



CONFERENCE

Imaginations of Autonomy: On Humans, AI-Based Weapon Systems and Responsibility at Machine Speed

22-24 MAY 2024

Media Sociology,
Department of Media Studies,
Paderborn University

Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS) exhibit a high degree of automation. The movement of vehicles and the identification, selection and killing of targets are claimed as processes that machines can perform ‘autonomously’ or even ‘responsibly’ without human intervention. However, AWS depend on (human-made) material, technical and organizational infrastructures including big data and ‘self-learning’, opaque machine learning algorithms. As complex human/machine configurations, AWS exhibit agency beyond the clear-cut realms of machines and humans - though responsibility can only stay with humans.

From this perspective, the claim of responsible AI as well as the autonomy of weapon systems can be seen as an epistemo-technoscientific as well as politically-driven imagination. However, this imagined autonomy has very real effects. It renews and strengthens promises of ‘fighting at machine speed’, and performing ‘precision strikes’. These technoscientific promises are articulated by politicians and the military; they drive hegemonic global politics and devalue discourses of and investments in diplomacy, conflict management and peace research. They legitimize arms contracts and trade as well as military research and development. Problematic effects of high automation such as automation bias, opaqueness of the systems and susceptibility to error are often overseen, underestimated or even made invisible.

Against this background, the first conference of the competence network *Meaningful Human Control – Autonomous Weapon System between Regulation and Reflexion*, led by Paderborn University and situated at five universities, aims to develop new approaches to understanding military human/machine configurations and their distributed, situational agency. Thereby, we aim to foster interdisciplinary dialogue, include non-Western positions more strongly in the debate and expand the scope with artistic perspectives and a robotic performance.

Programme

Wednesday, 22.05.

09:30 **Welcome and Introduction**
Birgitt Riegraf (former President UPB), Jutta Weber & Jens Hälterlein

Workshop *

10:00 **Stephanie Schmidt**
Ordinary Violence. On the Ethical Entanglements in Military Ethnographies

11:00 **Gabriel Udoh**
Reimagining Autonomy: African Cultural Perspectives and the Implications for Autonomous Weapons Systems

12:00 **Lunch Break**

13:30 **Ishmael Bhila**
Problematising Responsibility and Accountability in the Use of Autonomy in Weapons in Security Cooperation in Africa

14:30 **Linda Ruppert**
tba

15:30 **Coffee Break**

16:30 **Anna-Katharina Ferl**
tba

17:00 **End of Workshop**

18:00 **Dinner**

10:00 **Keynote: Derek Gregory**
Later Modern War: Genealogies and Geographies

11:30 **Elke Schwarz**
Engineering Moral Failure? On Algorithmic Ethics and Moral Responsibility in Autonomous Weapon Systems

12:30 **Lunch Break**

14:00 **Ingvild Bode**
How to Change Practices: Key Challenges for Governing Military Applications of AI

15:00 **Shiri Krebs**
Cognitive Assemblages in Drone Warfare: Light, Speed, Law?

16:00 **Coffee Break**

16:30 **Daniele Amoroso**
Imagining Normatively Acceptable Human-Machine Interactions in the Military Domain: The Case for Meaningful Human Control

17:30 **End**

18:30 **Dinner**

20:30 **Shona Illingworth**
The Airspace Tribunal: Towards a New Human Right to Live without Physical or Psychological Threat from Above

21:30 **Reception**

10:00 **Matilda Arvidsson**
tba

11:00 **Christoph Ernst & Thomas C. Bächle**
Automation, Networks, Augmentation: Military Technologies and the Autonomy of Imaginations

12:00 **Lunch Break**

13:30 **Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud**
Tinker Tailor Trial and Error: Incitatory Power and the Algorhythmic Battlespace

14:30 **Keynote: Marijn Hoijtink**
Platform Wars: Digital Surveillance, the Power of Metaphors and the Future of Warfare

16:00 **Conclusion**

16:15 **End**

Public Evening Event

17:30 **Robotics Performance** (Reinhard Gerndt & Daniel Giffhorn)

18:30 **“Künstliche Intelligenz im Krieg – Aktuelle Entwicklungen, technopolitische Versprechen, gesellschaftliche Perspektiven”**
Podiumsdiskussion

20:00 **End**

Thursday, 23.05.

9:00 **Jutta Weber**
Imaginations of Autonomy. On Humans, AI-based Weapons and Responsibility at Machine Speed

Friday, 24.05.

09:00 **Susanne Beck**
“The Scapegoat in the Loop?” Meaningful Human Control as Responsibility-Requirement in International Criminal Law

Participation in the conference is free of charge. However, we ask for a registration by 15.4.2024 at: <https://meaningfulhumancontrol.de/registration/>

For questions please feel free to contact the organizing team: info@mehuco.de

* Full Papers will be circulated in advance