies, Tracking & Human Rights” curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli, founder and program director of the organisation, and Mauro Mondello, investigative journalist and filmmaker. The two-day-event was a journey inside smart-city visions of the future, reflecting on technologies that significantly impact billions of citizens’ lives and enshrine new unprecedented concentrations of power, characterising the era of surveillance capitalism. A digital future which is already here.

Smart urbanism relies on algorithms, data mining, analytics, machine learning and infrastructures, providing scientists and engineers with the capability of extracting value from the city and its people, whose lives and bodies are commodified. The adjective ‘smart’ represents a marketing gimmick used to boost brands and commercial products. When employed to designate metropolitan areas, it describes cities which are liveable, sustainable and efficient thanks to technology and the Internet.

The conference was held at Berlin’s Kunstquartier Bethanien and brought together researchers, activists and artists to discuss what kind of technologies are transforming metropolises and how. The Disruption Network Lab aimed at stimulating a concrete debate, devoid of the rhetoric of solutionism, in which participants could focus on the socio-political implications of algorithmic sovereignty and the negative consequences on fundamental rights of tracking, surveillance and AI. They shared the results of their latest work and proposed a critical approach, based on the motivation of transforming mere opposition into a concrete path for inspirational change.



Lieke Ploeger, Community Director of the Disruption Network Lab (left), and Tatiana Bazzichelli, Founder and Programme Director of the Disruption Network Lab

The first part of the opening keynote “Reclaiming Data Cities: Fighting for the Future We Really Want” was delivered by Denis “Jaromil” Roio, ethical hacker, artist and activist. In his talk, moderated by Daniel Irrgang, research fellow at the Weizenbaum Institute for the Networked Society, Jaromil focused on algorithmic sovereignty and the incapacity to govern technological transformation which characterises our societies today.

Jaromil looked at increasing investments in AI, robots and machine learning, acknowledging that automated decision-making informed by algorithms has become a dominant reality extending to almost all aspects of life. From the code running on thousands of e-devices to the titanic ICTs-infrastructures connecting us, when we think about the technology surrounding us, we realise that we have no proper control over it. Even at home, we cannot fully know what the algorithms animating our own devices are adopted for, if they make us understand the world better or if they are instead designed to allow machines to study and extract data from us for the benefit of their creators. The same critical issues and doubts emerge with a large-scale implementation of tech within so-called “smart cities”, maximization of the “Internet of Things” born in the 1980s.

Personal data is a lucrative commodity and big data means profit, power, and insights, which is essential to all government agencies and tech firms. Jaromil announced a call-to-action for hackers and programmers, to get involved without compromise and play a

key role in building urban projects which will safeguard the rights of those living in them, taking into consideration that by 2050, an estimated 70 per cent of the world's population may well live in cities.

Jaromil observed that there is too often a tremendous difference between what we see when we look at a machine and what really happens inside it. Since the dawn of the first hacking communities, hackers preferred writing their own software and constructing their own machines. They were free to disassemble and reassemble them, having control over all the functions and direct access to the source code. This was also a way to be independent from the corporate world and authorities, which they mistrusted. Today, users are mostly unaware of the potential of their own tech-devices, which are no longer oriented strictly towards serving them. They have no exposure to programming and think Computer Science and Informatics are way too difficult to learn, and so entrust themselves entirely to governments and tech firms. Jaromil works to simplify interface and programming language, so people can learn how to program and regain control over their tech. He supports minimalism in software design and a process of democratisation of programming languages which works against technocratic monopolies. His *Think & Do Tank—Dyne.org*—is a non-profit software house with expertise in social and technical innovation, gathering developers from all over the world. It integrates art, science and technology in brilliant community-oriented projects (D-CENT, DECODE, Commonfare, Devuan), promoting decentralisation and digital sovereignty to encourage empowerment for the people.



Julia Koiber (left), Denis “Jaromil” Roio and Daniel Irrgang during the keynote “Reclaiming Data Cities: Fighting for the Future We Really Want”

The second keynote speaker, Julia Koiber, managing director at SuperrrLab, addressed issues of technology for the common good, open data and transparency, and—like the previous speaker—reflected on uncontrolled technological transformation. Koiber

noticed that the more people are mobilising to be decision-makers, rather than passive data providers, the more they see how difficult it is to ensure that publicly relevant data remains subject to transparent control and public ownership. In the EU several voices are pushing for solutions, including anonymised user data to be classified as ‘common good’ and therefore free from the control of tech companies.

Recalling the recent Canadian experience of Sidewalk Labs (Alphabet Inc.’s company for urban tech development), Koiber explained that in order to re-imagine the future of neighbourhoods and cities, it is necessary to involve local communities. The Google’s company had proposed rebuilding an area in east Toronto, turning it into its first smart city: an eco-friendly digitised and technological urban planning project, constantly collecting data to achieve perfect city living, and a prototype for Google’ similar developments worldwide. In pushing back against the plan and its vertical approach, the municipality of Toronto made clear that it was not ready to consider the project unless it was developed firmly under public control. The smart city development which never really started died out with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Its detractors argue that city dwellers were meant to be human sensors collecting data to test new tech-solutions and increase corporate profit. Data collected during the provision of public services and administrative data should be public; it belongs to the people, not to a black box company.

As Jaromil and Koiber discussed, in the main capitals of the world the debate on algorithmic sovereignty is open and initiatives such as the “Manifesto in favour of technological sovereignty and digital rights for cities,” written in Barcelona, reflect the belief that it will be crucial for cities to achieve full control and autonomy of their ICTs, which includes service infrastructures, websites, applications and data owned by the cities themselves and regulated by laws protecting the interests and fundamental rights of their citizens. Their implementation shall come within people-centric projects and a transparent participatory process.



Julia Koiber (left), Denis “Jaromil” Roio and Daniel Irrgang during the keynote “Reclaiming Data Cities: Fighting for the Future We Really Want”

The work of the conference continued with the panel “Making Cities Smart for Us: Subverting Tracking & Surveillance,” a cross-section of projects by activists, researchers and artists digging into the false myth of safe and neutral technologies, proposing both counterstrategies and solutions to tackle issues introduced in the opening keynote.

Eva Blum-Dumontet, English researcher on privacy and social-economic rights, dedicated her work to the impact of tech on people, particularly those in vulnerable situations. She opened the talk with the observation that the term ‘smart city’ lacks of an official definition; it was coined by IBM’s marketing team in 2005 without a scientific basis. Since then, tech firms from all over the world have been developing projects to get into governments’ favour and to build urban areas that integrate boundless tech-solutions: security and surveillance, energy and mobility, construction and housing, water supply systems and so on.

As of today, thanks to smart cities, companies such as IBM, Cisco, Huawei, Microsoft and Siemens have found a way to generate the satisfaction of both governments and their suppliers, but do not seem to act in the public’s best interest. In their vision of smart urbanism people are only resources: like water, buildings and administrative services, they are *something* to extract value from.

Blum-Dumontet explained that when we refer to urban tech-development, we need to remember that cities are political spaces and that technology is not objective. Cities are a concentration of countless socio-economic obstacles that prevent many individuals from living a dignified life. Privilege, bias, racism and sexism are already integrated in our cities’ (tech-)infrastructures. The researcher acknowledged that it is very important

to implement people-centric solutions, while keeping in mind that as of now our cities are neither inclusive nor built for all, with typical exclusion of, for instance, differently abled individuals, low-income residents and genderqueer people.



Panel discussion “Making Cities Smart for Us: Subverting Tracking & Surveillance” with Eva Blum-Dumontet, Andreas Zingerle, Linda Kronman and Tatiana Bazzichelli

A sharp critique of the socio-economic systems causing injustice, exploitation and criminalisation, also lies at the core River Honer’s work. River is a web developer at Expedition Grundeinkommen and anti-capitalist tech activist, who wants to support citizens and activists in their struggle for radical transformation toward more just cities and societies without relying on solutions provided by governments and corporations.

Her work methodology includes critical mapping and geospatial analyses, in order to visualise and find solutions to structurally unjust distribution of services, access and opportunities in given geographic areas. Honer works with multidisciplinary teams on community-based data gathering, and turns information into geo-visualisation to address social issues and disrupt systems of discriminatory practices which target minorities and individuals. Examples of her work include LightPath, an app providing the safest well-lit walking route between two locations through various cities; Refuge Restroom, which displays safe restroom access for transgender, intersex, and gender nonconforming individuals who suffer violence and criminalisation in the city, and the recent COVID-19 tenant protection map.

Honer’s projects are developed to find practical solutions to systematic problems which underpin a ruthless political-economic structure. She works on tech that ignores or undermines the interests of capitalism and facilitates organisation for the public

ownership of housing, utilities, transport, and means of production.

The Disruption Network Lab dedicated a workshop to her Avoid Control Project, a subversive tracking and alert system that Honer developed to collect the location of ticket controllers for the Berlin public transportation company BVG, whose methods are widely considered aggressive and discriminatory.

There are many cities in the world in which activist groups, non-governmental organisations and political parties advocate for a complete revocation of fares on public transport systems. The topic has been debated for many years in Berlin too; the BVG is a public for-profit company earning millions of euros annually on advertising alone, and in addition charges expensive flat fares for all travelers.

The panel discussion was concluded with Norway-based speakers Linda Kronman and Andreas Zingerle of the KairUs collective. The two artists explored topics such as vulnerabilities in Internet-of-Things-devices and corporatisation of city governance in smart cities, as well as giving life to citizen-sensitive-projects in which technology is used to reclaim control of our living environments. As Bazzichelli explained when presenting the project “Suspicious Behaviours” by Kronman, KairUs’s production constitutes an example of digital art eroding the assumptions of objective or neutral Artificial Intelligence, and shows that hidden biases and hidden human decisions influence the detection of suspicious behaviour within systems of surveillance, which determines the social impacts of technology.

The KairUs collective also presented a few of its other projects: “The Internet of Other People’s things” addresses technological transformation of cities and tries to develop new critical perspectives on technology and its impact on peoples’ lifestyles. Their video-installation “Panoptcities” and the artistic project “Insecure by Design” (2018) visualise the harmful nature of surveillance capitalism from the unusual perspective of odd vulnerabilities which put controlled and controllers at risk, such as models of CCTV and IP cameras with default login credentials and insecure security systems which are easy to hack or have by default no password-protection at all.

Focusing on the reality of smart cities projects, the collective worked on “Summer Research Lab: U City Songdo IDB”(2017), which looked at Asian smart urbanism and reminding the panellists that many cities like Singapore, Jakarta, Bangkok, Hanoi, Kuala Lumpur already heavily rely on tech. In Songdo City, South Korea, the Songdo International Business District (Songdo IDB), is a new “ubiquitous city” built from scratch, where AI can monitor the entire population’s needs and movements. At any moment, through chip-implant bracelets, it is possible to spot where someone is located, or observe people undetected using cameras covering the whole city. Sensors constantly gather information and all services are automatised. There are no discernible waste bins in the park or on street corners; everything seems under tech-control and in order. As the artists explained, this 10-year development project is estimated to cost in excess of 40 billion USD, making it one of the most expensive development projects ever undertaken.



Panel discussion “Making Cities Smart for Us: Subverting Tracking & Surveillance” with Eva Blum-Dumontet, Andreas Zingerle, Linda Kronman and Tatiana Bazzichelli

The task of speculative architecture is to create narratives about how new technologies and networks influence and shape spaces and cultures, foreseeing possible futures and imagining how and where new forms of human activity could exist within cities changed by these new processes. Liam Young, film director, designer and speculative architect opened the keynote on the second conference day with his film “Worlds Less Travelled: Mega-Cities, AI & Critical Sci-Fi“. Through small glimpses, fragments and snapshots taken from a series of his films, he portrayed an alternative future of technology and automation in which everything is controlled by tech, where complexities and subcultures are flattened as a result of technology, and people have been relegated to the status of mere customers instead of citizens

Young employs the techniques of popular media, animation, games and doc-making to explore the architectural, urban and cultural implications of new technologies. His work is a means of visualising imaginary future worlds in order to help understand the one we are in now. Critical science fiction provides a counter-narrative to the ordinary way we have of representing time and society. Young speaks of aesthetics, individuals and relationships based on objects that listen and talk back, but which mostly communicate with other machines. He shows us alternative futures of urban architecture, where algorithms define the extant future, and where human scale is no longer the parameter used to measure space and relations.

Young's production also focused on the Post-Anthropocene, an era in which technology and artificial intelligence order, shape and animate the world, marking the end of human-centered design and the appearance of new typologies of post-human architectures. Ours is a future of data centres, ITCs networks, buildings and infrastructures which are not for people; architectural spaces entirely empty of human lives, with fields managed by industrialised agriculture techniques and self-driving vehicles. Humans are few and isolated, living surrounded by an expanse of server stacks, mobile shelving systems, robotic cranes and vacuum cleaners. The Anthropocene, in which humans are the dominant force shaping the planet, is over.



