CRIEC Workshop
Data, People, Objects: The Security Governance and Infrastructures of Contemporary Mobilities

September 30 & October 1, 2016

Salle Chaufferie (CO-R700)
Pavillon Cœur des sciences

Sur invitation seulement.
By invitation only.
Cet atelier de travail se tiendra uniquement en anglais.
Securing Offshore: Infrastructures of (im)mobility in the Caribbean

Mimi Sheller

The release of the Panama Papers has made offshore banking a topic of general public interest, while offshoring has also become an important topic of recent social theory. With its high degree of dependence on the tourism economy and offshore financial sectors, but also a high degree of migration and illicit mobility, the Caribbean region poses specific challenges to securitization. The imagery of “borderless” mobilities is belied by the continuing reality of secured borders, including limits on migration and visas, the deportation of Caribbean nationals back to their home countries, etc.

Dr. Sheller will explore how new mobility regimes and communication infrastructures that span the Caribbean region are generating new challenges to territorial governance and re-shaping the relation between migration, financial/material flows, offshoring/on-shoring processes, globalization and de-globalization.

Performing Sovereignty in the Mobility Assemblage

Mark B. Salter

In an attempt to contextualize the theories of sovereignty embedded in actor-network theory and the work of Latour, this intervention focuses on how a performative model of sovereignty can shed new light on the infrastructure of the mobility assemblage.
What Comes After the Network?

Jairus Grove

The heat and carbon output of world wide computing and telecommunications are now significant contributors to global warming. Rare earth minerals are fueling wars, spoiling water, and declining in terms of the rate of discovery of new mines. Moreover, geopolitics is escalating the nationalization of the servers the internet needs to continue. These suggest that the limitless future of the digital realm may already be approaching collapse or speciation.

Rather than celebrating a ‘fourth industrial revolution,’ Dr. Grove argues that the ‘internet of things’ and other visions for the next expansion of ubiquitous sensory and data processing is likely to hasten the fracturing and demise of the internet both as an infrastructure and as a way of thinking about global integration. So, what next? Neural interfaces, bacterial processors, and quantum computing suggests a post-digital age of computing and local cellular hubs, TOR networks, and VPNs suggest the desirability of intranets.
The Currency of War

Emily Gilbert

If currency cannot circulate, it ceases to act as currency. But what are the conditions which make the circulation of currency possible, or impossible? Dr. Gilbert addresses these questions in the context of an era of increasing securitization. She examines how money is being mobilized in the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘weapons system’: in other words, how the international forces are disseminating currency to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the counter-insurgents, e.g. by paying for infrastructure, providing micro-loans, or compensating civilians who are harmed or killed. This circulation of money requires a new set of military networks that are situated at the nexus of security and governance, which are generating news kinds of mobility for people —soldiers and civilians—as well as money itself.

Crowdfunding for War: Social Media, Violence Entrepreneurs, and the Global Organization of Open-Source Conflict

Nicole Grove

Crowdfunding platforms and other participatory media are changing what it means to ‘go off to war’ in profound ways. Sites like GoFundMe, IndiGoGo and Facebook allow former military, private contractors, and citizens with no military training to engage in recruitment efforts for modes of non-state violence organizing and to facilitate the purchase of materials through individual donations.

These activities provide unique challenges to both domestic and international laws of war, which Dr. Grove argues can only be partially understood through the literature on the use of private contractors in theaters of combat. Moreover, the use of crowdfunding applications to transcend the ‘collective action’ problem of national security raises important questions about the increasing militarization of so-called ‘citizen’ responses to perceived security threats on a global scale.

Jennifer Matsunaga

Transitional justice is a well-rooted and growing field of expertise, policy and procedure, and set of institutions which are closely linked to the principles of security, peace, democracy, rule of law, truth and human rights. With its growing influence globally, transitional justice is a crucial site for consideration and sustained analysis.

Ms. Matsunaga emphasizes the reparations aspects of the debate on security governance and infrastructures of mobility. Using her research on Canadian reparations politics as a backdrop, Ms. Matsunaga will offer suggestions as to how transitional justice, particularly as practiced in and by Canada, connects with the conceptual, infrastructural, methodological and data concerns at hand. She seeks to set in motion discussions that focus on the production and erasure of racialized “Others” through the movement/restriction of people, of stories and memory, of data, and compensation procedures.
Assemblages of (Im)Mobility Governance in Context: The Case of Israel/Palestine

François-Xavier Plasse-Couture

Departing from his work on the effects of neoliberal security governance in the context of Israel/Palestine, Mr. Plasse-Couture will underscore the importance played by assemblages of (im)mobilities (differentials) in the governance of biopolitically qualified life (settler colonial) and disqualified forms of life (indigenous/Palestinians/Refugees).

