Doing Reflexive Migration Studies in Digital Times

This panel brings together papers and interventions which reflect on what it means to do reflexive migration studies in digital times. How do processes of digitization and datafication of all spheres of life – including migration, border controls and academic research – affect scholarship on migration in epistemological, ontological and methodological terms? The panel starts from the observation that "the age of migration" (Castles) has become digital. Hence, it is not surprising that some scholars have already called for a new field of scholarship, digital migration studies. However, instead of charting the agenda of new fields of study, this panel invites contributions that explore how the intensified use of digital devices for both migration and its regulation pose new epistemological and methodological challenges for research that aims to be reflexive in relation to its object of study as well as its research practices and the power effects of the knowledge it produces.

How, for instance, does the production of new types and unprecedented volumes of digital data change the methods and devices that are available to know and quantify migration? How do these new methodologies affect existing categorisations of migration and our very understanding of what migration is? What new ways of doing reflexive migration studies do digital devices and platforms offer and what kind of ethical issues and challenges to new methodologies like digital ethnographies entail? What are the digital technologies and devices that actors of migration management deploy with what kind of effects? What kind of new figures of migration and mobility practice emerge beyond the image of the smartphone-wielding refugee? How might we be able to study (and critique) these new practices and methods of cross-border mobility and control? And if migration is relational object of study that is constituted through the clash of human mobility with practices of statecraft and bordering how does the digital feature in these clashes and reconfigure the concerns of reflexive migration studies? The panel welcomes contributions that engage with these and other questions raised by the entry of the digital in the age of migration.

Technicalities:

Since the deadline for the submission of panel proposals will be 29th of February please send me an abstract (between 200 and max. 300 words) with a title and a short biographical note until 24th February the latest (stephan.scheel@uni-due.de). According to conference guidelines, a panel should consist of 3-4 presenters. If there is more people handing in abstracts, we can think about organising two panels. And if you any questions please do get in touch.