Anna Ramskogler-Witt and Lucia Conti during the Keynote “Worlds Less Travelled: Mega-Cities, AI & Critical Sci-Fi”

The keynote, moderated by the journalist Lucia Conti, editor at “Il Mitte” and communication expert at UNIDO, moved from the corporate dystopia of Young, in which tech companies own cities and social network interactions are the only way people interrelate with reality, to the work of filmmaker Tonje Hessen Schei, director of the documentary film “iHuman”(2020). The documentary touches on how things are evolving from biometric surveillance to diversity in data, providing a closer look at how AI and algorithms are employed to influence elections, to structure online opinion manipulation, and to build systems of social control. In doing so, Hessen Schei depicts an unprecedented concentration of power in the hands of few individuals.

The movie also presents the latest developments in Artificial Intelligence and Artificial General Intelligence, the hypothetical intelligence of machines that can understand or learn any task that a human being can.

When considering AI, questions, answers and predictions in its technological development will always reflect the political and socioeconomic point of view, consciously or unconsciously, of its creators. For instance —as described in the Disruption Network Lab’s conference “AI Traps” (2019)—credit scores are historically correlated with racist segregated neighbourhoods. Risk analyses and predictive policing data are also corrupted by racist prejudice leading to biased data collection which reinforces privilege. As a result new technologies are merely replicating old divisions and conflicts. By instituting policies like facial recognition, for instance, we replicate deeply ingrained behaviours based on race and gender stereotypes and mediated by algorithms.

Automated systems are mostly trying to predict and identify a risk, which is defined according to cultural parameters reflecting the historical, social and political milieu, in order to give answers and make decisions which fit a certain point of view. What we are and where we are as a collective —as well as what we have achieved and what we still lack culturally— gets coded directly into software, and determines how those same decisions will be made in the future. Critical problems become obvious in case of neural networks and supervised learning.

Simply put, these are machines which know how to learn and networks which are trained to reproduce a given task by processing examples, making errors and forming probability-weighted associations. The machine learns from its mistakes and adjusts its weighted associations according to a learning rule and using error values. Repeated adjustments eventually allow the neural network to reproduce an output increasingly similar to the original task, until it reaches a precise reproduction. The fact is that algorithmic operations are often unpredictable and difficult to discern, with results that sometimes surprise even their creators. *iHuman* shows that this new kind of AI can be used to develop dangerous, uncontrollable autonomous weapons that ruthlessly accomplish their tasks with surgical efficiency.



Lucia Conti, Editor in Chief “Il Mitte” (left), and Tatiana Bazzichelli, Founder and Programme Director of the Disruption Network Lab

Conti moderated the dialogue between Hessen Schei, Young, and Anna Ramskogler-Witt, artistic director of the Human Rights Film Festival Berlin, digging deeper into aspects such as censorship, social control and surveillance. The panellists reflected on the fact that—far from being an objective construct and the result of logic and math—algorithms are the product of their developers’ socio-economic backgrounds and individual beliefs; they decide what type of data the algorithm will process and to what purpose.

All speakers expressed concern about the fact that the research and development of Artificial Intelligence is ruled by a few highly wealthy individuals and spoiled megalomaniacs from the Silicon Valley, capitalists using their billions to develop machines which are supposed to be ‘smarter’ than human beings. But smart in this context can be a synonym for brutal opportunism: some of the personalities and scientists immortalised in Hessen Schei’s work seem lost in the tiny difference between playing the roles of visionary leaders and those whose vision has started to deteriorate and distort things. Their visions, which encapsulate the technology for smart cities, appear to be far away from people-centric and based on human rights.

Not only big corporations but a whole new generation of start-ups are indeed fulfilling authoritarian practises through commercialising AI-technologies, automating biases based on skin colour and ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity. They are developing censored search engines and platforms for authoritarian governments and dictators, refining high-tech military weapons, and guaranteeing order and control.

The participants on stage made clear that, looking at surveillance technology and face recognition software, we see how existing ethical and legal criteria appear to be ineffective, and a lack of standards around their use and sharing just benefit their intrusive and discriminatory nature. Current ethical debates about the consequences of automation focus on the rights of individuals and marginalised groups. Algorithmic processes, however, generate a collective impact as well that can only be partially addressed at the level of individual rights— they are the result of a collective cultural legacy.

Nowadays, we see technologies of control executing their tasks in aggressive and violent ways. They monitor, track and process data with analytics against those who transgress or attempt to escape control, according to a certain idea of control that was thought them. This suggests, for example, that when start-ups and corporations establish goals and values within software regulating public services, they do not apply the principles developed over century-long battles for civil rights, but rely on technocratic motivations for total efficiency, control and productivity. The normalisation of such a corporatisation of the governance allows Cisco, IBM and many other major vendors of analytics and smart technologies to shape very delicate public sectors, such as police, defence, fire protection, or medical services, that should be provided customarily by a governmental entity, including all (infra)structures usually required to deliver such services. In this way their corporate tactics and goals become a structural part of public functions.



Film director Tonje Hessen Schei during the keynote “Worlds Less Travelled: Mega-Cities, AI & Critical Sci-Fi”

In the closing panel “Citizens for Digital Sovereignty: Shaping Inclusive & Resilient” moderated by Lieke Ploeger, community director of the Disruption Network Lab, political scientist Elizabeth Calderón Lüning reflected on the central role that municipal governments have to actively protect and foster societies of digital self-determination. In Berlin, networks of collectives, individuals and organisations work to find bottom-up solutions and achieve urban policies in order to protect residents, tenants and community spaces from waves of speculation and aggressive economic interests. Political and cultural engagement make the German capital a centre of flourishing debate, where new solutions and alternative innovative perspectives find fertile ground, from urban gardening to inclusion and solidarity. But when it comes to technological transformation and digital policy the responsibility cannot be left just at the individual level, and it looks like the city government is not leading the way in its passive reactions towards external trends and developments.

Calderón Lüning is currently researching in what spaces and under what premises civic participation and digital policy have been configured in Berlin, and how the municipal government is defining its role. In her work she found policy incoherence among several administrations, alongside a need for channels enabling citizens to participate and articulate as a collective. The lack of resources in the last decade for hiring and training public employees and for coordinating departmental policies is slowing down the process of digitalisation and centralisation of the different administrations.

The municipality’s smart city strategy, launched in 2015, has recently been updated and refinanced with 17 million euros. In 2019 the city Senate released the Berlin Digital Strategy for the coming years. To avoid the harmful consequences of a vertical approach by the administration towards its residents, activists, academics, hackers, people from civil society and many highly qualified scientists in the digital field came together to rethink and redesign an ecological, participatory and democratic city for the 21st century. The [Berlin Digital City Alliance](#) has been working since then to arrive at people and rights-centred digital policies and is structuring institutional round tables on these aspects, coordinated by civic actors.

Digital sovereignty is the power of a society to control technological progress, self-determining its way through digital transformation. It is also the geopolitical ownership and control of critical IT infrastructures, software and websites. When it comes to tech in public services, particularly essential public services, who owns the infrastructure and what is inside the black box are questions that administrations and policy makers should be able to answer, considering that every app or service used contains at least some type of artificial intelligence or smart learning automation based on a code, which has the potential to significantly affect citizens’ lives and to set standards that are relevant to their rights. Without open scrutiny, start-ups and corporations owning infrastructures and code have exceeded influence over delicate aspects regulating our society.



Panel discussion “Citizens for Digital Sovereignty: Shaping Inclusive & Resilient Cities” with Elizabeth Calderón Lüning (left), Rafael Heiber, Alexandre Monnin (screen), and Lieke Ploeger.

Rafael Heiber, geologist, researcher and co-founder of the Common Action Forum, focused on the urgent need to understand ways of living and moving in the new space of hybridisation that cities of the future will create. Taking a critical look at the role of technologies, he described how habitability and mobility will be fundamental in addressing the challenges posed by an urban planning that lies in a tech-substratum. As he explained, bodies are relevant inside smart environments because of their interactions, which are captured by sensors. Neoliberal capitalism has turned us into relentless energy consumers in our everyday lives, not because we move too much, but because we use technology to move and tech needs our movements.

Heiber considered the way automobiles have been influencing a whole economic and financial system for longer than a century. In his view they symbolise the way technology changes the world around itself and not just for the better. Cars have transformed mobility, urban environment, social interactions and the way we define spaces. After one hundred years, with pollution levels increasing, cities are still limited, enslaved, and dominated by cars. The geologist suggested that the implementation of smart cities and new technologies might end up in this same way.

Alexandre Monnin, head of Strategy and Design for the Anthropocene, closed the panel discussion questioning the feasibility of smart cities, focusing on the urge to avoid implementing unsustainable technologies, which proved to be a waste of resources. Monnin acknowledged that futuristic ideas of smart cities and solutionism will not tackle climate change and other urgent problems. Our society is profit-oriented and the

more efficient it is, the more the system produces and the more people consume. Moreover, tech doesn't always mean simplification. Taking as example the idea of dematerialisation, which is actually just a displacement of materiality, we see today for example how video rental shops have disappeared almost worldwide, replaced in part by the online platform Netflix, which represents 15 percent of internet traffic.

Monnin warned about the environmental impact of tech, not just the enormous amount of energy consumed and Co2 produced on a daily basis, but also the amount of e-waste growing due to planned obsolescence and consumerism. Plastics are now a growing environmental pollutant and constitute a geological indicator of the Anthropocene, a distinctive stratal component that next generations will see. Monnin defines as 'negative commons' the obsolete tech-infrastructures and facilities that will exist forever, like nuclear power plants, which he defines as "zombie technology". The French researcher concluded his contribution pointing out that humanity is facing unprecedented risks due to global warming, and—as far as it is possible to know—in the future we might even not live in cities. Monnin emphasized that people shall come together to prevent zombie-tech obsolescence from happening, like in Toronto, and he wishes that we could see more examples of civil opposition and resistance to tech which is unfit for our times. Smart cities are not revolutionising anything, they constitute business as usual and belong to the past, he argued, and concluded by appealing for more consideration of the risks related to institutionalisation of what he calls "corporate cosmology" which turns cities into profit-oriented firms with corporate goals and competitors, relying on the same infrastructures as corporations do.



Panel discussion "Citizens for Digital Sovereignty: Shaping Inclusive & Resilient Cities" with Elizabeth Calderón Lüning (left), Rafael Heiber, Alexandre Monnin (screen), and Lieke Ploeger.

In its previous conference "Evicted by Greed," the Disruption Network Lab focused on the financialisation of housing. Questions arose about how urban areas are designed

and governed now and how they will look in the future if the process of speculation on peoples' lives and privatisation of available common spaces is not reversed. Billions of people live in cities which are the products of privilege, private corporate interests and financial greed. This 20th conference focused on what happens if these same cities turn into highly digitised environments, molded by governments and billionaire elites, tech-engineers and programmers, who wish to have them functioning as platforms for surveillance and corporate intelligence, in which data is constantly used, stored and collected for purposes of profiling and control.

According to the UN, the future of the world's population is urban. Today more than half the world's people is living in urban areas (55 percent). By mid-century 68 percent of the world's population will be living in cities, as opposed to the 30 percent in 1950. By 2050, the global urban population is projected to grow by 2.5 billion urban dwellers, with nearly 90 percent of the increase in Asia and Africa, as well as the appearance of dozens of megacities with a population of at least 10 million inhabitants on the international scene.

This conference presented the issue of algorithmic sovereignty and illustrated how powerful tech-firms work with governments—which are also authoritarian regimes and dictators—to build urban conglomerates based on technological control, optimisation and order. These corporations strive to appear as progressive think tanks offering sustainable green solutions but are in fact legitimising and empowering authoritarian surveillance, stealing data and causing a blurry mix of commercial and public interests.

Algorithms can be employed to label people based on political beliefs, sexual identity or ethnicity. As a result, authoritarian governments and elites are already exploiting this tech to repress political opponents, specific genders and ethnicities. In such a scenario no mass-surveillance or facial recognition tech is safe and attempts at building “good tech for common goods” might just continue to fail.

To defeat such an unprecedented concentration of power, we need to pressure governments at all levels to put horizontal dialogue, participation, transparency and a human-rights based approach at the centre of technological transformation. To this end, cities should open round tables for citizens and tech-developers, forums and public committees on algorithmic sovereignty in order to find strategies and local solutions. These will become matters of, quite literally, life and death.

Smart cities have already been built and more are at the planning and development stages, in countries such as China, Singapore, India, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Jordan, and Egypt. As Bazzichelli pointed out, the onset of the dramatic COVID-19 crisis has pushed social control one step further. We are witnessing increasing forms of monitoring via tracking devices, drone technologies and security infrastructures. Moreover, governments, banks and corporations think that this pandemic can be used to accelerate the introduction of technologies in cities, like 5G and Internet of Things.

There is nothing wrong with the old idea that we can use technology to build liveable, sustainable, and efficient cities. But it is hard to imagine this happening with technology provided by companies that exhibit an overall lack of concern for human rights violations.



Tatiana Bazzichelli (left), Founder and Programme Director of the Disruption Network Lab and Lieke Ploeger, Community Director of the Disruption Network Lab

Alongside the main conference sessions, several workshops enriched the programme. Videos of the conference are also available on [YouTube](#).

