The Welfare Ban-opticon:

Financial Sorting of Low-income Migrants from Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract After the last EU enlargement state borders have been partially replaced by internal border controls of state bureaucracies to regulate westward migration. Existing ideas of threat associated with non-EU migrants are accompanied by a 'new menace' referring to criminal 'insiders' who might profit from the freedom of mobility within the EU. Accordingly, social security and immigration policies are increasingly intertwined within surveillance practices of member states, blurring the line between welfare and crime control measures. Therefore, new geopolitical measures and local risk management strategies are introduced for tracing and screening mobile groups. These monitoring practices are taking new forms in technocratic bureaucracies and are changing the means of interaction between newcomers and administrative bodies in host societies. In order to understand how these welfare service- based financial monitoring structures facilitate spatial population control, we need to understand how selective incentives are invented in order to make undesired groups voluntarily leave the executive territory of host societies. The long-standing prejudiced perception of newcomers as profiteers living on welfare, involved in illegal activities and unwilling to integrate has become a basis for Western concerns about a "threatening flood" of westward-bound benefit tourists. This has been used to justify new control measures in several Western member states. Based on empirical case studies, this study will analyse these asymmetries of surveillance within the virtual walls of Fortress Europe, and uncover coping of low-income migrants from Central and Eastern Europe in daily bureaucratic welfare procedures in London.

Keywords: migration, welfare state, surveillance practices, benefit administration, coping strategies

Brave New Europe

Is the Brave New World coming of age? The growing popularity of dystopian literature raises the question whether Western surveillance societies are really moving toward Aldous Huxley's (1932) World State, in which geopolitical aims are manifested in extended forms of monitoring that are supported by surveillance technologies that govern people on the move. In these surrealistic images of totalitarian control, minorities are defined as uncivilised, traditional and uneconomical, a threat to the happiness of the World Society who should be displaced into 'savage reservations'. Following the idea of such dystopian social critiques, this study explores the

side effects of targeted monitoring practices that are used as geopolitical tools of population selection. By focusing on the participatory aspects of digital surveillance systems, the aim of this analysis is to reveal their discriminative nature, as well as describe how the anticipation of surveillance subjects impacts geopolitical incentives regarding mobility control.

After the fifth enlargement of the EU in 2007, intra-European mobility became a particular challenge for many Western governments. As full EU citizens, many Low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe have taken advantage of the freedom of movement in Europe. State borders have been partially replaced by the internal border controls of state bureaucracies seeking to regulate westward migration. Pre-existing ideas about the threats associated with non-EU migrants are accompanied by concerns of a 'new menace', referring to criminal 'insiders' who might profit from the freedom of mobility within the EU. Accordingly, social security and immigration policies are increasingly intertwined within the surveillance practices of member states, blurring the line between welfare and crime-controlling measures. Therefore, new geopolitical measures and local risk management strategies are being introduced to trace and screen mobile groups. These monitoring practices, such as the spidergrams of tax controllers, are taking new forms in technocratic bureaucracies and are changing the means of interaction between newcomers and administrative bodies in host societies. In order to understand how these welfare-service-based financial monitoring structures facilitate spatial population control, we need to understand how selective incentives are invented in order to encourage undesirable groups to voluntarily leave the executive territories of host societies.

This targeted social sorting is a dynamic process, shaped by the narratives of politicians, academics and civil society, in which economic and racist connotations of migrants are regularly intertwined. Based on empirical case studies, this paper analyses these asymmetries of surveillance within the virtual walls of Fortress Europe and describes how low income Central and Eastern European (CEE) migrants cope with day-to-day bureaucratic welfare procedures in London. First, data collection methods will be clarified. Second, the new management values of technocratic bureaucracies that facilitate the digital selection of undesired migrants are theorised. Last, the limitations of such surveillance methods are evaluated against the counter measures employed by targeted benefit applicants.

Methods and research epistemology

Following the tradition of qualitative data analysis in cultural criminology, the applied research methodology is founded on a critical ethnographic approach. As part of my PhD research, this study is based on multi-sited ethnographic research completed in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom. The general aim of this pre-conceptualised research process was to follow and study CEE

low-income migrants in real time to facilitate the documentation of the formation and operation of their interaction with local authorities and social networks with a view to better understanding how welfare dependent migrants develop coping strategies to gain access to service provisions.

Multi-sited ethnographic research was performed with various CEE migrant communities to clarify their strategies for coping with control measures, such as contesting digital monitoring techniques and attempting to gain access to social services. These research methods comprise three pragmatic approaches (multi-sited ethnography, institutional ethnography, and virtual ethnography) based on the three main contextual components of the research subject. Research techniques involve the classical ethnographic tools of data collection such as participant observation, interviews and shadowing of NGOs and civil servants as part of an institutional ethnography. Interpretation and translation of these multiple online and offline interactions refers to 'collective (cultural) understandings that are continually negotiated through linguistic and other symbolic practices' (Sullivan and Rabinow, 1979:31). Social media such as the online platform of Facebook serve as key ethnographic sources for tracing these actions and the meanings in these actions via multiple channels. By completing interviews on this website, searching for participants and following group discussions of activists and academics, this platform provided not only access to participants but also primary data on the research subject. Also, the use of social media allows the researcher to avoid traditional structuralist dualities (of researcher-researched, observer-observed, object-subject, rational-irrational, or formal-informal) through the examination of multiple presences in a multi-textured arena of experience that temporarily transcends the typical constraints of space and time in transnational research.

