

Technopolitics and the Making of Europe

Infrastructures of Security

**Edited by Nina Klimburg-Witjes
Paul Trauttmansdorff**

First published 2024

ISBN: 978-1-032-21184-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-21232-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-26740-9 (ebk)

Afterword

**Securitizing the infrastructural Europe,
infrastructuring a securitized Europe**

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

DOI: 10.4324/9781003267409-12



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Afterword

Securitizing the infrastructural Europe, infrastructuring a securitized Europe

Annalisa Pelizza

Almost ten years have passed since the publication of the first volume of the *Making Europe* book series. Coordinated by the Foundation for the History of Technology, the series revealed the infrastructural integration of Europe. Generations of non-governmental experts achieved recognition as key figures of European integration. Most importantly, *Making Europe* showed how transport, energy, food, communication infrastructures are pivotal in explaining geopolitical transformations by looking at minute technological decisions. Together with the concept of “Infrastructural Europeanism” (Schipper and Schot 2011), that initiative marked a refreshing move for those who wished to inquiry institutional transformations from a different lens than party politics, short-term policies, intergovernmental vs. supranational debates.

And yet the fact that the *Making Europe* book series did not dedicate a volume to security infrastructures tells something about the pace at which the geopolitical context has changed in the last decade. The ineluctable intuition of *Technopolitics and the Making of Europe: Infrastructures of Security* concerns the inextricable nexus between infrastructuring and securitizing. It furthers an early intuition by scholars at the intersection of critical security studies (CSS) and science and technology studies (STS): infrastructures are more and more deployed towards addressing security concerns. More precisely, infrastructures are imagined and designed as responses to heterogeneous security concerns, and at the same time they influence what comes to be framed as “security concern.” This double movement – this book suggests – is inherent to the infrastructuring/securitizing nexus.

As the rich collection of studies collected in this book shows, the production of security allegedly requires the obdurate sturdiness of infrastructures. Nuclear power plants and liquified natural gas terminals are key to guarantee state sovereignty and national independence. Information infrastructures at the Schengen borders are conceived of as critical for crime control and prevention. Machine-learning-based systems are expected to play a major role in international security. Pandemic preparedness infrastructures are depicted as bastions facing the next pandemic emergency. It looks like over the last decade we have turned from securitizing the infrastructural Europe to infrastructuring a securitized Europe. It is striking – even disturbing – that a strategic document by the European Commission foresees member states eventually harmonizing their efforts only

to tackle a “constantly changing security landscape,” as aptly recalled in the Introduction. This raises the question of what Europe is currently being enacted through infrastructures, which alternative ones can be claimed, and by whom (Pelizza 2020).

On the other hand, this instrumental understanding of infrastructures conceals a less reassuring evidence. As they introduce new variables on top of old components, the implications of infrastructures cannot be fully predicted, and are mostly contingent. Unexpected breakdowns, frictions, disruptions factor the complexities of layered assemblages which unfold in space and time. A photoelectric lighting kit can only work if European nonstandard plugs fit African plugs (Akrih 1992). Punch-card libraries prompted a new age in climatology at the cost of overwhelming the capacity of weather records centres with their weight and volume (Edwards 2010). Fingerprinting codifications may be helpful in avoiding asylum shopping only if the European Union is ready to turn a blind eye to its long-term free market competition policy (Pelizza 2021). Infrastructures can exponentially multiply sources of insecurity (see also Suchman, Follis, and Weber 2017). They do not *solve* security concerns but *shift* the definition of what comes to be framed as security concerns, and thus of who should be involved. Eventually, infrastructuring a securitized Europe might reveal a differently insecure Europe.

Still, this comes at a cost. The ambivalent nature of infrastructures is strictly correlated to the diverse actors who design, maintain, benefit from or are impeded by them. As Star and Lampland (2009) noted, what is an enabling infrastructure for some might turn into an unavoidable impediment for others. Even more, by operating mundane exercises of exclusion infrastructures can enact actors as disempowered. In this sense, infrastructuring Europe is a political project, not less than Brussels’ policy-making. It crystallizes in artefacts, plug-ins, standards, policies, organizational procedures, and protocols who is excluded and who is included in the imagined polity that we call “Europe.”

Such exercises of exclusion can both enact new disempowered actors or strengthen old subjectivities. Often, they re-trace the old lines of colonial extractivism. Infrastructures for identification recur to fingerprinting models introduced in British colonies in Asia and Africa. People on the move’s careers are recorded as “other” when they do not fit predetermined options assuming low-income jobs. COVID-19 vaccination programs rarely reach out marginalized minorities and non-residents’ shelters. In all these cases, infrastructures that produce security for some European citizens not only fail to reach the whole population but introduce intolerable distinctions between an “us” and a “them.”

Regardless of their focus on biosecurity and biodefense, energy, borders, artificial intelligence, or global health security, the chapters collected in this book have shared a concern with the boundary-making capabilities of infrastructures. Be they Eastern European or post-Soviet Baltic states, people on the move or people left out by securitized and pharmaceutical logics, these chapters have engaged with a common effort to problematize the rhetoric of seamless integration, to stress the diverse, distributed implications of infrastructuring, to imagine alternative orders of Europe. Because of this, I welcome *Technopolitics and the Making of Europe*:

Infrastructures of Security as part of the collective effort to reverse-engineer the infrastructuring of a securitized Europe.

Acknowledgements

This contribution has been financially supported by the project “Processing Citizenship – Digital registration of migrants as co-production of citizens, territory and Europe,” which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, grant agreement No 714463.

References

- Akrich, Madeleine. 1992. “The De-Description of Technical Objects.” In *Shaping Technology/ Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, edited by W. E. Bijker and J. Law, 205–224. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Edwards, Paul. 2010. *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Pelizza, Annalisa. 2020. “Processing Alterity, Enacting Europe: Migrant Registration and Identification as Co-Construction of Individuals and Politics.” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 45 (2): 262–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243919827927>
- . 2021. “Identification as Translation: The Art of Choosing the Right Spokespersons at the Securitized Border.” *Social Studies of Science* 51 (4): 487–511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312720983932>
- Schipper, Frank, and Johan Schot. 2011. “Infrastructural Europeanism, or the Project of Building Europe on Infrastructures: An Introduction.” *History and Technology* 27 (3): 245–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07341512.2011.604166>
- Star, Susan Leigh, and Martha Lampland. 2009. “Reckoning with Standards.” In *Standards and Their Stories: How Quantifying, Classifying, and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life*, edited by M. Lampland and S.L. Star, 3–33. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Suchman, Lucy, Karolina Follis, and Jutta Weber. 2017. “Tracking and Targeting: Socio-technologies of (In)security.” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 42 (6): 983–1002.