For details on speakers and topics, please visit the event page here:

<https://www.disruptionlab.org/data-cities>

The 21th conference of the Disruption Network Lab curated by Tatiana Bazzichelli “BORDER OF FEARS” will take place on November 27-29, live from Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 Berlin.

[More info here](#)

Domani nella battaglia pensa a come rimanere umano

Intervista a Tonje Hessen Schei

yanezmagazine.com/tonje-hessen-schei-intervista/

Davide Boba Grimoldi

December 14, 2020

Di Giorgia Bernardini - 14/12/2020



Ho intervistato la regista norvegese Tonje Hessen Schei in occasione della conferenza “Data Cities – Smart Technologies, Tracking and Human Rights”, organizzata dal Disruption Network Lab.

Il ciclo di incontri è stato inaugurato con la première tedesca di iHuman, il nuovo documentario di Hessen Schei, videomaker nota per il suo lavoro incentrato sulla presenza delle intelligenze artificiali nella nostra vita quotidiana.

Dopo aver esordito nel 2014 con il documentario intitolato “Drone”, che appunto investiga l'utilizzo dei droni in campo militare, Hessen Schei ha dedicato gli ultimi cinque anni della sua ricerca all'approfondimento del tema della robotica e come questa stia letteralmente rivoluzionando il modo in cui l'essere umano si approccia al mondo sensibile.

Nella nostra conversazione online abbiamo parlato della doppia anima dell'intelligenza artificiale, di come essa abbia innegabilmente facilitato diversi aspetti della nostra vita comunicativa e di azione, ma di come allo stesso tempo ci stia togliendo moltissime libertà, soprattutto sul piano della gestione dei nostri dati sensibili – noi utenti siamo diventati il prodotto in offerta mentre le grandi aziende come Google e Facebook si contendono i nostri bisogni e i nostri desideri per costruirci sopra un business ancora più stabile e lucrativo.

La visione del documentario e l'intervista che ne è seguita mi hanno accompagnata per qualche giorno, mettendomi in uno strano stato d'animo per cui ho iniziato ad avere un rapporto paranoico con il mio telefono e il mio computer. Uno stato che comunque mi ha lasciata dopo poche ore al termine delle quali sono tornata ad essere dipendente dai social media e dalle ricerche su Google esattamente come prima.

Mi sono domandata spesso cosa farò quando ci sarà un'intelligenza artificiale che saprà scrivere questo articolo molto meglio di me, e in maniera più rapida ed efficiente e ho formulato questa domanda anche ad Hessen Schei in relazione al suo lavoro di videomaker. La sua risposta ottimista sul momento mi ha soddisfatta, mi sono sentita persino sollevata, per poi rendermi conto a posteriori che la narrazione del suo lavoro racconta una storia con un finale completamente diverso.

Giorgia Bernardini – Vorrei cominciare dall'inizio, dal titolo del tuo lavoro iHUMAN. Questa parola incorpora i due aspetti che in un certo senso sono opposti. Mi puoi dire qualcosa di più? Come hai scelto questo titolo?

Tonje Hessen Schei – Il titolo è arrivato nella fase iniziale del lavoro ed è assolutamente ispirato da iPhone e tutto ciò che ha una I. Per me descrive l'umano digitale o il cyborg che siamo diventati.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/E2ovFjIHEa8>

Nel corso del documentario Jürg Schmidhuber, uno degli scienziati intervistati, fa un'affermazione che secondo me incorpora il significato dell'intelligenza artificiale (da qui in poi IA): «l'IA è come il fuoco. Puoi cucinare grazie ad esso e puoi riscaldare; ma può anche uccidere persone». Quindi il punto è la doppia anima dell'IA, dà libertà

eppure allo stesso tempo la toglie. Ma alla fine cosa è preponderante: il togliere o il dare?

Nel film la domanda resta aperta. E in genere anche quando un lavoro artistico di fatto è compiuto, per un po' l'autore continua a pensarci, a riflettere. A volte cambia idea, certe altre, seppur ad opera finita, continuano ad aggiungersi informazioni nuove. Qual è il tuo punto di vista adesso?

Anche io amo la metafora del fuoco usata da Jürg. Soprattutto perché dopo aver girato iHUMAN l'aspetto di cui sono più preoccupata adesso non è la tecnologia in sé, dal momento che essa stessa è uno strumento e dipende da noi il modo in cui decidiamo di impiegarla. Possiamo usarla per il bene e per fare di questo mondo un posto migliore in cui esistere oppure possiamo usarla come arma e creare ineguaglianza, contribuire così a creare una società distopica. Ciò di cui sono davvero preoccupata è la possibilità di un futuro molto negativo.

Al momento siamo confrontati con una sorta di mafia che gestisce l'IA e ha disposizione una quantità di denaro enorme e un accentramento di potere relazionato alle grandi aziende di tecnologia sino ad oggi sconosciuto all'umanità.

Non c'è trasparenza né diretta responsabilità per il modo in cui l'IA è sviluppata o impiegata. Inoltre sappiamo che queste aziende sono in stretta collaborazione con l'industria militare e i servizi segreti. E questo mi preoccupa molto, perché abbiamo a che fare con una tecnologia che per esempio sta rendendo la sorveglianza molto più efficiente.

Quando si tratta di richiedere maggiore trasparenza su come queste tecnologie si sviluppano e trovano uso nelle nostre vite, una questione focale è anche come possiamo limitare il controllo di queste società private e quanto potere esse dovrebbero avere. Ed è importante ricordare che queste aziende stanno spendendo più soldi di interi stati nello sviluppo dell'IA.

La domanda è in che tipo di mondo desideriamo vivere. Vogliamo vivere nell'impero globale di Google e Facebook oppure nella democrazia?

Questo è il quadro generale degli aspetti che temo. Con questo film per me era importante concentrarmi sulla sfida etica in modo da poter iniziare ad avere un dibattito internazionale su come approcciarci a tali questioni. Questo tipo di confronto è necessario.



Da iHuman, di Tonje Hessen Schei

Dopo aver visto iHUMAN ho ovviamente iniziato a parlare con le persone più vicine a me dei temi toccati dal tuo film. E molti mi hanno risposto di essere a conoscenza di come le grandi aziende ci spiano attraverso i nostri dispositivi, ma che questo non li disturba perché “non hanno niente da nascondere”. E ho la sensazione che le persone non siano a conoscenza di cosa stanno offrendo a queste aziende in cambio di briciole come avere una foto figa di loro stessi con un filtro Instagram oppure, non so, di un accesso rapido alla metro tramite il riconoscimento facciale. Ho la sensazione che un utente medio non capisca le enormi libertà che sta sacrificando in cambio di qualcosa di insignificante.

Vorrei tornare un attimo alla metafora del fuoco di Jürg. Il modo migliore per combattere un fuoco è usare il fuoco. E il risveglio dipende da noi.

Ho la sensazione che ognuno viva nel suo personale Truman Show, dove tutto è stato preparato su misura, come una camera dell'eco, uno spazio in cui vediamo solo ciò che ci piace. È molto difficile renderci conto che siamo in uno spazio artificiale. Ci vuole uno sforzo enorme per sviluppare un nuovo pensiero critico e uscire dalla nostra bolla.

Dobbiamo domandare di non essere trattati come utenti e consumatori, ma come cittadini, e in quanto tali abbiamo diritti che dobbiamo proteggere e per cui dobbiamo combattere. Siamo ad un incrocio in cui dobbiamo creare una linea di fuoco e affermare: ecco, fin qui e non oltre. Dobbiamo riprendere il controllo delle nostre narrative, del tipo di vita che vogliamo vivere.

E questo si collega alla tua domanda perché sì, ci sono così tanti benefici e siamo diventati tutti... voglio dire (*Tonje mi mostra il telefono*) questi sono diventati parte del nostro corpo. Cosa farei senza il mio telefono, o il mio computer?

Io riconosco anche dei benefici, un'efficienza, che arrivano da tutte queste applicazioni. Stanno rendendo la nostra vita più facile e divertente, e semplificano moltissimo le connessioni. Ma allo stesso tempo è travolgente il modo in cui tutto è connesso e come

siamo completamente sotto sorveglianza attraverso i microfoni e le videocamere. L'algoritmo impara da noi in continuazione, e ci analizza e ci categorizza. Perciò dobbiamo domandare che cosa succede con tutti questi dati, i nostri dati. Dovremmo essere in grado di sapere come vengono trattati.

Quando è arrivato il Covid si pensava che tutti avrebbero scaricato l'applicazione così da poter rilevare ogni persona contagiata e in questo modo limitare la diffusione del virus. Ma poi le persone hanno iniziato ad agitarsi per la loro privacy e per il fatto di essere costantemente tracciati. Al telegiornale norvegese è stato mostrato come i nostri telefoni in realtà fossero già tracciati e che i nostri dati sensibili erano già stati venduti a terzi. Le persone erano sotto shock. In Norvegia ci siamo chiesti che cosa stava succedendo.

Le compagnie telefoniche sono solo una piccola frazione del matrix di cui facciamo parte. Tutto questo sta accadendo su così tanti livelli. Come ci si comporta in una situazione del genere?

Mi piace molto il concetto di Shoshana Zuboff «capitalismo della sorveglianza»; tutto questo è talmente collegato al sistema capitalistico che ne siamo parte ormai. È una lotta molto difficile quella che ci aspetta.

I nostri dati sono il corrispettivo di chi siamo noi. I nostri dati sono la nostra identità. E se la mettiamo su questo punto, nessuno vuole essere manipolato.

Uno degli scienziati nel film dice è importante sapere che la maggior parte del denaro che viene investito in IA va a finire in spionaggio e in lavaggio del cervello.

È orribile. A nessuno piace essere manipolato, ma stiamo sperando il controllo delle nostre menti e sono le grandi aziende a decidere quali sono le informazioni che avremo sul mondo. È molto importante che gli utenti ne siano a conoscenza.

L'uso violento che le aziende fanno dei nostri social media e il costante tracciamento delle nostre vite attraverso i telefoni o il computer ci ha mostrato che il concetto di privacy è finito. In iHUMAN uno degli scienziati che hai intervistato parla di una società post-privacy. Ma che caratteristiche ha una società post-privacy? È una società in cui siamo d'accordo con il fatto di non avere più informazioni private sulla nostra persona?

È interessante la questione della App per tracciare il Corona Virus. Ho sentito molte persone che erano contro il trattamento delle informazioni sulla loro salute per paura di avere riscontri sul lavoro o sulla vita sociale o semplicemente perché non andava loro di condividere informazioni in maniera così aperta su una piattaforma. Ma allo stesso tempo le stesse persone non avevano nessun problema con il fatto che Instagram o Facebook avessero qualsiasi tipo di informazione sulle loro vite, pubbliche e private.

Da una parte siamo parlando di un virus pericoloso e dall'altra di shopping e della condivisione di foto di un sabato sera cool a Berlino.

A me è sembrato assurdo, tu invece come la vedi?

Grazie al mio lavoro nell'ultima decade abbiamo incontrato diversi giornalisti e scienziati che durante le riunioni infilavano i loro telefoni dentro il freezer e che sono tornati all'uso della carta. In certi casi per avere una conversazione siamo stati costretti

ad abbandonare un edificio. Così all'improvviso ti rendi conto come i nostri telefoni si sono trasformati in oggetti che ascoltano e che nessuno ha fiducia in loro.

Quando lavori ad un tema come questo ti rendi conto di quanto la privacy stia diminuendo e di come non si possa quasi più avere fiducia nei dispositivi attorno a noi. Le persone scelgono ogni giorno di prendere la pillola blu di Matrix perché non vogliono avere così tante informazioni.

Siamo costantemente bombardati e gli utenti cercano di trovare una soluzione per esistere in questo mondo ma se non facciamo qualcosa...Matrix è un film profetico. C'è qualcosa in questo scenario sci-fi che dobbiamo osservare con molta attenzione.

L'industria della tecnologia utilizza la sci-fi come ispirazione per capire come sviluppare il prossimo prodotto nelle nostre vite. E anche noi dovremmo osservare la sci-fi per sapere che cosa accade nelle nostre vite. Perché alcuni di questi scenari non sono molto piacevoli e io ho due figlie ed è una lotta distoglierle dal telefono. Ma anche io sono in qualche modo dipendente. Eppure io provo a mettere giù il telefono e ad andare a fare una passeggiata nel bosco. Questo è ciò che dobbiamo fare: dobbiamo scollegarci di più. E dobbiamo anche creare delle alternative a Google e Facebook per avere la nostra rete di contatti.

Anche noi stiamo permettendo a queste compagnie di avere un monopolio.