As a researcher, interpreter, housemate, "advocacy worker", and ethnographer, the different roles that were adopted often conflicted, leading to the collection of specific information about participants'considerations. Also, fieldwork was completed in the host country through shadowing local NGOs that were working with newcomers, and as an advocacy worker, interpreting between migrants and local authorities. Additionally, many of these interactions were analysed afterwards via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with migrants, advocacy workers and civil servants.

The experiences of migrants and their reflections about their interactions with local authorities in a foreign setting can only be understood through an analysis of their migration narratives. Therefore, the researcher is required to employ a mixed methods approach, established around qualitative interview data. Interviews took place online and offline in four different countries between May 2013 and February 2014. In a 14-month period of fieldwork, 98 interviews were completed. Of these, 56 were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using Nvivo data analysis software. More than 50 interviews were completed with low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe and returnees in different countries, 12 with social workers and

advocacy workers, 4 with police officers, 6 with interpreters, 2 with lawyers, and 24 with civil servants such as integration officers, education officers and counsellors. More than 30 of the CEE newcomer participants were women while 12 were men, with an average age of 41.2 years (ranging from 21-62 years).

I conducted semi-structured interviews both face-to-face and online in one- to three-hour sessions. Most of these were tailored to the participants, and additionally tried to capture information about participants' interpersonal relationships. Also, structured interviews were conducted with advocacy workers. Differences between the data collected in different locations and time-slots provided 'thick' accounts of participants' different perceptions and understandings of self-representation. They also enabled me to understand some contradictions between what participants said in private, and how they behaved in the presence of others.

Using these findings, I first, I describe local development in the social services of host countries that function as intra-national borders in their selection of migrants. Second, the different counterstrategies (manipulation techniques) that have been developed by low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe as a response to local surveillance practices are defined.

Population selection using welfare surveillance

In this post-enlargement EU context, anxiety is increasing as nation states realise they are losing their hold over their own skilled citizens, while attracting 'undesirable' groups, such as 'benefit tourists'. As external control measures change in favour of internal control, technological development creates an assemblage of new control and surveillance techniques for managing population flows. By adapting neoliberal values with regard to population selection, security is defined in economic terms such as productivity, forcing bureaucratic technologies to screen newcomers based on the parameter of financial capability as a precondition of inclusion. These values define foreign welfare claimants as social economic threats that should be eliminated. As economic threats to national welfare, new security measures are initiated to select out 'good' or 'productive' citizens from undesirable, 'passive' citizens (Woolford, 2013). Consequently, welfare-dependent newcomers are targeted by a growing number of monitoring and welfare restrictions in the form of geopolitical technologies to encourage financially dependent outsiders to move on.

With the securitisation of intra-European migration, control measures are being extended into the field of social service provision, and with the increasing privatisation of public sector activities new values and mechanisms are being introduced through welfare services. On the one hand, security has become defined in terms of financial dependency, and on the other, governmental services have turned into a poverty-management industry, adapting efficiency-oriented strategies and the competitive values of the business sector.

The general goal of neoliberal welfare policies is to adopt production ideologies to force everyone into productive market relations through "investigation strategies, and intrusive surveillance practices" (Bessant, Watts, Dalton and Smyth, 2006). These changes are distinguishable in the rolling back of social services and the rolling out of an increasing number of punitive controls that combine criminal and migration law. Surveillance practices are geared to eliminate potential threats and have resulted in increases in the monitoring and disciplining of the transnational movement of the poor in Europe. In such a harsh policy context, those experiencing poverty are conceived of as 'culpable actors', at risk of 'moral hazard' (Mead 1997, 19).

For example, after a foreigner passes the National Habitual Residence test in the UK, their different benefit claims can be processed online. Although most of these claims are related to different government organs, or to privatised services, entitlements are strongly interrelated and complex. Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support are the most commonly claimed benefits among immigrants from CEE, who often depend on irregular jobs from employment agencies which do not provide them a with regular income.

These claims bring foreign claimants (and other UK-born claimants) into contact with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) offices. These institutions are part of an executive agency which was created by combining two agencies: the Employment Service, which operated Jobcentres, and the Benefits Agency, which ran social security offices. Programmes such as 'Employment Zones' and 'Pathways to Work' were managed from these offices, sometimes by JCP. These offices regulated many aspects of unemployed people's lives by *making searching for jobs obligatory, and failure to do so subject to sanction*.

From 19 October 2012 onwards, all claimants who apply for Jobseeker's Allowance are expected to look for work online using the new Universal Jobmatch website, an online system accessible from a government portal, powered by Monster.com.

Legal regulations relating to population selection are thus intertwined with an internal selection process based on labour participation, thereby excluding the unemployed, welfare-dependent newcomer. Coercive mobility-flow-related practices are therefore being streamed by economic priorities in the global context. This process presupposes the financial surveillance of people on the move as a defining variable of welfare dependent groups. In order to understand how these welfare-service-based financial monitoring structures facilitate spatial population control, we need to understand how governing bodies are able to invent incentives that 'encourage' members of undesired groups to voluntarily leave their territory in the European context.

