THE DODECHADRON

a collection edited by
Pedro F. Neto, Ildikó Z. Plájas
& Nina Amelung

Collective tinkering & peer viewing: In this collection, we reimagined the process of feedback and review, stepping away from traditional peer review. Rather than simply exchanging drafts and comments, we proposed *collective tinkering*. We assigned collaborators to each piece, asking them to not only give feedback but get their hands dirty by co-creating the selected piece. This approach sparked renewed curiosity about each other's work. No longer just peer reviewing, we embraced *peer viewing* — witnessing and intervening in each others' evolving work. It became a form of "peer crafting" where playing and collective tinkering stimulated productive dialogues pushing the works a notch further. While our initial goal of triggering potential new co-authorships did not materialize, the process opened possibilities for future sustained collaborations. We leave the idea of collective tinkering open to others to explore further.

Borders, Migration and Technology: How do multi-modal forms of engagement with borders, migration, surveillance and technology transform our understanding of the very matters they critically engage with? The contributions in this collection invite a different kind of attention. They transcend (in)visibilities grappling with relations, justice, and research ethics on the one hand; and inequalities, violence and power relations on the other. They provide examples of and critical reflections on how to navigate collaborations amidst conflicting agendas and different epistemic backgrounds and practices. By foregrounding ethnographic attention to situated and material practices, these pieces also examine the performativity of our own epistemic interventions, including the multiple roles academics play — as scholars, academic experts, policy advisers, activists, and/ or artists.

On analytical potentials: While social scientists tend to get seduced by the sensory capacities of one or the other modality, we argue that the powers of multimodality lie in its analytical potential stemming from the gaps created when various modalities intersect. These gaps are not mere voids, but charged spaces—sites of tension, negotiation, and transformation. Rather than simply emerging, they are exposed through the interplay of modalities, revealing latent connections, ruptures, and possibilities for reconfiguration. In these interstitial spaces, new meanings take shape as modes intersect, challenge and extend one another's reach. Borders and edges become sites of montage, simultaneously brief pauses and folded interfaces that create unexpected possibilities for multiplying the stories, perspectives and arguments about borders, migration and technology.

Nine interventions: This collection brings together various contributions that experiment with, and combine, different modalities ranging from poetry to film, from sounding to critical map-making, and from objects to board games. But what can we learn about borders, migration, surveillance and related technologies when mobilising such diverse modes of engagement? These interventions do not offer a singular narrative but embrace the messiness of their methods and topics of concern. Together, they seek to reveal how thinking, writing, recording, filming, mapping, playing or dancing about and with these themes open up other ways of understanding. The dodecahedron however does not aim to reduce this abundance to an unexpected form. Rather, it invites the navigation of these contributions as they are: open-ended, multi-layered, and experimental.

Dodecahedron: a solid shape that has twelve faces, each defined by five edges — or borders. While the term might sound strange to many, as it did to us, once you see it laid out on a piece of paper, it starts to make sense. All you need is a printer, a pair of scissors, some glue, and the patience of folding, to bring it to life: a three-dimensional object, perhaps still sticky with glue, but one that instantly invites tinkering and playing. We invite you to take this dodecahedron in your hands, rotate it and engage with this introduction from unexpected angles. In this way, we invite you to ponder the affordances of multimodality in this collection. You may also consider this as a prompting impulse to open your senses for unanticipated ways to (re)think matters of migration, borders, surveillance and technology.

Appreciating paper & text: In the era of the digital and the affordances of online publishing, multimodality seems to be exploding into unprecedented possibilities. The path to simple and elegant formulations might indeed lead through wild playgrounds and digital rabbit holes. We may drift through Archimedean and Platonic solids, only to find our way back to paper, scissors, and glue. In this introduction we sought a form that remains rooted in elemental simplicity. The dodecahedron — easily printed and folded— is still a piece of paper with words on it, valuing our most ubiquitous tool in academic knowledge: writing. However, it breaks away from the linear text, introducing facets and borders. Once folded into a 3D shape, it invites a different kind of attention: fragmented yet interconnected. As the fingers (Latin: digitus) turn or click, they bring the digiti back into the realm of the digital.