Tonje Hessen Schei

Due giorni fa stavo guardando il tuo film e ho notato che come al solito avevo il telefono accanto a me. Ed è stata come un'epifania perché in realtà sai di avere sempre il tuo telefono accanto, ma in quel preciso istante mi è sembrata una cosa davvero sbagliata. Ho provato una sensazione di inquietudine e da quel momento ho iniziato a fare caso a quanto spesso interagisco con il mio telefono. Guardare il tuo film dà un controllo su qualcosa che facciamo continuamente senza pensare. E anche io cerco di fare un detox due settimane l'anno, ma il primo giorno il mio cervello mi implora costantemente di controllare dov'è il mio telefono e se ci sono notifiche. È quasi come una malattia.

Ma in un certo senso abbiamo una specie di vantaggio, perché sappiamo com'era il tempo in cui non guardavamo il telefono tremila volte al giorno. Ma lei tue figlie non lo sanno.

A volte mi domandano persino cosa facevo prima che esistesse internet. E io rispondo loro: noi...giocavamo.

Ma è anche una questione di quanto tempo ci rubano.

Sì ma il punto è se provi il sentimento: mi stanno rubando del tempo, oppure: internet è meglio perché hai accesso a così tante cose. Per noi la sensazione è più o meno: dovrei fare qualcosa di meglio tipo leggere un libro o fare una passeggiata, per le tue figlie è: oh mio dio, ho un contatto con persone che vivono negli USA. Ovviamente dipende da cosa ti interessa di più.

Durante lo screening mi sono sentita spesso in ansia. Avevo la sensazione che l'umanità fosse completamente assente. E dopo un po' mi sono accorta che a mancarmi era il concetto di etica, che è un aspetto che guida i comportamenti umani. A me capita spesso di chiedermi se ciò che sto facendo è etico, o almeno giusto. Ma gli scienziati che intervisti nel tuo film sono molto freddi, chirurgici.

Sono rimasta colpita da Jürg Schmidhuber in maniera particolare. Lui parla di una nuova fase per l'umanità e sostiene che gli umani di oggi sono solo una fase transitoria verso un'era in cui i robot governeranno il mondo. Afferma anche di non essere una persona legata al concetto di umanità; un'affermazione che per me è assurda. Mi è sembrato che Jürg preferirebbe essere lui stesso un robot (Tonje scoppia in una risata).

Capisci? È come Frankenstein. E lo guardavo mentre se ne stava in Svizzera a sciare felice sulle montagne nevose e nel frattempo tirava fuori certe frasi violentissime.

Quindi mi sono chiesta: come è stato per te lavorare con questi scienziati essendo tu un essere umano?

Abbiamo avuto delle conversazioni fantastiche.

Come esseri umani abbiamo avuto un sacco di possibilità e abbiamo mandato tutto a farsi fottere. E loro (gli scienziati n.d.r.) stanno contribuendo a creare un'intelligenza migliore che forse ci aiuterà a correggere alcuni dei problemi che noi da soli non possiamo risolvere. Anche Jürg si ispira molto alla sci-fi ed è davvero convinto che saremo capaci di creare una tecnologia molto più intelligente di noi.

Ma anche le conversazioni con gli altri sono state molto interessanti. Tutti sono molto ispirati da persone come Schmidhuber che crede nella AGI (*artificial general intelligence*, n.d.r.), e ci lavora molto.

Il motivo per cui per me è stato così interessante è che forse questa visione può essere un obiettivo non realistico, eppure aziende come Google spendono una quantità di denaro allucinante per queste ricerche a cura di alcune delle menti più brillanti del mondo. Quindi mi sono chiesta, ok cosa fanno? Che cosa sta per succedere?

Perché non abbiamo idea di cosa sta per accadere. Gli scienziati lavorano al riconoscimento della voce, del volto e queste innovazioni stanno accadendo perché loro spingono in questa direzione.

Quindi è stato super affascinate, ma anche terrorizzante. Ti rendi conto di quanto sarà difficile regolare la situazione perché viviamo la tecnologia nel modo in cui hanno deciso i tecnologi ed è nella nostra natura umana spingere le cose alle estreme conseguenze senza pensare davvero alle conseguenze etiche prima che sia troppo tardi.

Non mi sembra che persone come Schmidhuber siano interessate alle conseguenze etiche. Altrimenti non affermerebbero di star lavorando ad un robot capace di imparare e migliorarsi da solo e che una volta raggiunta la perfezione verrà venduto poi milioni di volte in tutto il mondo.

La cosa che mi spaventa è la serenità con cui queste affermazioni allucinanti vengono fatte.

Una delle cose che mi spaventa è che gli scienziati che programmano i codici per l'IA sono ragazzi molto giovani, sembra quasi una vendetta dei nerd. Ci sono un sacco di scienziati che hanno la sindrome di Asperger, hanno pochissima empatia, pochissime capacità di avere contatti di tipo umano. E questo spaventa anche me. Ma parlando con il whistleblower di Google che abbiamo avuto nella nostra produzione siamo venuti a conoscenza del modo in cui l'azienda controlla i suoi impiegati e come all'interno di questi ambienti tutto è estremamente frammentato. In questo modo nessuno capisce a fondo le conseguenze della piccola frazione a cui sta lavorando.

Ma vedere come le persone stanno iniziando a ribellarsi a queste aziende mi dà speranza.



Jürgen Schmidhuber

Ho visto la tua conferenza TED a Trondheim al tempo del tuo film Drone e ad un certo punto mostri un video in cui ci sono dei ragazzi giovanissimi, ancora teenagers, che in quanto gamer sono in grado di spiegare ai militari dell'esercito americano come usare un joystick e pilotare un drone in guerra. Anche questo è un aspetto che mi ha scossa. Questo va un passo oltre l'etica, cioè un ragazzino normale che gioca ai videogiochi in casa si trova a formare i militari americani su come uccidere le persone con la

maggior precisione possibile. È ancora più assurdo perché non si tratta di matematici o fisici, ma di bambini.

Il un certo senso iHUMAN è su un piano artistico la conseguenza logica del tuo lavoro precedente, Drone, dove elabori il tema dell'impiego di droni in campo militare per uccidere e vincere guerre in maniera efficiente, vale a dire senza la perdita di troppe vite umane. Come sei passata da un aspetto all'altro, qual è stata la tua metodologia?

Tutti i miei film sono nati l'uno dall'altro, c'è una specie di progressione nel mio lavoro. Sono molto interessata a strutture di potere e all'abuso di potere. E sono molto affascinata da come la tecnologia sta cambiando noi umani e allo stesso tempo come sta cambiando la nostra relazione con la tecnologia.

Quando ho avuto l'idea per iHUMAN stavo lavorando a Drone e uno degli aspetti che abbiamo trattato in Drone era lo stress post traumatico dei militari e la soluzione a cui stava lavorando l'aviazione americana era di fare in modo che i droni stessi fossero più autonomi così che i militari non avessero la sensazione di avere così tanta responsabilità. Quindi stavano cercando di dotare i droni di una voce in modo che essi potessero comunicare con il pilota e allo stesso tempo, attraverso l'IA, potessero raccogliere dati o scovare il bersaglio e prendere decisioni sull'atto definitivo dell'uccisione.

Questa tecnologia esiste già. Ed è qui che ho pensato: oddio ma questi sono pazzi, quello che sta per entrare in uso nell'industria militare è orrendo. E così ho iniziato ad osservare l'IA e mi sono resa conto che era già nelle nostre vite, e che era penetrata nel nostro mondo in un modo silenzioso e strisciante.

E nessuno sa cosa sta succedendo davvero. Con il mio team ho fatto alcuni workshop di *Machine Learning* e ho impiegato molto tempo a fare ricerca. In una fase successiva ho cercato persone a cui mostrare la mia storia. Ho tentato di avere un accesso a queste persone, e mi è costato molto, molto tempo. Un lavoro enorme. Ma io amo il mio lavoro perciò...l'abilità di andare a fondo ad una questione e trovare un modo per raccontarlo al maggior numero di persone, e raccontarlo al pubblico più giovane è un grande obiettivo della mia vita.

Colgo l'occasione per dire che questo è ciò che ti rende umana, un aspetto interessante per la mia ultima domanda.

A un certo punto nel film appare una donna robot che canta un'aria dell'opera. Si vede chiaramente che lei o lui o la cosa è un robot, ma nonostante questo canta in maniera favolosa. Tu che sei una storyteller, in un futuro vicino l'IA sarà in grado di scrivere storie, poesie, girare film.

Come ti senti all'idea che un'intelligenza artificiale sarà in grado di fare film persino migliori di quelli che giri tu?

(Tonje ride fortissimo) Il nostro sogno è di avere un editor IA per vedere come editerebbe le interviste. Sono conscia che stiamo assistendo all'esistenza di strumenti artificiali fantastici, alcuni di questi ci hanno ispirato durante la creazione di iHUMAN. A quel tempo OpenAI (azienda di ricerca e sviluppo di IA, n.d.r.) aveva ideato uno strumento per i testi, uno strumento che è stato migliorato moltissimo e quando Ilya

(Sutskever n.d.r.) ne parlava diceva che avrebbe potuto essere pericolosissimo sul mercato. Da quel momento in poi OpenAi è diventata più commerciale, e penso che alla fine il prodotto verrà immesso nel mercato. Questo strumento è talmente sviluppato che non riesci a dire se il testo lo ha scritto un'IA o un umano e inoltre è in grado di scrivere grandissime storie investigative in un attimo. La concorrenza quindi esiste. Ma io ho la speranza che il modo in cui l'IA funziona e il modo in cui elabora i dati crei una specie di monocultura e penso che la nostra forza risieda nella diversità, nella creatività e nella follia.

Noi abbiamo la storia umana da raccontare, e certo che sono preoccupata. L'IA sta rilevando il lavoro umano in così tanti campi. Ma è proprio adesso che abbiamo un ruolo molto importante in quanto *storyteller* e artisti.

E questo riguarda il modo in cui portiamo la storia umana alla superficie.

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impressum



DISRUPTION
NETWORK
LAB

NOVEMBER
27-29 2020

BORDERS OF FEAR

MIGRATION, SECURITY & CONTROL

MEDIA COVERAGE

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**Borders of Fear: Migration,
Security & Control**

[Dissens Podcast](#) · 25.10.2020

[il Mitte](#) · 03.11.2020

**BORDERS OF FEAR: Migration,
Security & Control**

[il Mitte](#) · 13.11.2020

**Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti
asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska
Schmidt, speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR**

[il Mitte](#) · 14.11.2020

**Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa:
"Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla
democrazia"**

[Der Spiegel](#) · 18.11.2020

**Video Documents Illegal Refugee
Pushbacks in Croatia**

[der Freitag](#) · 23.11.2020

Konferenz: BORDERS OF FEAR

[WDR - Cosmo Radio Colonia](#) · 27.11.2020

Ogni vita è importante

[Migrant Media Network](#) · 01.12.2020

**Borders of Fear Meetup: Facing Invisible
Borders**

[multicult.fm](#) · 6.12.2020

**multicult.fm berichtet von der Hybrid-
Konferenz „Borders of Fear“**



27. November 2020, 16:00 Uhr

BORDERS OF FEAR - MIGRATION, SECURITY & CONTROL

BORDERS OF FEAR deckt Fehlverhalten im Kontext von Migration auf, indem die Ursachen und Praktiken des Errichtens von Mauern und Grenzen untersucht werden, die zu physischer und kultureller Gewalt, Verfolgung und Menschenrechtsverletzungen führen. Im Rahmen der Konferenz wird der Diskurs über Grenzen sowohl auf konkreter Ebene als auch als Strategie kultureller Gewalt durch rechtsgerichtete Propaganda untersucht. Grenzschießungen, die Errichtung von Flüchtlingslagern und die Ausweitung von Sicherheitsmaßnahmen werden ebenso analysiert wie Narrative über Migrant*innen und geächtete Menschen in Europa und dem Westen, die durch grenzpolizeiliche Überwachung und die Dataisierung der Gesellschaft beeinflusst werden.

Kulturelle und physische Grenzen bilden häufig den Rahmen für Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße und für die Rechtfertigung von Rückführungen und Abschiebezentren, wo Menschen jahrelang eingesperrt werden und von Schleuser*innen ausgebeutet werden.

BORDERS OF FEAR bringt ein breites Spektrum von Sprecher*innen zusammen, um Ungerechtigkeiten, die an geächteten Menschen und Migrant*innen verübt werden, herauszustellen, und deren Stimmen bei dieser gemeinsamen Reflexion zu sozialer Gerechtigkeit und globalem politischen Bewusstsein anzuhören.

Das Disruption Network Lab ist eine fortlaufende Veranstaltungs- und Forschungsplattform, die sich auf die Schnittmenge von Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst, Technologie, Menschenrechten und Gesellschaft konzentriert. Das Disruption Network Lab e. V. organisiert seit 2014 partizipative, internationale Veranstaltungen mit dem Ziel, die Meinungsfreiheit zu stärken. Sie setzen sich für die global Marginalisierten ein!