Social sorting and population control takes the form of the intersubjective construction of security as a political technology (Burke, 2007, p. 20). This securitisation "enables, produces and constrains individuals within larger systems

of power" (Burke, 2007:20) defined under different modalities of surveillance (Bigo and Walker, 2007; Jones and Newburn, 1998). Based on the Foucaultian concept of disciplinary power, this panoptic modality in governing initiatives includes both control and behaviour-modifying mechanisms. As the collected empirical data illustrates (see below), enforcing mobility is one of the most common strategies deployed by authorities to channel and thereby regulate population and control unwieldy flows of people. State incentives are coded in different panoptic modalities to guide people who are on the move. These include mapping, valuation, codification, enclosure and boundary-setting. Since these incentives are proactively designed to shape individual conduct, financial planning is one of the key means of managing (im) mobilities and access. This apparatus of control and surveillance, used as a spatial disciplinary technology of the EU, may even play a more central role in the de- and re-territorialisation of people, since no visa regulations exist for European citizens (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987).

In brief, the practical implications of this process are that unwanted groups are classified through a process of securitisation and are tracked using local surveillance methods that reconstruct their profiles to supply data for new targeted measures. Aas and Bosworth have described the exclusion of migrants using invisible governmental incentives, and introduce this process of collective coercion and control as a *funnel of expulsion*. This concept refers to an additional dynamic of control that forces migrants to make the seemingly free decision to leave. These dynamics, in which different forms of control and access overlap, puts the emphasis on material incentives such as exclusion from social services, as described in the selected examples (Aas and Bosworth, 2013:266). However, these material incentives increasingly circumvent privacy and constitutional law.

Ban-opticon: the management of unease through financial sorting

Following Foucaultian ideas about governance, Bigo defines this process of exclusion as 'the management of unease'. Bigo claims that the legal state is rationalised by the routines and technology of professionals or politicians, police and judges. Thus, in order to understand how migration management is designed, we have to analyse the practices of these actors. In the words of Bigo, "This chart is not a panopticon projected on a global scale, it is what we - by combining the term "Ban", borrowed from Jean Luc Nancy and reworked by Giorgio Agamben, with Foucault's "optics" - call a Ban-opticon". As the term *Ban* implies, the normalisation of exclusion, including the predictable management of the future using measures of control, this process of selection management relies on the technical advantages of databases to define who might relocate to where, and who should remain immobile. The Ban is intended to define in advance who represents a possible threat in the local

context, and why. Security no longer depends on immobilizing authorities, nor by the 'permanent gaze of the guard'. By labelling some people 'illegal', 'criminal', or 'terrorist', preventive measures are enabled in the post-September 11th context that normalise the 'permanent state of emergency' in Western societies. As Bigo suggests, this "governmentality of unease" is characterized by practices of exceptionalism, acts of profiling, the containing of foreigners, and a normative imperative of mobility (Bigo, 2005). The ban attempts to show how the role of routines and the acceptance of everyday life protects some over others, and how the protection of these others against themselves relates to deep structure which explains the 'moment' of the declaration of exception (Bigo, 2005:3-5). As suggested, the key institutionalised risk management task of this system is profiling. Through these selection practices of the European Ban-opticon, the financial position of individuals comes to play a central organizing and disciplinary role for governments and societies, although its social sorting power is still not fully acknowledged. The screening of financial capacities facilitates the reproduction of social order and the selection of access in the context of inequalities, both within and across national spaces, and along the overlapping lines of class, gender, race and nationality.

As will be shown in the case of low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe, the recent use of information and communication technologies in public administration, combined with organizational change, serve to control and discipline new migrants. These technically improved public services are outsourced to third-party service providers that are entitled to control and sanction their users on behalf of the government. Technocratic developments with E-governments are essential in these monitoring processes since profile-based screening instruments also delineate the changing preconditions of entitlement to social aid. Although these techniques communicate the pragmatic goal of improving services for customers, many of the recent administrative polices are developed to socially sort unwanted migrants.

By analysing the bureaucratic field of welfare services we can trace the interactions in social service programs that provide a closer look at the operative logics of these monitoring processes that are determining the contemporary politics of population control. The main hypotheses behind this analyses is that, in place of the acceptance of expulsive governing incentives, the performance of low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe "are shaped to the symbolic conditions of the bureaucratic field and therefore are used to emulate the desired characteristics of neoliberal citizenship" (Woolford, 2013). The question is what kind of strategies are invented to reproduce those characteristics that make individuals legally eligible to governmental support.

Policing migrants using social services

Increasing mobility and digitalisation has turned many components of the bureaucratic system upside down. Driven by the functionalist principles of the

neoliberal market, Lipsky's 'Street Level Bureaucracy' (2010) has changed into a system of online applications and monitoring processes in which interactions between bureaucrats and individuals take place at a distance. As a result, management paradigms are overruling recent government welfare practices, resulting in decreased autonomy for local bureaucrats, limited face-to-face contact with their clients, and a reduction in the discretionary space for decision making, all of which contribute to a low level of government transparency since even social servants are unable to access their clients data. These elements of new bureaucratic systems are driven by target-based, cost-efficient systems which use privatised services and production targets in social policies.

