In Service to Security: Constructing the Authority to Manage European Border Data Infrastructures

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Abstract

Large-scale IT systems play a central role in the management of European borders. These systems not only support the management of mobility but also require management in and of themselves. Based on fieldwork carried out at the headquarters of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) this thesis identifies a logic of service as central to the management of European border data infrastructures.

Developed across three articles the thesis contributes to critical research on security. The first article contributes to research on the roles and relationships of new actors to the field of European (in)security. It theorises the role of eu-LISA as a guild of IT service management. This service role enables actors to take up a relationship to the field which is distinct from, yet in support of the work of professionals of (in)security, which I describe as delimiting security. The second article contributes to research on the (de)politicisation of security practices. I argue where issues of expertise are often characterised as depoliticising under a logic of security, under a logic of service they are routinely contested and debated, providing a space to engage with the politics of this work. The third article contributes to research on evolving competitions and stakes in the field of European (in)security. It identifies efforts to define the support needed to define threats and risks as an increasingly important stake in the field, which I describe as service capital. I define service capital in terms of the power that accrues from providing this support to others. Exploring service capital requires considering how actors make their work visible to one another, thus this article also contributes to research on the relationship between visibility, governance, and power.

In summation, the thesis offers an in-depth empirical account of the working practices of a key agency in the management of European borders, contributes to key debates in the critical
security literature, and most significantly identifies service as a central line along which matters of (in)security are increasingly being constructed, contested, debated and defined.
Danish Abstract

Store IT-systemer spiller en central rolle i forvaltningen af de europæiske grænseområder. Systemerne understøtter styring af mobilitet, men kræver også i sig selv styring. Baseret på feltarbejde udført i hovedkvarteret for EU’s Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT-systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), identificerer denne afhandling servicelogikken som central for forvaltningen af de europæiske grænsers datainfrastrukturer.

Afhandlingens tre artikler bidrager til kritisk forskning i sikkerhed. Den første artikel bidrager til forskning i nye aktørers roller og relationer i feltet europæisk (u)sikkerhed. Den teoretiserer over eu-LISAs rolle som en it-serviceledelsesguild. Denne servicerolle gør aktører i stand at indgå i en relation tilfeltet, som er afgrænset fra, men alligevel understøtter de personalegrupper, der arbejder med (u)sikkerhed, karakteriseret som afgrænsende sikkerhed. Den anden artikel bidrager til forskning i (af)politisering af sikkerhedspraksisser. Jeg argumenterer for, at spørgsmålet om ekspertise ofte bliver karakteriseret som afpolitisereret ud fra en sikkerhedslogik, mens det ud fra en servicelogik rutinemæssigt bliver anfægtet og debatteret, hvilket åbner for muligheden for at drøfte den politiske dimension i arbejdet. Den tredje artikel bidrager til forskning i skiftende konkurrencer og interesser indenfor europæisk (u)sikkerhed. Den identificerer bestrebelser på at definere, hvilken form for support, der er brug for til at kortlægge trusler og risici, som en stadigt stigende interesse i feltet, hvilket jeg beskriver som servicekapital. Jeg definerer servicekapital som den magt, der opstår som konsekvens af at yde denne support til andre. At undersøge servicekapital fordrer samtidig overvejelser over, hvordan aktører synliggør deres arbejde for hinanden, og derfor bidrager denne artikel også til forskning i forholdet mellem synlighed, governance, og magt.

Sammenfattende giver afhandling en dybdegående, empirisk redegørelse for arbejdsgangene hos en nøgleenhed i ledelsen af europæiske grænser og bidrager dermed til
debatten om centrale emner i den kritiske sikkerhedslitteratur. Frem for alt identificerer den service som et nøglebegreb, hvorom spørgsmål om (u)sikkerhed i stigende grad bliver konstrueret, testet, debatteret og defineret.
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Introduction

The information provided by EU systems plays a vital role in helping national authorities to manage the external border, to fight crime and terrorism, and to curb irregular migration. To maximise this EU added value, the information provided by EU systems needs to be complete, accurate and reliable. The current picture is fragmented, complex and difficult to use (COM, 2017, p. 2).

This thesis is an in-depth analysis of the management of large-scale IT systems for European migration and border security. The European Union has identified these systems as vital to the control of external borders, the effort to fight crime and terrorism and curb irregular migration. At the same time, these systems are problematised as “fragmented, complex and difficult to use”. Thus, they are simultaneously framed as the basis for improved intervention in the management of European border security, whilst also requiring management themselves. It is this later aspect that my research seeks to explore. To do so, I focus on the work of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT systems in the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice (eu-LISA).

Established in 2011 as a means to improve the operational management of a select number of large-scale IT systems, eu-LISA is a decentralised agency under DG Home. It is responsible for the operational management of several systems in various stages of development and deployment (SIS II; VIS; Eurodac; EES; Etias; Ecris-TCN and soon e-CODEX) and related initiatives (interoperability, data quality). Specifically, eu-LISA is responsible for ensuring these systems are operational 24/7, allowing the exchange of data between legally approved authorities. On-demand access to accurate information stored in these systems, shared between actors, is regarded as critical by the European Commission. While the technical management of the systems takes place at eu-LISA’s operational site in Strasbourg, France (a legacy of the previous organisation of the operational management of the systems), supported by a backup
site in Austria, its headquarters, where I carried out my fieldwork, are located in Tallinn, Estonia, in addition to a Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium.

In line with ongoing calls within Critical Security Studies for situated accounts of security practices, this thesis is grounded in empirical fieldwork that was carried out at the headquarters of eu-LISA. Field site access was secured through a gatekeeper. During the fieldwork period, I took up the role of an eu-LISA intern, reviewing the then research and technology monitoring function. During fieldwork, online and in-person expert interviews (see Bogner and Menz, 2009) were carried out with eu-LISA members of staff, including staff from the headquarters, liaison office, and operational site, and with external stakeholders. In addition, two focus groups were held with members of staff from the headquarters and the operational site. Both the interviews and focus groups were recorded with consent. On return from fieldwork, I carried out an analysis of key eu-LISA documents (see Bowen, 2009), focusing primarily on annual activity reports, strategy reports, and single programming documents, in addition to the annual SIS II, VIS, and Eurodac technical reports. These reports offer insights into the formal priorities, strategies, practices, and activities of eu-LISA.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that the systems were an absent presence in much of the day-to-day work of my counterparts. While the systems provide the rationale and justification for the setting up and expanding role of eu-LISA, many of the staff at the headquarters had never been to the operational site, had limited exposure to and experience with the technical practices of maintaining the systems, and indeed would likely never be engaged in this kind of work. Rather, their focus is primarily on how to make eu-LISA, the Agency, as opposed to the technical systems, operate. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, this work, in addition to the operational management of the systems, is crucial to ensuring the legitimacy of eu-LISA’s role in the field of European border security and migration management. While the functioning of the Agency and the systems are ultimately intertwined, this distinction is important, as they
should not be conflated in any analysis.

The analysis of materials produced during fieldwork to construct knowledge on eu-LISA was strongly influenced by the need to take seriously the views and opinions of my counterparts. This approach to my research has been a touchstone for how I have approached the ethical and critical aspects of the thesis. I recognise service as central to how my expert counterparts make sense of their work. Therefore, this thesis attends to the relationship between security and service, with a particular focus on the tensions it brings to the fore.

This thesis draws on Critical Security Studies, specifically on Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology-International Political Sociology (PARIS-IPS) approaches to the study of (in)security (Bigo and McCluskey, 2018). A PARIS-IPS approach analyses processes of (in)securitisation as part of the competition among actors to define the boundary between security and insecurity (Bigo, 2013). Such an understanding of security is heavily influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory as a framework for analysis, which I also engage with. These competitions determine whose expertise, authority, and legitimacy will emerge as the dominant framework through which (in)security is made sense of. (In)security is performed through the day-to-day practices and routines of multiple actors, who possess a shared sense of what is at stake but differ according to how security should be enacted. This body of work argues that security is an essentially contested concept, and, it argues that we must attend to the various “disputes, controversies and struggles” (Aradau, 2018, p. 300) involved in efforts to define what is (in)security. Extant critical research has demonstrated the central role technology plays in these contestations and competitions, a trend Ceyhan (2008, p. 102) has described in terms of the “technologization of security”.

In recent years, Critical Security Studies has turned to focus on the role of data-driven technologies in practices of European border security and migration management. There is now a growing body of research on specific technologies and systems, such as the large-scale
biometric identification systems under the care of eu-LISA (see Jeandesboz, 2016; Tsianos and Kuster, 2016; Bigo, 2020; Leese, 2022). Work in this area has identified several important trends in border management, most notably the rise of risk-based and pre-emptive security, whereby power is exercised at a distance from the geographic border and through new data infrastructures. This work has highlighted the need to understand not only how data is used but also how it is produced and managed and by whom (see Bellanova and González Fuster, 2019). Thus far, with the exception of a recent overview and study of systems design by Georgios Glouftsios (see 2021a, 2021b), there has been no sustained empirical investigation of the key agency for the management of large-scale IT systems, eu-LISA. Of course, social-scientific research on this key agency is important in and of itself, but the project to fully understand the work and role of eu-LISA also offers a unique opportunity to critically engage with evolving trends in the field of (in)security.

One of the most obvious new trends in the field of (in)security is the arrival of new players, such as data managers and IT professionals. These experts, according to Didier Bigo (2020, p. 75), bring “their own politics, connected with their own visions of the world order, their own interests, and specific habitus or dispositions”. While research has highlighted the need to better understand the practices of managing data infrastructures, empirical accounts of the logics and rationales that support and enable this work are still lacking (see Glouftsios and Scheel, 2021). Another trend, much commented on, is how data border security presents itself as objective, neutral, and apolitical as it relies on technocratic forms of expertise. So, one of the key questions is this: how do we grapple with the politics of ostensibly apolitical forms of expertise underpinning the management of data infrastructures? This thesis attends to this question, among others, by exploring the specific logic underpinning the work of eu-LISA, a logic of service.
I argue that service is a key rationale through which data infrastructures are managed and governed. Here I explore how a logic of service is not only central to how eu-LISA organises and practices its work, but is also central to how security is being redefined and debated in new arenas. Thus, the thesis offers fresh insights into the role of an important agency in the field of (in)security while also offering insights into the broader construction of processes of (in)security vis-à-vis a logic of service.

In this thesis, I explore the practices, positions, and capitals of data managers and IT professionals. Each of the articles in this thesis addresses a tension that emerged during my fieldwork experience, namely, the relationship of these experts to the field of (in)security, the politics of expertise, and the kind of power this form of expertise enables. Across the three articles, I explore these tensions in an overarching discussion of how the logic of service is now shaping the field of (in)security. Not only were the systems an absent presence during fieldwork but so also were discussions of security, border control, and migration management. Rather, the focus was on expertise in managing IT systems, the value provided to stakeholders by leveraging the role of these systems, and the sense of moral duty and responsibility that many feels accompany this task. It was primarily along these lines that my counterparts explained their work and spoke to me about the role of eu-LISA. This narrative crystallised around a particular claim presented by a counterpart, that eu-LISA is not a security organisation. Rather, as I argue, it is better understood as an IT service provider.

The management of IT systems is a field of professional practice in and of itself, consisting of its own bodies of knowledge and expertise. Within this field, Service Science (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008) is an expert literature on the delivery of value from IT systems. Thus, a logic of service is the expert way of understanding the practices of these professionals. To fully understand the role they play in the field of (in)security, we need to understand their work and how they make sense of their work, which in this case is through a logic of service.
A logic of service also structures relations between various actors in the field of (in)security. As service is practiced according to international standards, creating shared expectations around system use and performance. Furthermore, the delivery of value from IT systems (i.e. service) is the arena in which contemporary (in)security practices are being debated. Attending to service, then, provides a new lens through which to explore the politics and power of data infrastructures, as it raises the question of how value is performed and measured. What we find, then, is that today matters of (in)security are increasingly debated in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of technical solutions, that is, the value they provide. I argue, that rather than a straightforward depoliticising of security, what is emerging is a complex politics of service practices, relations, and power.

In the first article, ‘Solidarity through Service: The Guild of IT Service Managers and the Field of (In)security’, I expand on existing efforts to attend to the role of new players in the field of (in)security by offering a situated account of the professional practices of a key actor. The article responds to Didier Bigo’s (2020, p. 76), analysis of eu-LISA as part of an emerging “guild of ‘digital technologies’ managing security”. In contrast, I argue they are better understood as a guild of IT service managers who engage in efforts to deliver value to their stakeholders through the proper management of the systems. By focusing on its expertise in IT service management, I argue that eu-LISA positions itself as a service provider. As a service provider, eu-LISA understands its work and role as distinct from, but in support of, security actors. I introduce the concept of ‘delimiting security’ to foreground competing knowledge claims that are distinct from but are nonetheless integral to processes of securitisation. Delimiting security conceptually reflects the practical ways in which new and existing actors are seeking to construct their relationship to the field of (in)security. Therefore, I recast the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism as a continuum along which actors plot a range of relationships to processes of (in)securitisation.
The second article, ‘Security-as-Service in the Management of European Border Data Infrastructures’ explores how the practice of providing expertise shapes the politics of data infrastructures management. In Europe, as elsewhere, the rise of data-led border management is often captured in the language and ideals of ‘smart borders’ (Amoore, Marmura and Salter, 2008). Within critical security scholarship, a central question has emerged: how do expert discourses depoliticise matters such as migration and security, rendering them as mere technical matters of efficiency and necessity (Bigo, 2002; Amoore and de Geode, 2005; Leander, 2013; Walters, 2017)? There is now a desire to explore the management of data infrastructures (see Glouftsios, 2021b). In this article, I show that the data managers and IT professionals who staff eu-LISA apply their expertise under a logic of service in order to support their stakeholders, to better secure the legitimacy and authority of their role as a trusted advisor and service provider. Thus, as I demonstrate a logic of service extends beyond the technical practices of operational management of the systems, speaking to the dynamics of eu-LISA stakeholder relations, specifically those between an EU agency and Member States. The provision of this expertise, which would typically be considered a depoliticising technocratic practice is, as I will show, in fact highly politicised. I demonstrate that rather than a clear-cut depoliticisation of security practices and a politicisation of service, what we find is a constant unfolding of de-politicisation and politicisation, as both logics (security and service) are at play in how eu-LISA makes sense of its work.

Having demonstrated how new actors arriving in the field of European (in)security bring with them new logics, practices, and forms of expertise, the final article of the thesis explores how power accumulates and is used under a logic of service. The third article ‘Service Capital: Visibility, Power and Disinterested Securitisation’ introduces the concept of service capital. Service capital denotes the resources of power (capital) that accrue from efforts to support (service) the work of others, in this case, security professionals and policymakers. The concept
of service capital draws from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory and offers a new “thinking tool” (Leander, 2008) suitable for the study of relations of power in the transforming field of (in)security. In his analysis of forms of capital, Bourdieu (1986) challenged the distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”, calling attention to social relations of power. This is precisely the tension that I address across all three articles in this thesis, coming together in the concept of service capital – as disinterestedness rather than self-interestedness is the underlying logic of service.

As a service provider, eu-LISA presents itself as disinterested, arguing that the work it does is not for its own benefit, but rather for the benefit of its stakeholders. However, eu-LISA must also make visible its work to established professionals of (in)security, to offer meaningful support and accrue service capital. Service capital is not simply a matter of technical management but is also imbricated with a wider moral and political project to construct Europe, as it clearly draws from pre-existing notions of service, most notably public service. Moreover, service capital is not an intangible concept. On the contrary, it is captured as “European Added Value”, the EU measurement of the effectiveness, efficiency, and synergy provided by agencies to Member States. Because European Added Value is connected to budgets, service capital becomes the key source of competitive advantage, legitimacy, authority, reputation, and resources for institutional growth. In short, then, I will show that eu-LISA develops and exploits service capital, and thus manages the tension between being recognised as part of the social network of professionals of (in)security while delimiting its role as that of a neutral and disinterested service provider.

Taken together these articles advance critical scholarship on security by exploring the work and role of data infrastructure managers and IT professionals participating in the field of (in)security, who generally present themselves as disinterested experts. I demonstrate that rather than straightforwardly joining the professionals of (in)security, these actors view themselves as
service providers, which on the surface appears as a form of apolitical technocratic expertise. However, as the articles show, service is a highly politicised practice, encompassing matters of managerial, technical, and even moral practice. Each of the articles makes an empirical contribution to the critical study of data infrastructure management. The management of data infrastructures is understood by expert practitioners as a service, and service is a topic with its own expert literature. Service Science is subject to internal critiques. Drawing on critical security research, I explore how a logic of service relates to the construction of processes of (in)securitisation. Attending to the practical knowledge of my counterparts enables a deeper understanding of how they make sense of their work and role in relation to the field of (in)security.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Next, I provide a short overview of eu-LISA. This is followed by a discussion of the research methodology. After this, I outline the theoretical framework supporting the thesis arguments. These arguments are presented across the three articles of the thesis. While each of the articles offers a standalone contribution exploring the intersection of service and security, Articles 1 and 2 of the thesis are followed by a brief reflection note, outlining the ‘red thread’ of the thesis. Finally, I conclude with a brief outline summarising the main contributions the thesis makes to critical security scholarship, primarily the need to attend to a logic of service.

References


The European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice (eu-LISA)

Established in 2011, eu-LISA began operations in 2012, taking over responsibility for the operational management of several large-scale IT systems from the European Commission. A decentralised Agency under DG Home, eu-LISA is a ‘sister’ agency to eight other European agencies.1 As a European Union Agency, eu-LISA was founded and operates under the principle of subsidiarity (OJEU, 2012), which denotes that action at the European level should not be taken unless it is more effective than action taken at the national, regional or local level. In this case, subsidiarity frames the challenges of centralised system management as beyond the scope of individual Member States. This view is reflected in the following about the role of the Agency, “in today’s globalised world it is not realistic to expect that a single state will be able to ensure its security alone. Therefore, this transformation can only be addressed through the provision of sophisticated, flexible and integrated systems and solutions for law-enforcement cooperation and integrated border management at EU level”.2

The establishment of eu-LISA indexes the growing use of technical solutions in the field of (in)security. It also speaks to the broader trend towards ‘agencification’ in Europe. In the field of (in)security there is a reluctance to yield power to European Union institutions. In response, EU agencies provide, under the principle of subsidiarity, supranational and carefully delimited assistance to Member States. Thus, these agencies have been analysed as a proxy for Member State/EU institution relations (see Busuioc and Groenleer, 2013).

The establishment of European agencies under the principle of subsidiarity aligns in spirit and practice with the logic of service in the field of IT service management. The IT experts and professionals of eu-LISA, and experts in adjacent fields, frame their work in terms

1 Cepol; EASO; EMCDDA; EIGE; Eurojust; Europol; FRA; Frontex.
2 Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/About-Us (Accessed 19 November 2022)
of service: they apply their skills and knowledge for the benefit of their stakeholders. The contested relations of Member States and European institutions under the principle of subsidiarity are mirrored in the dynamics of service provider and service recipient competitions. For example, Sampson (2010, p. 127) has reflected on the tensions of service relationships in what he describes as the ‘customer-as-competitor’ issue:

customers are themselves the chief competitors for many services. Service providers sometimes need to convince do-it-yourself customers that they would be better off using the service provider. …. Customers have the advantage of owning and controlling their inputs, and may have the advantage of increased levels of customization (getting it exactly how they want it). Service providers, on the other hand, usually have advantages of economies of scale and expertise.

It is within this competitive and political landscape that eu-LISA must operate and make sense of its work and role as an ostensible apolitical IT service provider.

The Agency is located across a number of geographical sites, with its headquarters located in Tallinn, Estonia; its operational site located in Strasbourg, France; a business continuity site located in Sankt Johann im Pongau, Austria; and a Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium. The Agency is governed by a management board, which is composed of representatives from EU Member States, Associated Countries (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein), the European Commission, Europol, and Eurojust. The board was expanded in early 2019 to include a Frontex representative. In addition, eu-LISA has signed memoranda of understanding/working arrangements with several EU agencies including Cepol, EASO, ENISA, Eurojust, Europol, FRA, and Frontex formalising the provision of practical support and the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and best practices. The Agency also has six advisory groups, five of which are for individual systems and one for interoperability. In addition, an informal working group has been set up for transportation carriers, new system users and eu-LISA stakeholders under the Entry Exit System (EES) and European Travel Information and
Authorisation System (ETIAS) regulations. The Agency is managed by an executive director, and staff are organised according to various departments, units, and sectors across the different sites of eu-LISA. As of December 2020, the Agency was staffed by 322 personnel of various contract types, ranging from permanent posts to temporarily seconded national experts. Below is a diagram of the organisational structure.

Figure 1. eu-LISA Organisation Structure.³

eu-LISA is currently responsible for the operational management of three large-scale IT systems: the Schengen Information System (SIS II); the Visa Information System (VIS); and the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (Eurodac). It is also engaged in the development of three further systems: the Entry Exit System (EES); the European Travel Information and Authorisation Systems (ETIAS); and the European Criminal Record Information System for

Third Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN). And, will soon take over operational management of the e-Justice Communication via Online Data Exchange (e-CODEX) system.

The primary function of VIS is to prevent so-called visa shopping and to support the implementation of EU visa policy (eu-LISA, 2016) by enabling connected states to exchange information on visas. VIS is used to confirm a visa holder’s identity, allowing for “faster, more accurate and more secure checks”.

The primary function of SIS II is “enable competent authorities to enter and consult data on wanted persons … and objects that may have been stolen, misappropriated or lost” (eu-LISA, 2017a, p. 6). The primary purpose of Eurodac is to provide “fingerprint evidence, by comparing fingerprint datasets, to assist in determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application made in the EU” (eu-LISA, 2017b, p. 4). In doing so, it supports the implementation of the Dublin II Regulation and the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The primary function of EES is to register border crossings for all Third Country Nationals (TCNs) visiting the Schengen area for a short stay. It will register the identities of TCNs, together with details of their travel documents, and, it will link these to electronic entry and exit records. This will allow for the current practice of manually stamping travel documents to be discontinued. The EES is the first system to be developed under the management of eu-LISA. It is also the first system to be designed under a logic of interoperability, as it will be connected to the VIS.

The primary purpose of ETIAS is to function as a pre-authorisation system for visa-exempt travellers, verifying if a TCN meets entry requirements before travelling to the Schengen area. ECRIS-TCN is an expansion of the existing ECRIS system in operation since 2012. The primary function of ECRIS-TCN is to “allows Member State’s authorities to identify which other Member States hold criminal records on the


5 A maximum 90-day period in any period of 180 days.
third country nationals or stateless persons". Finally, the primary function of e-CODEX, the first system under eu-LISA care in the justice domain, is to enable “secure communication between national systems, facilitating its users (judicial authorities, legal practitioners and citizens) to send and receive documents, legal forms and evidence”.

Each of these systems plays an integral role in shaping and contributing to the landscape of contemporary European border control. In support of this, eu-LISA is tasked with maintaining system availability, keeping “all IT systems under its responsibility functioning 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to allow the continuous and uninterrupted exchange of data between the national authorities using them”. Each of the systems under the management of eu-LISA has its own detailed history, as they have evolved through processes of regulatory recasts, responding to changing user requirements and operational demands. eu-LISA has also been provided with a renewed legal mandate, which significantly expands their responsibilities in a number of areas, including the development of interoperability between current and future systems; data quality; research activities; the running of pilots, proofs of concept, and testing activities; and providing support to Member States and the Commission (see OJEU, 2018, p. L259/109).

In the ten years since it began operations, eu-LISA has taken on a growing role in European security and border management, as large-scale IT systems have become a centrepiece of contemporary European practices of bordering, what Bigo (2020) has described in terms of a shift from Integrated Border Management (IBM) to Integrated Data Management (IDM). In light of the growing role of large-scale IT systems, a stream of publications has flowed in the last two to three years exploring the technical practices of systems’ maintenance (see Glouftsios,

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6 Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/Activities/Large-Scale-It-Systems/Ecris-Tcn (Accessed 19 November 2022)
8 Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/Activities (Accessed 19 November 2022)
2021a; Bellanova and Glouftsios, 2022a), the design of large-scale IT systems (see Glouftsios, 2021b), in addition to much ongoing commentary on the implications of interoperability (see Bigo, Ewert Mendos Kuşkonmaz, 2020; Maguire and Murphy, 2021; Leese, 2022; Bellanova and Glouftsios, 2022b; Trauttmansdorff, 2022). Despite this, very little is known about the day-to-day practices and underpinning logics that inform how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role in the field of (in)security. This thesis responds to this gap by providing a detailed account of the logic underpinning eu-LISA’s approach to the management of large-scale IT systems, namely, a logic of service.

References


Methodology

Situated alongside the broader critical approaches to the study of (in)security, such as Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology-International Political Sociology (PARIS-IPS), this chapter is an opportunity to reflexively discuss my research practices. Attending to reflexivity requires reflecting on the relationship between the observer and the observed (see Leander, 2005, p. 717). While social-scientific research has strongly argued in favour of reflexivity, there is disagreement on how it should be done. Jeandesboz (2018, p. 22) has located reflexivity at the intersection of “efforts to locate security within a given political ordering” with “an effort from scholars to examine their own knowledge-producing practices”. In line with this argument, Aradau and Huysmans (2014, p. 612) argue in favour of thinking of methods in terms of “the pursuit of a goal”. Such considerations are reflected in the increased importance that critical security scholarship has placed on methodology (what is more commonly described as the methodology turn).

