

## 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* (1.3.2017-28.2.2022, now in its third year), 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 **12-month postdoc position** (renewable up to 30 months, pending favorable performance review) 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 focuses on how inter-organizational boundaries are shaped by data circulation (i.e., collection, processing, integration, use).** While another section of the Project investigates how personal data processing enacts individual migrants in residual ways (Bowker and Star 1999), this position should pay attention to the inter-organizational consequences of data circulation. It is known that the circulation of population data challenges existing institutional boundaries (Pelizza 2016). As Amoore and De Goede (2008, 176) have put it, “the physical jurisdictional border seeps into data and databases”. Furthermore, as new functions are delegated to new actors (Broeders and Dijstelbloem 2016), old boundaries and mandates are redefined.

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 and mention them in the motivation letter. The dataset collected will then be analyzed from a performative perspective, and contextualized in relation to key issues addressed within the *Processing Citizenship* project:

- 1) The way institutional and organizational boundaries are de facto shaped by the **circulation** of data (Pelizza 2016) 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*

- Amoore, L., and M. De Goede. 2008. "Transactions after 9/11: the banal face of the preemptive strike." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33: pp. 173-185.
- Aus, J. P. 2003. *Supranational Governance in an "Area of Freedom, Security and Justice": Eurodac and the Politics of Biometric Control*. University of Sussex: Sussex European Institute.
- Bowker, G. C., and S. L. Star. 1999. *Sorting things out: Classification and its consequences*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.
- Broeders, D. 2007. "The New Digital Borders of Europe. EU Databases and the Surveillance of Irregular Migrants." *International Sociology*, 22 (1): 71–92.
- Broeders, D and Dijstelbloem, H. 2016. "The Datafication of Mobility and Migration Management: the Mediating State and its Consequences." In I. Van der Ploeg and J. Pridmore (eds.) *Digitizing Identities: Doing Identity in a Networked World*. London: Routledge, pp. 242-260.
- 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
- Star, S. L. 1999. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43 (3): pp. 377-391.

## **Plan of activities**

The researcher will be presented with three main research challenges. The first challenge requires mapping the actual circulation of migrants' data. The second requires co-designing a tool to visualize such mapping exercise. The third challenge will require engaging and shaping interdisciplinary collaboration with the ongoing work carried out by the other team members.

In particular, the appointed candidate will:

- Conduct a literature review about data circulation from a trans-organizational perspective;
- Map the actual circulation of migrants' data throughout Europe: which data are accessible by which agency for which purposes. The appointed candidate should identify sources and fieldwork opportunities, using mixed methods if necessary. Methodological expertise and preferences should be disclosed in the motivation letter to be included in the application. This activity will require European fieldwork research;

- Co-design a visualization tool to represent the results of the mapping exercise;
- (Co-)author one peer-reviewed article in an international journal;
- 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*. Data circulation mapping is also expected to constitute the basis for visualization of data circulation;
- Actively participate to the activities of the *Processing Citizenship* team (e.g. organisation of workshops, conferences 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 Science and Technology Studies, sociology of technology or sociology of organization with a focus on data infrastructures, or PhD degree in social informatics, software studies, information science or information design, or neighboring disciplines
- Knowledge of organizational studies, especially inter-organizational ones
- Knowledge of European migration and IT policy
- Working knowledge of German and/or Italian
- Ability to think across disciplinary boundaries, creating an inclusive and creative culture
- Scientific writing editing skills
- Willingness to adopt a performative, dynamic and non-essentialist 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 and other'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 worldwide. The position is initially for one year – to be renewed up to 30 months. The salary indicated in the call is intended as gross per month; taxes are minimal. Health insurance is already covered in the gross salary. The salary assures comfortable

living conditions for singles and families in Italy. The appointee is expected to take office in March 2020, although a later start date may be negotiated.

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. Given our attention to diversity, we particularly welcome applications by women.

The Processing Citizenship team offers a dynamic ecosystem of enthusiastic colleagues (6) at different stages of their careers. The team is composed of sociologists of technology, ethnographers 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.

The University of Bologna stands for quality research and education connecting past and future. Not only is Bologna the oldest university in the Western world, but it also scores among the three top Italian universities for both research and education. Hosting a remarkable amount of European-funded research grants, internationalization is an important part of the University's strategic agenda. The research offices of the University of Bologna provide highly specialized support for ongoing international grants, as well as for new grant acquisitions. Thanks to this arrangement, talented researchers are given scope for developing groundbreaking research in a liberal environment.

Last but not least, with one fifth of its population made of students, a thriving entrepreneurial scene and an enviable quality of life, Bologna is one of the most sought-after areas to live and work in Italy and Europe. The University's facilities are entwined in the medieval layout of a vibrant, young city. Its international airport can be reached from the city center in a few minutes, public transport is capillary and fast train connections make reaching other Italian and European sites fast and convenient.