Although there is still general naivety about digitalised bureaucracies, there are clear indications of how the anonymity of service provision via online systems is leading to new forms of interaction and social selection as part of risk assessment justified as fraud prevention practices. The detachment of individuals from their personal data and the selection of personal characteristics according to profiling results reflects *a reality gap* (Heeks et al, 1999). Digital data is not always reliable, and is often not up to date, or may contain false information about the person it refers to. This gap is also created in the case of welfare claims when applicants try to produce information that makes them eligible for social support. These practices are increasing governmental unease and mutual suspicion between individuals and back-office bureaucrats. Users try to avoid profiling; the service provider tries to avoid data being manipulated. Many academics have recently raised concerns in the field of securitisation studies, and like Lyon (2006), have warned of the lack of privacy regulation and encouraged better investigation of profiling and classification processes that act as gatekeepers and which directly affect, create and sustain discriminatory practices.

With growing transnational mobility, individual data-based selection processes disetablish the boundaries between external and internal domains of sovregnity, dissolving the national penal domain, and mixing elements of immigration and criminal law (Stumpf, 2006; Bigo et al., 2007) and recently, social policies. As a form of contamination (in reference to restrictions on privacy), this process is leading to the extended control and reduction of state transparency about data collection as a method of social sorting. In order to illustrate the interplay of restricting measures and the response of migrants to monitoring and selection, I provide a few examples from fieldwork completed in 2014. London, as one of the biggest metropolises in Europe, embodies the dream destination for many Central-East-European migrants. First, I describe some of the selection methods that target newcomer EU migrants to London based on my findings as a volunteer at a local NGO. After detailing the procedures claimants are supposed to complete, I describe some examples of surveillance-related tactics that are common responses to application procedures and which aim to improve claimants' chances of obtaining benefit entitlement or social support.

War on welfare - profiling the unemployed

The primary means of social sorting in the case of migrants with EU citizenship is financial surveillance (Allmer, 2012), as manifested in service accessibility, reporting obligations and labour participation. In terms of access to welfare aid, financial sanctions are applied to clients who are unable to fulfil the preconditions specified by their case managers. The following examples illustrate some of the selection strategies, mediated by information and communication technology (ICT), for delivering or refusing welfare services.

In every EU member state, there are basic administrative procedures that enable foreign EU citizens to live and work abroad. In the case of the United Kingdom, the Jobcentre Plus is the main offline contact for newcomers who have applied for government support. This is often an uncomfortable environment that requires most claimants to report on a weekly basis about their efforts to find jobs or minimize costs. Most claims for financial support depend on a first claim, which has to be made online. In the form of a domino effect, if one claim is rejected, clients become automatically ineligible to make others, in particular with the case of the Habitual Residence Test. This was invented as a primary selection instrument for EU citizens who seek to claim benefits in the UK (Sainsbury 2012). After an online application is made for a benefit claim, this form is sent to applicants to monitor the term of residence and the financial background of applicants based on their labour history in the host country. As these procedures take a long time, migrants get into debt and often lose their tenancy rights. When they are evicted, they have to re-apply using their new address, and if they do not pass do not receive Job Seeker's Allowance or housing benefit, so they are constantly kept on the move. These conditions increase the reliance of newcomers on extremely low-paid jobs, or irregular jobs without long-term contracts, or jobs obtained through employment agencies. In the last few years landlords and agencies have thrived by exploiting such precariously situated tenants and employees.

The monitoring of applications and the selection of benefit recipients are thus determined at several levels. This does not just involve an audit of recipients, or surveillance of eligibility criteria, but an extended and consolidated verification procedure based on combined databases with computer assistance. As these examples illustrate, these outsources *government incentives for profiling* financially dependent newcomers in the receiving country involve the construction of the notion of 'bad foreign opportunists' versus 'good citizens' who deserve the support and protection of the state. These disincentives that work against foreign benefit claimants are also traceable in other screening instruments.

Since the relevant offices work according to targets, case managers monitor and sanction those who do not fulfil requirements, which directly impacts the additional benefits they receive, such as free school meals, housing benefit or access to council housing. Therefore, the case managers at Jobcentres or at HMRC, as well as digital

applications systems, are seen by migrants as a form of policing rather than support, which involves the constant screening of personal conditions, activities and income. Being financially sanctioned is typically migrants' greatest fear, due to the fact that they are not always up to date with the criteria which must be met to receive payment. On the other hand, case managers are also under pressure from this target system, so they are aware that they may be sanctioning those who are especially in need of government aid, but may be required to minimise successful claims as much as possible.

In the case of applications for housing benefit, monitoring of household and marital status through unexpected visits by civil servants involves real invasions of claimants' privacy. Additional monitoring measures are targeted at those who present a high risk of fraudulent behaviour, such as tax credit claimants who work only a low number of hours per day as cleaners. These risk-management targets have emerged from the use of fake payslips produced and sold by entrepreneurs who help new migrants to claim tax credits without real employment contracts. However, not every such restriction can be so clearly tracked. Claims are also regularly lost by authorities or rejected without clarification, so it is often difficult to appeal against decisions. These barriers are experienced as restrictions and control measures for poor migrants who do not form part of the desired neoliberal labour force. The question is, how are these application processes reshaping the likely targets of future restrictions?