The methodological turn in critical security studies focuses on the relationship between methods and the process of producing knowledge on practices of (in)security (see Salter and Mutlu, 2018). Aradau et al. (2014) argue in favour of thinking about methods in terms of practices. Such an approach reframes how we think about the purpose of methods, opening a space to develop and present accounts that bring to the fore the fragile, messy, and experimental nature of knowledge production (see also Aradau and Huysmans, 2014). In this sense, methods are closely intertwined with issues of politics, power, and responsibility (see Salter and Mutlu, 2018). To aid reflexive thinking, Salter and Mutlu (2013) suggest that researchers tackle three questions: 1. sufficiency, when can we stop our actual data retrieval? 2. coherency, what counts as a compelling argument in the tracing of competing logics, cultures, and meanings? And 3. criticality, what is a reasonable articulation of a critical position, if we are seeking engagement and not objectivity? (ibid, p. 15). These questions provide a framework for helping to improve
the legibility of research design, making explicit “the object of analysis, the research question, the method chosen, the data that counts as true, and the way that data is interpreted” (ibid).

I have chosen to structure this chapter in terms of negotiation. Social-scientific research has often drawn on the trope of negotiation as a means of depicting the realities of empirical research (see Reeves, 2010; Schwell, 2020). Such negotiations often intersect with the reflexive practices of the research. For example, Finlay (2002, p. 209) argues that “the process of engaging in reflexivity is full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails as researchers negotiate the swamp of interminable deconstruction, self analysis and self disclosure”. In addition, Rosset and Achermann (2019, p. 49) have analysed their efforts to negotiate access to the Swiss asylum agency’s ‘country of origin’ unit as a “situated case of knowledge control and discipline”. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines negotiation as:

i. to have a formal discussion with someone in order to reach an agreement with them;
ii. to manage to travel along a difficult route;
iii. to deal with something difficult.

Reflecting on my research practices in terms of negotiation as it is defined here provides a practical means to reflexively address the complexities of methods as they relate to the construction of knowledge, power, and politics.

To think in terms of negotiation is to attend to the practical and embodied experience of knowing and doing empirical research, as negotiation speaks to the active work and emotional labour involved in the access process. Negotiations are both temporally and contextually bound and socially constructed. In this sense, negotiations are products and reflections of the social worlds we aim to study, in addition to reflecting our own disciplinary demands and requirements. Negotiation is also a framework that offers further conceptual benefits as it speaks to existing metaphorical comparisons with the research journey – the preparations, the travel (sometimes physical, sometimes not, sometimes both), and the move from novice to expert.
Moreover, while the purpose of negotiation may be “to reach an agreement”, this is not to say that agreement will always be the outcome. It is worth noting that agreement is a fluid status, of more or less importance, which shifts and evolves depending on where in the research process negotiations are taking place. For example, reflecting on his position as director of Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) within a project, Rabinow documents moments of agreement and disagreement, where ultimately, he was “unable to sustain an ethical and methodological position of “adjacency” in terms of the affordances and expectations of his role” (Marcus, 2013, p. 210). Initial agreement as to Rabinow’s role and purpose within the project soon breaks down. In this sense, negotiation highlights the politics of methodological practices. And, finally, to negotiate, in the sense of dealing with something difficult, speaks to the stakes of our methodological practices, not only for our individual research endeavours but also for the discipline. It speaks to the rigour and effort required to produce knowledge, and to reflexively engage with ourselves and our research practices (see Leander, 2016; Hendershot and Mutimer, 2018). It also responds to growing calls within the discipline to embrace the “incomplete, messy, partial and complicated and failed” (Sjoberg, 2019, p. 77) nature of our research practices.

Here I set out my understanding of my research practices as they relate to the study of (in)security. The results of this research are necessarily partial and incomplete. The results are a reflection of both the priorities and interests of the researcher and the accounts she elicited during her research encounters, which are themselves a product of the research process as the context. This understanding delimits the boundaries of what qualifies as knowledge claims and particular forms of knowing. In keeping with the spirit of qualitative research, the focus of this research is on the lived experiences and practices of practitioners – how they make sense of their worlds and how they ascribe meaning to their activities. Thus, the knowledge produced is necessarily perspectival and intimately linked to the context within which it was constructed (i.e. the research process). The project explores the practices through which the management of data
infrastructures takes place. It focuses on the specific ways in which eu-LISA approaches this activity, as the expert EU agency responsible for this area. In line with this view, the research seeks to address the following questions in the different thesis articles, respectively:

1) How do professional practices of service define eu-LISA’s relationship to the field of (in)security? And, what are the implications of this relationship for processes/notions of (de)securitisations?

2) What form/rationality of managerial expertise informs the politics of data infrastructures? And what are the implications for the construction of (in)security and (de)politicisations?

3) How do professionals of service make themselves visible to the field of (in)security, while presenting themselves as disinterested experts? And, what does this mean for the emergence of new lines of competition in the field of (in)security?

Each of these questions reflects the process of negotiating and presenting my findings as part of the wider effort to consider eu-LISA’s role in terms of service, vis-à-vis its work and role in relation to the field of European border security and migration management.

The remainder of this chapter puts this framework of negotiation to work as I reflect on three moments within my research journey. I begin by outlining the process of negotiating access to my fieldsite. Here, I reflect on the practical realities of obtaining access in addition to the expectations and demands of these negotiations (access was obtained based on taking up an internship at the headquarters of eu-LISA, where I would review the research and technology monitoring function). I connect these reflections to Salter and Mutlu’s (2013) question on coherency and ongoing debates on the epistemological authority of empirical research. This is followed by an account of negotiating my research encounters (see Wilson, 2017). Here, I outline the practices of data collection carried out during fieldwork while negotiating my dual
role, as an eu-LISA intern and a PhD Fellow, and my position as an insider/outsider. I reflect on the ethics of these encounters both in terms of what it means to “study up” (Nader, 1972), but also in terms of what it means to have carried out my research under the auspices of an eu-LISA internship. I connect these reflections to Salter and Mutlu’s (2013) question on criticality and wider debates on the issue of positionality and power. In the subsequent section, I outline the process of negotiating my data. Here, I reflect on the process of constructing and presenting knowledge on eu-LISA through the drawing together of the empirical and the theoretical. I connect these reflections to Salter and Mutlu’s (2013) question on sufficiency and the politics of methods as bricolage, based on “the recognition that the world consists of things that ‘relate but don’t add up’” (Aradau et al., 2014, p. 7). Finally, I close by reflecting on the limitations of the research experience and design and offer some suggestions for future research. Across this chapter, I reflect on the ethical demands and questions posed by doing research on security.

**Starting field work, or perplexing difficulties and conditions for success**

Critical research on security has simultaneously highlighted the importance of empirical inquiry (see Pouliot, 2010; Côté-Boucher, Infantino and Salter, 2014; Leander, 2016) whilst also acknowledging the challenges of gaining access to the field (see Salter, 2013a; Baird, 2017; Belcher and Martin, 2020; Maguire and Winthereik, 2021). The practicalities of negotiating access are further complicated by the relationship between authority and positionality (see Clifford, 1983; Feldman, 2011; Enguix, 2014). Thus, the process of negotiating access (or not) is intimately tied up with disciplinary questions of what qualifies as legitimate knowledge and good research. The following section outlines the process through which I negotiated access to the headquarters of eu-LISA.

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1 The titles for the moments of negotiation are drawn from Malinowski’s classic anthropological text, Argonauts of the Western Pacific.
Initially, my PhD research focused on the role of eu-LISA in the construction of future data infrastructures for European border security and migration management, specifically the development of the Entry Exit System (EES). I had recently completed my MA, drawing on my experiences of working on the Ethical, Legal and Societal Issues (ELSI) work package of an FP7-funded project, ABC4EU². This project explored the ongoing use and development of automated border control gates as part of European border crossing processes. My experiences on the project brought to the fore the expanding use of large-scale IT systems and data collection technology for border security and migration management. In addition, this role provided a practical sense of what it meant to engage with security practitioners, as they negotiate their own competing concerns, interests, and priorities in the production of (in)security (see Bourne, Johnson and Lisle, 2015; Leese, Lidén and Nikolova, 2019). It was within the context of my professional responsibilities for the ABC4EU project that I first encountered the work of eu-LISA and met my future gatekeeper. This encounter was by and large a piece of good fortune – we happened to be standing next to one another in a queue to sign in at the 2014 European Day for Border Guards conference. Alone, and curious about the other attendees (the majority of whom were practitioners), I turned to begin a conversation with the person standing behind me, they happened to work at eu-LISA. Kalir (2019, p. 84) has highlighted the role luck plays in the research process, arguing that reflecting on luck can “help us to expound important features that structure the probability of getting access”. This initial, accidental, encounter combined with a purposefully curious conversation proved pivotal in shaping the course of my future academic career – as this contact would be instrumental to gaining access to eu-LISA and directing the focus of my PhD research.

Three years later, freshly accepted into my PhD programme based on a proposal to carry out research on eu-LISA, I began my efforts to negotiate access. To do so, I combined two

² http://abc4eu.com/
strategies suggested by Monahan and Fisher (2015) for obtaining access to secretive field sites: 1) attend industry or government conferences, and 2) coordinate coincidence. With this in mind, I identified an upcoming conference my contact would be speaking at (once more, luck played a part, as my contact still worked at eu-LISA in a role that involved frequent attendance at different public events and conferences). In advance of the conference, and in the spirit of coordinating coincidence, I sent the following email,

Hi XXX,

How are you?

Continuing in my tradition of emailing out of the blue, I see that you’re [attending X conference] next week, I’m also going to be there. I’m based at [university] now and was wondering if you’d be free for a quick chat about the eu-LISA internship programme and some possible collaboration. I’ll be around from Monday evening to Wednesday afternoon, if there’s a time that suits you in there.

Kind regards,

What followed was a short response, agreeing and proposing we chat over coffee during the scheduled lunch break. Our chat, which took place in a crowded conference lobby with coffee cups in hand, lasted no more than 10 minutes. During this time, I proposed taking up a position within eu-LISA, through a modified version of the existing year-long internship programme it offers. I would spend three months studying the internal preparations eu-LISA was undertaking in advance of developing and operationalising the recently adopted Entry Exit System (EES). This would align with the goals and demands of my own professional academic interests, in addition to which the findings could be used by eu-LISA to inform the development of the EES. This proposal was met with a spark of interest, a recognition of potential, and a need for adjustment to find shared interest and benefit.

My contact made their counteroffer and the process of negotiating access had begun. They noted the fortunate timing of my request, explaining that had I made the proposal before
then it would have been ‘completely impossible’. The year-long internship programme could not be adjusted to accommodate my request, but eu-LISA had already begun the process of developing a policy for a short-term internship. The dates of my request for access also aligned with the wider timetable of the new internship policy, which was due to begin in 2019. As I was proposing to carry out my fieldwork in late 2018, this could be considered as an opportunity to test run the new policy, as it would not be possible for the Agency to host two interns simultaneously. And, finally, my contact explained that it wasn’t of interest to them to have research done on the EES, they already had most internal processes in place and any findings I would identify could not be implemented and would be of no benefit to them. However, they would be interested in research on the expanded role set out for the monitoring of research under the then draft regulation updating the mandate of eu-LISA.

The draft mandate proposed expanding eu-LISA’s role in research and technology monitoring (RTM) to include contributing “to the implementation of the parts of the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation that relate to large-scale IT systems” (OJEU, 2018, p. L295/112). My contact wished for a review of the current RTM function in addition to exploratory research on how the function could develop considering this proposed new capacity. My contact clarified that if I wished I could do research on the EES for my PhD but noted that it may be challenging as I would not have access to the operational site where most of the work was being done, as I did not have security clearance. While not completely guaranteed, I left the encounter feeling quietly confident that progress was being made on negotiating access to my fieldsite. What was required next was a renegotiation of my initial access proposal, shifting focus to the research and technology monitoring function, in addition to rethinking how to carry out research on the EES under the “challenges of secrecy and confidentiality” (Bosma, de Goede, and Pallister-Wilkins, 2020, p. 5).

Over the coming weeks and months, I remained in contact with my now gatekeeper –
negotiations would last almost a year before my access to eu-LISA would be officially approved. During this time, several issues came into play affecting negotiations. The internship policy itself was a sticking point, as it took much longer to approve than my gatekeeper expected, delaying my expected start date. These matters of bureaucratic approval are inherent in efforts to negotiate access to governmental organisations. Discussions with my gatekeeper revealed a further issue that had arisen in the process of negotiating access – office space. There was quite literally nowhere to put me, in this sense, the ethnographic mode of ‘hanging around’ was not an acceptable way of being ‘in the field’. This issue was resolved when a desk space in a neighbouring department on the same floor as the department my gatekeeper worked in became available. Rather than concerns about the nature or intentions of my research, it was my future physical presence which became an object of negotiation and concern – literally a question of how I would situate myself in the field. Alongside these bureaucratic and administrative matters, my gatekeeper recommended I present a proposal on how I would use my time at the headquarters. This proposal was an important opportunity to communicate trustworthiness, a cornerstone of ethnographic research, and demonstrate my competence as a researcher. The proposal was framed in terms of my position as a PhD student at Copenhagen Business School. Institutional backing in the form of a letter of support lent further credibility and legitimacy to my request. In this sense, the proposal acted as a formal device for impression management and presentation of self, vis-à-vis my efforts to negotiate access (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

It was also during this time that my gatekeeper shared that it would no longer be possible to research the EES, as many materials on this topic would not be available for discussion or access. Thus, a further and significant renegotiation of my research was required. In light of the shortened timeframe for access in addition to the sudden and short notice that I would no longer
be able to carry out research on the EES. I opted to shift the focus of my PhD research to the subject of the internship – the expanding role of eu-LISA research and technology monitoring function. In communication with my supervisor, I summarised the issue in the following way,

Most importantly, following my previous call with eu-LISA it seems I will be unable to carry out research on the EES for my own PhD thesis as much of the materials on this are closed and cannot be accessed. Instead, I am planning to align my PhD objectives with the objectives of the report for eu-LISA (focusing on their new role in research). This will still allow me to carry out good research in the same area as before, but with a re-focusing of how I am approaching it. I don’t foresee any issues here, but we should probably run through what this means for the PhD long term.

Reflecting on this decision at the time, two issues are immediately noteworthy. First, I had equated successfully negotiating access with the doing of ‘good research’. Thus, the process of negotiating access is intimately tied to the technique of establishing professional authority and legitimacy vis-à-vis ethnographic presence (see Clifford, 1983). Reflecting on the use of presence as a means of constructing authority intersects with Salter and Mutlu’s (2013) question on coherency and what counts as a compelling argument. These issues take on renewed importance in light of the growing use of ethnographic approaches in the study of (in)security (see Salter and Mutlu, 2013; Maguire, Frois and Zurawski, 2014; Leander, 2016; Baird, 2017; Tazzioli, 2018) combined with the fact that access is emerging as a de facto currency through which the value and quality of research are being measured. Rozakou (2019, p. 68 emphasis in original) captures this unspoken aspect of the discipline in the opening lines of a recent article, “in the corridors outside conference rooms, researchers of the ‘migration crisis’ ask each other with barely concealed jealousy: How did you get in? How did you get access?” Thus, just as processes of negotiating access are reflective of “the cultural patterns, power dynamics and structures” (Schwell, 2020, p. 83) that inform our fields of study, they equally reflect the

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3 Fieldwork was due to begin in October 2018. I was informed of the removal of access to the EES in September 2018.
demands of our disciplines and what qualifies as ‘good research’. In my case, access was negotiated within a framework of professional exchange – I would assess the research and technology monitoring function of eu-LISA in exchange for insights on the day-to-day working practices of eu-LISA. Monahan and Fisher (2015, p. 712) have reflected on the benefits of such exchanges as a condition of access, whilst also highlighting the risks, “including ambiguities with informed consent, unclear lines between what does and does not count as research, competing claims to intellectual property, co-optation of the research project, self-censorship, and exploitation of researchers”. Negotiating access in terms of exchange brings to the fore the issue of power, as gatekeepers play an influential role in determining the degree of access (see Reeves, 2010). Furthermore, while exchange is not an uncommon practice within security research – and ethnographic research more generally – it poses significant ethical and political implications for the research process (see Amicelle, Badrudin and Tanner, 2020).

Second, is the naïve inability to ‘foresee any issues’ in bringing together these two roles and objectives. While the combination of the internship with my PhD builds on the understanding that empirical fieldwork often requires creative solutions (in this case, responding to the realities of negotiating access with my fieldsite) it also created tensions as my role as intern/PhD researcher often coincided. The bringing together of these two roles raises ethical and political questions about my position and research relations in the field (see Aradau and Huysmans, 2014). This is not to say that it is impossible to do research from this position, but rather the complexities and challenges of negotiating the insider/outsider continuum in addition to the politics of my research relations play a central role in the construction of ethnographic knowledge and need to be accounted for in the research process and the retelling of tales from the field.

The construction and presentation of empirical data are not neutral practices, rather they are “devices” (Aradau and Huysmans, 2014) enacting persuasion. Reflecting on the practical,
ethical, and methodological concerns of doing research on the regulation of migration, Maillet, Mountz and Williams (2017, p. 927) note “that despite the challenges and complexities detailed … it is extremely important to do this kind of research. Conversations about this work, though difficult, are worth having and recording so that … researcher do not feel alone in struggling with these issues”. Thus, I have sought, as much as possible, to render explicit the myriad choices which have informed my research, assembled together under my choices about access and engagement (see de Goede, 2020; Mutlu, 2020). It is to these matters, of the ethics and politics of my research relations and field encounters, that I turn to next.

An Airbnb among the data management natives

In early October 2018, I landed at Tallinn airport. From there, I took a taxi to an Airbnb apartment I had sourced within walking distance to the headquarters of eu-LISA. The following day I met with my contact, now turned gatekeeper, to discuss beginning the internship. The internship would last nine weeks, during which time I carried out semi-structured expert interviews, focus groups, and a form of listening participation (see Forsey, 2010; Seim, 2021). In addition, select eu-LISA publications were analysed. The following sections describe each of the data collection techniques in greater detail, and they close with a reflection on negotiating my research encounters and the advantages and disadvantages of a dual position in the field.

Listening Participant

Extant scholarship has identified the challenges of conducting participant observation in organisations (see Czarniawska, 2008; Lie, 2013; Schwell, 2020). The challenges associated with the demands of this technique and the realities of security research have been similarly noted (see Salter, 2013a; Kalir, Achermann and Rosset, 2019). However, ethnographic accounts are not dependent on the technique of participant observation alone (see Forsey, 2010; Feldman,
Efforts to think through the relationship between the objectives of ethnography and the techniques used to meet these objectives have given rise to disciplinary reflections on what researchers do in the field – particularly in relation to the various roles that researchers take on. Combining elements of participant listening (see Forsey, 2010) and observant participation (see Moeran, 2009; Mears, 2012; Seim, 2021) I characterise my fieldwork role as a form of listening participant.

Reflecting on the relationship between ethnography and participation observation, Forsey (2010, p. 560) argues for “the importance of listening to the ethnographic project”. In doing so, he describes the role of the ethnographer as “more participant listener than observer” (ibid, p. 561). This reframing of the role of the ethnographer also requires rethinking what qualifies as ethnographic research, which “may well be based less on traditional fieldwork and more on various types of interview” (ibid, p. 564-655). Such an approach defines ethnography in terms of its purpose rather than its methods whereby

The aim of the ethnographer is to listen deeply to and/or to observe as closely as possible the beliefs, the values, the material conditions and structural forces that underwrite the socially patterned behaviours of all human beings and the meanings people attach to these conditions and forces. When we conduct research with an ethnographic imaginary these are some of the aspects of human existence that we aim to uncover (ibid, p. 567).

Attending to the purposes of ethnography provides a stronger rationale for how we judge research in terms of “the quality of the representation of the lived reality” (ibid, p. 569). Thus, the role of the researcher, the purposes of the research and how it is carried out are intimately bound together. Reframing the role of the researcher in terms of listening and the doing of fieldwork in terms of interviews subsequently affects how we think about participation and presence in the field. Forsey (2010) captures this as he notes how “the disembodied experience of the research interview can resemble a world in which relationships are often conducted in the bounded time slots of phone or email contact, or in and around cultural activities that transcend
local and global spaces” (ibid, p. 568). Here, practices of listening and interviewing are akin to many of the work practices of bureaucratic organisations. This similarity came to the fore during an incident that took place during one of my first interviews. Scheduled to last 45 minutes, I had to interrupt the interview to remind the interviewee that we were nearing the end of our scheduled interview time.

INTERVIEWER: Sorry to interrupt you-

RESPONDENT: Yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: -just, no, just to let you know it’s a quarter to. Do you need to?

RESPONDENT: Actually, I can continue. I freed myself till three. My only worry was-

INTERVIEWER: Perfect.

RESPONDENT: -if this meeting room is free, but I didn’t see here anything I think four o’clock, or something.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

RESPONDENT: So, it’s okay.

INTERVIEWER: Well, whenever you need to finish up, you let me know. My evening-, my afternoon is free, so, whenever you want to.

RESPONDENT: I think I’m just getting to this talking mood-

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

RESPONDENT: -you know? From one day, it’s a little bit… I’m used to say, you know, during this meeting of Justice and Home Affairs agencies, we have to perform a tour de table for every agenda point, and normally, it’s five to 10 minutes. Ten minutes is normal for each agency, so you prepare for this your points and you know what you have to speak, as in you, you have to deliver it in a, a lot of information in a small amount of time. So, you just make sure that people heard your main messages. But if you just have to say what you’re doing, how you’re doing, then you see it’s quite slow.

INTERVIEWER: That’s good.

RESPONDENT: I have been-, I should have been maybe better prepared, but-

INTERVIEWER: No, no. This is perfect.
RESPONDENT: -otherwise, it just, you know, flows as what I remember that comes immediately.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it’s perfect.

At the time, I was frustrated by the unwelcome (as the interviewee notes themselves, they were ‘just getting to this talking mood’) but necessary (as part of an ethos of care to be respectful of the contribution of my interviewee’s valuable time) interruption of the interview. In reflection, such interruptions and conflicts in time management are part of the natural rhythm of organisational life as meetings run over and managing calendars are central to how the daily work at the Agency is organised and experienced. In this case, as the interviewee references the external constraint of whether someone else had booked the meeting room in which we were holding the interview. Before returning to the topic previously under discussion, the interviewee notes how the experience of our interview chimed with their own working practices, situating them in relation to one another as different but comparable forms of presentation of self and work.

The role of the researcher is not only reflective of what we as researchers do, but also speaks to the kinds of roles our counterparts allow us to take on. The literature has reflected on this issue in terms of membership (see Adler and Adler, 1987). One role, which requires a high degree of membership, is observation participation. Comparing this role to the classic role of participant observer, Seim (2021, p. 3) explains, “unlike the participant observer, who tends to invent a new and somewhat transient role as a hang around, the observant participator is more likely to occupy and enact a pre-existing role in the field”. In this sense, access to eu-LISA as an intern provided a pre-existing role that I could occupy. The ability to locate and occupy such a role not only provided a means to be in “proximity” (Bueger and Mireanu, 2014) to my counterparts but also attends to the realities of doing research in “difficult terrain” (Schwell, 2020, p. 80).
One of the benefits of the observant participant role is framed in terms of the potential to deepen fieldwork through the access it offers to “particularly secretive or closed-off” (Seim, 2021, p. 5) sites. Furthermore, Moeran (2009, p. 148) argues that an observant participation role offers “the ability to see beyond the social front that informants present to strangers in their everyday lives, to know that there is a difference between what Erving Goffman (1990) refers to as ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’ behaviour, and to have ready access to that back stage”. In the case of my own research, I delimit this claim as my role and relations as an eu-LISA intern were always intersected with my role as an external PhD researcher. In this sense, it would be remiss to assume that although I formally occupied the role of an eu-LISA intern, my counterparts did not engage in impression management and self-editing. Drawing on the insight of the observant participant role in combination with Forsey’s (2010) argument on participant listening, I characterise my role in the field as one of a listening participant. This role reflects the practice of listening and taking notes as central to the working practices of eu-LISA, as their daily routines involve meetings, conversations, conference calls, etc. For example, on one occasion I was permitted to attend a workshop where eu-LISA was participating remotely on EU migration data organised by the European Joint Research Centre (JRC). For most of the meeting, my counterparts’ participation took the form of listening. Looking around the room, my practices were consistent with my counterparts, as we listened to and took notes on the presentations and ensuing discussions. Afterwards I, along with the other eu-LISA staff attending the meeting, was invited to submit my notes to be included on the internal report summarising the meeting. In this case, what I had heard was more important than what I had seen both as a practice of research but also as the practice for eu-LISA. In addition, I attended several semi-public events hosted by eu-LISA. These events provided an opportunity to listen and observe how eu-LISA staff carry out their work, particularly in terms of how they communicated the work of eu-LISA.

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4 See Appendix 1 for an overview of listening participant activities.
to external stakeholders. Attendance at these events was also an opportunity to engage with staff from the other eu-LISA sites, along with providing an opportunity to engage with external stakeholders and request interviews.

At the same time, I distinguish my role from other similar roles developed within the literature such as an apprenticeship role (see Wacquant, 2005; Wadel, 2015) given the limited opportunities I had to partake in the activities of eu-LISA. While I experienced a version of life as an eu-LISA intern, my internship was the first of its kind and a hybrid role of my own research objectives. Equally, I was not being trained in what it is to be a member of staff at eu-LISA, in this sense I did not engage in what Czarniawska (2007) describes as shadowing, although the internship role did allow me to experience many aspects of day-to-day life at eu-LISA headquarters. For example, I was able to participate in many of the informal and social activities at the headquarters, including coffee breaks, lunches, leaving parties, eu-LISA anniversaries, and the Christmas party. While these events were not included as part of the data-gathering techniques of the research, they did inform my impressions and experience of eu-LISA.