In the context of a neoliberal economy of violence in which the state version of security is no longer the dominant logic, settlers and the Israeli state - as entrepreneurs of violence - now invest in insecurity and risk. In so doing, it will ask, among other questions: What are the various mobility differentials allowing for a modulation and governance of the different spaces? What is the impact of these mobility differentials on the economy (of violence)? What were the effects of the neoliberalization of the occupation on mobility? Etc.

Mobility, Transport Infrastructures and the Challenge for Humanitarian Intervention

Polly Pallister-Wilkins

Dr. Pallister-Wilkins looks at people on the move and the challenge of mobility for humanitarian intervention. She examines the ways mobility in practice has come to concern mobile subjects of protection compared to mobility more traditionally concerning the mobility of humanitarian practitioners and their kit. She unpacks the way mobility and the infrastructures of mobility increasingly shape where and how humanitarian intervention takes place and advances the idea of sticky mobility and effective humanitarian triage.
Settler Colonialism and the Pacification Logics of Critical Infrastructure Resilience

Tia Dafnos

Dr. Dafnos draws on pacification as a concept for critically engaging with security and Deb Cowen’s work on logistics to examine the emergence of critical infrastructure (CI) ‘resilience’ as a priority in national security. One consequence arising from this is a reorganization of political governance. As 85% of CI is privately owned and operated, the participation of these owner-operators in the project of national security is identified by governments as a necessary objective. The federal government has consequently taken measures that are gradually making owner-operators and ‘stakeholders’ partners with the capacity to shape the national security agenda. At the same time, the objective of resilience hinges on ensuring greater private investment in CI. CI is a direct and indirect means of accumulation for owner-operators and stakeholders because they are the supply chains of capital. This raises implications for Indigenous nations on whose territories these physical supply chains/infrastructures flow, as the resilience of the settler-colonial state depends on containment of Indigenous determination and assertions of jurisdiction.
Questioning Traceability: Function Creep and the Dynamic Social Identity of Instruments

Julien Jeandesboz

Traceability has become a central item of public debate in the context of the PRISM/Snowden affair. Dr Jeandesboz engages with the handling of digital traces for security purposes in the manner of a well-established research tradition on criminality and terrorism, which has long argued for an anti-functionalist analysis of criminal phenomena. The handling of electronic traces for security purposes, he argues, is a fundamentally constructivist process.

How does the use of digital devices in the field of security lead to stabilities in practice and meaning? Based on studies on financial surveillance, the SWIFT/TFTP programme, and on digital borders and policing, Dr. Jeandesboz argues that traceability is less about following the trail of individuals than it is about generating the very traces that are then used to sustain intervention. Traces are the outcome of the assembling of dispersed data items, articulated around a more or less stable and defined strategic objective.

Getting a Flu Shot at the Gas Station: Technologies, Infrastructures and Public Health Surveillance

Gabriel Blouin Genest

As public health surveillance now proceeds through, Internet and media scrawling, meta-data and social media analysis, Dr. Blouin Genest seeks to get a greater knowledge of the impacts of these new “informal infrastructures” for public health. He will thus inventory some of the different informal infrastructures currently used for public health surveillance while contributing to the theoretical and conceptual analysis of the interaction between health, surveillance technologies and informal infrastructures.
Fissures in the Borderscape: Thinking Through the Smart Border as Infrastructural Medium

Tamara Vukov

In a time of intensive and heightening algorithmic forms of “predictive” mobility control at different scales and across borders, Dr. Vukov proposes to think through different sets of smart border technologies that enact and track race as a biopolitical assemblage in particular ways. While doing so, she offers some speculative reflections on mobility justice as a political project, especially as to how it applies to spousal sponsorship. Dr. Vukov proposes a number of “strange moves” that may contribute to dislodge ruling logics of mobility control on increasingly racialized bodies on the move (whether crossing borders or moving through urban spaces). She also proposes to reflect on how algorithmic technologies inflect the biopolitical targeting of race and mobility in ways that serve to insulate smart border practices from democratic accountability.
The Logistics of Evacuation