Infos zum Termin

27. November 2020 , 16:00 Uhr

Live aus dem Kunstquartier Bethanien

Mariannenplatz 2, 10997 [Berlin](#)

[Mehr Infos](#)

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Über Franz Hausmann [hier](#)

100te-Fogle-Verlosung: Dissens verlost ein Exemplar "**Koks am Kiosk? Eine Kritik der deutschen Drogenpolitik**" von Franz Hausmann und zwei Überraschungsgewinne unter allen Fördermitgliedern und denen, die es bis zur nächsten Folge werden [Infos zum Buch hier](#)

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Die Online-Konferenz "**Borders of Fear**" vom [Disruption Network Lab](#) wirft einen Blick auf die weltweite Verfolgung von und Gewalt gegen Flüchtende und Migrantinnen. *Aktivistinnen*, Forscher*innen und Betroffene diskutieren vom 27.11. bis 29.11.2020 in Livestreams. Weitere Infos hier: <https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear>

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BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control): nuova conferenza del Disruption Network Lab

By **Lucia Conti** - 3 November 2020



BORDERS OF FEAR

Dal **27 al 29 novembre** il **Disruption Network Lab**, con la **media partnership del Mitte, Exberliner, Furtherfield e Taz die tageszeitung**, organizzerà a Berlino la web-conference **BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control)**.

Il tema centrale della conferenza saranno le persecuzioni perpetrate nei contesti di migrazione e nell'ambito della cosiddetta difesa dei confini.

L'iniziativa è finanziata da **numerosi soggetti istituzionali**, in primis il **Dipartimento per la cultura e l'Europa del Senato di Berlino**.

L'evento è inoltre in collaborazione con **Emergency, Transparency International, r0g_agency e Migrant Media Network**.



BORDERS OF FEAR

Muri, barriere, violenza fisica e violazione dei diritti umani che diventano violenza culturale e strumento di propaganda politica: tutto questo verrà dibattuto da giornalisti, attivisti, avvocati, ricercatori e intellettuali critici, che si confronteranno per gettare una luce su queste specifiche dinamiche di abuso.



Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki, speaker

Da un lato verrà analizzato il fenomeno della chiusura delle frontiere, della creazione di campi per rifugiati e della contestuale escalation delle politiche di controllo che si attivano in questi casi.

Dall'altro, con la competenza specifica che il Disruption Network Lab esprime, si analizzerà invece il modo in cui la **"datificazione"** della società sta influenzando la narrativa su migranti e rifugiati, in Europa e in generale in Occidente.



Sally Hayden, speaker. Photo by Salem Rizk

Secondo **Amnesty International** i termini "rifugiato", "richiedente asilo" e "migrante" sono spesso usati per descrivere persone che hanno lasciato i loro Paesi di origine e oltrepassato altri confini. Ogni categoria è trattata in modo diverso in base alla legge, ma ci sono molte persone che non sono tecnicamente rifugiate e che tuttavia potrebbero correre gravi rischi, se costrette a tornare indietro.

La nostra percezione di ciò che accade in diverse aree del mondo, dal Nord Africa al Medio Oriente, ma anche più in generale, è pesantemente influenzata dalle strategie geopolitiche e finanziarie in atto e da una concezione "bianca e occidentale" del cosiddetto "diverso".



La **Brexit** ha dimostrato ampiamente come l'arrivo di un numero di migranti relativamente ampio in aree storicamente soggette a un basso tasso di immigrazione, rende facile per i populistici monopolizzare il

12/1/2020

BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control): nuova conferenza del Disruption Network Lab - il Mitte

dibattito e far percepire la migrazione come la causa del fallimento sociale e del peggioramento dello stile di vita.

La **xenofobia** diventa a questo punto un modo per semplificare un dibattito complesso.



Contemporaneamente la propaganda anti-immigrazione fa percepire come legittimi la costruzione di muri e l'inasprimento della sorveglianza e dei controlli alla frontiera.

Questi confini, sia fisici che culturali, diventano un contesto di discriminazione, violenza e giustificazione dei **respingimenti** al confine e dei **centri di detenzione**, in cui i migranti sono rinchiusi per anni o sfruttati dai trafficanti.



Gaia Giuliani

Il 27 novembre BORDERS OF FEARS solleverà un dibattito su tutto questo con l'aiuto di numerosi esperti, ma farà anche direttamente ascoltare la voce degli stessi migranti e rifugiati, che parleranno del tema e delle loro esperienze.

Questo è il [programma completo](#) dell'evento, [questa la lista degli speakers](#) e [questo è l'evento Facebook ufficiale](#).

La web-conferenza sarà preceduta da [un meetup tenuto da Lorin Decarli](#), volontario e ambasciatore di [EMERGENCY Deutschland](#), nonché autore per Il Mitte della rubrica "[Raccontare la pace](#)".

Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS

14 November 2020
In "Apertura"

Il Disruption Network Lab presenta DATA CITIES, sulle città del futuro. Lucia Conti modererà il keynote su Intelligenza Artificiale e

17 September 2020
In "Apertura"

Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di

13 November 2020
In "Apertura"

Lucia Conti

Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

By **Lucia Conti** - 13 November 2020



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jstewart

Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di Borders of Fear

di **Lucia Conti**

Franziska Schmidt è membro del comitato di coordinamento della **Refugee Law Clinic di Berlino**, un'associazione di studenti legati alla **Humboldt Universität** e che offre consulenze legali gratuite ai rifugiati e ai migranti che si trovano sul territorio.

Dal 2018, tuttavia, Franziska e altri membri della Refugee Law Clinic hanno deciso di focalizzarsi soprattutto sull'hotspot di **Samos**, isola greca in cui restano spesso bloccati in condizioni drammatiche i richiedenti asilo che cercano di arrivare in Europa.

Il **27 novembre** Franziska Schmidt parteciperà come speaker alla conferenza online **BORDERS OF FEAR**, organizzata dal **Disruption Network Lab** di Berlino. La conferenza, che si terrà dal 27 al 29 novembre, affronterà proprio il tema del rispetto dei diritti umani nei contesti di migrazione.



Franziska Schmidt

Cos'è esattamente la Refugee Law Clinic di Berlin?

Il concetto di "Law Clinic" viene dal mondo anglosassone, sostanzialmente sono contesti in cui studenti di giurisprudenza fanno esperienza nel counseling e danno consigli gratuiti a chi ne ha bisogno, una situazione che si presume avvantaggi tutti. Ci sono vari ambiti in cui questo avviene, per esempio in relazione al diritto dei consumatori o alle norme che disciplinano internet.

Su questa scia, nel 2014 alcuni studenti della [Humboldt-Universität di Berlino](#), inclusa me, hanno fondato la Refugee Law Clinic Berlin, cercando di specializzarsi in materia di immigrazione e asilo. Attraverso un ciclo formativo che consiste di lezioni, internship presso avvocati specializzati nel settore e workshop, studenti di giurisprudenza, ma non solo, possono unirsi attivamente al progetto. Al momento abbiamo circa 70 counsellor, che operano regolarmente a Berlino e nel Brandeburgo.





Come nasce il tuo impegno nell'isola greca di Samos?

Nel 2018 un team della Refugee Law Clinic ha deciso di focalizzarsi sulle necessità dei migranti e richiedenti asilo presenti nell'hotspot di Samos.

Al tempo a Samos c'erano solo 3 NGO, ma nessuna di sostegno legale. Di conseguenza abbiamo deciso di intervenire con un apposito team che consiste di un coordinatore, un avvocato greco e alcuni legal counsellor, coadiuvati da interpreti che parlano persiano, arabo e francese.



L'hotspot di Samos

Cosa puoi dirci della tua personale esperienza di Samos, che dal 2018 ti assorbe completamente?

La prima cosa che mi ha colpito è il fatto che le persone che arrivano lì e vengono dalla Siria, dall'Iraq, dall'Afghanistan o da altre zone di conflitto, vedano la guerra come qualcosa di assolutamente normale.

Soprattutto quei ragazzi che magari sembrano meno vulnerabili perché giovani, forti e in salute, hanno alle spalle esperienze atroci, inclusa la tortura, e a volte neanche ne parlano. Quando li prepariamo per le interviste (*per ottenere l'asilo, ndr*) dobbiamo in qualche modo tirare fuori queste esperienze e far capire loro quanto siano rilevanti, perché hanno ormai normalizzato l'orrore. Uno scambio tipico è: "Hai mai vissuto l'esperienza dei bombardamenti?" "Ovvio!" "Ma devi dirlo!".



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Un'altra cosa che mi ha colpito molto è la forza delle donne e delle persone LGBTQ, che hanno sperimentato terribili violenze legate alla loro condizione e sono sopravvissute a così tanto orrore restando forti.

E poi ci sono tutti quei migranti africani che nel corso del loro cammino verso l'Europa passano dalla Turchia, sperimentando anche lì abusi drammatici. Ed è per questo che li esortiamo a raccontare anche questo, nella preparazione delle loro interviste. Specialmente per gli africani, l'esperienza turca è orribile.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Di cosa parliamo, in particolare? Quali sono gli abusi che queste persone subiscono in Turchia?

Ho ascoltato storie tremende. Moltissime donne sono vittime di violenza o sfruttamento sessuale, mentre gli uomini sono sfruttati in relazione alla loro forza lavoro, ad esempio nelle fabbriche.

In molti casi i datori di lavoro sequestrano i documenti dei migranti e li costringono ad accettare ogni condizione o mancato pagamento, con la minaccia di chiamare la polizia e far scattare la deportazione. Questo è traffico di esseri umani.



Queste persone fanno viaggi lunghissimi e rischiosi, fuggendo da esperienze traumatiche e gravi pericoli, prima di arrivare a Samos. Poi finalmente ci arrivano. Cosa accade, a quel punto?

Queste persone arrivano a Samos piene di speranza. Hanno vissuto esperienze inimmaginabili e sono sopravvissute e pensano che l'Europa sia vicina, con i suoi ideali di solidarietà e rispetto dei diritti umani. E poi, intervista dopo intervista, assistiamo al deterioramento delle loro speranze, mentre le procedure che determineranno il loro destino si allungano e queste persone finiscono bloccate sull'isola, in un campo sovraffollato, a volte per più di un anno e mezzo.

Alla fine sono distrutte, il loro stato psicologico crolla ed è devastante assistere a tutto questo. A volte ci sentiamo dire cose come "A questo punto tanto varrebbe tornare in Afghanistan", o in Siria, e noi non possiamo fare nulla.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Samos è in Europa e la Grecia fa parte dell'Unione Europea. Cosa dovrebbe fare l'Europa, a riguardo?

Potremmo evitare di esportare armi, tanto per cominciare. Ma potremmo anche non ammassare queste persone in un campo facendole aspettare per un'eternità. Questo sarebbe anche più facile da realizzare, se ci fosse la volontà di farlo.

Quali sono gli errori commessi dall'Europa relativamente alle politiche sull'immigrazione?

La politica dell'Unione Europea in materia per me è davvero incomprensibile. Mi chiedo come si possa fare un accordo con la Turchia e promettere a questa nazione 6 miliardi di euro! La Turchia non è mai stato un partner affidabile e quando ha riaperto i confini non mi sono neanche stupita. Senza contare che trovo assurdo, ad esempio, che si possano deportare in Turchia dei siriani, sapendo che non verrà data loro la possibilità di ottenere l'asilo.

E poi c'è il problema del Trattato di Dublino, che sposta tutto il peso e la responsabilità delle procedure di asilo sulle spalle dei primi Paesi di ingresso. Parliamo di Italia, Spagna, Grecia, che sono Paesi già in crisi.



Photo by adamansel52

Non esiste un modo per tentare di ridistribuire questa responsabilità, al di là di un'ipotetica revisione del Trattato di Dublino?

Formalmente anche altre nazioni, oltre ai primi Paesi di ingresso, potrebbero essere responsabili di alcuni procedimenti, per esempio in materia di ricongiungimenti familiari.

Immaginiamo che un minore approdi in Grecia e voglia raggiungere la madre in Germania. In questo caso, anche secondo il trattato di Dublino, è la Germania a dover provvedere. Ma quello che funziona sulla carta non funziona nella pratica e di fatto pochissime richieste per il ricongiungimento familiare sono state seguite con successo dalla Germania. Il tasso di rigetto è altissimo. E questo vale anche per altre nazioni.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jstewart

Ci sono altre responsabilità, che ascrivi all'Europa?

C'è il caso dell'Agenzia europea della guardia di frontiera e costiera, nota anche come Frontex, che agisce sotto la responsabilità dell'Europa e che è stata coinvolta in fatti molto gravi.

Ti segnalo a questo proposito **l'inchiesta del settimanale tedesco Der Spiegel**, che ha evidenziato il coinvolgimento dell'Agenzia nei respingimenti illegali avvenuti sempre più frequentemente nel mar Egeo, da quando la Turchia ha aperto i confini. Ed è un fenomeno sotto gli occhi di tutti, perché l'area da controllare non è vastissima.



Photo by Kripos_NCIS

Stai dicendo che l'Agencia europea finge di non vedere?

Come minimo. Ma l'inchiesta dello Spiegel dimostra che a volte è stata addirittura coinvolta attivamente nei respingimenti illegali.

E intanto una narrativa che presenta i richiedenti asilo come degli invasori da respingere si fa strada, e viene usata persino da Ursula von der Leyn, presidente della Commissione europea.