The role I was able to take on significantly impacted the kinds of knowledge I was able to produce, as I do not believe the level of participation that I achieved would have been possible as an external researcher alone. Thus, the internship formed the grounds on which I was able to access my counterparts, not only in terms of physical access to the headquarters, but also in terms of access to participation in interviews and focus groups, which provided key insights to how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role. It also provided the basis on which I was able to develop my research relations and experience certain aspects of life at the eu-LISA headquarters. At the same time, doing research in an organisational setting brought with it challenges in terms of “making the familiar strange” (Ybema and Kamsteeg, 2009). In addition, the ethical and political implications of taking on a role as an intern must also be addressed.
This dual role brought with it unexpected emotional challenges and ambiguities. For example, not long after my arrival, following a tour of the building by the security officer, I was informed that I would need to sign a document on confidentiality. I was hesitant, this was not something I had prepared for. To ‘buy time’ I explained that I would need to discuss the content with my supervisor. To which I was promptly informed, either I signed immediately, or I would not be permitted back on the premises. Williams (2017, p. 1016) has captured these experiences of research in what he describes as “mixed loyalties” where “the researcher, by nature of their participation, it is expected to conform to certain values, practices and procedures that may conflict with their own personal ethics”. Amicelle, Badrudin and Tanner (2020) have opened up the issue of research ethics to discussions of “account-ability”. In that moment, I struggled with a conflicting sense of account-abilities to my research, to my gatekeeper, to eu-LISA. At the same time, the internship provided an opportunity to work in a mode of engagement and collaboration (see de Goede, 2020) as I had to stay with the struggles of making sense of life at eu-LISA and being surprised by the accounts of my counterparts (see Austin, 2019). It was within the context of this role that I was able to trace the nuances and contradiction of the relationship between security and service, as service was identified inductively from the data collected. In the following sections, I outline the interview and focus group techniques employed as part of my listening participation.

**Expert Interviews**

During fieldwork, semi-structured expert interviews were carried out with both external stakeholders and eu-LISA staff (n = 36). Interviews focused on exploring the professional practices of eu-LISA staff to understand how they make sense of the Agency’s work and role in relation to the wider field of (in)security. An interview guide was developed as a basis for

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5 See Appendix 1 for an overview of interviewees.
directing the conversation, while also allowing for flexibility and the focus to move beyond this, responding to the directions of the interviewee (see Rubin and Rubin, 2012). The interview guide “translates the research questions … into questions that can be posed to interviewees in a language that makes sense to them” (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 59). The interview guide was structured around three key questions: day-to-day work; the research and technology monitoring function; and the future of eu-LISA. Interviewees were selected through purposeful sampling, in conversation with my gatekeeper (see Bergman Blix, 2019). Before entering the field, a review of publicly accessible eu-LISA profiles (through social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn) was carried out. This allowed me to identify potential research participants based on their position within the overall organisational structure. This list was reviewed and revised in discussion with my gatekeeper. Interviews were recorded with permission and took place either face-to-face or online through skype or teleconferencing. The remainder of the interviews were transcribed either by the researcher or a professional transcription agency. The choice to use a transcription agency was driven by the practical demands of the research as a large volume of material needed to be transcribed within a relatively short period of time. As the focus of the interviews was on eliciting the expertise of the interviewees, transcription focused on producing accurate written versions of the recordings. This presents a different focus to more interactional accounts, which generally seek to account for the role of “utterance, gestures and embodied action” (Jenks, 2018, p. 119).

While expert and elite interviews can be distinguished on the grounds that they involve different, although often overlapping, participants, they share many of the same methodological concerns (see Littig, 2009). Thus, this section draws on best practice literature for both interview forms. Both experts and elites have been described as ‘hard-to-reach’, as they may “actively resist participation in research because of their position and power, for the protection of

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6 See Appendix 2 for a copy of the interview guide.
knowledge, or because of political consideration” (Chamberlain and Hodgetts, 2018, p. 669). Elite and expert interviews also invert the typical power asymmetries between interviewer and interviewee, as these groups often occupy powerful and privileged positions. The importance of thorough preparation prior to the interview has been highlighted as a means to decrease this imbalance. This not only helps the interviewer to engage with the interviewee on a more equal footing, it is also an important aspect of impression management and demonstrating competence, key elements in building rapport during the interview. Attending to the issue of power dynamics within interview processes draws attention to the positionality of the interviewee as they negotiate the insider/outsider continuum (see Mikecz, 2012). The location of the interview has also been identified as an important issue, as holding interviews in either neutral locations or the offices of the interviewees presents both pros and cons. In the case of my research, all face-to-face interviews took place during working hours in eu-LISA headquarters. In this sense, interviews were framed very much in relation to being representative of eu-LISA. Interviews provided an opportunity to gather descriptions of the working practices of the eu-LISA staff, and gain insight into how they make sense of the work and role of eu-LISA. Interviews also allowed for accounts beyond those available in official documentation to come to the fore. This aspect must be balanced with an understanding that interviewees were interviewed on the premises of the Agency and they spoke in their capacity as Agency representatives. In addition, many of the staff interviewees were close colleagues, as well as subordinates, of my gatekeeper and the possibility of feeling obliged to participate in the research must be noted. Equally, participants were aware that the research was going to be returned to the Agency and may have self-edited their responses.

Bogner, Littig, and Menz (2018, p. 653) link the growing importance of expert interviews to the fact that “the superiority of expert knowledge is no longer taken for granted even though (or because) its importance for individual everyday life decisions or political-
decision making can hardly be denied. As a result, the expert increasingly becomes subject to
empirical sociological research”. More specifically, they define experts as “people who possess
specific knowledge that relates to a clearly demarcated range of problems and plays an
authoritative role in decision making of different kinds. Due to this knowledge, their
interpretations provide guidelines for social action and structure a particular field of social
action in a meaningful way” (ibid, p. 655). This definition is based on the understanding that
“the question of who is to count as an expert for purposes of method always has to be answered
in relation to concrete field of operation in which the expert acts, and with reference to the
investigative spectrum of the empirical study being carried out” (Bogner and Menz, 2009, p.
54).

In the case of my own research, two forms of intersecting expertise are targeted in the
selection of interviewee participants. The first relates to the administrative functioning of eu-
LISA, exploring the kinds of expertise required to develop and sustain an organisation for the
management of large-scale IT systems. The second focuses on the management of the systems
themselves, focusing on the kinds of expertise required to maintain operations. These kinds of
expertise intersect as understanding both perspectives is necessary to explore how eu-LISA
makes sense of its work and role in relation to the field of European (in)security. In line with
Bogner and Menz’s definition of experts, the expertise of administrative and technical staff has a
structuring effect on one another within the internal work of eu-LISA. At the same time, the
work of both types of experts have a structuring effect on the wider practices of European
border control and migration management. However, as the authors note not all experts have
equal effects on practices. Attending to practices of expertise and experts is a central concern in
critical studies of security, as research has demonstrated the relationship between ways of
knowing and the authority of security claims (see Amoore, 2006; Salter, 2013b; Degenhardt and
Bourne, 2020). In the case of my research, attending to the expertise of eu-LISA staff provides
an opportunity to explore the practices of service as a form of professional practice. In this
sense, expert interviews are a constructive way of attending to Nader’s (1972) call to study up.

The fluidity of expertise as a constitutive of social relevance also surfaced as the topics
of the interview often moved beyond the specific expertise of the interviewee. For example, as
per the requirements of the internship, interviews contained questions on interviewees’
experiences and knowledge of eu-LISA’s research and technology monitoring (RTM) function.
In some cases, interviewees had little to no knowledge of this function. This often presented as a
situation where interviewee and interviewer worked to find either a common point on which
they could discuss the topic or in some cases this issue presented as irrelevant, in this case
interviewees seemed apologetic when they did not have extensive knowledge of the research
and technology monitoring function, simultaneously the interview felt mismanaged by the
interviewer. Managing these issues in a way that keeps the interview moving forward
constructively requires building rapport with the interviewee. This was done by reminding
participants that familiarity with the RTM function was not a requirement of participation, that
my interest lay in their understanding, and that there was no correct answer.

The issue of consent is well-established as an important and necessary component of
research. Reflecting on the ethics of consent, Miller and Bell (2012, p. 61) argue that “‘consent’
should be an ongoing and renegotiated between researcher and researched throughout the
research process”. As they explain this requires considering issues of consent beyond the
signing of consent forms at the beginning of the research process. Throughout the project,
consent was sought at regular intervals. Before undertaking the research, consent was tacitly
sought when participants accepted the invitation to engage in the research. During interviews,
consent was sought a second time as each interview began with a review of the informed
consent sheet and project information sheet, sent with the initial invitation. Following
completion of the interview, consent was sought a third time when transcripts were returned to
participants to review, modify, or flag content not for publication. Participants were also provided with the option to choose which outputs from the research they are giving consent to. Consent forms were designed with the following table and participants were asked to mark only those outputs they agreed to contribute to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Please indicate which output you give consent for your information to be used in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal eu-LISA report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD Thesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic conferences, journal publications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miller and Bell (2012) have argued that researchers do not always know what the results of the research process will be, and in this sense, participants cannot fully understand what they are consenting to. While, this remains true, distinguishing between the three categories of outputs provides participants with a greater degree of choice than blanket consent.

**Focus Groups**

Two focus groups were also held. Participants included eu-LSA staff from both the headquarters and operations. The focus groups were held in the headquarters and participants from operations joined by teleconference. My gatekeeper played an active role in co-ordinating participation in the focus group. As we discussed who would be a ‘good fit’ in terms of participation (see Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, p. 4) describe focus groups as “group discussions exploring a specific set of issues”. They distinguish focus groups from group interviews based on “the explicit use of group interaction to generate data” (ibid). Focus groups provide a means to explore “how accounts are articulated, censured, opposed and changed through social interaction and how this relates to peer communication and group norms” (ibid,

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7 See Appendix 3 for a copy of the informed consent sheet.
8 See Appendix 1 for an overview of focus groups.
p. 5). A select number of external stakeholder interviews were partially transcribed during the fieldwork period and data from these interviews were then used to inform the design and structure of the focus group discussions. While the focus groups were designed to explore the work of eu-LISA in relation to the research and technology monitoring function, discussions often expanded to discuss the role and work of eu-LISA more generally. The focus groups offered an opportunity to observe group interactions and elicit cross-organisational perspectives (see Cyr, 2016). For example, it was in the context of focus group discussions that the boundaries and capacity of eu-LISA’s role strongly came to the fore, as participants debated what their stakeholders would consider legitimate for eu-LISA, offered supporting or conflicting views on these matters. In addition, Farnsworth and Boon (2010, p. 605) argue that “an orientation to group relations is essential” for effective use of focus groups. While the focus group participants came from different departments within the organisation, the first focus group was primarily composed of participants from the headquarters, whereas the second focus group was primarily composed of participants from the operational site. In this sense, participants were well-known to one another. In cases of cross-site participation, participants were also well-known to one another as they referenced shared tasks and common knowledge between one another. This simultaneous cleavage and intersection are reflective of the day-to-day working practices of the Agency.

Attending to the relations of focus group participants allows for further reflection on the dynamics of the interaction. For example, as part of my routine updates to my gatekeeper, I outlined the organisation of the focus groups. This included a review of the participant list, in response to which my gatekeeper offered two pieces of advice. In the first focus group, they noted that I may need to encourage participants to engage. And, on the second focus group, they noted that I may to exercise a bit more control over the conversation. These comments

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9 Please see Appendix 2 for a summary of the focus group discussion questions and topics.
accurately reflected the group relations and dynamics. The first focus group proceeded in an orderly manner, where each participant responded in turn, raising their hand to make further comments or respond to a comment made by other participants. The second focus group was far less orderly, as participants frequently jumped in, cutting across one another. Attending to these dynamics brings to the fore the role of facilitator. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, p. 10) have listed some of the skills required in the facilitator role, including “balancing keeping quiet with knowing when to intervene. … to be able to think on their feet to clarify ambiguous statements, enable incomplete sentences to be finished, encourage everyone to participate and ensure that interesting and unexpected avenues are pursued. One of the key skills is ensuring that interaction between research participants is encouraged”. During the focus groups, two ambiguities surfaced that are important in relation to my research. The first relates to conceptual clarity. The second relates to purpose and design of the focus group. On conceptual clarity participants often queried the precise meaning of terms around which I had designed the focus group. Specifically, two terms were the focal point of demands for clarification – research and security. On the one hand, these demands probed my competence and authority as a facilitator and as a researcher, as an incorrect/unsatisfactory answer risked demonstrating that I did not truly understand their work. On the other hand, discussions around these ambiguities produced significant insights on how participants make sense eu-LISA’s work and role, as it was in the context of these discussions that the preference to describe their work and role in terms of service emerged most clearly. Connected to these conceptual ambiguities were further questions relating to the purposes of the questions discussed during the focus group. For example, in response to the opening slide one focus group participant made the following comment,

I have just a comment on the approach, because I don’t see the map between the article 14 and this approach. So, I guess that then this part is more for your PhD than for the part dealing with the research within the … taking into account the new aspect of the article 14
This conversation progressed as the participants negotiated the structure of the design of the order of the focus group. This interaction simultaneously highlighted both the context of the focus group as an important factor in shaping the production of data and the direction of the conversation, in addition to the awareness of participants of my dual role (and possibly in their eyes, competing objectives) as both an intern and a PhD student (see Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999).

Participation in focus groups also raises questions about what constitutes as informed consent. While participants were sent informed consent documents in advance of the groups, they were also asked to sign these documents in the groups. Peer pressure may have made it difficult to refuse to do so. Practical challenges also emerged in the process of the focus group. In the first focus group, most of the participants were in person. Here, online participants risked falling to the background and their level of participation was reduced. In the second focus group, most of the participants were online. This presented both technical challenges due to freezing and dropped lines. It also increased the risk and occurrence of miscued speech as without physical and visual cues, speakers often cut across one another. Teleconferencing also misses the nonverbal cues that form a large part of social communication, making it unavailable for data collection and analysis (see Iacono, Symonds and Brown, 2016). Despite these limitations, the use of teleconferencing was worthwhile as it enabled off-site participation of otherwise hard-to-reach participants.

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10 The speaker number is purposefully left unidentified here.
Document Analysis

Document analysis is a “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents … document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Bowen identifies five different purposes documents can serve in research, 1) to provide data on the research context; 2) to suggest questions/observations for the research; 3) to provide supplementary research data; 4) as a means of tracking change and development, and 5) to verify findings from other sources (ibid, p. 30). In line with these descriptions, documents were analysed as supplementary research data, adding further insights on the issue of service as it had been identified in the interviews, focus groups and listening participation. Analysis of the documents offered insight into the formal definitions and descriptions of service. They provided a means to access descriptions of the technical understanding of service management practices as access to the operational site was not possible.

A select range of eu-LISA publications was reviewed, in addition to official documents relating to the setting up of the Agency.11 This process focused on descriptions of service, paying attention to both what was said and “how the different elements of the text combine to further consolidate (or disrupt) the meaning” (Rapley, 2007, p. 113). This process requires that we pay attention to the “rhetorical work of the text” exploring “how the specific issues it raises are structured and organized and chiefly how it seeks to persuade you about the authority of its understanding of the issue”. (ibid, p. 114). The construction of authority vis-à-vis these documents is central to demonstrating the expertise of eu-LISA as a service provider. In this sense, the documents analysed are organisational artefacts and products of the choice of instrument to manage the data systems, that is many of the documents are produced under reporting obligations because eu-LISA is a decentralised EU agency. Thus, they provide

11 Please see Appendix 1 for an overview of documents reviewed.
valuable insights on how eu-LISA formally and publicly communicates about how it make sense of its work and role. Attention to documents also offers a means to explore how particular issues are framed as problems and solutions (see Rapley, 2007). In this case, one of the central ways in which the setting up of eu-LISA was justified was in terms of the challenges of ensuring efficient and effective operational management. Ensuing organisational reports have been framed in terms of this particular problematisation from the outset, where accounts of eu-LISA’s working practices offer a concrete means to communicate how they efficiently and effectively manage the system in order to deliver value to their stakeholders, measured against objective key performance indicators (KPIs) such as system availability and customer satisfaction levels (see eu-LISA, 2022).

A review of these documents provided an opportunity to explore how issues of service are framed within wider accounts of Agency practices and how these matters intersect or not. For example, service is simultaneously a technical matter, as it relates to the efficient running of the systems, but it is also a governance matter, as it relates to the efficient management of eu-LISA responsibilities. At the same time, service is also a moral matter as the management of the systems is made sense of in terms of Member State efforts to achieve a ‘safer Europe’. Thus, the documents offer supporting material to the empirical data gathered during fieldwork. This was helpful as service was not identified prior to entering the field and returning was not a viable option. So, while service emerged from the empirical material as a meaningful construct, in-depth accounts of service practices were not fully developed in these conversations.

**Research Relations**

The techniques of data collection carried out during fieldwork are defined within the context of my research relations and vice versa. Here, I reflect on these relations, particularly as they relate

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12 [https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/](https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/)
to the construction of knowledge and my dual role and position within the field. To think more critically about research encounters Wilson (2017, p. 455) highlights the negotiated, messy and unpredictable nature of self/other relations:

Whilst keeping hold of how encounters are shaped, managed and constrained, the recognition that the negotiation of Other bodies can never be fully predicted is supported by a ubiquitous reference to ‘possibility’ and ‘potential’. This ubiquity demonstrates an understanding that actions are brought forth from encounters and, as such, that we can never predict what affects minds and bodies might be capable of ahead of any given encounter.

Attending to our research relations in terms of negotiated encounters highlights the influential role these relations play in the production of knowledge, as we can never predict how they will affect the research ahead of time. In this sense, the dynamics of our research relations are a key condition in the construction of knowledge. Both the anthropological and security literatures have reflected on the importance of research relations vis-à-vis the construction and production of knowledge, addressing issues of power, epistemic authority, and criticality. As Aradau and Huysmans (2014, p. 608) note “claims to knowledge raise political questions about the relations between anthropologists and security experts for instance, between researchers and subjects, as well as about the political effects of the ethnographic methods one adopts”. I begin by reflecting on my relationship with my gatekeeper, as one of the most influential of my research relations, as “gatekeepers frame the researcher’s perception of the field, putting boundaries around both the people the researcher can access and the field as a whole” (Bergman Blix, 2019, p. 4) From here, I move on to reflect on the implication of this relationship for my other research relations. I conclude this section by reflecting on my dual role, as both a PhD researcher and an eu-LISA intern, for my research relations. The duality of this role is reflected in my ambiguous position as both an insider and outsider.
My relationship with my gatekeeper was central to how my research developed, as they not only provided an access point to eu-LISA, but they also helped to direct the focus of the research, participated in the research themselves as an interviewee, and provided a framework of reference through which my other research relations were given meaning. Kara et al. (2022, p. 3) characterise the researcher’s relationship and collaboration with gatekeepers as a “continuous, complex and dynamic rapport-building process”. Reeves (2010) has highlighted the ways in which the dynamic of researcher-gatekeeper relations can influence fieldwork, as gatekeepers exert power and control over the research process. At the same time, extant research has highlighted the importance of trust and rapport within the researcher-gatekeeper relationship, as gatekeepers often ‘vouch’ for the researcher, providing guidance and introductions (see DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

My relationship with my gatekeeper developed within the context of our previous professional encounters. Garton and Copland (2010) have highlighted the role prior relationships can play in building rapport. The effects of our prior relationships may not always be immediately apparent or explicit. For example, my prior acquaintance with my gatekeeper came to the fore as they reflected on the intersection of eu-LISA’s work on the smart borders pilot, the work of the ABC4EU project and an additional FP7 project Fastpass, comparing the timelines of the three projects,

let me think back to 2015. 2015 I attended whatever conference, 2014/2015, and I met FASTPASS for the first time, and saw the work they were doing. 2015 we were running the Smart Borders Pilot. Extensive, extensive overlap. We had been given, I can’t think of the sums now, to do the Smart Borders Pilot, but it was 1/10 or less than what FASTPASS had been given to run their pilot. Their project was finishing in 2016, I think yours was even later, ABC4EU, so it was finishing even later (Interview N, 2018).\textsuperscript{13}

In their reflections, the interviewee refers to ABC4EU as my project, as it was within the

\textsuperscript{13} The interview number is purposefully left unidentified here.
framework of my position on the ABC4EU project that we had first met. Here, our shared professional experiences of doing security research at a European level provided the grounds to recognise one another as similar and trustworthy. Within the context of this aspect of our discussions, I move into the position of an insider (see Mikecz, 2012).

Throughout the fieldwork process, I maintained an active relationship with my gatekeeper, as we co-ordinated around the progress of the research/internship. Following the completion of my fieldwork, contact with my gatekeeper continued as we discussed the ongoing progress of the report. However, upon submitting the report my email bounced back. After numerous attempts (during earlier interactions it wasn’t unusual for my emails to bounce back as my gatekeeper’s inbox was often full), I was left wondering what to do next. At the same time, I had registered to attend the upcoming annual eu-LISA conference. In conversation with another counterpart over email about the conference, they raised the topic of the report. I explained that it was complete, but I wasn’t sure where to send it as my gatekeeper had now left eu-LISA and moved. Striepe and Cunningham (2022) have analysed this aspect of the gatekeeper role in terms of ghosting. They described ghosting as “when an individual stops all communication with a friend, partner, or colleague without any explanation. Any attempt to communicate with the individual is simply ignored (i.e. ghosting)” (ibid, p. 279). They go on to note that “ghosting can be unintended; in this case, our ghosts might have been busy and didn’t have time to or forgot to respond” (ibid, p. 285). This unexpected development in the relationship with my gatekeeper left an unsatisfactory feeling in relation to my ‘exit’ from the field, as it raised questions concerning the status of our relationship and my gatekeeper’s impression of me – had I transgressed a boundary I was unaware of, had I failed to fulfil some aspect of our negotiations, or had my communications simply gotten lost in the churn of day-to-day life?

My relationship with my gatekeeper strongly informed the research process as they
actively directed me and introduced me to others to include in the research. Such selection strategies are not unusual within the researcher-gatekeeper relationship, as gatekeeper not only provide access but also function as guides. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002, p. 37) have highlighted this aspect of the gatekeeper relationship as they explain that “gaining access to specific institutions, place and events may take more time. Often the researcher will find that this is facilitated by particular individuals who essentially take the ethnographer under their wing and help to introduce them to their society or group”. In this sense, my gatekeeper not only controlled fieldsite access but also played a role in controlling participant access (see Reeves, 2010). Garsten (2013, p. 151) has reflected on the process of obtaining access (or not) and field relations in terms of an ‘economy of connections’, where “… referrals and references take the form of valuable symbolic capital in a highly competitive and politicised form of exchange. This is an economy in the sense that social connections and referrals are provided as gifts between trusted parties. The connection may provide access to yet other valuable resources, like information, attention, or a job opportunity…”. Thus, my gatekeeper’s willingness or not to make introductions and share contact information was reflective of both a particular economy of connections and the level of trust between us.

The literature has also reflected on the effects of gatekeeper relationship on the issue of participant consent. As my access to eu-LISA has been negotiated through my gatekeeper and my role as an intern formally approved by management, it is difficult to determine if participants participated “out of actual interest, a sense of duty, or on direct or perceived direct orders from the management” (Kara et al., 2022, p. 6). For example, during my research, I was party to the following exchange between my gatekeeper and a potential interviewee,

Dear XXXX,

I hope that you are keeping well. By way of this mail, I would like to introduce Eileen Murphy who is starting with us at eu-LISA as an intern looking into the views of
stakeholders on how the research and technology monitoring function at eu-LISA should evolve in line with the new Agency mandate in this area (in particular involving EU-funded research projects).

Interviews with key stakeholders form a key component of the work. We have the XXXX as relevant and would be hopeful that you might be able to accommodate an interview in your schedule in order to help us.

I will allow Eileen to follow-up to this mail and provide further information on the nature of and arrangements for any interviews. In case of questions nevertheless, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for any support that you can provide.

Kind regards,

The interviewee replied as follows,

Dear XXXX,

We’ll look after Eileen.

We’ll keep in touch

Best Regards

While this interaction raises problematic issues around what counts as free participation and the fact that the request was made in the context of my role as an eu-LISA intern alone, it also highlights the care that we receive from our gatekeepers. In order to address this issue, I relied on the formal research management tools of the project (e.g. the information sheet and informed consent sheet) as a means to draw attention to both my role as an intern but also as PhD researcher, in addition to designing repeated opportunities to confirm/revoke consent throughout the research process.

My dual role as both an intern and PhD researcher strongly shaped my research relations. The influence of this dual role is reflected in the ways in which my status continuously shifted along the continuum of insider/outsider (see Mikecz, 2012). Depending on the specific research
relation I was engaged in and at what point in the research process, my positionality moved along this continuum. As data gathering progressed over time my status as an outsider among staff at the headquarters shifted, with one participant joking, ‘when you leave you’ll know more about the organisation than we do’. This simple joke reflected the complexities of my position, as my knowledge of the Agency positioned me as an insider, but the reference to leaving, positioned me as an outsider. In this sense, although my outsider status shifted to the background, it did not ever fully disappear. The fluidity of these roles and positions required constant impression management. In addition to acknowledging the effects of my presence in the field vis-à-vis the construction of knowledge (see Leigh, et al., 2020).

