



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. (Room L 1.202)

- 09:30 **Welcome and Introduction**
Birgitt Riegraf (President of Paderborn University), Jutta Weber & Jens Hälterlein (Paderborn University)
- Pre-Conference Workshop ***
- 10:00 **Gabriel Udoh (Universität Hamburg)**
Reimagining Autonomy: African Cultural Perspectives and the Implications for Autonomous Weapons Systems
- 11:00 **Linda Ruppert (University of Freiburg)**
Geopolitics of Technological Futures: Warfare Technologies and Future Battlefields
- 12:00 **Lunch Break**
- 13:30 **Ishmael Bhila (Paderborn University)**
Problematising Responsibility and Accountability in the Use of Autonomy in Weapons in Security Cooperation in Africa
- 14:30 **Anna-Katharina Ferl (Peace Research Institute Frankfurt)**
Reconfiguring Human-Machine Relations: Risk, Responsibility, and the Human Role in Future Warfare
- 15:30 **Coffee Break**
- 16:00 **Christoph Marischka (Information Centre on Militarisation)**
AI-based Targeting - The Case of Gaza
- 17:00 **End of Workshop**
- 18:00 **Dinner**

* Full Papers will be circulated in advance

Thursday, 23.05. (Room L 1.202)

Conference Day 1

- 09:00 **Jutta Weber (Paderborn University)**
Imaginations of Autonomy. On Humans, AI-based Weapons and Responsibility at Machine Speed
- 10:00 Keynote: **tba**
- 11:30 **Elke Schwarz (Queen Mary University of London)**
Engineering Moral Failure? On Algorithmic Ethics and Moral Responsibility in Autonomous Weapon Systems
- 12:30 **Lunch Break**
- 14:00 **Ingvild Bode (University of Southern Denmark)**
How to Change Practices: Key Challenges for Governing Military Applications of AI
- 15:00 **Shiri Krebs (Deakin University, Australia)**
Cognitive Assemblages in Drone Warfare: Light, Speed, Law?
- 16:00 **Coffee Break**
- 16:30 **Daniele Amoroso (University of Cagliari)**
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 (University of Kent)**
The Airspace Tribunal: Towards a New Human Right to Live without Physical or Psychological Threat from Above
- 21:30 **Reception**

Friday, 24.05. (Room L 1.202)

Conference Day 2

- 09:00 **Susanne Beck (Leibniz University Hannover)**
"The Scapegoat in the Loop?" Meaningful Human Control as Responsibility-Requirement in International Criminal Law
- 10:00 **Jens Hälterlein (Paderborn University)**
More-than-human Imaginaries of War – Swarming and Meaningful In/Human Control
- 11:00 **Christoph Ernst & Thomas C. Bächle (University of Bonn)**
Automation, Networks, Augmentation: Military Technologies and the Autonomy of Imaginations
- 12:00 **Lunch Break**
- 13:30 **Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs)**
Tinker Tailor Trial and Error: Incitatory Power and the Algorithmic Battlespace
- 14:30 Keynote: **Marijn Hoijtink (University of Antwerp)**
Platform Wars: Digital Surveillance, the Power of Metaphors and the Future of Warfare
- 16:00 **Conclusion**
- 16:15 **End**
- Public Evening Event (Location: tba)**
- 17:30 **Robotics Performance** (Reinhard Gerndt & Daniel Giffhorn; Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences)
- 18:30 **"Künstliche Intelligenz im Krieg – Aktuelle Entwicklungen, technopolitische Versprechen, gesellschaftliche Perspektiven"** Podiumsdiskussion
- 20:00 **End**

Participation in the conference is free of charge. However, we ask for a registration by 29.4.2024 at: <https://meaningfulhumancontrol.de/registration/>
For questions please feel free to contact the organizing team: info@mehuco.de