Surveillance asymmetries in transnational nationality

The difficulties migrants experience with their application processes and eligibility claims reflect the selection processes that are described above as profiling. Data provided by claimants permits the identification of financially disadvantaged migrants who are more willing to claim social benefits. By identifying their characteristics, new criteria for eligibility are defined that disallow these dependent newcomers from obtaining any entitlements. According to the research findings, since many newcomers have relatives who are following changes in legislation, they teach the newcomers about these criteria, who then develop the *expected digital profiles* as claimants in response. These processes of data manipulation are regularly discovered by screening authorities who try to combine different data resources and restrictions on application procedures to deny access to unemployed migrants. These practices have been recognised by several NGOs that represent applicants who complain about fast changing eligibility criteria, slow procedures, inaccurate decision-making processes, and a lack of transparency regarding which data is collected.

When I was shadowing advocacy workers, I noticed similar phenomena. Most of the applicants do not know what the authorities 'know' about them. Claimants have no insight into these databases, the communication of authorities is vague, and the reasons for any cuts are often not defined. In contrast, claimants are

constantly forced to provide more evidence about their situation and to post original documents to authorities to confirm their identity in a process of continually proving their entitlement to benefits. These practices of 'inverted proof' that forces applicants to defend themselves due to constant disbelief of their eligibility are increasing the mutual suspicion of claimants and back office workers, just as their awareness increases about exchanges of data between nongovernmental actors under the sacred term of safeguarding, which was invented to justify additional control measures. While potentially and sometimes actually leading to social sorting and discrimination, this dataveillance process is ambiguous and has not avoided a counter response. Surveillance subjects do not simply accept their assigned roles in surveillance systems, but reconfigure their identities by taking advantage of the system of categorization by which they are appraised. They actively participate in their own surveillance, and some encourage the implementation of the surveillance systems brought to bear upon them. Lyon (2007) focuses on the role of transparency as central to lessening the risk of discrimination created by the new mechanisms of surveillance, and what he calls the 'safety state'.

In brief, preventive selection is taking place in digitalised environments based on constantly changing variables with the assistance of civilians. In this liquid, database-oriented surveillance process, control and discipline go hand in hand, targeting the perceived threat of individuals with selected characteristics.

'Follow the white rabbit'- Anticipation in digital selection

The selection process of determining social service eligibility involves interaction between service providers and claimants. Migrants apply various strategies to reproduce or imitate the characteristics of 'desirable citizens'. My observations and interviews led me to conclude that applicants who want to become eligible for social benefits learn about the limitations of government data systems and application forms from others. Most of the strategies they apply are learned from others who are already familiar with the systems, such as settled minorities in their local environments. Pakistani landlords, employment agency workers and NGO advocacy workers also educate newcomers about how to adapt to screening policies and adapt documents to make the applicants appear to be entitled to welfare-related benefits.

Migrants who consciously construct the identity of 'deserving citizens' also change their coping strategies in line with changes in family circumstances. This development was illustrated by cases in which marital status changed, and by a shift away from receiving from unemployment benefits to tax credits. As was concluded, the construction of a virtual identity is supposed to ensure the economic and social rights of newcomers, but its behaviour-modification effects are unpredictable.

As part of my fieldwork in 2014 several strategies that were employed to avoid, circumvent or manipulate the surveillance strategies embedded in bureaucratic

processes were analysed. Within monitoring processes in social services, low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe are likely to take on very specific roles when they are engaging in *identity talk,* or defying de-individualised treatment. Identity talk is a historically developed coping strategy of marginal groups, such as low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe, who have been targeted by controlling measures for decennia by civil servants who often treat low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe as second-class citizens. Due to the experience of several generations, these newcomers have learned to be distrustful of administrators of welfare services and to deal with institutionalised prejudices in order to access governmental aid. Though many of the techniques they employ are very similar to those used by illegal migrants, some new strategies are being utilised by legal EU migrants, facilitated by contact from a distance. *Hiding* or avoiding institutional visibility, waiting for a period of time to meet criteria for entitlement (e.g. a minimum three-month period of registered residence in the UK), exchanging identities with family members, and changing names are tactics often used during the first steps of the application process.

Because the key emphasis is on work in the UK welfare system, labour has also turned into the central element of self-representation of claimants, constructed as 'the entrepreneurial self'. This contextually created identity defines which individual characteristics are deemed socially valuable, and which are therefore worth highlighting by low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe when they seek access to specific goods such as social service assistance. The presentation of the 'economic self' has changed structurally with the digitalisation of bureaucratic processes. Thus in order to fully understand the accounts of these performances among low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe, we first need to examine the broader constraints that structure and shape these individual performances. In order to understand this process, we must also "remain attentive to the immediate normative context, as well as the variety and complexities of human interaction and interpretation of these responses" (Woolford, 2013). According to the findings of my fieldwork, many low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe disavow their original and discredited identity through the practices of distancing and creating fictive, or undated data, or valorising some components of their identity by accepting and even promoting certain aspects of their national identity. Aware of the ever present threat of stigmatization, these individuals protect their identities using specific manoeuvres (Woolford 2013: 293). When one fears the exclusionary effects of transparency, the reconstruction of identity (the case of identity fraud, for instance) may be an attractive option. Attesting to the market value of personal data, identity is used and sold as a commodity by unemployed CEE migrants who take advantage of dysfunctional surveillance mechanisms. Due to the hegemony of bureaucratic systems in the European Union, the invisibility of individuals who are