Salter and Mutlu (2013, p. 15) have asked “what is a reasonable articulation of a critical position, if we are seeking engagement not objectivity”. Thus, positionality is not only an issue in terms of how we situate ourselves during our research encounters and relations, but also how we situate our research in relation to the wider objectives of the discipline. This issue has been taken up in relation to the challenges and benefits of collaboration and engagement. For example, de Goede (2020, p. 112) has asked “how we might draw upon the unlikely and uncomfortable alliances of academic-practitioner engagement to anchor critique”, where “practitioners’ own doubts, hesitations and critiques can be leveraged and augmented to develop a richer public critique”. In the case of my own research, I have sought to take seriously the hesitations my counterparts have in making sense of eu-LISA’s work and role as a security organisation, preferring instead to think of their work and role in terms of service. I argue that attending to this distinction, and the ways in which it is maintained, provides a means to better understand how the practices and relations of actors within the field of (in)security unfold and develop. Thus, the approach I present here is one of ‘thinking with’ professionals and practitioners, in line with “a methodological commitment to understanding the world from the inside of positions” (ibid, p. 109), as I focus my efforts on bringing to fore the “disputes,
controversies and struggles” (Aradau, 2018, p. 300) at play in the construction of (in)security. Such a position has allowed for a space to be surprised (Austin, 2019) by the accounts of my counterparts, and reflects the production tension Montesinos Coleman and Rosenow (2016, p. 205) identify between proximity and distance, where “engagement with practice – being ‘in the field’ – can force us to gain distance from the concepts, categories, and problems through which the field asks us to interpret practice”. As I demonstrate in the case of my own research, it was only by engaging with the practices of my counterparts and by taking seriously their efforts to distinguish their sense of their work and role from that of the professionals of (in)security that I was able to identify the importance of service.

**Order and Consistency in (Security) Cultures: Methodological Consequences**

At the end of my internship, I returned home, armed with my empirical material and a strong desire to make sense of what I had heard and observed. Despite the overall volume of data I had collected and my initial intentions to focus on the expansion of the research and technology monitoring function, making sense of life at eu-LISA was proving a difficult challenge. It was clear to me that I had collected significant material on the research and technology monitoring function, but at the same time I felt that there was a bigger story being told across the data. Analysing eu-LISA as a security organisation did not sit well with the data, nor did it reflect my experiences from fieldwork. This dissatisfaction with the relationship between my data and choice of theory left me with a distinct feeling of failure. Lisle, Squire and Doty (2017, p. 4) have highlighted the productive nature of failure, noting its “capacity to energize and enliven—to make us think harder about what we do as a profession, to make us care more about how we engage with each other (however that other is figured), and to make our critical interventions more robust as we contest formations of the international that perpetuate violence, inflict damage, and entrench exploitation”.

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Working my way through this sense of failure, forced me to ask myself, if eu-LISA does not make sense of its work and role in terms of security, then, how does it? Leander (2016, p. 466) has highlighted the virtues of “creativity in approaching data gathering and flexibility in adjusting the aims it serves”. If the aim of my data analysis is to make sense of eu-LISA, then I would need to look beyond security. It was in asking this question, in conversation with the data collected that the issue of service came to the fore. Thinking about my data in terms of service has provoked new insights, which I argue would not have been possible under a security studies lens alone. This has required sustained methodological reflection, where “the task of a critical researcher is not to substitute his or her reasoning for that of the actors to anticipate what they will do but, rather, to understand their practical reason and the historicity of their actions. (Bigo, 2014, p. 197). As a body of expert knowledge in its own right, thinking in terms of service has required moving back and forth between taking into account the practical reasoning of my counterparts (de Goede, 2020), while also maintaining distance (Montesino Coleman and Rosenow, 2016). Austin (2019, p. 216) has recently reflected on this issue, arguing for the need to take more seriously “the “local,” “lay,” or “ordinary” critical capacities of those we study”. And, yet, neither security nor the study of security is irrelevant. While it may not be the principal logic through which eu-LISA seeks to make sense of its role and work, it is still a relevant factor. In this sense, I have situated my analysis of eu-LISA as a service organisation within the wider context of a field of (in)security. And it is for this reason, that I have grounded my argument and my research contributions in critical approaches to the study of security. Turning to service has allowed for contradictions and tensions present in the ways eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role vis-à-vis security to come to the fore. It is within this framework that my data was analysed, which I outline below.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis. The discovery of themes is argued to be the basis of much social science research, as “without thematic categories, investigators
have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explore” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p. 86). King and Brooks (2018, p. 219-220) define thematic analysis as “forms of qualitative data analysis that principally focus on identifying, organising, and interpreting themes in textual data”. Thematic analysis offers a systematic yet flexible means to engage with the data set. In this sense, thematic data analysis is not tied to the epistemological and ontological assumptions of any one theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) have outlined six phases associated with thematic analysis which have guided the analysis process: 1) Familiarizing yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report. In line with this process the following steps were undertaken. A close reading and re-reading of the transcribed material was carried out to familiarise myself with the data. From this, initial codes were developed relating to the different practices and descriptions outlined in the data. These descriptions focused the line of inquiry to a particular tension recurring within the data; how did participants understand the objectives and boundaries of eu-LISA’s work and role. This tension expressed itself in numerous ways, returning, either explicitly or implicitly, in debates and conversations asking what is the core function of eu-LISA? This question was posed in many ways; what are the boundaries of their technical responsibilities; what role is imagined for them by their stakeholders; how should they interpret their legal mandate; how should they manage the challenges of resourcing; and what is the future of eu-LISA in the light of its expanding responsibilities? Attending to these questions brought to the fore discussion on how eu-LISA produces and delivers value based on its expertise in IT systems management, opening the way to think about how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role in terms of service. The resulting focus on service came as a direct result of the coding as service was not known to the researcher at the time of data collection and only came to her attention to find a conceptual language that would enable engagement with the empirical material and to capture the dynamics of what was
taking place.

Analysing the data does not take place in isolation to the wider research process, nor is it cut off from the dynamics and entanglements of research relations (see Roulston, 2001). Hoskins and Stoltz (2005) have captured this dynamic as they reflect on their experiences of researcher discomfort when engaging in analysis. Austin (2019, p. 215) has addressed this issue in relation to security studies as he calls for “cultivating a non-judgemental ethic of “care-full” analysis and description”. Accepting and negotiating this complexity is driven by my own goals on what I wanted to achieve with the research. While contributing to the scholarly field as a necessary demonstration marking my progress and development as a researcher is the central motivation of this thesis, it is also important to me that I develop an account that makes sense to my counterparts. This is not to say that they would or should have to agree with everything I have said. Rather, I hope that if/when they read it, they will at least be able to say, ‘yes, I can recognise a sense of my experiences in the story that is being told here’. Thus, at the core of my efforts to produce knowledge on eu-LISA are shared attempts (between them and me) to think seriously about eu-LISA’s work and role in the field of European border security and migration management.

Salter and Mutlu (2013, p. 15) have asked what qualifies as a sufficient amount of data? Put another way, this question asks, when can we stop our data retrieval? Such questions are relevant to the way in which we construct truth and produce knowledge in our research practices. These questions force us to consider if we have included all the relevant details, do we have a sufficient understanding of what is happening to make sense of it in a meaningful way, can we accurately create insight through our accounts. This issue was particularly salient in my research. As service had not been the focal point of my data gathering, discussions on this topic were sparse in comparison to the overall volume of material I had collected. Could I argue for the importance of a logic of service in the management of data infrastructures? Attending to this
concern involved three processes. Firstly, efforts to triangulate my data through document analysis; secondly, acknowledging the partial and incomplete nature of qualitative accounts and knowledge; and thirdly, transparently outlining the research process and the role of the researcher in the construction of the argument.

**Limitations**

It should be noted that the research was carried out by a sole researcher and any limitations of the project are her responsibility. In line with qualitative research practices the data presented are reflective of the time, place, and means by which it was gathered. Some limitations that impacted on the collection of data include the fact that interviews and focus groups were carried out on the premises of the Agency. Within this context participants may have not felt able to openly express critical thoughts or feelings. While this is an inherent risk when doing qualitative work, it is possible to see from the data gathered that participants did express critical comments. Furthermore, the offer to return the transcript to participants supported a willingness to discuss topics openly, as participants were reassured that any comments that they were uncomfortable with could be excluded from publication. Additionally, the data was collected over 9 weeks, and future research would benefit from an iterative data collection process to enable a review of the data. The data collected was analysed by the researcher and is subject to her biases. And, finally, most of the data collected is in relation to the work of the headquarters, and additional data in relation to the operations and liaison office should be collected to build a more complete picture of how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role in terms of a logic of service.

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Theoretical Framework

Critical Security Studies (CSS) research is marked by a diversity of theoretical approaches (Aradau, 2018). Here, I focus on the insights of International Political Sociology (IPS) approaches to the study of (in)security (Guillaume and Bilgin, 2017). More specifically, I focus on research within the Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology-International Political Sociology (PARIS-IPS) approach that draws on Bourdieusian concepts (Bigo and McCluskey, 2018). This is followed by an overview of Service Science, the expert literature informing the work of my counterparts. I bring a Critical Security Studies lens to the Service Science literature into to develop a critical theory of service. I conclude the chapter by presenting an overview of the main concepts applied in each of the thesis articles. These conceptual frameworks are connected to wider debates in critical security research, wherein I outline the contributions my research makes to the literature. Before doing so, I wish to take a moment to explain why it is necessary to engage with the topic of service and the expert literature in that field.

Despite my preparations to ‘read security’ in my fieldwork encounters it was strangely absent from my conversations with my counterparts, with some even going so far as to contest the characterisation of their work and eu-LISA as ‘security’. Rather, they repeatedly focused on their expertise in managing IT systems (addressed in Article 1), the support they provide to their stakeholders (addressed in Article 2), and the sense of responsibility they feel accompanies this work (addressed in Article 3). Thus, my theoretical framework has developed to reflect the priorities of my counterparts, and I engage with the insights of Service Science to foreground the dynamics of a logic of service at play in the management of European border data infrastructures.

Montesinos Coleman and Rosenow (2016) have previously reflected on this issue, arguing that “CSS too quickly reads security logics as determinative of modern/liberal forms of
rule and power” (p. 202). Such logics, they argue, focus on “the management of threat, risk, vulnerability, protection, the mediation of death and/or the fixing of political identities by categorizing others in ways that render them sources of threat, risk or vulnerability”, and in doing so, risks concealing “other, intricately related, ordering practices and logics of power” (ibid, p. 204). Taking seriously the need to investigate other practices and logics of power at play does not mean research cannot contribute to the study of (in)security. Indeed, Bigo and McCluskey (2018, p. 120) have argued that “the process by which a specific label of security or/and insecurity is connected with other terminologies, in terms of proximity or opposition, will be more important than the isolation of a true meaning of security through space and time in order to build a concept and a theory of security or securitization”. Thus, the study of (in)security often requires that we look beyond security, in its more obvious forms, to explore the myriad of other ways in which it is being practiced and performed. In the case of eu-LISA, while a logic of service is central to the management of the systems, a logic of security is also important given that many of the systems’ users are professionals of (in)security. In this sense, processes of (in)security provide a key context to the practice of service. And at the same time, as I argue, service is increasingly emerging as the language through which matters of security are being debated, contested, and defined. Understanding the imbricated nature of these two logics is crucial to making sense of the work and role of eu-LISA specifically and the management of border security data infrastructures more generally.

Engaging with a logic of service as the “practical sense” (Bigo and McCluskey, 2018, p. 127) of my counterparts not only provides a means to explore evolving notions of (in)security, but also functions as a vital source of critical thinking (see Austin, 2019). Recent work has turned its attention to the relationship between issues of engagement and collaboration and the development of critical thinking. For example, De Goede (2020, p. 101) has called on critical security scholars to ask if engagements with practice can generate effective forms of critique.
Building on Foucault’s rejection of the separation of practical and theoretical knowledge, she argues that “critical practice can be leveraged through ‘thinking with’ professionals and practitioners – rather than denouncing them” (ibid, pg. 112). This approach echoes ongoing efforts to draw on the practical knowledge of our counterparts as a means to develop our critical thinking (see Austin, Bellanova and Kaufmann, 2019). Such an approach opens up new avenues for research and creates a space to ask questions about the politics of security (see Bellanova, Lindskov Jacobsen and Monsees, 2020). In line with this approach, I strive to think with my counterparts as they make sense of their work and role in terms of service, asking what this means for the study of (in)security.

Finally, a clarification must be made regarding the role the Service Science literature plays in this thesis. Critical Security Studies literature provides the guiding theoretical framework through which I situate the work of eu-LISA, as it operates in the context of ongoing competing efforts to define what is (in)security. Drawing on CSS research allows me to understand what are the implications and consequences of organising the management of border security data infrastructures in line with a logic of service. Furthermore, from within the CSS literature, I draw on research that is underpinned by Bourdieusian field theory. Central to this approach is the understanding that the concepts of field theory should not simply be applied but must respond to the empirical practices and context of the research (Leander, 2006). In this case, an understanding of service was required to anchor my analysis of what was taking place. Service research, rooted in the evolving practices of service professionals, is a practical branch of knowledge. Nonetheless, unless Critical Security Studies research can take account of these practical and powerful forms of knowledge it cannot fully understand how processes of (in)security are constructed.
Critical Security Scholarship

Critical approaches to the study of (in)security have argued for the need to study what security does, as opposed to what security is (see C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). In this sense, security as a concept has no essence but takes on its meaning in relation to the practices of security actors and agencies (Bigo, 2013). Exploring the multiplicity of ways in which security is constructed and performed, has expanded the analytical focus of security studies beyond traditional accounts of states to include research on a range of actors, such as, *inter alia*, police (Bigo, 2002), private military companies (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2007; Leander, 2010), and more recently the work of data managers and IT specialists (Bigo, 2020; Glouftsios, 2021). This work has brought to the fore expanding claims and competitions about what counts as security (Bigo, 2002).

Within the Critical Security Studies literature, multiple theoretical perspectives have been applied, foregrounding and backgrounding different aspects and mechanisms of (in)securitisation processes. Across the research is a shared concern for the disputes that arise during the construction and performance of (in)security, the modes of knowledge that support these efforts, and how these efforts intersect with and reflect relations of power. The thesis draws primarily on a PARIS-IPS approach to the study of (in)security. This approach is based on the understanding that processes of (in)securitisation are “driven by competition among actors to police the line between security and (in)security” (Bigo, 2013, p. 120).

A PARIS-IPS approach brings several elements to the fore. It focuses analytical attention on the specific ways in which these competitions take place, placing significant attention on the role of the everyday practices of actors, highlighting the bureaucratic and administrative aspects of (in)securitisation processes. This work seeks to situate these practices within their wider social and historical contexts, in an effort to locate (in)security within a given political ordering (see Huysmans, 1998; Jeandesboz, 2018). The ability to define what qualifies as a matter of security or not, endows actors with significant power, as it provides a means to accrue resources
(capitals) and to implement their view of the world as dominant, what Bourdieu characterises as symbolic power (see Swartz, 2020). Outlining the analytical focus of PARIS-IPS, Bigo and McCluskey (2018, p. 122) explain that the approach “insists on symbolic power as a main category of analysis”.

In line with Bourdieu’s efforts to overcome the opposition between theory and practice (Bigo, 2011) a PARIS-IPS approach is simultaneously constructivist and empiricist. As it is both “reflexive and deconstructs essentialist claims to knowledge” and “sensitive to the practices of human beings and their relationships to objects and starts its theories from these sociological and historical relationships” (Bigo, 2013, p. 121). This approach emphasises the importance of empirical accounts, where familiarity with the practices of our counterparts forms the basis for theoretical reasoning and thinking (see Leander, 2008; Côté-Boucher, Infantino and Salter, 2014; Adler-Nissen, 2016). Attending to these matters requires situating practices in relation to one another, localised within contexts of time and space. Mediating between the practices of our counterparts and the practice of doing research, requires adopting a reflexive approach. Engagement, collaboration, and reflexivity are thus central to PARIS-IPS processes of constructing knowledge, offering the “necessary protection against the grand theories and analytical frameworks that risk wiping out the heterogeneity of social and security compositions” (Leander, 2019, p. 327). In this sense, a PARIS-IPS approach remains sensitive to the constructed, partial, and contested nature of knowledge.

A PARIS-IPS approach draws on the insights of Bourdieusian sociology (often in combination with other theoretical traditions, see for example Leander, 2013; Frowd, 2018). Adopting a Bourdieusian-inspired analysis of (in)security, provides “thinking tools” (Leander, 2008) through which to critically reflect on social relations of power. This work has explored the relations between security actors as a field. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 97) describe fields “as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions”. The field of
(in)security takes shape along multiple lines. It is a field of force, drawing together different actors under shared interests and understandings of how the world operates. It is a field of struggle and domination, as these actors compete to establish their own forms of expertise as the prevailing framework through which (in)security takes shape (see C.A.S.E. Collective, 2006). And, finally, it is a transversal field, where actors are connected through evolving practices of professional socialisation that operate beyond the bounds of the nation state (Bigo, 2016).

Attending to the transnational nature of fields acknowledges that the boundaries of fields are permeable, and they expand and contract vis-à-vis the practices of the actors involved (Bigo, 2011). It is important to note that while a field analysis is representative of a particular moment, this does not mean that fields themselves are static, as the positions and relations of actors are subject to change and contestation, evolving in context (Leander, 2011).

Within fields, actors occupy positions in a social space, mediated by their practices and relations to one another and influenced by different forms and volumes of capital, that is the specific resources that are valued within a field (Leander, 2006). The position of an actor within the field is relative to its relations to other actors in the field, as actors draw on their habitus, that is the “taken for granted understandings functioning as an intuitive guide to action” (Leander, 2006, p. 7). One’s habitus “shapes how a person sees the world and acts in it” (ibid), thus it is intimately linked to the accumulation of capital and field position. While habitus operates at the level of the agent, it is produced in specific fields, reflecting “the inter-subjectively shared, taken for granted, values and discourses of a field, its doxa”, which in turn is shaped by the habitus of people in the field (ibid, p. 8). This relationship between habitus and field goes beyond the dualism of structure and agency to focus on a relational understanding of social action and agents, whereby “acting, agents are shaped by the relations they engage in” (Bigo, 2011, p. 236). These actors compete for resources (capitals) which enables them to establish their sense of the
game as dominant. These competitions are focused on particular stakes in the field. Bigo (2006) has identified efforts to define a threat or a risk as a central stake in the field of (in)security.

A PARIS-IPS approach to the study of (in)security offers a productive framework of analysis for my research as it focuses on the construction of (in)security through the everyday, mundane and routine tasks of bureaucratic and administrative actors. Its focus on the definitional practices and claims of actors offers a lens through which to explore how eu-LISA both makes sense of its work and role in terms of service and has sought to establish this sensibility within the field. And, finally, its focus on the practice of symbolic power is central to how eu-LISA operates – as a service provider that presents as disinterested, but which nonetheless is a key actor in the field of (in)security. The following section introduces the Service Science literature, focusing on a logic of service (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

Service Science

The history of Service Science (in its current disciplinary form) is intimately linked to the history of the well-known multinational corporation IBM (International Business Machines). On a page titled the ‘invention of service science’, the IBM website frames the beginning of Service Science, circa 2004, as a response to their need for staff knowledgeable across computer science, engineering, management, and social science to support the growing role of service in IBM’s business model¹. Service Science has developed as a “transdisciplinary area of study” (Spohrer and Maglio, 2008, p. 238), supporting systematic research on service systems and service innovation (see Ostrom et al., 2010). With the support of IBM, Service Science has, over the last two decades, been established as a recognised field of study across universities worldwide. In this sense, the study of service has developed in relation to wider efforts to establish professional practices of service.

Efforts to establish Service Science as a legitimate field of study have reflected on the need to develop “common terminology and methods that increase our insight into the service domain” (Chesbrough and Spohrer, 2006, p. 36). Responding to this need, Maglio and Spohrer (2008, p. 18) argue that a service-dominant logic “provides just the right perspective, vocabulary and assumptions on which to build a theory of service systems, their configurations, and their mode of interaction”. In their seminal publication, Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 1) chronicle the emergence of “a new dominant logic for marketing, one in which service provision rather than goods is fundamental to economic exchange”. To develop this argument, Vargo and Lusch distinguish between a service dominant logic (SDL) and a goods dominant logic (GDL) on the basis of resources and value creation. Under a GDL, resources are primarily defined in terms of stuff, where value is embedded in a product during the production process. In contrast, under a SDL, resources are primarily defined in terms of skills and knowledge, where value is “cocreated with the consumer rather than embedded in the output” (ibid, p. 6). Vargo and Lusch do not aim to place goods and services in opposition to one another. Rather they take an integrative view whereby goods are understood as distributive mechanisms for service. On this basis, Vargo and Lusch define service as “the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and performance for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself” (ibid, p. 2). This definition highlights a number of important aspects of SDL: it is anchored in processes of specialization and the application of resources, it focuses on exchange; it prioritises expertise and capabilities; it is relational; and it is value driven.

In their initial outline of SDL, Vargo and Lusch (2004) presented eight foundational premises (FP) summarising the theory. Over the next twelve years, three further FPs were added, in addition to amending the original eight FPs. Finally, the FPs were revised as five axioms, highlighting the central tenets of SDL:

Axiom 1: Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.
Axiom 2: Value is cocreated by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary.
Axiom 3: All social and economic actors are resource integrators.
Axiom 4: Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary.
Axiom 5: Value cocreation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements. (Vargo and Lusch, 2016, p. 18).

Under SDL, all actors are engaged in the exchange of skills and competences (Axiom 1). To do so, service providers develop and communicate value propositions, service offerings, which are assessed by service users/beneficiaries in the context of their needs and objectives (Axiom 4). Thus, the value of service is defined by the user and cocreated in the interaction between provider and user (Axiom 2). As all actors are both service providers and recipients, integrating the skills and competences exchanged by others (Axiom 3), value is cocreated in use and context and is facilitated or inhibited by wider institutions and institutional arrangements (Axiom 5). Together Axiom 3 and 5 highlight the relational and social nature of service, which Vargo and Lusch (2016, p. 7) describe in terms of “nested and overlapping service ecosystems”. They define a service ecosystem as “a relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value cocreation through service exchange” (ibid, p. 10-11). This definition resonates with Bourdieusian accounts of fields, indeed Vargo and Lusch explicitly draw on practice research, including Bourdieu and Giddens, to develop their argument on the role of institutions.

SDL has had a significant impact on the development of Service Science and it has formed an integral and influential aspect of its theoretical repertoire. However, recent work has highlighted the tendency of SDL research to focus on the collaborative and cooperative nature of value co-creation processes, arguing that SDL overlooks the potential for value co-destruction (see Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Hietanen, Andéhn, and Bradshaw (2018) have issued a strong critique of SDL on two fronts. First, they argue that a focus on value-in-use over and above value-in-exchange leads to a relativist understanding of
value, which ignores the wider social and political context. They argue that value matters as an issue of not just responding to a need, but also as an issue of social status and power. This intersects with their second critique, as they argue that SDL depicts market exchanges as a “benevolent” (ibid, p. 102) practice of meeting the needs of service recipients in order to improve their well-being. Such an account, they argue, ignores how market exchanges reinforce and reproduce societal inequalities. Building on these critiques, the authors situate SDL as a particular form of service relation predicated on the politics of capitalist value exchange (as opposed to value-in-use) and the labour of consumption.

Tadajewski and Jones (2021, p. 116, emphasis in original) adopt a different approach in their critique of SDL, as they argue that the theory is only “seemingly apolitical”. Adopting a genealogical approach, they aim to scrutinise Vargo and Lusch’s narrative on the emergence of SDL, pointing instead to a multiplicity of historically situated service discourses. To do so, they highlight the evolutionary and progressive tone underpinning Vargo and Lusch’s description of the shift from GDL to SDL. As a counterpoint to this narrative, they focus on historical efforts to develop service thinking, which developed specifically in terms of duelling political agendas, which they describe as service capitalism and service socialism. Their analysis situates the claims of SDL within a broader historical context, linking its assumptions about exchange, value and power to a capitalist agenda, where “business and professional men united in the ideal of service” (ibid, p. 120).

This research underlines the need to adopt a more critical perspective in our analysis of the politics of service practices (see Corvellec and Hultman, 2014). To support this effort, I draw on the insights of PARIS-IPS studies of security, to explore the ways in which a logic of security and a logic of service are imbricated in support of one another. I bring a PARIS-IPS lens to Service Science. A logic of service provides the language that expert counterparts use to make sense of the working practices and routines in eu-LISA, wherein service, as a form of
“practitioner knowledge” (Austin, 2019), is central to the management of border data infrastructures. However, service research lacks a mature engagement with the politics of service practices and the relations of power it produces, it is here that the insights of a PARIS-IPS approach come to the fore.

Bringing a critical perspective to service provides a means to ask questions about practices of security, when they do not readily present as ‘security’. If security studies research is to come to grips with the role being played by new actors such as data managers and IT specialists in the field of (in)security, then it must expand its analysis of practices to include the types of expertise and know-how of these actors. In this case, as an IT service provider, eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role according to a logic of service. It is only by attending to this logic that critical security studies research can ask questions about how these new actors are affecting the field of (in)security. I have sought to develop this approach here by engaging with research to ask questions about the construction of new relationships to the field, which determines these actors’ level of participation in processes of (in)security, about where we can find the politics of managing border security data infrastructures, and finally how the introduction of these logics changes how actors compete to define the value of their work. In this sense, attending to the supplementary logics that inform the practices of actors in the field of (in)security is vital to understanding how security is evolving.

It is important to note that while a logic of service offers important insights into the practices, positions, and capitals at play in the work of managing border security data infrastructures, it is in no way the only logic at play. Nor is service a homogenous concept, where value is understood to mean the same thing to every actor. Indeed, as the articles will demonstrate what is understood and expected of service provision are often points of tension and debate. Most importantly, service offers a way to think about security relations, which are often described in ways other than security. It provides a way to temporarily stabilise and open
up for exploration the contradictions and tensions involved in the work of actors and agencies who manage border security data infrastructures but who also do not understand themselves in terms of security.