Peter Adey

Within a project exploring the wider history of evacuation, Dr. Adey examines logistics as a set of logics, rationalities and a host of related arts, technologies and practices which have evolved with, and as, ways of moving peoples away from harm (usually). He addresses a critical and highly uneven mobility by exploring the interplay of colonial infrastructural networks and geopolitical alliances; the codification of evacuation into semantic practices, categorisations and other slippages of terms; the work of private security contractors, underwritten by political and medical evacuation insurance policies and other risk management practices; the collision of international legal principles with air traffic controllers, national militaries and airspace managers; alongside an established set of medical-military practices of non-combatant and casualty evacuation involving chains, flow processes, handling centres, and lists of ‘entitled personnel.’

Criminalized for their Immobility? Homeless People and Protesters Occupying Public Space in Montreal

Véronique Fortin

Homeless people and protesters in Montreal have at least one thing in common: both groups (and they are by no means mutually exclusive) are routinely controlled for their occupation of public spaces through tickets issued by the municipal police for alleged violations of municipal by-laws (such as loitering or unlawful assembly).

Drawing on ethnographic research, Dr. Fortin argues that the ticketing practices, anchored in broken windows theory and order maintenance policing, serve to remove homeless people and protesters from public spaces. Under the appearance of inoffensive space management, serious exclusion occurs for the marginalized populations who occupy public space in a way that contrast with the ordinary flux of consumers, car drivers, and capital. Hence, tickets, occupiers and public spaces form a legal assemblage imposing normative mobilities in the City.
Deportation Infrastructures

William Walters

Dr. Walters seeks to expand the ways we understand the coerced mobility of people by looking at deportation infrastructure. He focuses on one particular modality of deportation: group deportations on chartered planes. Drawing on examples from the UK experience, Dr. Walters maps some key features of what he calls air deportation. Air deportation reveals that expulsion is not a generic activity, nor just a version of convict transportation, but a distinctive mode of unfree mobility which comprises a specific art of moving and removing persons.

Dr. Walters argues that charter flights are a double-edged sword: while they are criticized by pro-migrant campaigners as new forms of 'mass expulsion' they also give air deportation a new kind of public visibility, evident in the fact that charter flights are increasingly monitored by human rights inspectors.
Hacking the Planet: From Hacking Smart Infrastructure to Subverting Planetary Surveillance

David Murakami Wood

The era of globalization is over. Some have made a strong case that the urban can now be seen as a planetary condition. And, using the computing architecture metaphor of ‘the stack’, Benjamin Bratton has recently issued a persuasive call for thinking of computing as a planetary condition too. Enabled by planetary urbanism, pervasive networked communications and ubiquitous surveillance, the planet is becoming a new cybernetic system, with computing overlaying and interpenetrating existing social and ecological systems. In critical political economic terms, the emerging planetary era shows no signs of enabling anything other than an even more vicious and exploitative form of capitalism than before. But cybernetic systems can be hacked. And they perhaps need to be if human life on Earth is to persist in socially and environmentally just ways. This speculative intervention builds on work on previous work on global surveillance and current work on infrastructure hacking to consider the ways in which planetary surveillance might be subverted towards such goals.

Open Government Data: Artefact or Infrastructure

Daniel Paré

Dr. Paré will look at open government data as artefact or infrastructure following the infrastructural turn in communication studies. He asks how can one study and account for the role of infrastructures in information mobility and how can data (as) infrastructures empirically generate mobilities of data. His work builds on the notable cross-fertilization of ideas from the fields of Communication Studies and Science and Technology Studies (STS) to better understand intersections between communication and socio-technical infrastructures. For example, growing numbers of communication researchers have been employing conceptual tools and methods offered by STS to assist in understanding the socio-technical character and situatedness of media and information technologies and their configurations. Likewise, in organizational communication, STS concepts have brought attention to the ways in which artifacts influence organizational life.
Predicting Crime and the Distribution of Safety. The Perimeter Patrolling Subject to Mobility Constraints by Algorithm

Bilel Benbouzid

In this supposed “data revolution”, the security sector has embraced the applications of “big data” and machine learning algorithms to anticipate crime. For three years, Dr. Benbouzid investigated the world of “predictive policing” in the United States and France. Softwares indicate to police patrols the location of future crimes with a stunning accuracy. However, there are few situations where the police can directly observe a criminal event. So, how can we claim to “predict” crime? This phenomena illustrates the classical discussion in the field of risk prevention on the difference between “to forecast” and “to predict”.

