

# TECHNO-POLITICS OF INTEROPERABILITY

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## **Abstract:**

In recent years 'interoperability' has become a powerful term and an important matter in different domains of national and EU policy. In the name of interoperability, new regulations have been adopted (Leese 2020), new EU agencies (e.g. eu-LISA) have been created (Trauttmansdorff & Felt 2021), information and data systems have been harmonised, and institutions have been reordered (Pelizza 2016). Yet, when looking into different domains of governance, notions of interoperability differ greatly in regard to the socio-technological imaginaries and futures they produce, the human and non-human actors they bring together, and the issues and critiques they assemble.

For instance, in the domain of security, migration and border control interoperability has been framed as a political strategy to overcome siloed databases in order to spot "irregular migration" and "terrorist activities" (EU Comm 2019) by making interconnected biometric databases accessible via search portals. Critical voices have stressed the extension of state power, new forms of surveillance, data and function creep, and serious consequences for certain populations that face new forms of discrimination and criminalisation. In contrast, interoperability in the domain of messenger services in EU-policy discourse has been related to "open standards" that could open up locked-in messaging systems like Whatsapp, go against market leaders like Facebook, support bottom-up initiatives and prevent 'failed innovations'. Here, interoperability seems to be shaped along the lines of market power, competition and innovation. In the domain of developing data infrastructures "by Europe, for Europe, and beyond", interoperability has been related to "European values", such as "data sovereignty", "data privacy", or "transparency" that make sure that data is collected, processed and shared "in an environment of trust". Not only does interoperability promise the collaboration between companies, research institutions, associations, and administrations but also foster the engagement of open-source communities, civil society, and citizens.

In this panel, we seek to shed light on the techno-politics of interoperability regarding data practices and infrastructures in a comparative manner. We invite contributions on the above mentioned domains and beyond that study

the fields and arenas in which struggles and issues around interoperability arise (e.g. actor-networks, discourse formations, reshapings and reconfigurations through time),

their power dynamics (e.g. the (re)articulation of claims, the (re)positioning of actors, the sociotechnical imaginaries and futures, and the silencing of voices), or/and

the material (re)configurations they imply (e.g. the (re)shaping of technologies, the (re)ordering of institutions or the (re)configuration of practices).

Welcome are both empirical case studies (historical, ethnographic, discourse analytical etc.) and conceptual pieces. Please send paper proposals of no more than 300 words to pollozek@europa-uni.de and passoth@europa-uni.de. <sup>1</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

**Key words:**

interoperability, techno-politics, data infrastructure