The following sections outline the contested interaction of security and service as explored across the three thesis articles. The conceptual framework applied in each article is connected to wider debates in Critical Security Studies research and I outline the contributions that each of the articles makes to the scholarly literature, namely (de)securitisation; (de)politicisation; and relations of power.

Conceptual Frameworks and Contributions to the Literature

The thesis explores how the management of border security data infrastructures takes place. It focuses on the case of eu-LISA as the expert EU Agency responsible for this area. The research seeks to address the following questions in the different thesis articles, respectively:

1) How do professional practices of service define eu-LISA’s relationship to the field of (in)security? And, what are the implications of this relationship for processes/notions of (de)securitisations?

2) What form/rationality of managerial expertise informs the politics of data infrastructures? And what are the implications for the construction of (in)security and (de)politicisations?

3) How do professionals of service make themselves visible to the field of (in)security, while presenting themselves as disinterested experts? And, what does this mean for the emergence of new lines of competition in the field of (in)security?

The first article, ‘Solidarity through Service’ explores how professional practices of service define eu-LISA’s relationship to the field of (in)security? This question is considered in
the light of what this means for evolving processes of (de)securitisation. Attending to the role of positions highlights the importance of understanding that it is not only what is said that matters, but also “where you say it from” (Leander, 2006, p. 3). Here, the authority of actors is intimately tied up with their position in wider social structures and contexts. For example, in the case of eu-LISA establishing their position as experts in IT service management is crucial in order to secure their legitimacy and authority in the field of (in)security whilst simultaneously allowing them to distinguish their work from that of the end-users. To think in terms of the position of actors is to focus on the contextual and relational nature of power and politics. It is also to think in terms of the field effects, as the introduction of new actors, and the successful establishment of their position shifts relations across the network (Bigo, 2020).

In the first article, I expand on existing efforts to attend to the role of new players in the field of (in)security by offering a situated account of the professional practices of a key actor. Responding to recent work analysing eu-LISA as part of an emerging “guild of ‘digital technologies’ managing security” (Bigo, 2020, p. 76), I argue they are better understood as a guild of IT service managers. In doing so, I highlight the importance of attending to service as a crucial logic shaping the professional practices of data infrastructure management in the field of (in)security. I introduce the concept of ‘delimiting security’ as a means to describe competing expert knowledge claims that are distinct from but are nonetheless integral to securitisation. In this sense, delimiting security reflects the novel ways in which actors are seeking to construct their relationship to the field of (in)security, drawing new lines around what they understand as security or not. Therefore, I recast the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism as a continuum along which actors construct and delimit a range of relationships to processes of (in)securitisation.

The second article, ‘Security-as-Service’ explores how technocratic expertise informs the (de)politicisation of data infrastructure management. Critical Security Studies literature has
highlighted the central role technology and data-driven solutions play in border security and migration management (see Andersson, 2016; Ruppert, Isin and Bigo, 2017). This work has highlighted the entry of new actors and agencies in the field of (in)security, such as data managers and IT specialists (see Bigo, 2020; Glouftsiou, 2021). Research has highlighted the need to better understand the practices of managing data infrastructures, however, empirical accounts of the logics and rationales that support and enable this work are lacking (Glouftsiou and Scheel, 2021). In this article, I show that service is a key rationale through which data infrastructures are managed and governed. This requires a critical evaluation of Service Science as a body of expert knowledge central to the management of IT systems. Service Science is a transdisciplinary body of knowledge dedicated to the study of service systems and systematic service innovation, including IT systems and their management, which focuses on delivering (co-created) value through the proper management of IT systems. Focusing on the dynamics of a logic of service provides a means to attend to the (de)politicisation of data infrastructure management, as this article demonstrates it is within the framework of a logic of service that matters of security are increasingly being assessed in relation to the expert practices of managing data infrastructures.

While there is internal critique within Service Science scholarship (see Hietanen, Andéhn and Bradshaw, 2018), the role of service has not been addressed from a Critical Security Studies perspective. The second article brings these literatures into critical dialogue, exploring how a logic of service brings with it its own form of politics, countering a de-politicised view of technocratic expertise. Critical Security Studies has highlighted the depoliticisation of security practices through recourse to technocratic expertise as a focal point for the area of study. De-politicisation signals mounting agreement and consensus concerning the appropriateness of technical solutions for security problems (Bigo, 2020). In response, critical security research increasingly asks where we can locate the politics of this work.
Hagmann, Hegemann and Neal (2018) introduce the notion of arena shifting in order to argue that politics no longer takes place in traditional arenas. In line with this argument, EU agencies have emerged as important sites of political practice (see Busuioc and Groenleer, 2013). Where Critical security studies research has argued that technocratic expertise forecloses or reduces the space to discuss the societal impacts of security measures and technical solutions, I argue that the specific mode of data infrastructure management undertaken by eu-LISA brings to the fore a politics of its own kind, a politics of service, where the delivery of value from digital technologies remains subject to political disagreement. As I will show, a logic of service is increasingly emerging as the language through which matters of security are being debated and contested and defined. Delving into the work of eu-LISA I demonstrate that practices of providing expertise under a logic of service is neither exclusively de-politicising or politicising, indeed it is often simultaneously both.

The third article, ‘Service Capital: Visibility, Power and Disinterested Securitisation’, explores how professionals of service make themselves visible in the field of (in)security, while also presenting themselves as disinterested. Critical Security Studies research has analysed the field of security as competing efforts between established professionals of (in)security to define what is a threat or a risk. But new actors and agencies have entered this competitive field, especially in the area of data management, and IT service provision, bringing their own professional practices, logics, and expert know-how. I argue that they are competing to support their stakeholders but this support is packaged as neutral, objective, and disinterested expertise.

I introduce the concept of service capital, drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory. In his analysis of forms of capital, Bourdieu (1986) challenged the distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”, calling attention to social relations of power. Service capital addresses this tension, as disinterestedness rather than self-interestedness is the underlying logic of service. Thus, service capital offers a new
“thinking tool” (Leander, 2008) for the study of relations of power in the transforming field of (in)security.

Service capital draws from pre-existing notions of service, most notably public service. Service is not just a matter of technical management but is also a moral and political practice. Moreover, service capital is not an intangible concept. On the contrary, it is mapped and measured by the EU as European Added Value. Because European Added Value is connected to budgets, service capital becomes the key source of competitive advantage, legitimacy, authority, reputation, and resources for institutional growth.

Taken together these articles advance Critical Security Studies scholarship by exploring the work and role of data infrastructure managers and IT professionals participating in the field of (in)security, who generally present themselves as disinterested experts. I demonstrate that rather than straightforwardly joining the professionals of (in)security, these actors view themselves as service providers, which on the surface appears as a form of apolitical technocratic expertise. However, as the articles show, service is a highly politicised practice, encompassing matters of managerial, technical, and even moral practice. Across the articles, I draw on PARIS-IPS approaches to the study of (in)security to explore how service shapes the practices, positions, and capitals of these actors. Each of the articles makes an empirical contribution to the critical study of data infrastructure management. The management of data infrastructures is understood by expert practitioners as a service, and service is a topic with its own expert literature. Service Science is subject to internal critiques. Drawing on Critical Security Studies research, I explore how a logic of service relates to the construction of processes of (in)securitisation. Attending to the practical knowledge of my counterparts enables a deeper understanding of how they make sense of their work and role in relation to the field of (in)security. If we are to understand how these key actors make sense of security, we must consider the forms of practical knowledge that they draw on in their day-to-day work but also
how they organise their approach to this work. I argue that it is within a logic of service that the
politics of many security practices and relations are now taking shape and being played out.

References


Solidarity through Service: The Guild of IT Service Managers and the Field of (In)security

Abstract

Critical security researchers are highlighting the ways in which processes of (in)security are being transformed by the participation of new agencies and actors, especially data managers and IT systems operators. Expanding scholarly analysis to account for these new agencies and actors requires engaging with how they position themselves. In recent work, Didier Bigo has described these actors as a “transnational guild” positioned in the field of (in)security. In this article, I argue that these actors are better understood as a guild of IT service managers who operate under a logic of service and are not just another (in)securitising actor. In support of this argument, I analyse the practices of operational management carried out by the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA). I argue that by organising its work in line with a logic of service, eu-LISA is able to rationalise its seemingly contradictory relationship to the field of (in)security. Despite its active participation in the construction and maintenance of IT systems for border security, the Agency does not make sense of its work or role in terms of security. Rather, it views its work as distinct from, but in support of that of the professionals of (in)security. I characterise this relationship to the field of (in)security as one of delimiting security. Identifying this relationship reframes the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism, which is common in critical security studies, as a continuum, reflecting the increasing complexity of actors’ relationships to the field. Attending to the specific practices through which new actors make sense of their work and role in relation to the field of (in)security is necessary if critical security scholarship is to fully understand the part they play in processes of (in)securitisation.
Introduction

[I]t's a duty for us to evolve [the systems] and we do it together with the Member States. So, that’s kind of the advantage for the client Member State. … So, we are really like a service provider, very, very close service provider to the Member States (Interview No. 35, 2018 [my interpolation]).

The Agency is seeking to continuously improve and extend its role as an IT service provider. To support this ambition, eu-LISA deployed in 2016 its initial IT service management (ITSM) process model, based on the Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) best practice (eu-LISA, 2021: 53).

In his analysis of the origins of Frontex, the EU’s border security agency, Andrew Neal (2009) notes that “much of what is being done in the name of security is quiet, technical, and unspectacular, in the EU intensely so, and just as much again does not declare itself to be in the name of security at all” (Neal, 2009, p. 352). Today, critical approaches to security emphasize the quiet, technical and unspectacular work that is done in the name of security but does not readily declare itself as such (see Amoore and de Goede, 2005; Huysmans, 2006; Carrera and Hernanez, 2015). But one cannot assume the field of security is coherent and unified. Indeed, as Neal (2009, p. 351) argues “whatever ‘security’ may be, it cannot be understood through a single overarching logic”. In this article, I will go further and argue that the field is composed of a multiplicity of sometimes very new actors who operate off different logics, hail from different professions, and bring with them different political sensibilities. In this article, I will focus on the emergent and powerful guild of IT service managers, showing how a logic of service shapes their professional disposition and desire to delimit security. This article, then, moves beyond the dualism of securitisation/desecuritisation to highlight how security is being delimited by an understudied guild of professionals.

To explore how security is being delimited in the contemporary moment I turn my attention to the work of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-
Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA). Established in 2011 to provide “a long-term solution for the operational management of large-scale IT systems”, eu-LISA is currently responsible for three systems in operation (SIS II, VIS & Eurodac) in addition to three future systems (EES, ETIAS & ECRIS-TCN).\(^1\) It is also responsible for the development and implementation of interoperability between these systems. Moreover, eu-LISA has recently been approved to take over the operational management of e-CODEX, a cross-border judicial tool. While eu-LISA is headquartered in Tallinn, Estonia, in addition to a Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium, the technical management of the systems takes place at the Agency’s operational site in Strasbourg, France (a legacy of the operational management of the systems prior to eu-LISA’s establishment), supported by a backup site in Austria.

The systems under eu-LISA’s management play a key role in the governance of international mobility (see Glouftsios, 2021a; Glouftsios, 2021b; Bellanova and Glouftsios, 2022). In this sense, eu-LISA actively participates and operates in the field of European border security and migration management. The majority of the systems’ users – national police, and border agents, for example – can un-problematically be described as professionals of (in)security (see Bigo, 2014a), and the systems themselves have frequently been examined within a framework of securitisation (e.g. Jeandesboz, 2016; Tsianos and Kuster, 2016; Bigo, Ewert and Mendos Kuskonmaz, 2020). Indeed, nascent efforts to understand eu-LISA have simply assumed that the Agency straightforwardly belongs to the field of (in)security (see Bigo, 2020). However, in conversations with eu-LISA staff during fieldwork, it soon became apparent that the description of eu-LISA as a security actor did not resonate with their understanding of the Agency’s role and their professional disposition. In fact, in numerous cases, this suggestion was actively refuted. Rather, in their efforts to explain the Agency’s role staff repeatedly focused on their expertise in IT management and the support this enables them to provide to

\(^1\) Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/About-Us/Who-We-Are (Accessed 17 July 2022)
their stakeholders. This understanding of eu-LISA’s work and role is reflective of a logic of service.

In this article, I focus on the technical practices of operational management carried out by eu-LISA. This work is organised in line with best practice IT service management (ITSM) guidelines, connecting eu-LISA to a wider professional field of service. Within the expert literature on IT service management, service is understood as “a means of delivering value to customers by facilitating outcomes customers want to achieve without the ownership of specific costs and risks” (Axelos, 2011, p. 51). Thus, IT service management practices speak to how IT systems in the field of (in)security are constructed and performed as valuable or not.

By focusing on service, eu-LISA is able to establish a relationship with the field of security that allows it to understand its work and role as contributing to processes of (in)security whilst also being distinct from the work and role of professionals of (in)security. Therefore, I shall show that the operational management staff of eu-LISA are members of a transnational guild of professional IT service managers (Bigo, 2016). To explain their relationship to the field, I introduce the concept of security delimitation. Despite active participation in the construction and maintenance of systems that are central to the field of (in)security, these actors do not make sense of their work and role in those terms. Rather, they view themselves as distinct from, but in support of, security. Under a logic of service, new boundaries on what qualifies as practices of security are being determined. In this article, I will show that the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism, which saturates the scholarly literature (see Scheel, 2022), cannot comprehend fully the role of an Agency like eu-LISA or the role of the professionals who staff it. New actors are developing new claims on they understand their role in processes of (in)securitisation, opening up a continuum of positions from which they participate in the field.

This article proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the research methodology. This is followed by an overview of the theoretical support for my argument. This is followed by
a presentation of eu-LISA’s working practices and a discussion of how it negotiates its relationship with the field of security and border management. And, finally, the implications of connecting a logic of (in)security with a logic of service are discussed in the conclusion.

**Note on Methodology**

This article presents findings from a period of fieldwork carried out in 2018 at the headquarters of eu-LISA, Tallinn Estonia. Field site access was secured through a gatekeeper. During the fieldwork period, I took up the role of an eu-LISA intern, reviewing the then research and technology monitoring function. During fieldwork, online and in-person expert interviews (see Bogner and Menz, 2009) were carried out with eu-LISA members of staff, including staff from the headquarters, liaison office, and operational site, and with external eu-LISA stakeholders. In addition, two focus groups were held with eu-LISA members of staff only, from the headquarters and the operational site. Both the interviews and focus groups were recorded with consent.

On return from fieldwork, I began to reflect on my interlocutors’ preference to describe their role in terms of service. I found their view resonating with descriptions in key Agency documents, which I analysed focusing primarily on eu-LISA annual activity reports, strategy reports, and single programming documents (see Bowen, 2009). As security restrictions prevented direct observation of the practices of operational management, document analysis offered an alternative means to explore these professional practices, bringing to the fore IT service management.

The identification of service as central to how my expert counterparts make sense of their work, focused my attention on the relationship between security and service, with a particular focus on the tensions it brought to the fore. In this case, how eu-LISA has established a relationship with the field that both acknowledges the role they play in processes of
(in)security whilst also enabling them to distinguish their role from that of the professionals of (in)security.

**Delimiting Security**

Inspired by the insights of field theory, Bigo (2002) has analysed the emergence of a transnational bureaucratic network of actors he initially describes as managers of unease. These actors, now more commonly described as professionals of (in)security (Bigo, 2014a), compete with one another “for the monopoly of the legitimate knowledge on what constitutes a legitimate unease, a “real” risk” (Bigo, 2006, p. 111). Thus, processes of (in)securitisation are “centrally driven by competition among multiple actors to police the line between security and insecurity” (Bigo, 2013, p. 120). In this sense, these processes are shaped by the practices of professionals of (in)security, that is “the various ways of doing and knowing of those who claim security to be their profession” (Guittet and Jeandesboz, 2010, p. 231). Thus, it is through their day-to-day practices that professionals of (in)security compete to define what is (in)security. The ability to define what qualifies as a matter of security or not endows professionals of (in)security with significant power, as it provides a means to accrue resources and implement their view of the world as the dominant one.

While professionals of (in)security compete amongst themselves, they also share “common beliefs, practices and meanings” (Bigo et al. 2007, p. 8) about the nature of threats, imposing “a claim about security understood as a “truth” of institutions and “independent experts”, relayed and supported by the practical know-how of various security agencies” (Bigo, 2002, p. 76). Central to this are processes of professional socialisation (Bigo, 2014a). This focus on the role of professional socialisation is further reflected in Bigo’s (2016) more recent move away from the category of professionals of (in)security in favour of the notion of transnational guilds, allowing for a more nuanced consideration of relations both between actors and also
between actors and the field (i.e. their positions).

Bigo (2016, p. 407-408) describes transnational guilds as “actors whose struggles and solidarity at a distance are connected with a profession and, inside this profession, with a specific craft explaining the common dispositions between individuals who are very distant from each other”. He goes on to argue that the concept of guilds should “be employed only when it is possible to speak of groups who have specific crafts, and which enter into competition inside or between different professions to organize the world along the logic that fits best with their patrimony of dispositions, transforming their logic of practice into a practice of logic” (ibid, p. 410). The implication of this is that disparate guild members have shared mechanisms for bringing professional knowledge together, most obviously through the use of standards and “best practices”.

Agencies like eu-LISA operate in a world where knowledge standards and best practices function as key metrics to demonstrate their expertise in IT management. As the analytical gaze of critical scholarship turns to data-driven technologies in the management of European borders, increasing attention is being given to the specific practices of the new agencies and actors involved in this kind of work (see Aradau and Blanke, 2015; Amoore and Raley, 2017; Bellanova and de Goede, 2021). Reflecting on the growing importance of data within security and migration management, Ruppert, Isin and Bigo (2017, p. 3) have introduced the concept of data politics, arguing that the production of data is a social and political practice that happens “through structured and structuring fields in and through which various agents and their interests generate forms of expertise, interpretation, concepts, and methods that collectively function as fields of power and knowledge”. In this sense, there is a growing need, I argue, to understand the professional practices or ‘crafts’ related to the management of large-scale IT systems that enable new claims on what counts as (in)security.

Seeking to analyse the effects of new actors and agencies in the field of (in)security Bigo
(2020) has identified the emergence of a guild of “digital technologies” for managing security. The emergence of this guild, he argues, is a result of “a push for more power of decision in terms of risk analysis by data analysts, IT systems engineers profiting from dromopolitics to challenge the police establishment, and large segments of border control agencies” (ibid, p. 76, emphasis in original). To support this argument, Bigo traces the historical development of SIS II and the creation of an agency for IT management, eu-LISA, which has succeeded in transforming the logic of physical border control into “an ‘offline’ world which has to obey to the logic of the ‘online’ world” (ibid, p. 89). In doing so, Bigo argues that this guild has successfully laid the grounds to make new claims on how processes of (in)security are constructed and defined. Reflecting on the reconfiguring effects of digital technologies, Bigo (ibid, p. 75) argues that their growing use “introduces de facto new ‘players’ in the (in)security field in Europe who have their own politics, connected with their own visions of the world order, their own interests, and specific habitus or dispositions”. One such group are actors involved in the management of IT systems. And, while Bigo has sought to situate the work of eu-LISA within the wider guild of “digital technologies” for managing security, highlighting shifting strategies to define what counts as (in)security, his analysis lacks an account of the specific craft which distinguishes these actors from other guilds. Without such an account, his argument is premised on the assumption that eu-LISA, and other similar actors, can be analysed as yet another (in)securitising actor, thus overlooking the importance of other logics and practices shaping how they make sense of their work and role.

In contrast to Bigo, I argue that eu-LISA is better understood as a service provider. And those who carry out the operational management of the systems are better understood as part of a guild of IT service managers. These actors are positioned at the intersection of the fields of (in)security and service and operate according to a logic of service. IT service management “focuses on defining, managing and delivering IT services to support business goals and
customer needs” (Winniford, Conger and Erickson-Harris, 2009, p. 153). This approach requires that IT service providers “systematically plan the quality of the services and customer relationships to ensure value delivery from IT operations” (ibid). Thus, IT service management is central to processes of IT governance.

One of the central ways by which eu-LISA seeks to ensure proper IT governance is through the implementation of best practice ITSM guidelines, such as the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL). Cronholm, Göbel and Åkesson (2020, p. 75) argue that the purpose of best practices in the IT sector is to “provide normative knowledge that guides service providers in the improvement of their management of IT services”. The implementation of ITSM guidelines, such as the ITIL, brings to the fore a specific craft of IT systems management, focused on shared practices and common know-how, driven by competing efforts to ensure the delivery of value from IT systems. I take seriously this framework of my counterparts, given that the task of the “critical researcher is not to substitute his or her reasoning for that of the actors in order to anticipate what they will do but, rather, to understand their practical reason and the historicity of their actions” (Bigo, 2014b, p. 197). Thus, attending to IT service management as a practice provides a means to explore how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role (see Côté-Boucher, Infantino and Salter 2014).

By focusing on the delivering of value through its expertise in IT service management, eu-LISA is able to distinguish its work and role from that of the professionals of (in)security, claiming possession of a different way of doing and knowing. Bigo (2020) has highlighted that this results in competition between the professionals of data management and the professionals of (in)security, and a reconfiguring of the field of (in)security. However, he does not specify the practices driving the dynamics of this competition. If, as my counterparts argue, the operational management of large-scale IT systems should not be understood as security practices, but rather are better understood as service practices, what does this mean for how these actors make sense
of their role in and relationship to the field? To answer this question, I introduce the concept of delimiting security, whereby despite active participation in the construction and maintenance of systems that are important to the field of (in)security, actors do not make sense of their work and role in terms of security. At the same time, this is not to say that eu-LISA is engaged in efforts to desecuritise its work and role, as it is attuned to the field of (in)security as the wider social space and network of relations in which it operates. Rather, it has constructed a specific relationship to the field, that is distinct from, but in support of, security.

Huymans (1998, p. 570) describes desecuritisation as a critical strategy for the unmaking of a securitisation. Scheel (2022, p. 1051) argues that the impetus behind desecuritisation is to destabilise the credibility and authority of security professionals’ expert knowledge and related regimes of truth, depriving security of its epistemic foundation. In this article, I propose that neither the concept of securitisation nor desecuritisation is adequate for understanding how actors in the guild of IT service management relate to the field (in)security. Instead, I propose that a more accurate concept is delimiting security. Delimiting security does not refer to processes that seek to undermine the epistemological foundation of securitisation, but rather it seeks to support them, as it is often the traditional professionals of (in)security who are calling for expertise in IT management. Delimiting security describes competing expert knowledge claims that are distinct from but are nonetheless integral to securitisation. In this sense, it reflects the novel ways in which actors are seeking to construct their relationship to the field of (in)security, drawing new lines around what they understand as security or not.

Therefore, I am recasting the securitisation/dsecuritisation dualism as a continuum, along which actors construct a range of relationships to processes of (in)securitisation. In this sense, to think of a logic of service in terms of delimiting a logic of security resonates with what Derrida describes as the supplement, that is, “an addition from the outside, but it can also be understood as supplying what is missing and in this way is already inscribed within that to which it is
added” (Bernasconi, 2014, p. 19). A logic of service is supplementary as it allows an actor to engage in “the contrary without contradiction” (Bernasconi, 2014, p. 20), as service both enables actors to act within a field but to not make sense of their work in this way. The delimiting of security by eu-LISA through a logic of service enables it to construct a position where it is part of but distinct from the field of (in)security.

To demonstrate that the operational management staff of eu-LISA are better understood as part of a guild of IT service management (ITSM), I begin with a description of ITSM practices for ensuring IT systems availability and the delivery of value. This is followed by a series of comments from staff distinguishing their role from the role of professionals of (in)security, highlighting the differing professional socialisations between these guilds and the challenges involved with defining and maintaining the boundaries between these roles.

The Emerging Guild of IT Service Managers

For the first time in its history the European Union has an agency responsible for managing and promoting information and communication technology (ICT) as a key success factor for the implementation of the Union’s policies in the area of justice, security and freedom. … Being a young organisation, eu-LISA has the unique opportunity to grow and develop its operations following industry standards and best-practices.²

As the operational managers of several large-scale IT systems under its care, eu-LISA is responsible for ensuring they are available to their users 24/7. To ensure system availability, the Agency engages in processes of IT governance. Glouftsiōs (2021b, p. 454) has highlighted corrective and adaptive techniques and practices of maintenance as central to the governing of “unruly, unstable and failing infrastructures”. He describes maintenance as the “continuous moulding of the systems’ material properties and agencies” (ibid, p. 458). Maintenance, as

² Available at: [https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/About-Us](https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/About-Us) (Accessed 29 October 2022)
Glouftsios argues, is the means by which eu-LISA renders intelligible the conduct of the systems, only takes on meaning in relation to the expectation that the systems are available 24/7. While Glouftsios’ account of maintenance offers early insights into the practices of operational management, it lacks a full consideration of the through which this work takes place. I argue that the expectation of 24/7 system availability only takes on meaning in relation to the Agency’s core mission, which is to “continuously add value to Member States, supporting through technology their efforts for a safer Europe” (eu-LISA, 2016, p. 12), that is a logic of service. Agreed expectations between eu-LISA and the Member States concerning system availability are set out in service level agreements. To meet these expectations and ensure the delivery of value to their stakeholders, eu-LISA applies industry-wide best practices for IT service management, including the use of the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL).

