HUMAN RIGHTS AND PERFORMING SECURITY THROUGH BIG DATA

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Collaboration as Big Data Ethics Workshop
Virginia Tech
September 29, 2016
CIHR Research Areas

- **Technology in International Relations**
  - We study how digital technology shapes global politics and foreign policy.

- **Norms embedded in Technology**
  - We study how norms define technology and how technology influences social norms and values.

- **Digital Trade and Development**
  - We study how the Internet changes existing models of trade and development.
Ethics of Algorithms

Should algorithms decide your future?

cihr.eu/ethics-of-algorithms
Why do they raise ethical concerns?

1. They keep information away from us: gatekeepers

2. They increasingly make subjective decisions

3. We often don’t know how they work
Big Data is a question of ethics of algorithms.
What is Big Data?

1) **Technology:** maximizing computation power and algorithmic accuracy to gather, link, and compare large data sets

2) **Analysis:** drawing on large data sets to identify patterns in order to make economic, social, technical claims

3) **Mythology:** the belief that large data sets offer a higher form of knowledge that can generate insights that were previously impossible

(Crawford & boyd 2012)
Large data sets – the amount of data available through digitization continues to grow.
Trends in Big Data and Security

- **Broadening** of Security: Threats become risks

- **De-differentiation** of Security: Blurring of internal and external dimension

- **Privatization** of Security: Most data gathered by private actors
The risk-based logic of security is anticipatory.
What is Risk in Security?

Risk = potential damage x probability

This is a question of perspective:
- Everything can be a risk
- Not all risks are interpreted as dangers

→ Process of *(In)Securitization*
  (Bigo et al. 2006)
From Prevention to Preemption

Big Data Risk Management:

- Permanent monitoring for 'social sorting'
  (Lyon 2003)
- Logic of 'collect it all'
- From individuals to types of people
- A form of security that classifies groups – separating 'the risky' from the 'at risk'
The Age of (In)Security

Examples of risk-based security:
- Predictive Policing
- Border Security (refugees, no-fly lists)
- Intelligence-based air strikes

Human Rights Concerns:
- Rule of law & due process
- Privacy
- Discrimination
- Ethical Constraints
(Security) Algorithms are not ethically neutral.
Conclusions I

Mythology of Big Data:
- Data does not speak for itself, there is no such thing as raw data
- Theories and models are still needed
- Methods and assumptions have to be made explicit
- Practice and discourse-based approaches may help to disrupt the mythology
Conclusions II

(In)Security and Big Data:
- Risk-based security abandons causality
- We must not depoliticize data in performing security
- Government regulates through algorithms, → algorithms have to be regulated