Dr. Benbouzid seeks to show that the prediction algorithms are part of the production of inspirational utopias. He argues that the “predictability” of crime is an “actionable myth” that replaces the myth of “forecasting”. Paradoxically, the “utopia of prediction” can act on “unforecastable phenomena”. By analyzing two competing American companies - Predpol and Azavea (Hunchlab software) - he explains prediction can act in a situation of “unforecastability” because manufacturing software for government raise creative tensions that promote “policy settings” translated in the algorithms, the choice of data and the possibilities offered by the “administrator” systems of the software. The differences between Predpol and Hunchlab show the specific way to do politics with predictive analytics software.
ORGANIZATION TEAM

Anthony Amicelle
Assistant Professor in the School of Criminology at Université de Montréal

Karine Côté-Boucher
Professor in the Department of Geography at the Royal Holloway, University of London

Anne-Marie D'Aoust
Professor in the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre de recherche en immigration, ethnicité et citoyenneté (CRIEC) at UQAM

David Grondin
Associate Professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa

Mireille Paquet
Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Immigration Policy Evaluation (CIPE) at Concordia University

Eunbyul Park
Coordinator of the Centre for Immigration Policy Evaluation (CIPE) at Concordia University

Victor Alexandre Reyes Bruneau
Coordinator of the Centre de recherche en immigration, ethnicité et citoyenneté (CRIEC) at UQAM
# CONTACT INFORMATION

## SPEAKERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peter Adey</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Peter.Adey@rhul.ac.uk">Peter.Adey@rhul.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilel Benbouzid</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Bilel.Benbouzid@univ-mlv.fr">Bilel.Benbouzid@univ-mlv.fr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel Blouin Genest</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Gblouin@vt.edu">Gblouin@vt.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tia Dafnos</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Tdafnos@unb.ca">Tdafnos@unb.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Véronique Fortin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Veronique.Fortin6@usherbrooke.ca">Veronique.Fortin6@usherbrooke.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Gilbert</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Emily.Gilbert@utoronto.ca">Emily.Gilbert@utoronto.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jairus Grove</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jairusg@hawaii.edu">Jairusg@hawaii.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Grove</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Nsgrove@hawaii.edu">Nsgrove@hawaii.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julien Jeandesboz</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Julien.Jeandesboz@ulb.ac.be">Julien.Jeandesboz@ulb.ac.be</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Matsunaga</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jennifer.Matsunaga@queensu.ca">Jennifer.Matsunaga@queensu.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Murakami Wood</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Dmw@queensu.ca">Dmw@queensu.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polly Pallister-Wilkins</td>
<td><a href="mailto:P.E.Pallister-Wilkins@uva.nl">P.E.Pallister-Wilkins@uva.nl</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Paré</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Daniel.Pare@uOttawa.ca">Daniel.Pare@uOttawa.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>François-Xavier Plasse-Couture</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Plasse@hawaii.edu">Plasse@hawaii.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark B. Salter</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mark.Salter@uottawa.ca">Mark.Salter@uottawa.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimi Sheller</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mbs67@drexel.edu">Mbs67@drexel.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamara Vukov</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Tamara.Vukov@umontreal.ca">Tamara.Vukov@umontreal.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Walters</td>
<td><a href="mailto:WilliamWalters@Cunet.Carleton.Ca">WilliamWalters@Cunet.Carleton.Ca</a></td>
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## TEAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anthony Amicelle</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Anthony.Amicelle@umontreal.ca">Anthony.Amicelle@umontreal.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karine Côté-Boucher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Karine.Cote-Boucher@umontreal.ca">Karine.Cote-Boucher@umontreal.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne-Marie D'Aoust</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Daoust.Anne-Marie@uqam.ca">Daoust.Anne-Marie@uqam.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Grondin</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Dgrondin@uottawa.ca">Dgrondin@uottawa.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mireille Paquet</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Mireille.Paquet@concordia.ca">Mireille.Paquet@concordia.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eunbyul Park</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cipe.cepi@concordia.ca">cipe.cepi@concordia.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor Alexandre Reyes Bruneau</td>
<td><a href="mailto:reyes_bruneau.victor_alexandre@uqam.ca">reyes_bruneau.victor_alexandre@uqam.ca</a></td>
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