IT service management (ITSM) is a governance framework that provides best practice guidelines to manage IT services effectively. Gallacher and Morris (2012, p. xvii) argue that IT service management is “an increasingly important area of study for all IT professionals”. One of the most used ITSM guidelines is the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) (Marrone and Kolbe, 2011: 363). ITIL is recognised as an industry-wide best practice guideline. Originally developed by the UK government, the ITIL is now managed under a joint commercial venture between the UK government and the Axelos company. Proficiency in ITIL is managed through formal certification, progressing from foundation to practitioner, intermediate, expert, and master. In this sense, ITIL is part of a professional body of IT service management knowledge and practice.

The current version of the ITIL in use by eu-LISA for the operational management of the systems is ITILv3, which is centred around a lifecycle, with 26 related processes for service management. The implementation of ITIL has been identified as part of eu-LISA’s strategy for operational management since its founding. For example, eu-LISA’s Annual Activity Report for
2013 states,

To further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of IT processes and overall service delivery, the Agency continues to align its functions, operations and internal processes with IT services management framework best practice. In conjunction with the VIS/BMS MWO contractor, a set of core ITSM processes were designed and put in place in December 2012 and a project was launched during May 2013 to deal with the Agency-wide implementation of an ITIL compliant service model (eu-LISA, 2014, p. 14).

Here, ITSM and ITIL not only provide eu-LISA with a means to regulate the operational management of the systems, but they also enable them to coordinate their working practices with those of their contractors. Thus, ITSM and ITIL are important codified knowledge that serve as a framework for managing eu-LISA’s stakeholder relations as well as a mechanism for sharing professional expertise and know-how operating across public and private actors in the management of data infrastructures, in the case above of the VIS/BMS the MWO contractor is a private consortium of four private actors, Accenture, ATOS, Idemia Identity and Security France SAS. Adherence to best practice ITSM guidelines, such as ITIL, offers a standardised approach, aiding the construction of a shared worldview on processes of IT management. In the ensuing decade, the implementation of ITSM and ITIL has remained a consistent focus and priority in eu-LISA’s operational management of the systems (see for example, eu-LISA, 2022).

The implementation of ITSM and ITIL is central to maintaining system availability as it shapes the ways in which eu-LISA deals with the reporting and management of incidents. The ITIL defines an incident as, “an unplanned interruption to an IT service or reduction in the quality of an IT service” (Axelos, 2011, p. 29). Incidents are reported to the eu-LISA service desk. The set-up of which is in line with ITIL guidelines, where incidents are categorised according to impact, urgency, and priority. Incident response is carried out according to ITIL escalation procedure, following first and second-level support. The logging of incidents is one of the main criteria through which the availability of the system is calculated. System availability is
a key performance indicator used to measure the quality-of-service eu-LISA delivers, in addition to the level of system performance and average processing times for specific operations.

Gallacher and Morris (2012, p. 223) argue that “a poor service desk can result in an overall poor impression … while an efficient, customer-focused team can ensure customer satisfaction even when the service is operating below the agreed service level”. Thus, something as mundane as the service desk encounters are in fact a crucial data point for how users assess the operational management of the systems by eu-LISA and their ability to deliver value from the use of the IT systems. For example, the 2016 evaluation of eu-LISA notes that “the effectiveness of the service desk support to Member States is in some cases altered by certain communication barriers, such as language and technical expertise, which have been reported by both sides (the Agency and Member States)” (European Commission, 2016, p. 13).

Attending to practices of ITSM brings to the fore the professional nature of operational management of large-scale IT systems. Proven experience in ITILv3 (or other similar frameworks for ITSM, such as COBIT and ISO 2000) is a common selection criterion for vacancies advertised at the Agency’s operational site in Strasbourg. Thus, expertise in ITSM is a specific craft shared by professionals of data management and IT systems operators. By ensuring they have sufficient expertise in the management of IT systems, eu-LISA seeks to distinguish its work from that of the adjacent professionals of (in)security. When speaking with focus group participants about the role they see eu-LISA playing in European security and border management, one offered the following opinion:

So, I think we should not mix the, what are the core, the core competence of eu-LISA? Managing large-scale system, here we can have leadership, because we have some [inaudible 18:30] knowledge, complex system with complex technology, but supporting the business of migration, of border management, of asylum, but the business of border management, asylum, also we are already concerned with this. We try, we support this. It’s not our core business. Our core business is to operate those large system, and to make them available no matter what to our stakeholders, so that’s the thing, I think. To have the new technology integrated, and that support after, what’s, the premise in this area, we need
to have double competence, to have the knowledge about the business, and to have the very strong competence in bringing the solution that address the business, let’s say, challenges (Speaker 6, Focus Group 2, 2018).

Here, the speaker makes a clear distinction between the management of large-scale IT systems and the business of running the borders. They explain that the core business of eu-LISA is to support the ‘business of the border’ by ensuring the uninterrupted availability of the systems to their stakeholders, ‘no matter what’. Although the speaker is able to make a distinction between the management of large-scale IT systems and the business of running the border, this is not to say that a decoupling has taken place. Rather, as the speaker explains, the management of large-scale IT systems is done in support of the business of running the border, which requires that they ‘double competence’ in both knowledge of the business of the border and bringing solutions that address that business. Reflecting further on the matter, the speaker explains,

[O]ur role is more the operational management than on the security business. That’s what, I have this feeling. We are a support function for the security, but to play a role in security, for me, it’s something else. We are only one part of the element of the security, you know, and the security of what, first. Security of what? In which area, so because border management, there is a part which is civil, but there is also a part which is military. So here we have no set route to this world. (Speaker 6, Focus Group 2, 2018).

Here, the speaker clarifies the relationship between operational management of the systems and the business of security, they are, as the speaker explains, a support function for security. However, for the speaker, this does not necessarily mean that they play a role in security. The speaker not only questions the role eu-LISA can and should play, but also questions the wider framework of ‘security’ as a given, as they ask ‘security of what?’ The correspondence between eu-LISA as a natural actor within the field of (in)security is further undermined in the speakers closing words as they explain that ‘we have no set route to this world’. Rather the way in which eu-LISA makes sense of its relationship to this field is one they have actively constructed and negotiated through their expertise in IT management and the support they provide to their
stakeholders, that is the delivery of value under a logic of service.

This distinction between the role of eu-LISA and the role of traditional professionals of (in)security was further reflected upon by participants in focus group two as they discussed the challenges of understanding the needs of the system users,

Speaker 6: Even what you say is exactly what we should do. For example, to go around Europe-

Speaker 3: I think as well.

Speaker 6: -to see all the guys they are working, because-

Speaker 3: I think as well that we should, but okay.

Speaker 6: -for instance, I think, we think because we have ends, what does it mean? It mean (sic) that okay, the idea can come from the practice, from the business, from the ground, and of course, these synergies, so, we have idea because we have seen around the problem are for the Member States, so we can have innovative, let’s say, solution for them if we know their business. What we know about the business of the Member States, tell me, I’m a former police officer, I can tell you, we are far here from what are their daily problem. We don’t know their business.

Speaker 3: So, I am not a police officer, and I do not even imagine-

Speaker 6: Exactly.

Speaker 3: -so it’s even worse.

Speaker 6: So, I think-

Speaker 3: But I would like to be able to imagine, at least.

Speaker 6: -and I think this is true of Europe that you are mentioning, it’s something that we all should do to understand what are their business, what is the consequence of the mistake we may do, in doing our job here, for them. So, it’s really important to propose innovative, let’s say, view. We have the knowledge of the technology. We do not have the knowledge of the business. The Member State have the knowledge of the business, and they do not have totally the knowledge of all the technology behind…

Here the speakers not only distinguish between the kinds of work they do but also highlight the significant gap in understanding the work and priorities of police officers (as one type of system user). As speaker 3 and speaker 6 compare their different professional histories, speaker 3 states
that they cannot even imagine what the daily problems of a police officer are. In doing so, the speakers surface the different forms of professional socialisation at play in the work and role of eu-LISA, whereby the value of their work is dependent on the value they can create for their users. Speaker 6 makes this point in reverse when they highlight the need to understand the consequences for users when they make mistakes.

While the distinction between the professional skills and role of these actors and professionals of (in)security was consistent throughout my conversations with staff at eu-LISA. There was varying opinion on how best to manage the relationship between eu-LISA’s role as the operational manager of the systems and the Member States as the primary users of the systems. For example, in a discussion on how best eu-LISA can deliver value from IT through the proper management of the system, participants in focus group 2 debated what should be the extent of eu-LISA’s role. One speaker gave the following example of the intricacies of this relationship:

It’s more about knowing how IT technology is moving ahead of us. Because as [Speaker 3] pointed out, indeed, we’re a bit years behind and we’re not proactive enough. So, this is for me an interesting way to ensure that the Agency will have, when they will build a system, something that is not outdated, really strong in terms of security. Another point that will be interesting for me, it’s all related to biometric system. As I said today, what happens when we have false matching into our system? We just report it to the Member State to do the job, to handle the business properly. But we don’t do any analysis behind why do we had a false match. Or is there a fraud attempt or something like that? So, we have in our databases a lot of things that could be improved in the biometric technology. I know that today, it’s not our mandate, but if at some point we can maybe dig into it to get some ideas to improve the biometric system in this way, could be really profitable for the Agency (Speaker 5, Focus Group 2, 2018).

In contrast, another speaker argued that “IT innovation is our domain, not how to put the head, the hand on the scanner or how to catch more criminals. This is not in our mandate” (Speaker 2, Focus Group 2, 2018). Thus, defining and maintaining the boundaries that distinguish the work and role of eu-LISA from the work and role of the traditional professionals of (in)security is not
clear-cut or easy. Summarising this issue, speaker 3 emphasis the following point at the end of the focus group, as they explained,

what you saw here is really interesting, because this is what is the reality. We have to fight a bit between a very, you know, highly-regulated environment, that we have to do things by the book, and we have, you know, scrutiny from Commission etc., we cannot deviate. We have also, you know, an umbrella, technological umbrella that we have to be more innovative, follow what happened etc., so this, you know, different view [inaudible 1:14:04] reflect, indeed, our everyday reality. How we have to balance, you know, these things, and this is not easy, and I think this should be reflected (Speaker 3, Focus Group 2, 2018).

Thus, while the ability to deliver value to their stakeholders through their expertise in IT service management is central to how eu-LISA makes sense of its work and role, the specifics of defining the boundaries of how value is created and by who are increasingly difficult to decipher.

It is important to note that I am not attempting here to either reinforce or justify the distinction made by the IT service professionals nor do I claim that this distinction will persist over time. Rather, I highlight how this distinction is maintained despite its fragility and real limitations. Indeed, as I have shown, the professionals with whom I interacted were aware of the challenges of drawing a clear line between their work and role in operational management and that of the business of the border, as relations of service and security are intimately entangled in the management of contemporary border data infrastructures.

**Conclusion**

Attention to the role of best practice frameworks as tools of IT governance offers an opportunity to explore how actors make sense of their role and position in relation to the field of European border security and migration management. This allows me to make several contributions to the scholarly literature on security. In this article, I have expanded on existing efforts to attend to
the role of new players in the field of (in)security, by offering a situated account of the professional practices of a key actor. I have also responded to recent work analysing eu-LISA as part of an emerging “guild of ‘digital technologies’ managing security” (Bigo, 2020, p. 76), arguing they are better understood as a guild of IT service managers. In doing so, I have highlighted the importance of attending to service as a crucial logic shaping the professional practices of data management in the field of (in)security. I have introduced the concept of delimiting security as a means to describe competing expert knowledge claims that are distinct from but are nonetheless integral to securitisation. In this sense, delimiting security reflects the novel ways in which actors are seeking to construct their relationship to the field of (in)security, drawing new lines around what they understand as security or not. Therefore, I recast the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism as a continuum along which actors construct and delimit a range of relationships to processes of (in)securitisation.

The implementation of ITIL, an IT governance framework, which I have discussed in detail here, functions as part of eu-LISA’s self-governance in line with its understanding of itself as a service provider, rather than a security actor. Consideration of this matter offers empirical details on how actors in this space maintain this contradiction without experiencing the contradiction as a negative. By engaging with a logic of service, eu-LISA positions itself as a service provider to its stakeholders, enabling it to construct new limits around how it makes sense of its relationship to (in)security (see Bigo and McCluskey, 2018). By extension of this, they are also able to reconcile how their work relates to the politics of border security and migration management in new ways. By locating themselves at the edge of the field they are able to view their work as distinct from, yet supportive of, security.

References


Red Thread 1.0

The first article examines key practices involved in the operational management of large-scale IT systems carried out under a logic of service in an effort to understand the work and role of eu-LISA as part of an emerging guild of ITSM. Such a guild is reflective of the role new actors, such as data managers and IT systems, are playing in the field of (in)security.

At the same time, eu-LISA is not simply a guild of new actors as it is also a European agency, whose work and role are bound by the dynamics of EU agency-Member State relations. To explore this issue, the following article expands its analysis of eu-LISA to examine its efforts to communicate to its stakeholders its understanding of itself as an expert service provider. To do so, I further explore service research as the body of expert literature that not only informs the technical management of the systems through practices of ITSM, but also functions as a wider logic informing the practices of the Agency. In this sense, the following article seeks to build on the current article to demonstrate how eu-LISA is engaged in a process of transforming its logic of practice (ITSM) to a practice of logic (service).
Security-as-Service in the Management of European Border Data Infrastructures

Abstract
Today large-scale IT systems play a central role in the management of European borders. These systems not only support and enable the management of mobility but also require expert management as complex data infrastructures. There are growing calls within critical security scholarship to explore the politics of data infrastructure management. However, extant research in this area has demonstrated the depoliticising effects of technocratic expertise. Thus, the question emerges where are the politics of data infrastructure management to be found? Drawing on fieldwork carried out over several months in 2018 at the headquarters of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA), this article explores the expert discourses and practices through which eu-LISA seeks to establish its legitimacy and authority as the managers of data infrastructures. I show that, in line with a logic of service, one of the central ways it does so is through the sharing of its expertise in large-scale IT systems operational management with its stakeholders. By attending to a logic of service I show that the management of data infrastructures is neither exclusively de-politicising, or politicising, rather it is often simultaneously both. Thus, this article not only contributes to efforts to study the management of data infrastructures but also to recent efforts to reopen the relationship between security and politics, in addition to establishing a novel line of research inquiry along which the construction of processes of (in)security is taking place.

Introduction
The contemporary border strives towards virtualisation, speed, and efficiency (Bigo, 2014; Murphy and Maguire, 2015). Though many border crossers often experience it as a space of
violence and exclusion. In Europe, as elsewhere, the rise of data-led border management is often captured in the language and ideals of ‘smart borders’ (Amoore, Marmura and Salter, 2008), prompting critical investigations of the forms of knowledge shaping contemporary practices of bordering. Recent work has focused on the central role large-scale IT systems play in the management of international mobility (Leese, 2016; Glouftsios, 2021a; Bellanova and Glouftsios, 2022). As data infrastructures, these systems support and enable the capture, storage, processing, and exchange of data (Bigo, Ewert and Mendos Kuşkonmaz, 2020; Leese, 2022), in addition to supporting “the knowledge regimes that inform and shape migration policies, border regimes and migration management” (Scheel, Ruppert and Ustek-Spilda, 2019, p. 579).

Extracting and exploiting the maximum value promised by such systems, often couched in terms of improved efficiencies and effectiveness, has become a priority for policy professionals and security experts (Amoore, 2006; Besters and Brom, 2010; Broeders and Hampshire, 2013; Carrera and Hernanz, 2015). However, these systems are often prone to failure (Glouftsios, 2021b). As a result, ensuring their proper management has emerged as a priority area in European Union governance (COM, 2016, 205 Final). Perhaps one of the most important governance interventions in recent years is the establishment of the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA).

Established in 2011 as a means to improve the operational management of several large-scale IT systems, eu-LISA is responsible for multiple systems in various stages of development and deployment (SIS II; VIS; Eurodac; EES; Etias; Ecris-TCN and soon e-CODEX). It is also responsible for related initiatives, such as interoperability and data quality. Specifically, eu-LISA is tasked with ensuring the systems are available 24/7 to meet operational requirements, allowing the exchange of data between approved actors on issues of border crossings, visas, and asylum applications. On-demand access to data stored in these systems and shared between
actors has been framed as central to the successful implementation of asylum, border management, and migration policies in the EU. While technical management takes place at the Agency’s operational site in Strasbourg, France (a legacy of the previous organisation of the operational management of the systems), supported by a backup site in Austria, eu-LISA’s headquarters is located in Tallinn, Estonia, in addition to a Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium. Within critical security research eu-LISA has been analysed as emblematic of the entry of new actors and forms of expertise, such as data management and IT systems operation, into the field of (in)security (see Bigo, 2020). While this is true, it is also important to note that eu-LISA is a decentralised EU agency under DG Home. And, as an EU agency one of its key functions is the provision of expert advice on matters relating to its mandate.

Over the last decade of critical security scholarship, a central question has emerged: how do expert technocratic discourses depoliticise matters such as migration and security, rendering them as mere technical matters of efficiency? (Amoore and de Geode, 2005). In an effort to counter this official framing, researchers have sought to reveal the politics of security systems, and ‘solutions’, exploring the relationship between practices of expertise and power (Bigo, 2002; Leander, 2013; Walters, 2017). Building on this work, there is a desire to expand analysis to include “the mundane, but politically significant” (Glouftsios, 2021b, p. 460) work of those involved in the management of data infrastructures. This requires that we ask larger questions. In this case, two pressing questions come to the fore: 1) if the management of data infrastructures is politically significant, what kind of politics does it signify, and 2) what does attending to the politics of managing data infrastructures mean for how processes of (in)security are performed and made sense of? Drawing on findings from my fieldwork, I argue that the politics of data infrastructure management are located at the intersection of a logic of service and a logic of security. Where matters of technocratic expertise, which are traditionally viewed as depoliticising under a logic of security, are highly politicised under a logic of service. Thus,
this article explores a logic of service as the mode of managerial expertise informing the politics of data infrastructures.

Thus far, critical approaches to the study of security have paid little to no attention to the topic of service.\(^1\) The absence of critical research on the logic of service must be addressed, given that eu-LISA, and similar actors define, understand, and practice their work through a logic of service. Service is understood as political by these actors, but the political nature of service is not well understood in the social sciences. Within the service literature, Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 2) describe service as “the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and performances for the benefit of another entity of the entity itself”. Within this process value can only be co-created between the service provider and recipient. Central to this process is the construction of value propositions or offerings which are evaluated by service beneficiaries in the context of their needs (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). In order for the co-creation of value to take place, the service offering must be accepted by the service recipient. As I will demonstrate, eu-LISA seeks to establish the legitimacy and authority of its work and role through the construction of a particular value proposition: it is the actor best able to ensure the delivery of value from the use of IT systems to its stakeholders. In an effort to make concrete this proposition or claim, eu-LISA makes available its expertise in systems management to its stakeholders.

In this sense, the sharing of expertise in systems management practiced through a logic of service, is neither simply politicising or de-politicising but often simultaneously both. It is clear, then, that we must grapple with the logic of service as a key form of expertise in relation

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\(^1\) Service research distinguishes between service, singular, as a process of value co-creation, and services, plural, as a special type of output. Critical Security Studies research has explored the latter, primarily in relation to the rise of private and commercial security actors (see for example, Abrahamsen and Williams, 2007).
to which security practices are taking place. Today, then, the politics of security often presents itself in the form of service.

**Note on Methodology**

This article presents findings from a period of fieldwork carried out at the headquarters of eu-LISA, Tallinn Estonia, for three months in late 2018. Field site access was secured through a gatekeeper. During the fieldwork period, I took up the role of an eu-LISA intern, reviewing the Agency’s then research and technology monitoring function. During fieldwork, online and in-person expert interviews (see Bogner and Menz, 2009) were carried out with eu-LISA members of staff. This included staff from the headquarters, liaison office and operational site. Interviews were recorded with consent. In addition, analysis of key documents was carried out (see Bowen, 2009), focusing primarily on eu-LISA annual activity reports, strategy reports, and single programming documents. These reports offer insight into the formal priorities, strategies, and practices of eu-LISA. In this sense, documents were analysed as supplementary research data, adding further insights into the issue of service as it emerged in the interviews. Following fieldwork, and in line with best practice, transcripts of the interviews were returned to participants for review. Final transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (see Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As the focus of the fieldwork was on exploring how eu-LISA understands its work and role in relation to the field of European border security and migration management, service was not a pre-established category. Rather, it emerged inductively from the analysis of the data, as participants simultaneously countered a characterisation of their work in terms of security and focused instead on both their expertise in managing IT systems and the support they provide to their stakeholders by leveraging the role of IT systems. The identification of a logic of service as central to how my expert counterparts make sense of their work, focused my attention on the
relationship between security and service, with a particular focus on the tensions it brought to the fore. In this case the simultaneously de-politicising and re-politicising function of providing expertise on the management of data infrastructures.

**A Critical Theory of Service**

Critical Security Studies literature has highlighted the central role technology and data-driven solutions play in border security and migration management (see Salter, 2004; Guittet and Jeandesboz, 2010; Andersson, 2016). At the same time, this research has also warned of the risks of technological determinism (Davidshofer, Jeandesboz and Ragazzi, 2016), arguing for explorations of how digital technologies intersect with social, political, and economic forces to “reconfigure the rationales, techniques and practices of border security and migration management” (Glouftsios and Scheel, 2021, p. 124). More specifically, Bellanova and Glouftsios (2022, p. 179) have argued that “the pressing question we should address revolves around the extent to which the governing of subjects and populations on the move depends on the monitoring, control, correction, adaptation and (re)adjustment of those (data) infrastructures that make mobility governable in the first place”. However, while research has highlighted the need to better understand the practices of managing data infrastructures, empirical accounts of the logics and rationales that support and enable this work are lacking (Glouftsios and Scheel, 2021). I argue that service is a key rationale through which data infrastructures are managed and governed. To do so, I start by critically evaluating Service Science as a body of expert knowledge central to the management of IT systems.

Service Science is a transdisciplinary body of knowledge dedicated to the study of service systems and systematic service innovation. Service systems are “value-co-creation configurations of people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and external service systems, and shared information” (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008, p. 18). Such service
systems include IT systems and their management. Indeed, the development of Service Science, in its current disciplinary form, is intimately linked to developments in ICT (Chesbrough and Spohrer, 2006). For example, on a page titled the ‘invention of service science’, the well-known multinational corporation IBM (International Business Machines) reflects on the beginning of Service Science as a response to their need for staff knowledgeable across computer science, engineering, management, and social science to support the growing role of service in IBM’s business model.\(^2\) With the support of IBM, Service Science has, over the last two decades, been established as a recognised field of study across universities worldwide. In this sense, the expert literature on service has developed in relation to wider efforts to establish professional practices of service.

Drawing on Vargo and Lusch’s (2004) theory of service dominant logic, Service Science defines service as “the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself” (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, p. 2). Under a logic of service value is co-created between the service provider and beneficiary. Co-creation takes place within the context of the specific needs and objectives of the service beneficiary (value-in-use). Reflecting on the intimacy between data and predictive security practices, Bigo and Bonelli (2019, p. 103) have argued that this relationship is not inherent to the nature of data enabling technologies, but rather “depends on power struggles between actors who determine the use and exchange value of digital data. … Moreover, the symbolic value of intelligence data depends less on its content – despite the ideology of secrecy that sanctifies this content – than it does on who produced it, in what context, and for what reason”. As service providers cannot create value alone, understanding these matters, how and why data are produced, by whom and under what circumstances, are at the centre of managing data infrastructures under a logic of service.

Attending to a logic of service provides a means to engage with how service providers seek to co-create value within the process of managing data infrastructures. As value is determined in the context of service users’ needs, service providers seek to construct value propositions, that is value offerings, which they believe users will assess favourably. However, constructing and communicating value propositions is complex, as they are often subject to negotiation, amendment, and refusal by service beneficiaries (see Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). Value propositions not only detail value offerings to service beneficiaries but also reflect how service providers want their own work to be valued (See Corvellec and Hultman, 2014). I argue that eu-LISA is engaged in the process of constructing and communicating a particular value proposition: it is the actor best able to ensure the delivery of value from the use of IT systems to its stakeholders. The acceptance of which, by its stakeholders, aids in establishing the legitimacy and authority of its role as a service provider. In an effort to make concrete this proposition or claim, eu-LISA makes available its expertise in systems management to its stakeholders.

Critiques of service research have highlighted its apolitical account of value, arguing that it fails to grapple with the inequalities of exchange relations in a capitalist market (see Hietanen, Andéhn and Bradshaw, 2018). Indeed, today there is much discussion of value co-destruction as a corrective to the optimism of earlier accounts of value co-creation (Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Laamanen and Skålén, 2015). Within the expert literature on service, then, we see a need to develop a critical perspective, which I aim to begin here, as I explore how a logic of service brings with it its own form of politics, countering a depoliticised view of technocratic expertise.

Eu-LISA’s efforts to communicate how they want their work and role to be valued, through the making available their expertise, must be situated within the wider context in which eu-LISA’s work takes place, that of an EU agency. Scipioni (2018, p. 769) has described the tasks EU agencies should perform as those “related to gathering information and providing
technical expertise”. Similarly, Schneider and Nieswandt (2018, p. 13) have argued that EU agency staff are “united in a shared belief in disinterested, apolitical bureaucratic rules of procedure, based on a notion of ‘expertise’ that transcends national boundaries and supersedes national concerns”. Thus, the provision of de-politicised expertise is a defining feature of the work and role of an EU agency and is central to how EU agencies seek to establish and maintain their authority and legitimacy (see Boswell, 2008; Parkin, 2012; Fjørtoft, 2022). However, the field of (in)security is marked by a reluctance to yield power to European Union institutions. The contested relations of Member States and European institutions, under the principle of subsidiarity, are mirrored in the dynamics of service provider and service recipient competitions. For example, Sampson (2010, p. 127) has reflected on the tensions of service relationships in what he describes as the ‘customer-as-competitor’ issue:

customers are themselves the chief competitors for many services. Service providers sometimes need to convince do-it-yourself customers that they would be better off using the service provider. …. Customers have the advantage of owning and controlling their inputs, and may have the advantage of increased levels of customization (getting it exactly how they want it). Service providers, on the other hand, usually have advantages of economies of scale and expertise.