On multimodality: The faces of a dodecahedron, once (un)folded, toggle dynamically, each engaging with many others at a time. In this rounded, multifaceted object, the faces might represent individual contributions while edges might signify the sites where they begin to touch and rub against each other. Frictions may arise in the gaps between words and images, sounds and dance, critical mapping and poetry. The spaces —or gaps—, that open up at the edges —or borders—, are caught in between different modalities. As such, the dodecahedron becomes an invitation to think and see beyond the simple multimodal realm, leaping instead into a truly multi-dimensional one. We aim for the multiplication of scales, layers, and angles. As the faces of the dodecahedron rub against one another, they also multiply strategies for meaning making. Its cartographic imagination also evokes a universe — its edges, folds, and crossings mirroring the entangled realities of migration, borders, surveillance and technology.

Appreciating the Sensate Journal: The form of this introduction is also inspired by Sensate Journal, a project nurtured by collaboration and an over a decade-long labour of love. The dodecahedron, with its twelve united faces not only maps out connections with/between contributions but also gestures towards the numerous interventions published in Sensate over the past twelve years. As a pioneer of what has come to be known as the multimodal turn in the social sciences, Sensate Journal broke away from rigid, chronological structures to enable networked explorations and associative ways of reading, thinking, and understanding. In this sense, this collection is, in many ways, also a tribute to Sensate Journal and its community, specifically to Julia Yezbick and Lindsey Lodhie whose careful, creative and instructive guidance was paramount in bringing this dodecahedron to life.

Experimental space & community: This journey began with the desire to create an experimental space for alternative co-creative research and dissemination strategies beyond academia, and engage with different publics. Our goal was to bring together a community interested in developing new forms of critique on migration, borders, surveillance, and technology. The first spark came with the organisation of a panel during the annual STS-MIGTEC workshop in February 2022. This was followed by a workshop at the ReCNTR, University of Leiden, in October 2022, and yet another at the Institute of Social Science, Universidade de Lisboa, in November 2023. Over three years, this exploration nurtured a small community appreciating experimentation, and committed to make space and time for a slow and tentative science. This prolonged engagement enabled us to get to know each other's work, foster trust, curiosity, and meaningful collaborations.

In this collection I: Shirley Van der Maarel develops a board game as part of a study on migration and depopulation in Sardinia, Italy, exploring how non-textual outputs like games can engage academic rigor while challenging existing frameworks, transforming research through interactive and creative processes. **Darcy Alexandra** uses poetry and other sensory modalities to engage with ecological practices of care in the Madrean Sky Islands, Southern Arizona, USA. Her piece reveals watersheds as inter-relational spaces, disrupting entrenched perceptions and fostering radical reimagination. **Irene Gutiérrez et al.** use participatory filmmaking to explore Ceuta's Moroccan-Spanish border crossings, presenting films by migrant women to foster critical reflection beyond hegemonic visual spectacles. **Pedro F. Neto** explores the diverse borders between Portugal and Senegal through sound. Building on the concept of sonic amplitude, his piece examines the phenomenology of borders, their heterogeneity, intensity, and they are enacted, perceived and experienced through sounding and listening.

In this collection II: Rune S. Andersen & Ariel Caine create an animated mapping and walkthrough video exposing the fractures and contradictions of surveillance infrastructure in a Palestinian neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem. **Fredy Mora-Gaméz** explores handicrafts and handcrafting as embodied expertise among people on the move, rendered into no-bodies. He weaves this with digital sewing interventions, drawing on *tantear*—a tactile searching in the dark. **Amade M'Charek** follows grazing goats along the Tunisian coast, stumbling upon abandoned boats used for illegal crossings, prompting reflections on death, waste, and the possibilities of life and livelihood. **Jonathan L. Austin & Maevia Griffths** blend visuality, dance, curation, and text to interrogate the black box(es) of Amna Suraka—once an Iraqi intelligence headquarters—revealing the multifaceted practices of violence within. They offer new ways to think about *grievability* and *response-ability*. **Ildikó Z. Plájás** highlights birds that either fly across borders or become data points in training image recognition algorithms, complicating discussions on the politics of surveillance technologies.

Print (A3 or larger), cut, fold, glue — and play.