L'hotspot di Samos. Photo by jtstewart

Al di là della preparazione dei richiedenti asilo alle interviste, il vostro lavoro implica anche il ricorso alla Corte Europea dei diritti dell'uomo?

Faccio una premessa. A gennaio, l'anno scorso, il campo era già sovraffollato. Era stato costruito per contenere 648 persone e molto presto sono diventate migliaia. Negli ultimi tre mesi il numero è passato da 4000 a 8000, praticamente raddoppiando. Le persone debordano nella cosiddetta "giungla", lo spazio che circonda i vecchi confini del campo, che ormai non contengono più la folla.

Niente funziona più, ci sono bambini che vagano da soli e senza supervisione, donne incinte che vivono nelle tende senza assistenza medica. Abbiamo cercato di aiutare le persone in termini di consigli giuridici e assistenza medica, ma non ha funzionato. A quel punto abbiamo fatto appello alla Corte.



L'hotspot di Samos

Che procedura avete seguito, esattamente?

In base all'[articolo 39 del Regolamento di procedura della Corte](#) può essere richiesta un'*interim measure*, vale a dire una misura provvisoria, che si applica solo quando esiste un rischio imminente di danno irreparabile alla persona. In questi casi la Corte può ordinare al singolo governo, nel nostro caso quello greco, di provvedere e rimuovere il rischio.

Ci siamo avvalsi più volte dell'articolo 39 e questo ci ha permesso, ad esempio, di aiutare una donna incinta che viveva in una tenda, senza assistenza medica, e rischiava di partorire lì. In questo caso l'*interim measure* è stata concessa e al governo greco è stato ordinato di garantire alla donna una sistemazione adeguata e la dovuta assistenza medica. Abbiamo fatto lo stesso in molti altri casi, soprattutto quando si trattava di donne incinte e persone bisognose di cure mediche.



Samos hotspot, Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Che ruolo ha in tutto questo il sito [Ihaverights](#)?

Dalla primavera del 2020 è lo strumento che abbiamo usato di più, perché a causa del Coronavirus non abbiamo potuto preparare le persone per interviste che non hanno comunque avuto luogo, tutto si è bloccato.

Ad ogni modo anche dall'estero continuiamo a chiedere misure d'urgenza sulla base di profili che ci vengono segnalati dalle NGO mediche o dalle stesse persone che pensano di poter avanzare la richiesta.

Il sito Ihaverights serve anche a questo. Non sappiamo quanto a lungo durerà il lockdown del campo, so solo che alla fine dell'anno le persone che vivono nell'hotspot dovranno muoversi in una nuova struttura, stavolta chiusa, più simile a un centro di detenzione, e sarà ancora più difficile per noi avere contatti diretti con loro. Di conseguenza è importante fare in modo che queste persone Ci raggiungano comunque online e ottengano il nostro aiuto.



Samos hotspot, Photo by [jtstewart](#)

Hai parlato, inevitabilmente, di Coronavirus. Qual è la situazione, al momento?

Fino a settembre non c'era neanche un caso di Coronavirus a Samos, anche se la Grecia era in lockdown. Poi a luglio si sono aperti i confini, un sacco di turisti sono arrivati a Samos e poche settimane dopo il Coronavirus è arrivato sull'isola. A settembre è apparso il primo caso nel campo e a quel punto il virus si è diffuso, perché non c'è modo di mantenere il distanziamento in quel contesto.

Oltretutto il Corona si è diffuso subito dopo l'incendio del campo di Moria, sull'isola di Lesbo, e poi c'è stato un pesante terremoto. Una settimana fa a Samos è bruciata anche la sezione del campo di lingua francese e bengali. È una situazione difficilissima.



Samos hotspot

Ti occupi anche di migranti lgbtq+. Puoi spiegarci quali fattori rendono la situazione di queste persone particolarmente difficile?

Essere perseguitati sulla base dell'orientamento sessuale è una ragione per vedersi riconosciuto il diritto di asilo. Ma ovviamente in questi casi si verificano altri problemi.

Per esempio in un campo sovraffollato c'è mancanza totale di sicurezza, vivi a stretto contatto con persone della tua stessa comunità o di altre che possono essere un rischio per te, perché magari esprimono l'omofobia diffusa di alcuni Paesi.

Inoltre in questo contesto c'è una mancanza totale di impianti sanitari, le porte dei bagni e delle docce sono spesso rotte, non c'è illuminazione e di notte non si sa che cosa accada in giro. Di conseguenza persone identificate come LGBTQ sperimentano violenze sessuali, come del resto anche le donne. E anche

12/1/2020 Le condizioni inumane dei richiedenti asilo a Samos. Intervista con Franziska Schmidt, speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR - il...
se le vittime trovano la forza di denunciare gli abusi alla polizia, non succede nulla. A volte le denunce non vengono neanche verbalizzate.

E poi c'è quello che queste persone passano, quando vengono intervistate nel corso della procedura per ottenere l'asilo.



Cosa accade in questi casi?

È chiaro che l'orientamento sessuale non si può provare con un test, e allora arrivano una serie di domande tese a verificare la veridicità delle dichiarazioni e c'è anche il rischio che chi intervista faccia domande improprie. Mi riferisco a domande sulla vita sessuale, per esempio.

E quindi persone che hanno passato la vita a proteggersi da attacchi e violenze si trovano a essere intervistate da un estraneo e magari davanti un interprete della loro stessa comunità, al fine di ottenere il diritto di asilo. Un diritto che può essere negato facilmente, al primo passo falso.



Samos, Grecia

Cosa vuoi dire a chi ci legge, a Berlino e altrove?

C'è un detto tedesco, *aus den Augen, aus dem Sinn*, che significa che se non vedi qualcosa non ci pensi. Dobbiamo evitare questo. Non so se in Italia avete un detto simile...

Sì, è "lontano dagli occhi lontano dal cuore"

Mi piace! Il concetto è proprio questo. Spingendo il problema fuori dai suoi confini, l'Europa lo spinge lontano dalla nostra vista e quindi dalla nostra mente o cuore, che sia.

Ma dobbiamo sapere che questo accade, accade anche se non lo vediamo. A Samos, nell'Egeo, in Italia e in Spagna. E il problema su come l'Europa tratta i richiedenti asilo permane. Bisogna continuare a parlarne, a fare domande, a mettere in discussione le soluzioni proposte, come il **Nuovo Patto per la Migrazione e l'Asilo**, a mio avviso facilmente criticabile su più punti. Questo dobbiamo fare.

Può interessarvi anche **EMERGENCY-Raccontare la pace. Quanto costa la guerra?**




Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS

14 November 2020
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BORDERS OF FEAR (Migration, Security & Control): nuova conferenza del Disruption Network

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 Newcomer Festival Berlin: un'iniziativa per supportare i rifugiati

Newcomer Festival Berlin: un'iniziativa per supportare i

6 November 2016
In "Apertura"

Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

By **Lucia Conti** - 14 November 2020



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden a Shagareb, un campo per rifugiati eritrei nel Sudan orientale, 2017. Molti in seguito hanno viaggiato verso la Libia nel tentativo di raggiungere l'Europa

Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

di **Lucia Conti**

Sally Hayden è una giornalista investigativa e fotografa freelance, con un focus specifico sulla migrazione, i diritti umani e le crisi umanitarie.

I suoi reportage dall'Europa, dal Medio Oriente e dall'Africa sono stati pubblicati su moltissimi eminenti organi di stampa tra i quali il **Guardian**, la **BBC**, **TIME**, **New York Times**, **Washington post**, **Al Jazeera** e **CNN International**.

I suoi articoli sono stati tradotti in nove lingue e Sally Hayden ha realizzato i suoi servizi in Siria, Nigeria, Iraq, Sudan, Libano, Giordania, Cambogia, Malawi, Ruanda e molti altri Paesi, non esclusi quelli europei (Malta, Italia, Ungheria, Irlanda).

Il suo lavoro sulla Nigeria e su Boko Haram è stato usato come riferimento dal **Dipartimento di Stato americano**, mentre nel 2019 la rivista Forbes l'ha inserita nella lista degli **under 30 più influenti** nel campo dei media in Europa.

Al momento Hayden sta lavorando a un libro sui centri di detenzione in Libia, che verrà pubblicato all'inizio del 2022.

Il **27 novembre** parteciperà come speaker alla conferenza online **BORDERS OF FEAR**, organizzata dal **Disruption Network Lab** di Berlino. La conferenza, che si terrà dal **27 al 29 novembre**, affronterà il

12/1/2020 Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BOR...
tema del rispetto dei diritti umani nei contesti di migrazione.



Sally Hayden e Yoseph Zemichael Afeworki, altro speaker di BORDERS OF FEAR

Il 27 novembre sarai ospite del Disruption Network Lab di Berlino per BORDERS OF FEAR. Di cosa parlerai e perché è così importante seguire questo evento?

Parlerò del mio lavoro, che consiste nel documentare i problemi subiti dai rifugiati in tutta l’Africa. In particolare parlerò di quello che accade ai rifugiati che cercano di arrivare in Europa, inclusi quelli che vengono intercettati nel mar Mediterraneo e costretti a tornare in Libia, dove vengono rinchiusi a tempo indeterminato in centri di detenzione gestiti dalle milizie.

Il COVID-19 ha costretto molto europei a rendersi conto di cosa significhi non poter attraversare certi confini, ma i rifugiati, i richiedenti asilo e i migranti delle nazioni impoverite lo hanno sempre saputo e ne hanno sempre sofferto.

Penso che la conferenza sarà un modo interessante di sottolineare proprio questo.



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden a **Shagareb**, un campo per rifugiati eritrei nel **Sudan orientale**, 2017. Molti rifugiati hanno in seguito viaggiato verso la Libia nel tentativo di raggiungere l'Europa

Viaggi continuamente in tutto il mondo, documentando fatti, dinamiche ed eventi che appartengono alla cronaca e alla storia. Che cosa hai avuto modo di scoprire sul campo che non avresti scoperto senza diventare un testimone diretto?

Riguardo ai rifugiati, credo che non avrei mai capito fino in fondo quanto costoso e difficile possa essere vivere anche in uno di quei Paesi considerati "sicuri", definizioni che in molti casi è spesso politica.

Le persone possono infatti finire in situazioni in cui sono costantemente sfruttate dalle forze di sicurezza, indebitate, in costante lotta per la sopravvivenza, per l'assistenza medica, per il lavoro o per opportunità accademiche. Qualche volta è più facile spostarsi che restare.



Foto scattata da Sally Hayden ad Aleppo, Siria, 2017. In quella circostanza Hayden ha realizzato un reportage sui rifugiati siriani rimpatriati dall'Europa e in seguito arrestati e torturati.

Tra i tuoi numerosi impegni professionali, hai anche tenuto corsi di scrittura per lo staff della BBC alla BBC Academy. Qual è a tuo avviso il ruolo del giornalismo investigativo e del fact-checking in quella che è stata chiamata l'era della "post-verità"?

Io credo fermamente nel giornalismo e lo ritengo essenziale alla democrazia.

I giornalisti dicono la verità al potere e ci sono così tanti poteri a cui non si chiede conto di nulla e invece lo si dovrebbe fare.

È parte del nostro lavoro fare in modo di cambiare ciò che alcuni sostengono non si possa cambiare, mostrando totale disinteresse nel cambiamento dello *status quo* mentre altri invece soffrono e muoiono per questo, senza che le loro voci vengano ascoltate.



12/1/2020

Sally Hayden, giornalista investigativa: "Il nostro mestiere è essenziale alla democrazia". A Berlino sarà speaker di BOR...

Foto scattata da Sally Hayden ad Aleppo, Siria, 2017. In quella circostanza Hayden ha realizzato un reportage sui rifugiati siriani rimpatriati dall'Europa e in seguito arrestati e torturati.

"Le mie fonti sono in tutto il mondo. I rifugiati, in particolare, fanno di tutto per avere un telefono, come se fosse la loro ancora di salvezza", hai detto al Global Investigation Journalism Network. Puoi spiegare perché avere il telefono non è un lusso, ma una necessità, per molti migranti?

Un telefono è lo strumento con cui puoi chiedere aiuto. Se sei rinchiuso con i trafficanti o in un centro di detenzione gestito dalle milizie o da gruppi armati affiliati al governo libico, le persone che ti controllano, controllano ed edulcorano anche la tua percezione della realtà. A meno che non trovi il modo di ottenere un resoconto realistico di cosa sta realmente accadendo fuori. I rifugiati in detenzione mi hanno raggiunta usando telefoni nascosti per dirmi che non venivano nutriti da tre giorni, che dozzine di persone erano morte per incuria medica o che il loro centro era stato bombardato.

Altrove, rifugiati e i migranti usano i loro telefoni per orientarsi (una volta ho incontrato un rifugiato siriano che era arrivato in Europa usando Google Maps), per chiedere soldi alle loro famiglie al fine di continuare il loro viaggio o per sapere se sia rischioso o meno tornare a casa.