It is within this competitive and political landscape that eu-LISA must operate and persuade its stakeholders to trust in its expertise, legitimising its work and role as Europe’s foremost IT service provider.

Critical Security Studies research has argued that the prioritisation of technocratic expertise results in the de-politicisation of security practices. The C.A.S.E. Collective (2006, p. 476) describes de-politicisation as “naturalized correspondences between things and words, between processes framed as problems and ready-made solutions”. Thus, to think of issues in terms of de-politicisation is to think in terms of agreement and consensus concerning the role of technical solutions for security problems, as technocratic expertise forecloses or reduces the
space to discuss the societal impacts of security measures and technical solutions (Bigo, 2020). In order to counter this effect, critical research has sought to foreground the politics of security technologies and data practices (see Jeandesboz, 2016; Scheel, Ruppert and Ustek-Spilda, 2019; Leese, Noori and Scheel, 2022). This work has brought with it a growing concern with where we focus our analytical attentions in order to locate the politics of European security and border management (see Jeandesboz, 2017). One proposed solution is to think in terms of the politics of infrastructures, as the structures through which the regulation of data practices are increasingly taking place (Bellanova and de Goede, 2021).

Reflecting on the implicit politics of infrastructure networks, Folkers (2017, p. 856, emphasis in original) has argued for the importance of attending to “the historically specific ways in which these matters become politicized and depoliticized”. Similarly, Hagmann, Hegemann and Neal (2018, p. 5) have argued that “instead of looking at security as closure, we propose an understanding of security as a field of political activity occupied by diverse actors mobilised in different kinds of struggles, and in which political conflicts can shift across arenas. Seen this way, political closure might be one possible outcome, but it should not simply be presumed and taken for granted”. Such an approach requires that we attend to “the varied forms and modes of politics that increasingly emerge in and around security” (ibid). Thus, EU agencies are a key arena in which the politics of infrastructures are taking place, under a mode of service.

Where issues of technocratic expertise have often been analysed as de-politicising, I argue that the specific mode of management at play brings to the fore a politics of its own kind, a politics of service. While the role of digital technologies presented as solutions to security challenges may no longer be subject to meaningful political disagreement, the delivery of value from these technologies very much is. In this sense, a logic of service is increasingly emerging as the language through which matters of security are being debated and contested and defined.
But as of yet critical security research has not developed a critical stance on service. Hereafter, I will delve into the work of eu-LISA in greater detail to appreciate the significance of the logic of service for one of Europe’s key border management agencies. In doing so, I demonstrate that practices of providing expertise, under a logic of service, are neither exclusively de-politicising or politicising, indeed they are often simultaneously both.

‘Infotechnological Iceberg’

Situated at the Northern edge of Estonia, the headquarters of eu-LISA is a large concrete and glass structure. On a grey winter’s day, it sits into a background of choppy waters and heavy clouds. Entrance to the headquarters takes place in layers. The building itself is fenced off from the surrounding area and access is controlled by a gate that is operated by key card. Two controlled doors separate the world outside from the internal foyer. The foyer is manned by a security desk, where all visitors must present identification and sign in. Once signed in, people and belongings must go through a scanner (like at an airport) before waiting to pass through a cylindrical security portal, designed to spot potential tailgating and unauthorised access to the interior of the building. The headquarters is laid out across five floors, access to which requires a key card, and visitors must be greeted at security and accompanied. Past security is the ground floor reception area which opens to an impressive height. Hanging from the centre of the ceiling is a multi-piece glass installation by an Estonian artist.
The installation, pictured above, entitled ‘Jäämägi’, which translates to ‘Iceberg’, is described by the artist as follows, “Only a fraction of an iceberg is visible. The rest is under water — grand, concealed and sometimes dangerous. The employees of the eu-LISA have the privilege and responsibility to guard the underwater part of the infotechnological iceberg” (Ugandi, 2018). This description highlights the complexities of managing large-scale IT systems, as both a ‘privilege and responsibility’. Drawing on traditional imagery of power and force, eu-LISA guards the systems under their care, ensuring the data infrastructure of European border management operates on a “24/7 basis” (eu-LISA, 2011a). This responsibility is underpinned by eu-LISA’s mission to “continuously add value to Member States, supporting through technology their efforts for a safer Europe” (eu-LISA, 2011b). How are the complexities of this task organised? I argue that eu-LISA frames its work and role in line with a particular proposition: it is the actor best able to ensure delivery of value from the use of IT systems to its stakeholders. This proposition is constructed and communicated through the Agency’s efforts to make available its expertise in the management of the systems, applying its skills and knowledge for the benefit of Member States and its stakeholders, thereby, reinforcing its legitimacy and authority.
A Management Authority for Large-Scale IT Systems

[T]he primary objective of eu-LISA is 24/7 service to the Member States, that’s our mission. … The point is that to fulfil our mission you need to have people that are committed, that they work hard 24 hours a day, seven days a week and they try to keep the situation under control and make sure the systems work (Interview No. 5, with senior eu-LISA staff member, 2018).

Prior to the establishment of eu-LISA, the operational management of large-scale IT systems was carried out directly by the European Commission in combination with France and Austria. In the process of adopting the second-generation Schengen information system (SIS II) and the Visa Information System (VIS), the Council and the Parliament invited the Commission to submit proposals for the setting up of a long-term management authority for large-scale IT systems. An impact assessment compared five options against operational, governance, legal and financial criteria. From these options, the choice of a new regulatory agency was deemed favourable. The need to set up a management authority for large-scale IT systems was framed in terms of the challenges of expert systems management and governance, focusing in particular on the practical requirements and demands of maintaining the systems, as it was argued that “the systems cannot function without a long-term central Management Authority to ensure continuity and operational management of the systems, and the permanent flow of data” (COM, 2009a, p. 10). The impact assessment goes on to state that “a dedicated, specialised organisation would also ensure the highest level of efficiency and responsiveness to the requirements of Member States and other stakeholders” (ibid, p. 14). Thus, matters of efficiency and effectiveness were prioritised in the impact assessment, framing the setting up of a management authority, and the choice of a regulatory agency, as a depoliticised, technical matter. This depoliticised framing of the management of the systems is further reflected in the following description distinguishing
between the impacts of the systems and the impact of the authority responsible for their management:

It is the existence of the systems themselves that may have economic, environmental and, most of all, social impacts. The establishment of the Authority that would manage the systems is not likely to produce any additional significant impacts under these categories. All the systems have an impact on problems such as crime, terrorism, security, and fundamental rights. However, their mode of management will not be a differentiating factor between the scales of these impacts (COM, 2009a, p. 19).

However, as extant critical security studies research has shown the ‘mode of management’ and forms of managerial expertise at play in data infrastructures is a profoundly political matter. For example, Tsianos and Kuster (2016, p. 239) have argued in relation to the potential for systems interoperability that “it is only the set-up of the legal and institutional form of EU-LISA [sic] as an agency that provided the possibility to build a common open and flexible database architecture”. I argue that the mode of management eu-LISA employs is one of service, and it is within a logic of service that the politics of data infrastructure management can be found.

In the years since its formal establishment, eu-LISA has worked hard to communicate to its stakeholders its role in the field. Through their website, social media posts, official documents and publications, along with various presentations at conferences and events they are engaged in near-constant communication of their work and the role they play in European (in)security and border management. For example, their biannual newsletter, ‘The eu-LISA Bits & Bytes’, 3 provides updates on the progress of their work. A new “awareness package” has been launched, which serves as a “one-stop-shop” containing “everything you need to know about the various activities of eu-LISA”. 4 And, most recently, they received “a Forbes Social Award for

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4 Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/our-publications/information-material?RID=28&LID=1b47a889-222a-49cc-9a04-7eec81cf4ab9 (Accessed 17 July 2022)
its innovative and inspirational initiatives in the field of public communication”.\(^5\) Within these communication practices, descriptions of eu-LISA’s mission, such as the one below, are commonplace across their website and official publications and reports:

The Agency’s mission is based on its legal mandate and focuses on *continuously adding value for Member States by supporting through technology their efforts for a safer Europe*. This mission is delivered through the Agency’s vision, which is to *provide high-quality and efficient services and solutions to stakeholders, to earn their trust through continuously aligning technology capabilities with the evolving needs of Member States and to grow the Agency as a centre of excellence* in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) domain (eu-LISA, 2018, p.11, emphasis in original).

Such statements are reflective of a logic of service (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), as eu-LISA applies its skills and knowledge to ‘continuously add value for Member States’. In addition, this description reflects one of eu-LISA’s core value propositions, that it is the actor best able to deliver value from the systems under its care. This proposition is further reflected in the Agency’s strategic vision, where it has explicitly set out the goal to earn the trust of their stakeholders by making available their expertise.

Since its founding, eu-LISA has published three strategic documents (eu-LISA, 2014; 2017; 2021), outlining the Agency’s goals. In these reports, they outline their intention to establish themselves as an acknowledged ICT centre of excellence and service provider, (see strategic goal 2, 2014; 2017; 2021), where “as the principal ICT service provider in the Justice and Home Affairs domain and based on its expertise and capabilities, eu-LISA will continue its work on building and consolidating its role as a centre of excellence. The Agency will continue to provide its advice and assistance to the European Institutions, the Member States and other EU Agencies as needed” (eu-LISA, 2021, p.10). Where the status of the strategic goals of the Agency have evolved over time, their focus has remained relatively consistent: delivering value

\(^5\)Available at: [https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/Newsroom/News/Pages/eu-LISA-awarded-for-innovative-public-communication.aspx](https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/Newsroom/News/Pages/eu-LISA-awarded-for-innovative-public-communication.aspx) (Accessed 27 November 2022)
and benefit to their stakeholders based on their expertise. This approach to the organisation of their work, or mode of management, aligns with a logic of service, as eu-LISA has worked hard to establish the legitimacy of its expertise in order to justify its role as the rightful manager of the systems. Reflecting on this issue, one interviewee explained the value of having a ‘dedicated IT agency’ thus,

[T]he agency has, by now, a considerable experience in the management of large-scale IT systems, containing sensitive and personal data and ensuring the implementation of data protection and security regulations. The point is that you know the Commission was, of course, fine in the running of IT systems but we are, quality-wise, better because we are like a dedicated IT agency while Commission is not an IT body; Commission is an executive body implementing agency, institution, proposing institution. They are not – Commission cannot be an implementing agency in a very efficient form. So, I would say that there is a quality increase from bringing those officials, desk officers, managing contracts, you know, IT contracts, to bringing all this work to an agency who is then really dedicated. So, let’s say that that is the point of this experience, that our agency has a very good experience by now and we have a good streamlined approach, how to manage IT systems. So that’s a quality in itself. And the fact that we deal with a lot of sensitive data, that’s a huge challenge and we are good, really we are good (Interview No. 35, 2018).

As my interviewee explains the degree of expertise and experience that comes with a ‘dedicated IT agency’ is a ‘quality in itself’ that should be acknowledged. However, the value of this work must always be demonstrated and cannot be taken for granted. The value of eu-LISA’s expertise is contextually determined by its efforts to meet the needs of its stakeholders. The interviewee went on to note this dynamic as they compared the model of centralised IT systems management under the control of an EU Agency with the current set-up for systems in customs,

For example, in the customs domain, that’s what we were explained on Tuesday, they are very afraid that if they go to a centralised IT systems model for, let’s say, most of the customs databases, then they lose control but our point was that they wouldn’t because the management board is very closely supervising the work of the Agency, so they wouldn’t. Now, they are very much dependent on those voluntary Member States and, secondly, who are running their IT systems, and, secondly, they are very dependent on the Commission. And, you know, they feel that the Commission officials are making their decisions. … Maybe it’s a perception but that’s what they feel and maybe there are some factual bases for that. … So, we try to explain them the model that it is not taking away
their power, in fact, it is doing everything together because we have to report all the time what we are doing. And in addition to that management boards and advisory groups, we have ad hoc groups and, you know, any topic basically that Member States want to – where they want to control us or steer our work, they can call an ad hoc group and they have done so and then we meet with them and we explain what we do. So, there is a lot of interaction and this I think the customs people just haven’t really understood and they’re afraid that somebody in the Commission will do the decisions but in the Agency model, it’s not the Agency staff does it; we do it jointly (Interview No. 35, 2018).

Under the Agency model, eu-LISA makes available its expertise to its stakeholders as part of joint efforts to plan the management of the systems. Thus, to think in terms of service is to reflect on the particular mode of management eu-LISA enacts in its role as the operational managers of large-scale IT systems. In this sense, service acts as a logic setting the conditions for the possibility of knowledge, on both the systems and the use of the systems. It also draws our attention to how security emerges within the politics of service. Specifically, in the management of large-scale IT systems service legitimises, values, and provides the grounds upon which contestation takes place. It is on these grounds that contemporary security is debated, although it is not often named as such in those debates, as matters of security are translated into debates on how the value of IT systems is determined.

One interviewee reflected on this issue, as they explained how they manage stakeholder relations and any potential challenges to the Agency’s authority during advisory groups,

First of all, I’m marketing eu-LISA, to demonstrate how we do things. So, I promote the methods and the work and what is therefore behind delivering a specific product, or a specific deliverable. So, in fact, I sell. I market the agency itself. If I mess up, it has the opposite effect. At the same time, I defend the agency, but I defend also the stakeholders because they have needs and they need me to properly pass the message internally on the business need and to convince other stakeholders on what is behind that need. …what I try to do is again work on those three pillars. If you sell knowledge, you inspire trust. If you sell a vision comprising of those three pillars, you inspire confidence. Also, I think a key element, when they trust you they are open to you. Of course, governments, they play their own cards, and delegates, stakeholders, they have their own agenda to follow. The key success factor here is indeed to, somehow, make them believe to the common goal. For sure, they will follow their agenda, I am not there to change it, but I am there to
adapt it. So, it means I do comply with what they want, but they also comply with what I want. So, it’s somewhere in between the whole thing (Interview No. 4, 2018).

The process of establishing eu-LISA as the actor best able to deliver value from the management of IT systems is not spontaneous and without its challenges, expounded by what is at stake in their work. In this sense, as my interviewee goes on to note, “stakeholder management is maybe the most challenging one in this respect, because what we have to do here will occur for the very first time in the European IT history and maybe globally” (Interview No. 4, 2018). Central here is the notion of trust between eu-LISA and its stakeholders as a means of mediating the politics of different agendas. This trust, as my interviewee explains, is intimately linked to the knowledge and expertise of the Agency. In this sense, eu-LISA staff are keenly aware of the politics of their own expertise, as the role of trust is important not only in relation to the progress of delivering specific projects and deliverables, but also in relation to the development of the Agency itself (see Busuioc and Groenleer, 2013). Another interviewee, further reflecting on the importance of trust in the Agency, noted that,

[L]ooking at the new mandate it seems like we’ve gained trust during those first five years. So, people have started to entrust us with even more interesting tasks, and that is what is very well reflected in the mandate. I don’t see any, not even a single point, not even a hint of an idea of taking away from the agency, saying ‘well, this maybe you didn’t do that well, so maybe we’ll find somebody else to do that’. Quite to the contrary, it is clearly spelled out if you read the changes that everybody seems to be pretty happy with what we did with what we have. And, feels like if they give us the necessary resources that we can do even more and even better with the new tools that they defined in the new regulation (Interview No. 3, 2018).

Establishing the legitimacy and authority of their role as the manager of the large-scale IT systems under their purview has been central to the way in which eu-LISA has carried out its responsibilities. In this sense, eu-LISA is intimately aware of the politics of their work. But rather than a politics of security, theirs is a politics of service.
Conclusion

This article has sought to address a notable gap in how we understand the (de)politicisation of security processes. In order to do so, I have highlighted the role played by a logic of service. Under a logic of service that which would typically be considered as depoliticising, the form of expertise supporting the management of large-scale IT systems, and the practice of providing this expertise, is in fact highly politicised. I argue that attention to and understanding of a logic of service is therefore important for the study of security for a number of reasons.

In the case of eu-LISA, service is the framework through which they make sense of their role in the wider field of border security and migration management. If we are to understand the ways in which actors make sense of security, we must consider the forms of practical knowledge that key actors draw on as both part of their day-to-day work but also how they organise their approach to this work.

Furthermore, attention to service offers a new relation in which to explore the boundaries of (in)security. Mapping out the lines along which the politicisation of service and (de)politicisation of security intersect and diverge adds further empirical depth and nuance to our effort to study (in)security. For example, in this article, I have demonstrated that rather than a clear cut depoliticisation of security practices and a politicisation of services, what we find is a constant shifting back and forth between de-politicisation and politicisation, often occurring at the same time, as multiple logics (both security and service) are at play in how eu-LISA seeks to establish its legitimacy and authority. I argue that it is within a logic of service that the politics of many security practices and relations are now taking shape and being played out. The account I have developed here offers but one telling of how a logic of service intersects with a logic of security. However, the notion of service is manifold, as it is defined within the context of situated sociotechnical relations, which must be addressed within our studies of (in)security.
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Red Thread 2.0.

The second article examines how rather than a straightforward depoliticisation of security practices through a framing of data infrastructure management in terms of service, what emerges in my analysis of eu-LISA’s efforts to communicate to their stakeholders about the legitimacy of their work and role is a politics of service. This article highlights the importance of not conflating analysis of eu-LISA with analysis of the systems it manages, as much of the work that takes place at the Agency is also driven by the dynamics of EU/Member State relations.

The next article builds on the insights of Articles 1 and 2 to explore the power that comes from operating under a logic of service. I introduce the concept of service capital as the resources of power (capital) that accrue from efforts to support the work of others (service), further connecting the politics of data infrastructure management, executed under a logic of service, with the wider institutional European landscape.
Service Capital: Visibility, Power and Disinterested Securitisation

Abstract

In Critical Security Studies scholarship, the professional field of (in)security has been described as a space of competition to define what is a threat or a risk. New actors and agencies such as data managers and IT service providers have entered this field bringing different practices, logics, and expert know-how. These new actors and agencies compete to support established professional stakeholders. They do so by presenting their contribution as neutral, objective, and disinterested expertise, yet they clearly have an interest, or stake, in the field. To explore this tension, and drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, I introduce the concept of “service capital,” denoting the resources that accrue from the provision of service to stakeholders such as security professionals and policymakers. Service capital is a conceptual contribution to the study of relations of power in the transforming field of (in)security. Drawing on fieldwork carried out at the headquarters of eu-LISA, I explore how Europe’s key IT service provider seeks to make visible its work to established professionals of (in)security. They must strike a balance between making themselves visible to accrue service capital and thus be recognised as legitimate, while delimiting their role by presenting their contribution as not for their benefit but, rather, for the benefit of their stakeholders. Service capital as a new expression of “disinterestedness” draws from existing notions of service, such as public service, connecting ostensibly technical practices to a moral and political project, reflected in the European Union’s formal assessment of added value.

Introduction

In this article, I introduce the concept of service capital to explain evolving competition between actors and agencies participating in the field of European (in)security. Service capital denotes
the resources of power (capital) that accrue from efforts to support the work of others (service), in this case, security professionals and policymakers. Previous work has framed the field of (in)security as a space where actors and agencies compete to monopolise legitimate knowledge of threats and responses (Bigo, 2006). Recent work has widened this frame to include new actors and agencies in these competitions, such as data managers, and IT specialists (see de Goede, 2017; Bigo, 2020; Glouftsios, 2021). However, the entry of these new agencies and actors has fundamentally transformed the field of (in)security, and we must now attend to new logics, forms of competition, and capital. I argue that rather than competing to define what is a threat or a risk, these actors are instead competing to support their stakeholders by providing expertise and enabling technical operations, all in an ostensibly neutral, objective, and disinterested manner. These agencies and actors must also make themselves visible to their stakeholders, which requires that they take an interest in the (in)security game. To manage this tension, they seek to accumulate service capital, the resources of power (capital) that accrues from efforts to support (service) security professionals and policymakers.

Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory introduces the concept of “capital” and other valuable “thinking tools” (Leander, 2008). His ideas loom large in Critical Security Studies. Bourdieu (1986, p. 242) argues it is “impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world” without taking into consideration all forms of capital. He identifies several forms of capital, e.g. social, cultural, economic, etc. By turning his attention to how social value is accumulated, he seeks to undo the false distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”. Analysis of the creation, accumulation, exchange and consumption of capital draws attention to social relations of power (see also Swartz, 2020, p. 321) offering a means to engage with those that present themselves as neutral or disinterested.

Here I deploy the concept of service capital informed by the principles of a “logic of service” in the field of service science (see Vargo and Lusch, 2004). I am interested in how
agencies and actors in the broad field of (in)security strive to be seen and recognised by the social network of professionals of (in)security, while pursuing a role that is distinct from those same professionals of (in)security. In order to accumulate service capital, then, actors must present their work as being done for the benefit of another. In this sense, they are “disinterested” as they are not immediately self-interested. They present as having no skin in the game; their work is framed in terms of neutrality and impartiality; and their capital is banked with pre-existing and morally durable notions of service, such as public service. Thus, service capital, though new, edges into older symbolic capital resources. Attending to this aspect of service, highlights the moral and ethical nature of IT service management and delivery, offering further insight into the politics of what is often mischaracterised as a depoliticising technical practice. Moore (2014, p. 105) tells us that “capital in action is the enactment of the principle of the field. It is the realization in specific forms of power in general”. In this case, the field of IT service management has as its principle ensuring the proper management of the potential value of IT. Attention to service capital, then, provides a concrete means to analyse the situated ways in which technology functions as a specific form of power in the field of European border security and migration management. This argument is in line with ongoing calls to avoid overly deterministic accounts of the role of technology (Glouftsios and Scheel, 2021).

To explore service capital, I turn my attention to the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA). Established in 2011 to provide “a long-term solution for the operational management of large-scale IT systems”¹, eu-LISA is currently responsible for three systems in operation (SIS II, VIS, and Eurodac) in addition to three future systems (EES, ETIAS, and ECRIS-TCN). It is also responsible for the development and implementation of interoperability between these systems. And has recently been approved to take over the operational

¹ Available at: https://www.eulisa.europa.eu/About-Us/Who-We-Are (Accessed 17 July 2022)
management of eCODEX, a cross-border judicial tool. These systems play a key role in the governance of international mobility (Broeders and Hampshire, 2013; Glouftsios, 2021). In this sense, eu-LISA actively participates and operates in the field of European border security and migration management. The majority of the users of these systems can be described as professionals of security (Bigo, 2014). However, as I argue eu-LISA does not make sense of its work and role in terms of security, rather it sees itself as a service provider. As service professionals, they are focused on their expertise in managing IT systems, the support they provide to their stakeholders by leveraging the role of IT systems, and the sense of moral duty and responsibility that many feels accompany this task. eu-LISA has sought to not only establish its position in relation to the field but also to grow and expand. Attending to the practices of their work brings to the fore new forms of competition developing in the field of European security and border management.

In the next section, I explain the methodology through which I studied eu-LISA. This is followed by a theoretical discussion of extant Critical Security Studies literature exploring the dynamics of field competitions and visibility. Thereafter, I present and discuss how eu-LISA makes visible its work in relation to the field of European security and border management. And, finally, the implications of connecting a logic of (in)security with a logic of service are discussed in the conclusion, reflecting on the need to understand service as a moral, political and technical practice.

Note on Methodology
This article presents findings from a period of fieldwork carried out in 2018 at the headquarters of eu-LISA, Tallinn Estonia. Field site access was secured through a gatekeeper. During the fieldwork period, I took up the role of an eu-LISA intern, reviewing the then research and technology monitoring function. During fieldwork, online and in-person expert interviews (see
Bogner and Menz, 2009) were carried out with eu-LISA members of staff, including staff from the headquarters, liaison office and operational site, and with external eu-LISA stakeholders. In addition, two focus groups were held with eu-LISA members of staff only, from the headquarters and the operational site. Both the interviews and focus groups were recorded with consent.

On return from fieldwork, and reflecting on my interlocutors’ preference to describe their role in terms of service, an analysis of key eu-LISA documents was carried out (see Bowen, 2009), focusing primarily on annual activity reports, strategy reports and single programming documents, in addition to the annual SIS II, VIS and Eurodac technical reports. These reports offer insight into the formal priorities, strategies, practices and activities of eu-LISA, in addition to demonstrating the reporting requirements and performance-driven demands of EU agency governance (see Busuioc and Groenleer, 2013) and public service delivery (see Clarke, 2005). The identification of service as central to how my expert counterparts make sense of their work, focused my attention on the relationship between security and service, with a particular focus on the tensions it brought to the fore. In this case, how eu-LISA must both maintain a neutral, impartial role, but must also ensure their work is made visible in order to participate in the field of professionals of (in)security. I argue that to do so, eu-LISA draws on service capital.

Theorizing Service Capital
The scholarly literature on border security and migration management emphasises how governmental power manifests itself through specific technologies that make populations visible and knowable, such as passports (Torpey, 1998; Salter, 2004), watch lists (van Houtum, 2010; Dijstelbloem and Broeders, 2014), and databases (see Ruppert, 2012; van Reekum, 2018). This work tends to focus on the ‘front end’ of border security and migration management by
exploring how professionals of (in)security deploy and experiment with cutting-edge tools and technologies (Glouftsios and Loukinas, 2022), whilst also highlighted the profound and often negative social and ethical impacts of security technologies (e.g. Bigo, 2014).