detached from their digital identity is creating a new market. Two years of fieldwork with migrants indicated to me that participants were becoming more assertive towards many professional policies adopted after the enlargement of the EU. The commodification of personal documents, which are the most valuable capital of marginal populations who are willing to move to another country, is facilitated by the dysfunctionality of control mechanisms and the unequal rights of migrants. Sham marriages or birth certificates of dead family members or infants may be seen as investments and the commodities of marginalised, poor people. Participants are aware of the risks they take by selling their documents, which in many cases exposes them to accusations of fraud, but they are also aware of the limitations of international legislation. Entrepreneurs, who see themselves as recruiters, visit isolated villages and offer foreign work and housing to unemployed men or women. These hopeless migrants travel to host countries, register themselves, and due to the assistance they require end up being used by foreign criminal networks to obtain different types of credit and mobile phone contracts and leasing agreements. Many of those who have registered as UK residents have never left their home countries. In addition, the quicker that information about personal experiences with fraud spreads, the more individuals became interested in the formal processes related to claiming welfare support. This awareness leads to the ongoing recalculation of the value of such personal documents, and the more information those who are marginalised have about the value of their personal data and the application process, the more they try to exploit it as a commodity on the international market. This tendency towards commodification is leading to an increase in the manipulation of applications for residency and correspondingly restrictive application processes at Jobcentre Plus offices.

Working tax credit online – "Dividuals" in the web of spidergrams

When restrictions on claiming Jobseeker's Allowance were introduced, applications for tax credits increased among research participants. Tax credits are designed to subsidise low-income taxpayers. Several related documents are required by HMRC[1] as proof of income, including payslips with the applicant's PAYE (Pay As You Earn) number and work-related contracts. HMRC is, among other things, responsible for managing working tax credits and child tax credits. It is an efficiency-oriented tax management office that has adopted security approaches from the commercial sector. The following cases illustrate how private sector and e-commerce surveillance methods prove to be dysfunctional when adapted to e-governance.

The problem lies in their different objectives: public administration is concerned

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1 HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs) is a non-ministerial department of the UK Government responsible for the collection of taxes and the payment of some forms of state support.

with the well-being of society, while e-business strives to maximise profit and increase market share (Lau, 2006:39). Furthermore, with regard to privacy issues, information manipulated within an e-government process should be treated at a higher level of sensitivity than in a commercial business, and there is no need for the same level of standardisation and optimisation of processes as in a commercial business (ibid, 39). In addition, governmental processes involve more parties, which means that interests may conflict. Although HMRC employs strict sanctioning and monitoring measures, many participants prefer to make claims through HMRC instead of Jobcentre Plus because of the impersonal nature of the interaction process. Although both services engage in the social sorting of the welfare Ban-opticon, the tools employed by HMRC are far less transparent than those of Jobcentres.

Clients can apply for tax credits online, which requires them to fill in a form, sign it and submit it to the data centre at HMRC. These forms are filled in with the assistance of brokers who can supply the applicant with the answers needed to meet entitlement screening parameters. In comparison to Jobseeker's Allowance applications, these processes do not deal with claimants as individuals, but rather rely on the data that clients share. The HMRC collects and analyses impressive amounts of data, but the process of data collection and analysis is invisible. In the next section of this paper, the surveillance software and selection methods used by HMRC are discussed to determine how a gap may arise between a client's digitalised identity and real identity, and how tax credit applicants can use this to their advantage.

When Jobseeker's Allowance and housing benefit restrictions were introduced, many welfare-dependent newcomers sought alternative solutions to enable them to keep paying their rent. Restricting state support for newcomers from new EU member states has increased the debt level of many CEE migrant families. Yet loopholes in the procedures of welfare bureaucracies created by contemporary dataveillance technology have provided welfare claimants with new opportunities to construct and invent profiles of 'deserving citizens' who are entitled to state benefits. Not actually having to be present during face-to-face selection encounters allows claimants to manipulate their identity in an attempt to approximate the neoliberal ideal type of tax-paying citizen.

HMRC uses Connect, a piece of business software that facilitates the collection of data from 28 different data sources, cross-matching one billion internal and third-party data items to uncover hidden relationships between organisations, customers and their associated data links. This software transforms data into spider diagrams or 'spidergrams', a visualisation tool that displays individuals and associated data links of interest by mapping addresses, phone numbers, bank accounts and employers which are linked to each other as graphical symbols representing a maze of connections that ripple across the screen and facilitate the discovery of attempts

at concealment. If someone is operating in the hidden economy, the spidergram will take on a different shape.

Access to such a comprehensive dataset not only allows investigators to spot anomalies, but also simplifies HMRC's procedure for checking information contained in individual tax returns (such as, for example, data about inheritance tax, for which HMRC receives about 300,000 paper returns every year). HMRC can sift through information about property transactions, company ownership, loans, bank accounts, employment history and self-assessment records to identify where estates might have failed to declare items of interest. "Mystery shopping" checks, the observation of businesses by inspectors, tip-offs from informers, the identification of fake PAYE numbers, third-party information, and information from businesses and government agencies are also used by HMRC to check the veracity of claims. The number of properties an individual owns can be compared to declared rental income, with any discrepancies indicating potential fraud.