L'informazione è potere e senza un telefono è dura reperire informazioni, informazioni di cui queste persone hanno assolutamente bisogno per prendere decisioni su cosa fare e dove trovare un posto sicuro.



Sally Hayden. Photo di Salem Rizk

Proprio i centri di detenzione libici sono l'oggetto del tuo prossimo libro, che sarà pubblicato all'inizio del 2022. Qual è la situazione in Libia attualmente, in un momento in cui il Coronavirus sta distogliendo l'attenzione da ogni altro problema?

La situazione è terribile. Il conflitto continua ad andare avanti. Le procedure per il rilascio e l'evacuazione legale per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo si sono fermate (il loro numero era incredibilmente basso anche prima, ma almeno a volte accadeva, prima della pandemia). Centinaia di persone che hanno passato anni tra trafficanti di esseri umani e centri di detenzione sono stati immediatamente buttati per le strade di Tripoli e soffrono per l'assenza di assistenza medica e per gli attacchi regolari della milizia.

Inoltre sono appena tornata da un viaggio di un mese in Etiopia, dove ho assistito al processo di due trafficanti di grosso calibro, uomini che sono accusati di spostare decine di migliaia di migranti e rifugiati in Europa, ricattandoli durante la tratta. Io ero l'unica osservatrice indipendente presente alle udienze. Non sarei sorpresa se la ragione fosse proprio la pandemia.



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“They Were Beating Me Like Crazy”

Video Documents Illegal Refugee Pushbacks in Croatia

For years, asylum-seekers have been claiming abuse at the hands of Croatian border police, with some reporting beatings, electric shocks and even having their toenails torn out. For the first time, videos in combination with reporting by DER SPIEGEL have confirmed some of these reports.

By **Steffen Lüdke** und **Nicole Vögele**

18.11.2020, 19.06 Uhr



Ibrahim after the pushback operation: "I have never been so scared in my life."

Foto: No Name Kitchen

Ibrahim had a hunch he knew what was coming when the Croatian police car stopped. The young Pakistani had set off from Kashmir two years earlier to reach Europe. But now, on a

cold day at the end of March, the Croatian police dragged him and the other refugees out of the vehicle, Ibrahim recalls. More security forces were waiting outside. They wore black balaclavas to hide their faces.

The men forced the refugees to take off their jackets, shoes and pants, and one by one, the hooded men lined up. One of the men in masks grabbed Ibrahim by the neck and dragged him toward the river, according to his recollection. The others beat him, aiming at Ibrahim's back, arms and legs. "They were beating me like crazy," he says. Out of fear, he asked that he not be identified by his last name in this article.



Ibrahim during his interview with DER SPIEGEL: "They were beating me like crazy."
Foto: Nicole Vögele

Ibrahim recalls a long, thick branch that hurt especially bad when he was hit with it. Three other refugees say they were beaten with a metal rod and with a sling that had a heavy object attached to the end of it.

AN

The beatings lasted only a few minutes, but it felt like an eternity to Ibrahim. The hooded men pushed him down to the Glina River, the natural border between Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the village of Poljana. The river is only a few

meters wide there. "Fast, jump," one of the masked men shouted in English, says Ibrahim. "Go back Bosnia!"

Instead of being given a hearing, asylum-seekers are beaten.

The European Union closed the Balkan route to migrants in 2016, after it had already been used in previous months by hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria and other countries as they made their way to Western Europe. Thousands of refugees have been camping in the forest and in old war ruins in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina ever since. On the other side of the border, Croatian officials with night-vision goggles and firearms patrol the border. But that doesn't stop the refugees from setting off each night. They have a name for their dangerous attempt to get past the border guards: "The Game."

Asylum seekers have been reporting for years of abuse at the hands of Croatian police and of being forced back to Bosnia. Photos from aid organizations show refugees with bleeding lacerations, broken arms, knocked-out teeth and dark red marks on their backs. Asylum-seekers speak of torture with stun guns, sexual abuse and even torn-out toenails. The focus of their reports is always the same: Masked police officers.

Beatings Instead of Hearings

NGOs, doctors and even the United Nations Refugee Agency have collected thousands of such testimonies. Sometimes, skin color alone is enough to become a target of the security forces. In winter 2019, Croatian border guards illegally deported two Nigerian table-tennis players who were only trying to take part in a university championship.

Pushbacks, as they are called, violate not only Croatian asylum law but also European law and the Geneva Convention on Refugees. They make a mockery of the right to apply for asylum. Instead of being given a hearing, asylum-seekers are beaten.



A migrant after attempting to cross the border: lacerations, broken arms and knocked-out teeth Foto: Danish Refugee Council

The Croatian authorities deny that officers use force at the border or that they illegally drag asylum seekers back across the border. The government has simply ignored video clips showing security forces leading asylum-seekers to the border. Government officials also claim that refugees have simply invented claims of violence. Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan

Grlić Radman recently said that his country denies "all accusations of incorrect behavior at the border."

But Ibrahim's case makes Croatia's claims of innocence all the more difficult to uphold.

DER SPIEGEL spent months investigating his case together with the media organization Lighthouse Reports. The reporters spoke with three refugees who were traveling with Ibrahim. To the extent possible, they reconstructed the route they took. The refugees' reports can only be partly independently verified, but their geodata does corroborate their statements. There is also a video that the NGO No Name Kitchen obtained when interviewing the refugees. DER SPIEGEL and Lighthouse Reports were able to verify its authenticity.

The reporting clearly shows that it is not only in Greece that refugees are being pushed back forcibly . On the Bosnian-Croatian border, masked men are beating up refugees. The images reveal a disturbing level of violence that is increasingly becoming the norm at the EU's external borders.

Ibrahim, for his part, had already failed to get past the Croatian security forces dozens of times, but in March things went better than usual. He and three other migrants described to DER SPIEGEL how they, together with around 50 other refugees, some of them underage, set off that day for the EU. The men crossed the border near Šturlić, a village in Bosnia, before walking through the wilderness of the Croatian forests. It was cold, and at night they slept in cheap sleeping bags.



DER SPIEGEL

After around seven days, the group reached the Kulpa River, which borders Slovenia, and the migrants spent the night there. They ate the last of their supplies, they recall, and finally waded through the river on their way to Western Europe. The group stopped in a patch of forest above the Slovenian village Kočevje. Smugglers were supposed to meet them there to take the men to Italy, but nobody showed up. "We held out for three or four days without food or anything to drink," says Ibrahim. But then they finally gave up.

Slovenian police intercepted the refugees as they left their hiding place. The refugees say the officers took them to a police station, questioned each individually and took photos and fingerprints. The migrants claim that each of them asked

to be allowed to file an asylum application. But the answer they received, they say, was clear: "No asylum. You're going back to Bosnia."

"I Have Never Been So Scared in My Life"

When contacted by DER SPIEGEL, the Slovenian police confirmed that they had apprehended the refugees. They deny, however, that Ibrahim asked to apply for asylum, so they handed the men over to the Croatian authorities as part of a return agreement. Both the Croatian and the Slovenian officials certified the handover with their signatures.

Things moved quickly once the refugees were in the hands of the Croatian police. The men say the officers drove the group to the border river, where the men wearing the balaclavas were already waiting for them. "I have never been so scared in my life," says Ibrahim.

The refugees' geodata, stored in a Google Maps account, supports their statements. It includes data geolocating the group in Croatia and Slovenia. Shaky mobile phone images provide even more evidence. One of the refugees says that the images only exist because he was able to hide his mobile phone in his underwear.



A Pushback on the Croatian Border

DER SPIEGEL

The images show Ibrahim standing on the Bosnian side of the river, in wet pants and no shoes. The young Pakistani can be seen crying, his face twisted in agony. "I have such pain in my leg!" he whimpers. Another refugee whose clothes are wet and also doesn't have any shoes, can be seen supporting him.

Four men can be seen in the background on Croatian soil with blue and olive-green clothing reminiscent of uniforms. Three are seen putting on black masks. The men carry a long pole with them, as well as a stick with rope that has a heavy object attached to it. One of the men can be seen wielding the homemade weapon.

The hooded men lead another group of people to the border river. They beat one of the migrants with a stick or a pole. They then chase another a few seconds later, running toward the border. "Fuck your mother" rings out across the river.



Masked men on the Croatian side of the border: Homemade weapons and migrant beatings (Video: DER SPIEGEL/No Name Kitchen)

The metadata show that the video was taken on the afternoon of March 23. The buildings in the background prove that the events unfolded near Poljana on the Bosnian-Croatian border. The masked men can't be clearly identified in the images. However, their presence at the closely guarded border suggests that the men are part of the Croatian security forces. It's unlikely that masked men could operate in broad daylight without the knowledge of the authorities.

"Some of the uniforms visible in the video seem to be all mixed up," says Ranko Ostojić, a politician with the center-left social democrats in Croatia. He says he suspects the men in question are retired police officers who are now part of the reserves. "They used to be allowed to keep their uniforms, and now they are apparently carrying out pushbacks."

Ostojić was once Croatia's director of police and interior minister. He spent years chairing the Domestic Affairs Committee in the Croatian national parliament. "The pushbacks are systematic," he says. "Based on my experience, I am convinced that they are at least tolerated by the government."

When contacted by DER SPIEGEL, officials at the Croatian Interior Ministry said in a statement that they have no records of any operations on the date and location in question. They said they could not comment on the events described without further details. Croatia offers asylum seekers the opportunity to apply for asylum, the statement says, and goes on to claim that NGO reports on injured migrants almost completely ignore the conflicts between migrants in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ministry claims that the migrants are injured in accidents or that they inflict injuries on each other and then blame Croatian border police.

"It looked like someone had stuck an iron bar into a fire and then hit him with it."

Resident Milo Gujić

When Bosnian Milo Gujić hears shots or screams from the woods below his barn, he knows they are coming again. A short time later, bleeding, crying and half-naked men show up in his yard. Sometimes, he says, it happens daily.

Fear of Retaliation

Gujić and his wife have been experiencing the brutality of the Croatian border police up close for years now. Their property is located only a few hundred meters away from the EU's external border. Gujić, who has a wiry build, has asked that we not use his real name for this story. He is afraid that Croatian security forces might retaliate against him.

In March, Gujić opened up his home to Ibrahim and his companions. Gujić says he found the men standing at his door trembling and sobbing. When shown the video, he immediately recognizes them. He built a fire for them and brought dry clothes and food. "When I took the clothes off one of them, I saw his back. It looked like someone had stuck an iron bar into a fire and then hit him with it. That's how deep red the marks from the blows were."



A migrant after attempting to cross the border: There have been thousands of reports of violence at the border. Foto: Danish Refugee Council

The Glina River along the border is a popular place for pushbacks. It is easily accessible from the Croatian side and only sparsely populated on the Bosnian side. Gujić says the Croatians recently paved the gravel road leading to the border, an omen, he believes, that the half-naked, injured men will keep coming. Gujić can't understand the violence: "You don't even hurt animals like that."

The EU pays Croatia millions of euros to secure the border. Croatia is also slated to join the Schengen Area soon, meaning its borders with other members of the area will no longer be controlled. Once that happens, the Croatian border with Bosnia-Herzegovina will become one of those places where decisions are made on how many asylum-seekers are actually allowed to reach Western Europe.

In October 2019, the European Commission gave Croatia a positive evaluation in its progress toward accession into the Schengen Area, but said it would have to continue its work on "management of the external borders." All Schengen member states must approve any country's accession. But already, the Croatian government is effectively acting as one of Europe's gatekeepers.

"In light of these terrible images, the EU should act immediately."

Lawyer Hanaa Hakiki

So far, the EU has largely ignored these obvious violations of human rights. In Germany, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer

and Chancellor Angela Merkel have openly praised the work of the Croatian border police. EU border management agency Frontex, which monitors the border from the air, has reported hundreds of illegal border crossings, but no human rights violations.

"The EU is turning a blind eye to pushbacks," says former Croatian Interior Minister Ostojić. He says it appears EU officials don't seem to care whether the border police act in accordance with international law. And their silence merely encourages the Croatian government.

International

Abo





A migrant near Poljana tries to cross the border in what refugees call "The Game."
Foto: Nicole Vögele

"The images are the clearest evidence yet that Croatia engages in violent pushbacks," says Hanaa Hakiki, a lawyer with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), a Berlin-based human rights organization that provides support to refugees facing court proceedings. She notes that the deportations did not take place at official border crossings and that some of the weapons used by the masked men were homemade. "In light of these terrible images, the EU should take immediate action," she says.

Schengen As a Means of Pressure?

Ylva Johansson, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs responsible for EU borders, sent a letter to the Croatian Ministry of the Interior at the end of October and urged that the reports be investigated. "If proven true, what is shown there is of course unacceptable," she now says after viewing the images. "People cannot be beaten up at the border. There must be consequences."

Meanwhile, the EU's ombudswoman has also opened a probe. But real pressure on Croatia would probably only arise if the pushbacks were to put Croatia's Schengen accession into question. "Violence at the border cannot continue," Johansson says. "This will not help Croatia in its efforts to join the Schengen Area."

