**Title**

Social studies of data infrastructures for population management

## Project description

This position is opened in the context of the project *Processing Citizenship: Digital registration of migrants as co-production of citizens, territory and Europe* (1.3.2017-31.8.2023), Acronym: ProcessCitizenship – G.A. 714463. The Project is funded by the European Research Council (ERC), with prof. A. Pelizza as the Principal Investigator (PI). More information is available at <http://processingcitizenship.eu>.

The *Processing Citizenship* project aims to investigate how data infrastructures and practices of third-country population management at and across European borders simultaneously enact alterity, the European order and territory. Current migration waves – and the methods to manage them – are changing not only national and European policies, but also the way knowledge about individuals, institutions and space is produced. Interoperable data systems and data practices are key enablers of this knowledge. They crystallize security, humanitarian, administrative and technical dynamics that compete to define what “alterity”, “citizenship”, “state” and “Europe” are (Aus 2003; Broeders 2007).

*Processing Citizenship* focuses on information systems that are key to the nation state and Europe: those used for foreigners’ identification and registration. Within this framework, *Processing Citizenship* offers a **16-month postdoc position** at the University of Bologna, Department of Philosophy and Communication (FILCOM). The position is open to candidates wishing to focus their research on the socio-organizational aspects of data infrastructures, with attention to how circulation of third-country populations data shapes and is shaped by inter-organizational boundaries.

**The appointed researcher is expected to contribute to the part of the *Processing Citizenship* project that answers Research Question 2 (i.e., how are institutional boundaries shaped?) and Research Question 3 (i.e., how are conceptualizations of space redefined by networked information infrastructures for migrant processing?)** It is our hypothesis that the circulation of population data challenges existing institutional boundaries (Pelizza 2016), as well as modernist conceptualizations of space.

The appointed researcher is expected to engage with technical and design documents, as well as with empirical sociological research (e.g. interviews, observations, mixed methods). The candidate is asked to identify preferred sources to start their analysis. The dataset collected will then be analyzed and contextualized in relation to the key issues addressed within the *Processing Citizenship* project:

1. The way institutional and organizational boundaries are de facto shaped by the **circulation** of data about third-country nationals;
2. How relationships between EU and Member States, on one hand, and between governmental and non-governmental actors, on the other hand, are shaped by efforts to build **interoperable** information systems;
3. The emergence of new de facto *loci* of power. For example, international organizations and contractors have a major role in setting the **standards** for what counts as “data” and what does not (Broeders and Dijstelbloem 2016; Pelizza 2019);
4. The **coupling** between citizenship and territory occupies a central role in *Processing Citizenship.* In particular, we are interested in mapping which rights and limitation are associated to membership of specific databases.

*Selected list of references*

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Dourish, P. 2017. *The Stuff of Bits*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Latour, B. 1992. "Where are the missing masses?" In *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by W. E. Bijker and J. Law. Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press.

Pelizza, A. 2016. "Developing the Vectorial Glance: Infrastructural inversion for the new agenda on governmental information systems." *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 41(2): 298-321. DOI: 10.1177/0162243915597478.

Pelizza, A. (2019), ‘Processing Alterity, Enacting Europe. Migrant registration and identification as co-construction of individuals and polities’, *Science, Technology and Human Values*, first published online on February 6th: 1-27. DOI: 10.1177/0162243919827927

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## Plan of activities

The researcher will be presented with three main research challenges. The first challenge requires identifying which loci of power emerge from interoperability practices (in collaboration with another postdoc researcher). The second requires identifying incipient hybrid patterns of territory/citizenship arrangements (in collaboration with the PI). The third challenge requires engaging and shaping interdisciplinary collaboration with the ongoing work carried out by the other team members.

## In particular, the appointed candidate will:

* Using the map about the circulation of migrants’ data throughout Europe (already produced by other researchers in the project), assess the impact of ongoing interoperability programs. This activity may require European fieldwork research;
* (Co-)author one peer-reviewed article about interoperability in the JHA area;
* Conduct a literature review on the territory/citizenship patterns allowed to aliens in European history;
* (Co-)author one peer-reviewed article on the territoriality of alienage and its relations with the territoriality of citizenship;
* Work in close relationship with the PI and rest of the *Processing Citizenship* team, in order to contribute to the comparative approach of the project. The analyses at the core of his/her research will be compared with the analyses produced in the other milieux under investigation within the *Processing Citizenship*;
* Actively participate to the activities of the *Processing Citizenship* team (e.g. organisation of workshops, final conference and panels; co-editing a special issue; access-aimed networking with authorities and individuals; dissemination of the scientific results; communication with stakeholders);
* Support to Project’s administration and organization.

## Desirable skills (on top of the requirements indicated in the call text)

* PhD degree in Human Geography or Science and Technology Studies, in both cases with a focus on data infrastructures
* Knowledge of European migration and IT policy
* Working knowledge of German
* Ability to think across disciplinary boundaries, creating an inclusive and creative culture
* Scientific writing and editing skills
* Willingness to adopt a performative understanding of data infrastructures
* Willingness to embark in international fieldwork research
* Commitment to the Project’s success, including willingness to collaborate in a research team, share data and write joint publications
* Excellent administrative and organizational skills, including the ability to plan one’s work and meet deadlines
* Willingness to accept Horizon2020/ERC administrative, financial and ethical requirements
* Sound understanding of the potential non-academic impacts of the research and ways of engaging with it

## Conditions of employment and organizational environment

We offer a fulltime postdoc position in an inspiring multidisciplinary and international environment. As it is known, ERC grants are among the most prestigious research environments. The position is funded until the end of the Processing Citizenship project in August 2023. The appointee is expected to take office in May 2022.

The terms of employment are in accordance with the Italian Law Concerning the Organization of Universities (Law 240/2010), as well as with the regulation for postdoc positions (i.e. ‘assegni di ricerca’) issued by the University of Bologna.

The Processing Citizenship team offers a dynamic ecosystem of enthusiastic colleagues at different stages of their careers. The team is composed of sociologists of technology, ethnographers, political and computer scientists from diverse countries, who share a passion for collaborative and trans-disciplinary research. The Project is composed of the Bologna unit and of a smaller unit based at the University of Twente, The Netherlands. Exchange and communication among the two units are systematic.

The Processing Citizenship project adheres to the new Alma Mater Research Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence (*Alma AI*, to be launched in January 2020). Alma AI is set to establish itself as a landmark in the European research landscape on digital knowledge, data infrastructures and socio-technical ecosystems.