By controlling the 'data doubles' of personal (legal) identities in the registries and databanks of government agencies and private companies, HMRC is able to generate knowledge from data about individuals. This "virtualization of citizenship" (Schinkel, 2010) is a crucial technique in the neoliberal strategies of nation states, making it possible to identify, differentiate, monitor and intervene with populations and individuals who deviate from cultural values and accepted forms of individual responsibility. "Individual cases are reduced to a series of parameters that are accessed and interpreted by the digital system, which renders an individual's profile more accessible for bureaucratic purposes as it is stripped of the diversity and dynamism of a living, breathing individual. By reducing the individual to a series of discrete, but associated, parameters for assessment and evaluation, the bureaucracy transposes the plurality of individualism with the predictability and manageability of the digital profile" (Jarvis, 2010:13).

Two forms of tax credit are frequently claimed by the participants that I researched; namely, working tax credit and child tax credit. The process for obtaining both requires the same documents, but different screening mechanisms are used.

Control Alt Hack – changing virtual citizenship abroad

While CEE migrants are often described as passive victims of their economic circumstances, some participants in the study were in fact actively trying to find solutions to their predicament, and, faced with discriminatory bureaucratic demands, responded flexibly to changing circumstances in order to remain eligible to benefits. These welfare-dependent participants have learnt to manipulate surveillance systems and have found ways to manage their identities vis- à-vis authorities. By trial-and-error, applicants learn the requirements of different welfare provisions and how to present themselves accordingly. Families manage and manipulate their

employment history and number of working hours in order to remain eligible for maximum benefits, while often enjoying significantly higher incomes in the grey economy.

In April 2014, at the end of the tax year, several families who participated in the study reported receiving a letter from HMRC notifying them of an overpayment. Most promptly appealed against the decision, ready to prove their case, even though their claims were based on fictitious employment contracts. Many welfare-dependent families had contracts with fictitious firms that sell employment contracts and provide payslips for use in tax credit applications. Low-income CEE migrant families who were notified of overpayments often made their claims based on these documents, without the firms paying National Insurance contributions for their 'employees'. Many of the firms provided fake payslips for cleaning jobs (of one or two hours a day); consequently, all cleaners were subjected to increased screening for potential tax credit fraud. Families were obliged to pay back tax credits of more than GBP 5,000 annually. Suspect claimants had to provide written proof of their employment. The repercussions people faced were based on their profile in the simulation and computer-generated projections (Staples, 2002), not on how they actually behaved. These processes occur continuously, without any personal contact (Graham and Wood, 2003).

One participant who was tracked for a year in the process of the research was notified by HMRC of an overpayment in 2013. She was already paying back another debt for an overpayment in 2012 of more than GBP 9,000. She received no housing benefit because she was living in a new apartment and there had been no decision about the amount of council tax to be paid, so she had to wait for the council decision before claiming tax credit. On paper, she was self-employed with a cleaning job, and had applied for working tax credit as a single mother, child benefits and child tax credit. In this situation it is easy to lose track of the administrative situation: Once the woman in question submitted the same tax credit claim documents to HMRC and to JCP for income support, which meant that she had two identical employment contracts. Another time she had to look up the name of her employer's company during a conversation about her overpayment. Her advocacy worker pointed out: 'Everyone knows the name of their employer'. Later, she admitted to paying for payslips, but was apologetic and vowed that she would never do it again, and she stuck to her promise. Instead, she changed her status to self-employed and was hoping to avoid overpayment the following year.

Another participant described similar practices, only in this case payslips were not provided by a fictitious firm, but were sold by employees of real companies:

> Interviewer: 'Is it a copy they make for you?'
> Respondent: *'No, it is based on a registered contract they provide payslips with. It is fake employment, but it is like a real one. It is the same with bank statements.'*

> Interviewer: 'Ok, but is it really a registered company?'
> Respondent: '*No, it is a payslip from the Grange Hotel. I can fix payslips with the manager.*' (BR5)

This interview suggests that there is an extended network of actors who enable claimants to provide fictitious data about themselves and their labour history. As described in the previous section, brokers and recruitment agents commodify documents, and help put them to use in digitalised welfare services. Surveillance in 'control societies' like the UK can be characterised as "powered by simulation" rather than representation (Best, 2010). On the surface, the circulation of data represents existing citizens, transformed into a quantifiable and manageable form; however, what is actually occurring is the creation of selves, or "dividuals", which are simulations of the original (cf. Kilger, 1994; Poster, 1991). As Williams writes (2005), a dividual is a "physically embodied human subject that is endlessly divisible and reducible to data representations via the modern technologies of control, like computer-based systems". A dividual is a simulation of itself, constantly 'modulating' or responding "to differing expectations for productivity, consumption and political conduct" (Packer, 2006:390).