In the end, Ibrahim finally managed to win the "Game." After another attempt, he managed to make it to Italy. He is

currently living in a housing project in the north of the country and he was able to apply for asylum.

But the months spent on the Croatian border took a massive toll on him. When he looks at the videos of himself on the Croatian border today, he bursts out in tears. He says he still suffers from headaches and the pain in his knee is also getting worse, especially now that the weather is getting colder. At night, he says, he sometimes has nightmares about the beatings by the Croatian policemen. One time, his roommates told him the next morning that he had been calling out for help. Again. **S**

[Feedback](#)

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MIGRATION SECURITY & CONTROL



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Bei diesem Beitrag handelt es sich um ein Blog aus der Freitag-Community

Journalist*innen, Aktivist*innen, Anwalt*innen, Forscher*innen und kritische Denker*innen bringen Verfolgung, Kontrolle und kulturelle Gewalt rund um Grenzen und Migration ans Licht.


[BORDERS OF FEAR \(https://youtu.be/55r1BScZV0g\)](https://youtu.be/55r1BScZV0g) deckt Fehlverhalten im Kontext von Migration auf, indem die Ursachen und Praktiken des Errichtens von Mauern und Grenzen untersucht werden, die zu physischer und kultureller Gewalt, Verfolgung und Menschenrechtsverletzungen führen. Im Rahmen der Konferenz wird der Diskurs über Grenzen sowohl auf konkreter Ebene als auch als Strategie kultureller Gewalt durch rechtsgerichtete Propaganda untersucht. Grenzsicherungen, die Errichtung von Flüchtlingslagern und die Ausweitung von Sicherheitsmaßnahmen werden ebenso analysiert wie Narrative über Migrant*innen und geflüchtete Menschen in Europa und dem Westen, die durch grenzpolizeiliche Überwachung und die Datafizierung der Gesellschaft beeinflusst werden.



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Kulturelle und physische Grenzen bilden häufig den Rahmen für Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße und für die Rechtfertigung von Rückführungen und Abschiebezentren, wo Menschen jahrelang eingesperrt werden und von Schleuser*innen ausgebeutet werden.

BORDERS OF FEAR bringt ein breites Spektrum von Sprecher*innen zusammen, um Ungerechtigkeiten, die an geflüchteten Menschen und Migrant*innen verübt werden, herauszustellen, und deren Stimmen bei dieser gemeinsamen Reflexion zu sozialer Gerechtigkeit und globalem politischen Bewusstsein anzuhören.



Das [Disruption Network Lab](https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#speakers) [https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#speakers] ist eine fortlaufende Veranstaltungs- und Forschungsplattform, die sich auf die Schnittmenge von Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst, Technologie, Menschenrechten und Gesellschaft konzentriert. Das Disruption Network Lab e. V. organisiert seit 2014 partizipative, internationale Veranstaltungen mit dem Ziel, die Meinungsfreiheit zu stärken. Sie setzen sich für die global Marginalisierten ein!

15:56 23.11.2020

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Ascolta l'intervista a Regina Catrambone

COSMO Radio Colonia - Beitrag 27.11.2020 06:18 Min. Verfügbar bis 27.11.2021 COSMO

Ogni vita è importante



di Vincenzo Savignano e Francesco Marzano

È il motto del MOAS, prima organizzazione non governativa che ha condotto operazioni di ricerca e soccorso di migranti nel Mediterraneo. La ong ancora oggi si batte per l'introduzione di vie di fuga legali dai teatri di guerra verso l'Europa. Ai nostri microfoni la fondatrice di Migrant Offshore Aid Station, Regina Catrambone.



Le fughe da guerre, oppressioni e carestie continuano anche in tempi di Covid

Il Moas è nato in seguito al naufragio dell'ottobre 2013 al largo dell'isola di Lampedusa, nel quale morirono 368 persone. Fondata dai due giovani imprenditori Regina e Christopher Catrambone, dal 2013 fino al 2017 la ong ha salvato circa 40.000 persone.

In seguito Regina e suo marito hanno deciso di interrompere l'attività di monitoraggio attraverso i droni nel Mediterraneo. Le immagini raccolte venivano, infatti, controllate dalla Guardia costiera italiana che le trasmetteva anche a quella libica che, in molte occasioni, fermava e arrestava i migranti sui barconi.



Il logo della conferenza Borders of fear

"Non volevamo partecipare indirettamente al sistema dei respingimenti", sottolinea Catrambone, che dal 2017 ha riorganizzato la propria attività, continuando sì a monitorare il Mediterraneo, ma spostando il proprio focus operativo sul Bangladesh.

- Per seguire online la conferenza "Borders of fear" | [mehr](#)

[<https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear>]

Il Moas continua comunque a chiedere all'Ue la realizzazione di vie e sistemi legali per consentire ai migranti di raggiungere le coste europee. Ma a cuasa del Coronavirus le rotte migratorie nel Mediterraneo sono passate un po' in secondo piano nei media e anche a livello politico.

Regina Catrambone partecipa fino a domenica 29 novembre 2020 alla conferenza organizzata dal Disruption Network Lab di Berlino dal titolo: "Borders of fear - Migration, security & control". È possibile seguire la conferenza in streaming gratuito al link qui sopra indicato.

- Vai agli altri temi | [mehr](#)

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Stand: 27.11.2020, 18:29



BORDERS OF FEAR MEETUP: FACING INVISIBLE BORDERS

December 1, 2020 / in #MMN Meet-ups, Germany Events, News /

Facing invisible borders, every year thousands of people from developing countries apply for a visa to western countries and face an often tedious visa application process. They worry about whether they have the right documents or whether a typo might put their application directly into the reject pile and anxiously await a response. At best, successfully getting a visa is a completely mystifying process. At worst, after doing all the hard work, their visa gets denied.

Are the strict regulations governing access to the consulate and the complicated application process strategically designed to induce fear? If so, why?

The Borders of Fear Meetup:

[<https://www.disruptionlab.org/>] Facing Invisible Borders was organized by the Disruption Network Lab and held on October 28, 2020 from 19:00-22:00 at ACUD Macht Neu [<https://acudmachtneu.de/>] in Berlin's Mitte district. It was hosted by Thomas C. Kalunge of the #MigrantMediaNetwork [<https://migrantmedia.network/>]. Thomas sought to answer questions related to the journey of a potential

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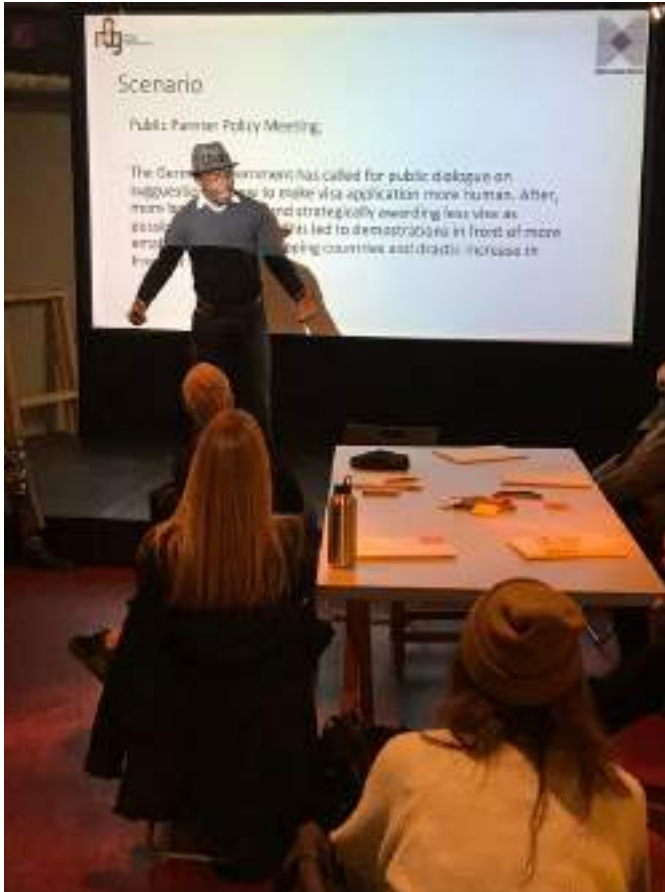
October 2, 2020

migrant to Germany using design thinking.



Migrantmedianetwork provides young Africans with reliable information and training on migration issues and social media, in order to help others make informed decisions and be aware of safer migration options to Europe.

The German & European community was of particular focus in this #MMN meetup, with 13 Germans and other European citizens of the German community taking part in the event that welcomed 25 participants overall. Thomas began the evening by presenting on how a design thinking methodology could help us gain a deeper knowledge of the situation. He then took participants on a hypothetical journey that detailed the steps an individual coming from a developing country would have to take in order to apply for a visa to come to Germany as a migrant. In walking participants through this visa application process, he was able to make the invisible border visible, showing all of the hurdles that exist along the way.



As of July 2020, the German passport was ranked as the 3rd strongest passport in the world: German passport holders can travel to about 189 countries without a visa. The problems surrounding visa applications was therefore new to Germans, or citizens of the European Union, and highlighted the inequity faced by others whose citizenship does not bestow upon them these privileges.

The evening event was designed to be experiential in nature and covered the following topics:

Role Play: Visa Application Process

All participants were briefed and asked to arrange their documents in order and proceed to the gate for security control before they proceeded to the consulate.

Consulate setup: There were three consulates onsite ready to process the visa application forms of the participants. The participants went through two security checks: all required documents were checked, and electronic gadgets were left at the gate by the security checkpoint.

5 out of 20 participants were granted a visa, leaving 15 participants without visa. Participants were rejected based on the following criteria:

- Failure to answer odd questions
- Failure to submit required documents
- No reason given

Through role playing participants were able to in a small way experience the nature of the visa application process in developing countries.

After this, the group discussed and sought answers and solutions to these questions:

- What are the challenges that potential migrants face in the migration process, especially for those from developing countries?
- Why do some of the migrants choose to not even try to apply for a visa and instead take the irregular (backdoor) path, even in cases where the backdoor path costs more money than the regular path?
- Are the strict regulations governing access the consulate and the complicated application process strategically designed to induce fear? If so, why?

Discussing policy and public dialogue

In the past, the German government has called for public dialogue and suggestions for how to make the visa application process more humane. Yet at the same time, more border security was put in place and they have begun to strategically grant fewer visa. This led to demonstrations in front of embassies in developing countries and drastically increased irregular (backdoor) migration.

Based on this information and the role play, participants were divided into three groups to brainstorm and discuss these questions:

- Have you applied for visa before?
- How was your application?
- What made it difficult or easy for you?

- How did this process make you feel?
- Do you see any fault in the process?
- How can this process be made more effective?
- What could be changed about the process?

Outcome

The workshop was designed to foster discussion and allow participants to gain a better understanding of the hurdles that stand in the way of applying for a visa and using the prescribed path to migration. These goals were met. Participants came up with ideas and solutions they were ready and willing to share with the German government in the context of the public dialogue surrounding migration and the visa application process.

Ideas garnered from the discussions:

- Provide clear information on the official websites
- Websites need to be functional and user-friendly
- There should be offline info-centers
- Provide clear information on the reason for a rejection
- More funding to have sufficient & well-trained staff
- Greater transparency of the process
- Decentralized Consulates / Agencies for more accessibility
- Ban discriminating & intimidating behavior on the part of agency or staff

Another group argued that the process should be free and would be more fair if the following were implemented:

- Personnel should be well-informed / educated in order to provide accurate answers
- The process should be anonymous
- Provide a clear checklist of requirements/ documents (available online and offline at the consulate)
- Forbid questions related to socio-economic status

- Provide visa assistance through simple language forms and someone who does a pre-check for accuracy and typos
- Examining the root causes of problems more extensively
- Stop media fear mongering
- Digitalize the visa process (automation could decrease risk of prejudice / racism in interviews)
- Reduce “ultra security” in application centers.

Written by Benedictus Agbelom

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REPLIES



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Montag - Freitag: 6:00 - 9:00 Uhr
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daCapo:

Montag - Freitag: 10:00 Uhr - 13:00 Uhr

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„Borders of Fear“

morgen:magazin | 02.12.2020

Wie kann es sein, dass auch fünf Jahre nach Beginn der Flüchtlingskrise beinahe jeden Tag Menschen im Mittelmeer ertrinken müssen? Welche Strukturen machen Diskriminierung, Gewalt und Menschenrechtsverstöße an den europäischen Außengrenzen möglich? Die Konferenz BORDERS OF FEAR des Berliner Disruption Network Lab, bringt internationale Expert*innen zusammen, um gemeinsam über Verfolgung, Kontrolle und kulturelle Gewalt rund um Grenzen und Migration nachzudenken. Die



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Veranstaltung wird am Freitag, den 27.11. ab 16 Uhr aus dem Studio 1, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin live gestreamt:

<https://www.disruptionlab.org/borders-of-fear#schedule>

Ihr habt an dem Termin keine Zeit? Kein Problem. multicult.fm berichtet für Euch am 02.12. im Morgenmagazin über die Konferenz.

Teilen