As theorised by Deleuze, these simulations are multiple assemblages and take on a life of their own (Nayar, 2015). "Unlike the previous discriminatory apparatuses, the categories of differentiation are multiply cross-referenced so that one can hardly define the factors that result in credit being denied, much less change desirability. The repercussions people face are based on their profile in the simulation and computer-generated projections, not on how they actually behave. In essence, the original self is superfluous to the processes that follow on from the gathering of information, processes that distribute impacts and effects based on these multiple simulated data-generated selves, without regard to the original referent" (Best, 2010:11).

Personal activities and documented characters are divided up, and the need for the representation of real actors slowly disappears. Besides the fact that data systems know more about the dividuals' parameters than the original person does, overestimation of the power of the all-seeing eye of such technocratic instruments can occur. The vast amount of data that is collected about individuals often remains unconnected. For example, one of the participants in the study was unable to complete her application for working tax credit because she was unable to find the address to which to submit her documents. The claim was closed. As she had become unemployed, she was no longer eligible for working tax credit, but had to apply for Jobseeker's Allowance at Jobcentre Plus instead. When JCP required proof that she was no longer receiving working tax credit, she showed the relevant letter at the office, but her case manager failed to add it to her file. Consequently, her Jobseeker's Allowance was terminated as well, which in turn led to cuts in her

housing benefit. She kept attending Jobcentre Plus appointments without receiving Jobseeker's Allowance because they were paying her pension and National Insurance contributions. She was advised to provide proof that she had no additional income in order to receive Jobseeker's Allowance payments again. Her case illustrates the gaps in communication between the two major benefit distributors (JCP and HMRC). Working tax credits are frequently applied for using false payslips, false contracts, false addresses or self-employment registration. The gaps between real individuals and dividuals and the lack of interaction between service providers has enabled tax credit claimants to manipulate data according to the changing requirements.

As a consequence of these cat-and-mouse games between claimants and the bureaucracy, there is an increasing reality gap between the real identity of the claimant and the 'dividual' who is translated into data based on specific parameters. Databases become full of manipulated personal information provided by those who feel targeted by local bureaucracies. These mutated profiles lead to unpredictability and inconsistency in spatial sorting strategies, increasing the distrust among benefit claimants who, as a result, become even less transparent. Although screening mechanisms like spidergrams are increasingly applied to databases, the algorithm that is supposed to classify claimants may be cheated. Retargeting and restrictive policies both underestimate the participative skills of applicants, and overestimate the capacity of a digitalised bureaucracy.

Conclusion

Although increasing attention is being paid to meta/data analyses and the reliability of digital surveillance, the impacts of smaller local databases that are used for local population control on the lives of everyday citizens should not be underestimated. The study reveals that digitalised surveillance practices are overestimated regarding their objectivity and effectiveness, and that the calculated effects of surveillance awareness are underestimated in the field of welfare provision in the UK. Due to the conflicting values pursue in the provision of welfare, managerialist neoliberal service providers are unable to act according to the norms of a welfare state and must adopt competitive market-oriented principles. The production-oriented notion 'from welfare to work' is shifting the role and strategies of contracted service providers that control and sanction the unemployed. Unattractive migrant groups, often seen as 'benefit tourists', associated with benefit shopping, are targeted and excluded from the welfare system and forced into the labour market. However, in place of leaving the host country, or avoiding service providers, many applicants stay.

The reality gap facilitated by the digitalisation of welfare services creates new operating space for both civil servants and applicants. Through welfare application forms, newcomers create a new digital identity that is recycled in governmental statistics, NGO reports and by policymakers who believe the data represent their

citizens. However, with an increasing awareness of data surveillance, those who receive "benefits" from manipulating data will continue managing their identity.

As illustrated, as the knowledge of excluded groups about the preconditions of service providers' digital selection techniques and the data collection methods of bureaucratic organs increases, this group learns and invents new tactics to circumvent legal restrictions. Although these newcomers are often framed as dependent and uneducated, they successfully develop their knowledge about the weaknesses and advantages of digitalised bureaucracies and adapt data to match the parameters of the desired applicants. Coping strategies are differentiated on a broad scale, although identity management plays a central role. By providing the 'perfect data' that entitles them to the provision of services, these applicants structurally manipulate data surveillance methods and challenge the profiling algorithms. As the vicious circle continues, welfare systems invent more data control mechanisms that further widen the reality gap between the individual and his or her digitalized identity, the 'dividual'. Through this process, the most successful migrants remain hidden from the scrutiny of social services and invisible to the 'Welfare Ban-opticon'.

Low-income migrant from Central and Eastern Europe are moving toward Western Europe with a range of aspirations, particularly a search for social dignity. However, targeting by NGOs and market-oriented advocacy contributes to reinforcing the pre-existing ideas about marginal CEE migrants that justify targeting mechanisms. In short, these neoliberal selection methods shift the focus of discriminatory practices from legal parameters onto the financial capabilities of applicants. CEE migrants who settle abroad are constantly monitored by their environment: they are subject to high expectations from their family networks and are living under the gaze of welfare surveillance. Theirs is a life of transgression on the edge of moral deservingness and legal eligibility, constructed by a hidden identity. Although many sorting practices are meant to exclude unproductive newcomers, digitalised bureaucracies widen the gap between the real and the dividual and permit the artificial construction of 'desirable citizens' who manage to stay by tricking the Banopticon of social service provisions.

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