Recently, however, scholars have argued that the focus on front-end deployment “only yields a partial picture” (Jeandesboz, 2017, p. 260). Instead, they call for attention to the different sites in which technologies are designed and developed (Glouftsios, 2021), together with the relationship between the designs and the practices of knowledge production they enable (Bellanova and González Fuster, 2013; Bourne, Johnson and Lisle, 2015). Today, Critical Security Studies scholars focus much of their work on the practices of professionals of (in)security, their knowledge, and the expert field in which they operate. Professionals of (in)security, according to Didier Bigo, recognise one another and share know-how. He argues that there is a,

… shared knowledge between the professionals, a knowledge beyond the grasp of people who do not have the know-how about risk assessment and pro-activity, is also an ethos of secrecy and confidentiality. It creates a community of mutual recognition and governs a logic of implicit acceptance of claims made by other professionals, not only with respect to the substance of these claims but also to the forms and technologies of knowledge acquisition (Bigo 2002, p. 74-75).

Bigo has made an enormous contribution by highlighting the common world of professionals of (in)security, but he assumes that the agencies and actors are competing to define what is a threat or risk (Bigo 2006, p. 111; see also Jeandesboz, 2016). However, as new actors and forms of expertise participate in the field of (in)security new lines of competition begin to develop (see Glouftsios and Leese, 2022). Thus, in contrast to Bigo, I argue that actors and agencies are increasingly competing to be the foremost experts who support the more traditional security professionals and policymakers, that is, the experts who create the most of what is described in European parlance as ‘added-value’. In order to think critically about this type of power, I
introduce the concept of service capital.

Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory looms large in critical security studies, especially the “thinking tools” (Leander, 2008) he provides in the form of different types of “capital”. Capital is “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its “incorporated,” embodied form) which when appropriated on private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Bourdieu identifies several forms of capital, including three main types. First, economic capital, which is material assets that are “immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights” (ibid, p. 242). Second, cultural capital, which exists in three forms, “the embodied state, i.e. in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) … and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which … confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee” (ibid, p. 243). Third, social capital, which is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (ibid, p. 248). These capitals can be converted into one another. And, the accumulation and use of a specific capital form is dependent on the other forms of capital. These forms of capital can be further converted into symbolic capital, which is defined as “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17). In this sense, symbolic capital is “inherently relational since it cannot simply be claimed: it must be recognized and, in an important sense, mutually agreed” (Lawler, 2011, p. 1420). Thus, the legitimacy of eu-LISA as an EU agency “depends not only on their actual output but above all on their professional reputation, that is, on their recognition by other relevant actors in the field” (Schneider and Nieswandt, 2018, p. 20-21).
By identifying these additional forms of capital, Bourdieu seeks to undo the false distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”. According to Bourdieu, “interest is ‘to be there’, to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact are worth pursuing; it is to recognize the game and to recognize its stakes” (1998, p. 77). Fields – such as the field in which professionals of (in)security operate – have their own interests, according to Bourdieu, even if it is common to present oneself as disinterested in that field. Analysis of the creation, accumulation, exchange, and consumption of capital draws attention to social relations of power (see also Swartz, 2020, p. 321) offering a means to engage with those who present themselves as neutral or disinterested.  

Critical Security Studies researchers have shown that security actors often seek to present their work as neutral and objective, that is, as disinterested. For example, in a recent analysis of the history of Frontex, Fjørtoft (2022, p. 558) argues that their constant “appeal to objective neutrality and technical expertise was an effective legitimizing device”, a device which enabled them to grow to inhabit their current powerful role. This work has focused on demonstrating that practices that present themselves as neutral are in fact deeply political. In the process of doing so, they frame the issue of disinterestedness as intellectually unproblematic for professionals of (in)security and a matter of superficial presentation. However, I will show, following a logic of service, that disinterestedness is not mere presentation. It is in fact, crucial to how eu-LISA ensures its visibility and ability to accumulate power in the field, i.e. service capital. Service capital denotes the resources of power (capital) that accrue from efforts to support (service) the work of security professionals and policymakers.

Bourdieu elaborates thus, “If economics deals only with practices that have narrowly economic interest as their principle and only with goods that are directly and immediately convertible into money (which makes them quantifiable), then the universe of bourgeois production and exchange becomes an exception and can see itself and present itself as a realm of disinterestedness” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).
I introduce the concept of service capital, which is informed by the principles of a logic of service. Vargo and Lusch (2004, p. 2) define service as “the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and performance for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself”. Service focuses on the co-creation of value between service providers and service users. Value co-creation is a context-driven practice, as value is determined in the context of a user’s need. A logic of service is premised on the understanding that knowledge is a fundamental source of competitive advantage (see Vargo and Lusch, 2004). In this sense, a logic of service is primarily framed in terms of the benefits and value it can offer its stakeholders. However, critiques of service theory have highlighted its apolitical account of social relations, arguing that it fails to grapple with the inequalities of exchange relations in a capitalist market (see Hietanen, Andéhn and Bradshaw, 2018) – indeed, today there is much discussion of value co-destruction as a corrective to the optimism of earlier accounts of value co-creation (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011; Laamanen and Skålén, 2015). Within the expert literature on service, then, we see a need to develop a critical perspective that better accounts for social relations of power. To do so, I develop the concept of service capital.

Service capital denotes the power that comes from supporting one’s stakeholders. Service capital, therefore, brings with it a demand for social recognition, that is to be visible to those same stakeholders. Research on governmental power has consistently focused on the issue of visibility (see Dean 2010) and more recent research has called for a move away from “singular and rather homogeneous arguments about visibility and power” (Tazzioli and Walters, 2016, p. 446). At the same time, research has shown that new actors are increasingly

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3 This focus on the management of visibilities resonates with recent work highlighting the significant efforts undertaken by EU agencies to develop reputation-management strategies (see Rimkutė, 2019). For example, a recent report on the activities of Frontex argues that it “spends a significant amount of time and money on its public image, and insists that its activities are fully transparent. However, that public image is – unsurprisingly – heavy on spin, and panders to far-right narratives. Meanwhile, its commitment to transparency is questionable – to say the least” (Kilpatrick, 2021). In this sense, and as
participating in the field of (in)security. These actors and agencies must establish and make visible the value of their expertise. Service capital operates within the productive tension between being seen and recognised by the social network of professionals of (in)security, whilst also maintaining a role that is distinct from those same professionals. To accrue and exploit service capital actors must both make visible their work, in order for it to be recognised, but must also present this work as being done for the benefit of another, in this sense, they are argued to have no skin in the game.

Service capital draws on older already-established notions of service, in particular, what the literature describes as public service motivation. Vandenabeele, Ritz and Neumann (2018, p. 261) describe public service motivation as “the motivation people have to contribute to society”. Schott et al. (2019, p. 1202) highlight that “the purpose of public service-motivated individuals is to contribute to society at large through public service provision and serving the abstract idea of the public interest”. Thus, far from being a simple, depoliticising practice, attention to a logic of service and service capital highlights the moral and political nature of managing data infrastructures. This intersection of service capital and motivation for public service crystallises in the concept of added value.

Below, I will show how eu-LISA strives to make itself visible to its stakeholders, an effort that is underpinned by a sense of duty and responsibility (often moral in tone), but which is in tension with their desire to be disinterested (a desire that also conveys moral tones). This creative tension is resolved through recourse to a logic of service. Therefore, below I describe their activities in terms of service capital.

Flyverbom, (2015, p. 168, emphasis in original) argues, transparency efforts “are rather a matter of managing visibilities than providing insight and clarity”.

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Making Service Visible

In a recent report on its annual activities, eu-LISA’s executive director describes how the Agency has grown “from a small technical agency to the ‘digital heart’ of Schengen” (eu-LISA, 2022, p. 14). This description of eu-LISA is in stark contrast to those found in earlier reports, which are presented in purely functional terms. For example, its first Activity Report describes the Agency’s work and role as contributing to the “maintenance of secure external borders, effective police cooperation and to the implementation of European visa and asylum policy” which it does by ensuring the “operational management and continuity of operations” (eu-LISA, 2013, p. 3). Today, however, eu-LISA is described as driving “the digital transformation” of EU border and migration management. Central to eu-LISA’s evolution has been its efforts to develop its work and role in line with a logic of service. This requires that it makes itself visible to its stakeholders as a trusted IT service provider.

eu-LISA is actively engaged in the promotion of its work and the support it provides to its stakeholders. One of the key ways it makes visible its work is through its corporate governance function. Staff in the corporate governance and planning sector are responsible for the development of the Agency’s Single Programming Document. One interviewee explained how the programming document is prepared,

So, what we do is, actually, we collect, based on the Annual Work Programme, we have tables, in which we collect information for each activity; if it is done, were the outputs delivered, were the outcomes achieved, or the objectives of the activity, and we also provide HR and financial information. In general, we follow the templates that are provided to us by the Commission. So, in short, this is how we do it. In practice, it’s a very lengthy and resource-consuming process. It requires a lot of coordination, with 50-60 stakeholders, internal or external, a lot of improvement, a lot of versioning and, actually, the adoption of the programme or the document is, not only, makes it obligatory for us to implement it but also provides us the financial resources. … So, based on the budget that we have in this document, the Programming Document is planning not only for the work but also for the resources; we plan the human resources long-term, for three years ahead, and also the budget (Interview No. 9, 2018).
The Programming Document functions as a key tool to make visible not only the work eu-LISA has carried out but also the work it intends to carry out. This form of corporate governance is an important mechanism for eu-LISA to secure adequate resources to carry out the tasks assigned to it. This kind of reporting also forms part of wider efforts to standardise reporting practices about the work of EU agencies, in order to enable cross-agency comparison in terms of their added value. Clarke (2005) has highlighted how performance measurement and reporting have become characteristic of contemporary bureaucratic management, whereby competition for resources is increasingly justified along these lines. Thus, the preparation and presentation of the Programming Document is not just a regulatory task but also a key means by which eu-LISA makes visible the value of its work, as it serves as a basis for monitoring and assessing the performance of the Agency.

eu-LISA’s internal policy officers also play a key role in ensuring the Agency’s visibility within EU policy. The Agency has a dedicated liaison office, located in Brussels, which one interviewee described as the “face and voice of the agency” (Interview No. 33, 2018), in addition to a policy team at the headquarters in Tallinn. It is important to note that eu-LISA does not develop policy, rather it is an implementing body, a distinction my counterparts stressed. The policy officers in Brussels and Tallinn work closely together to review policies in relevant areas to determine what role, if any, eu-LISA should play. As one officer explained when describing their responsibilities,

So, basically if I receive any documents, it has to be assessed. For example, there is a report from the Commission on the implementation of agenda on immigration, or agenda on security. They have this framework document that incorporates all the efforts of currently in the European Union that are focused on enhancing response to migration issues, or enhancing Member States’ capabilities to respond to security issues. So, this is the main document. What we have to do, we have to screen the documents, see if, first of all if we are mentioned. It’s our-, we all have to keep in mind that whenever there is a relevant topic for us we have to be there, otherwise if we are not visible there will be no
references to us, no finalisation, no staff increase and so on, so we have to be visible in policies, one part is how do you achieve this? … So, first of all, if we are visible. If not, then we have to screen the document and find the most appropriate part where we could be mentioned, and there is really something for us to do, like providing support to Member States with regard to large-scale IT systems. For example, there is concern about personality fraud. And then we go and say, ‘But, you have a sharing information system’, and there is-, okay, you have all this data, alphanumeric data and biometric, and now you can even search the biometric data. So, this AFIS, you know, automated, fingerprints identification system, incorporated to SIS, giving opportunity to look people for-, not for the alphanumeric data, like names only, but also for fingerprints. So, here we go, we are supporting this, we are, how to say, in bringing more Member States to use the system, so why don’t you mention it in this paper? So, this is one of the examples of what we could do in this regard. (Interview No. 2, 2018).

What the speaker makes clear here is that their objective is not to identify and define new threats or risks, but rather to ensure that the work eu-LISA does to support Member States is fully recognised and made visible at a policy level. As with the work of the corporate governance sector, this visibility is key to ensuring that the Agency has access to resources. As we can see here, the Agency is deeply engaged with the European policy-making process – in a Bourdiesusian (1986) sense, they are “interested”. However, as another policy officer explained this work is “very transparent, always very neutral and reflecting purely our technical perspective and respective consequences” (Interview No. 33, 2018). Thus, their participation in the field is framed in terms of neutrality, objectivity and disinterestedness.

Reflecting on how the visibility of eu-LISA’s work and its official presence has improved over time, the same interviewee noted

When I start working at eu-LISA, the Agency was still quite young and not yet well-known. Also in terms of official documents [it] was not very common to see the Agency mentioned. At this moment, I believe that all relevant stakeholders and even the public, in general, are much more aware of what eu-LISA is and what are the Agency’s tasks. In fact, I am even surprised sometimes to see the name of the Agency mentioned in documents and areas where normally the Agency never had a role. For e.g. in one of the latest documents produced by DG Mare is mentioned the possibility for eu-LISA to create a central system to support the work on this area. In any case, there is still lots of work to be done in order to improve the visibility of the Agency. … But I think that our good
reputation, our visibility has increased enormously in the last years, with the work that the Agency has done and the new tasks given to the Agency, together with the reinforcement of its mandate. (Interview No. 33, 2018 [my interpolation]).

The interviewee links the visibility and legitimacy of the Agency to its professional reputation among its stakeholders (see Schneider and Nieswandt, 2018; Rimkutė, 2019). In this sense, it is only through social recognition by its stakeholders that eu-LISA can grow and expand as an Agency (see Busuioc and Groenleer, 2013).

The Agency’s efforts to ensure its visibility bring to the fore tension regarding its role in the field. On the one hand, eu-LISA must participate in the field in order to be socially recognised and legitimised. On the other hand, it must maintain a neutral and objective stance. To manage this tension, the Agency frames its work in terms of the support and value it provides to its stakeholders (i.e. a logic of service). by framing its work in terms of service, eu-LISA does not engage in competition for the monopoly of legitimate knowledge for the definition of security threats or risks, rather it competes for knowledge on how best to support its stakeholders, in an effort to accumulate service capital.

The Moral Authority of Service

Service capital builds on pre-existing notions of public service, grounded in the ideals of the ‘public good’, widespread across the EU community. For example, one interviewee explained eu-LISA’s role in the following way, “… we should always remember why we are doing that and we are doing for the European citizens and for the security of Europe and the Schengen itself” (Interviewee No. 4, 2018). The interviewee went on to describe the importance of sound financial and project management as key elements to building and maintaining the trust of the public.
I think we need to understand that the systems we manage or we operate does not belong to us, it belongs to the taxpayers. They are there, they are paid by the taxes, for a purpose. So, this being said, we should give away our egoism on managing super systems and grasp here the needs, understand where we have to prioritise and anticipate. I think anticipation for me is a key element. If you anticipate, then business is trusting you. Taxpayers’ trust that you will not mess up with their money … The budgets we are managing are massive and the budgets and the financial resources are entrusted to us; I underline the word, ‘entrusted’ because it means a lot. We have to do sound financial and project management. So, not to spend too much and when we spend, to justify why we spend. And at the same time, yes, to deliver. (Interviewee No. 4, 2018).

This aspect of service brings to the fore a moral component of eu-LISA’s work, as service is not only a form of technical or managerial expertise structuring the practices and relationships between eu-LISA and the users of the systems, but also fundamentally shapes how they understand their relationship with European citizens, their security and indeed, the future of the European project. eu-LISA’s (2022) most recent annual activity report includes the following visualisation of what kind of organisation the Agency wants to be in the future.

Figure 1. eu-LISA Cultural Ambition Map (recreated from eu-LISA, 2022, p. 67)
This visualisation identifies EU citizens, in a strong and united Europe, as the “ultimate beneficiaries” of eu-LISA’s work. Therefore, although their work is the provision of “ICT services”, this service is embedded in a political and moral order.

Recently, scholars have begun to consider the moral and ethical implications of data management. For example, McGilvray (2021, p. 65) draws attention to the actors and agencies that are “managing information resources on behalf of others and for the best interests of the organization”. According to McGilvray, they are “stewards”, not owners. Similarly, the interviewee quoted above describes the Agency as managing a system that doesn’t belong to it, but rather on behalf of and for the benefit of others. The concept of service capital captures work such as this, where the goal is to bring benefits and value to stakeholders. Reflecting on the responsibilities and demands of managing the systems, the interviewee framed the future of the Agency in terms of cooperation,

I see the future more and more bright for the Agency, but the Agency needs resources to deliver. I see confrontation, if you like, with other agencies, but I would convert this differently because, you know, when an organisation grows, it might be conceived as a threat to others. So, this has to change. It’s not a threat, it’s a cooperation with the others because we are all in the same boat. We need to deliver for our children, as I said, in the annual conference. So, cooperation amongst agencies, no matter how eu-LISA will grow, is important (Interview No. 4, 2018).

While the interviewee acknowledges the competitive and confrontational dynamic between EU agencies, they seek to reframe it in terms of cooperation. Such a reframing, as I argue does not eliminate the field dynamic of competition, rather it is converted into a new form, one in which actors compete over the ability to best support, through cooperation, their stakeholders. Attending to the moral nature of managing data infrastructures illustrates how symbolic power, exercised through service capital, is practiced in the field of (in)security, adding further depth to critical investigations of symbolic power, which “is particularly efficacious when it is not recognised, but working through practices that are seemingly disinterested and unrelated to
social power and hierarchy” (Leander, 2006, p. 4). In this case, eu-LISA provides ostensibly disinterested technical services to its stakeholders, but, in fact, as I have shown, their work is embedded in a political and moral order. Indeed, to successfully carry out their work, ensure their visibility and grow within the institutional landscape, the Agency must present itself as disinterested while being deeply interested in the accumulation of service capital. This tension is reflected in the following comment from one interviewee, as their ‘self-interest’ in the Agency’s newly expanded capacity to offer support to Member States comes to the fore,

But, me personally, I’m also looking very much forward for the idea of being able to work for groups of Member States if they request our support. So that is a completely new ball game that I would like to, let’s say, at least explore, I’m trying to be polite and not say exploit. Very interesting point in the regulation. … Lots of ideas, that could feed into that, but let’s see how that comes around. And, of course there is always the one more step to go through the Commission for the Member States. But I think that can make our life very exciting on top of what we already have, which of course already is very exciting. So, ya, very much looking forward to that (Interview No, 3, 2018).

As I have shown, EU agencies, such as eu-LISA operate according to a logic of service, where they accumulate and deploy service capital in a field of new and more traditional stakeholders. But a key question remains: how are competing efforts to provide support, that is service capital, measured? In this case, the delivery of ‘added value’ is the established metric for measuring successful service provision (see Schout and Bevacque, 2018).

**Measuring Service Capital**

In the Treaty of Europe, Article 5 the principle of subsidiarity is established. Subsidiarity denotes the power conferred on the European Union to act “only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, … but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level” (OJEU, 2012, p. C326/18). The principle of subsidiarity provides the guiding rationale for
the setting up of European agencies, such as eu-LISA. In order for subsidiarity to be effective, Europe must measure “the value resulting from an EU intervention which is additional to the value that would have been otherwise created by Member States alone” (COM, 2011, p. 2), that is its European Added Value (EAV). This definition focuses on three key criteria for assessing EAV, namely effectiveness, efficiency, and synergy. In the case of eu-LISA, an evaluation of its added value found that “(t)he level of service to Member States is considered as having increased as the Agency has been able to provide added value by virtue of bringing the three systems together ‘under one roof’, pooling expertise and harnessing synergies in the operational management” (European Commission, 2016: 105). The development of the concept of EAV is closely connected to the management of the EU budget, particularly the multi-annual financial framework. Thus, EU agencies need to demonstrate EAV in order to secure resources and make visible their position in the EU institutional landscape. In short, then, efforts to support another take on meaning and significance in relation to EAV, converting service into a valuable resource, that is a tangible and measurable capital.

Conclusion

Critical Security Studies has analysed the field of security as competing efforts between established professionals of (in)security to define what is a threat or a risk. But new actors and agencies have entered this competitive field, especially in the area of data management and IT service provision. These agencies and actors have entered the field bringing their own professional practices, logics, and expert know-how. They are transforming the field of (in)security and the competitions for capital therein: I argue that they are competing to support their stakeholders but this support is packaged as neutral, objective, and disinterested expertise. Attending to this drive to provide expert support brings to the fore a tension between being disinterested while being clearly interested in, or having a stake in, the field of (in)security.
In order to explore this tension, I introduce the concept of service capital, the resources that accrue from the provision of support to stakeholders such as security professionals and policymakers. The concept of service capital draws from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory and offers a new “thinking tool” (Leander, 2008) suitable for the study of relations of power in the transforming field of (in)security. In his analysis of forms of capital, Bourdieu challenged the distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”, calling attention to social relations of power. This is precisely the tension that I address through service capital, as disinterestedness rather than self-interestedness is the underlying logic of service.

In this article, using the example of eu-LISA, I have shown that the introduction of new forms of expertise has brought new professional logics and forms of competition, namely competition to be recognized as an expert service provider. eu-LISA seeks to make visible its work to established professionals of (in)security. As I have shown, they must strike a balance between making visible their work to these professionals, the users of the systems they manage, in order to accrue service capital and thus be recognised as legitimate. Yet they must delimit their role by arguing the work they do is not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their stakeholders, thus framing their efforts in terms of what Bourdieu has described as disinterestedness.

Service capital clearly draws from pre-existing notions of service, most notably public service. In this sense, service is not just a matter of technical management but is also a moral and political practice. Moreover, service capital is not an intangible concept. On the contrary, it is mapped and measured by the EU as European Added Value. Agencies like eu-LISA must demonstrate their added value to their stakeholders by providing a service that delivers value – understood as effectiveness, efficiency and synergy – that cannot be achieved at the level of a single Member State. Because European Added Value is connected to budgets, service capital
becomes the key source of competitive advantage, legitimacy, authority, reputation, and resources for institutional growth. In short, then, I have shown that eu-LISA developed and exploited service capital, and has thus managed the tension between being recognised as part of the social network of professionals of (in)security while presenting itself as neutral and disinterested. As more new agencies and actors enter the field of (in)security, it will be important for Critical Security Studies to understand how they contribute to the production of processes of (in)security, but also how they exercise power and achieve a position in the field. This article has argued that attention to professional practices, logics, and expert know-how of a key data infrastructure manager illuminates the importance of service capital, an as-yet unexplored form of capital in the field of (in)security.

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Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the professional practices, institutional positioning, and accumulation of capital by data managers and IT professionals in the contemporary field of European (in)security. The thesis responds to the tension that surfaced during my fieldwork with a critical agency managing border data infrastructures, eu-LISA. The tension emerged because of how contemporary security is delimited, (de)politicised, and recast as a logic of service. Across three articles, I explore this tension in an overarching effort to illuminate how a logic of service is shaping the field of (in)security. The thesis shows that contrary to extant analysis eu-LISA cannot be fully understood as just another security organisation. Rather, as I have demonstrated, it is better understood as a service provider operating in the field of (in)security.

This thesis makes a significant scholarly contribution to the academic field of Critical Security Studies. Critical scholars have argued that security is a contested concept that acquires its meaning in relation to the day-to-day professional practices of security actors and agencies. This work has brought to the fore the competing claims made by multiple actors and agencies, such as the police, border guards, and intelligence officers, as to what counts as security. More recent research has highlighted the participation of new actors and agencies in this field. These actors and agencies are making their own claims on how processes of (in)security are constructed and defined. Most notably, Bigo (2020, p. 76) has analysed eu-LISA as part of a new “guild of digital technologies for managing security.” This argument, however, fails to take into account the specific form of knowledge and expertise at play in the management of data infrastructures, that is, a logic of service. In contrast, this thesis analyses service as a key logic shaping the work and role of eu-LISA, signposting a path for further research on the role service plays in other important adjacent agencies in the field of (in)security. I do so by drawing on a Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology-International Political Sociology (PARIS-IPS) approach.
PARIS-IPS focuses analytical attention on how these competitions in the field of (in)security take place, paying significant attention to everyday practices, where the meaning of security is performed. They argue that through these performances actors and agencies define what qualifies as a matter of security or not and this endows them with power, as it provides a means to accrue resources (capitals) and to implement their view of the world as dominant. A PARIS-IPS approach emphasises the importance of empirical accounts, where familiarity with the practices of our counterparts forms the basis for theoretical reasoning and thinking (see Leander, 2008). Mediating between the practices of our counterparts and the practice of doing research, requires adopting a reflexive approach. Engagement, collaboration, and reflexivity are thus central to PARIS-IPS processes of constructing knowledge (see Leander, 2019). In this sense, a PARIS-IPS approach remains sensitive to the constructed, partial, and contested nature of knowledge.

In this thesis, as is common in PARIS-IPS research, I have drawn on the thinking tools of Bourdieusian sociology (see Leander, 2008). This work has explored the relations between security actors as a ‘field’. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 97) describe fields “as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions”. The field of (in)security is a field of force, where transnational actors have shared interests and understandings, and common practices of professional socialisation, but also struggle and compete to establish their own forms of expertise as the dominant framework through which (in)security takes shape. The thesis has argued that service is a key form of expertise through which new actors, such as data managers and IT experts, are (politically) engaging in the field of (in)security, delimiting security as they do so, accruing a new and important form of capital, service.

To explore the delimitation, politics, and accrual of capital through service in the field of (in)security, drawing on the example of eu-LISA, this thesis answered the following research questions:
1) How do professional practices of service define eu-LISA’s relationship to the field of (in)security? And, what are the implications of this relationship for processes/notions of (de)securitisations?

2) What form/rationality of managerial expertise informs the politics of data infrastructures? And what are the implications for the construction of (in)security and (de)politicisations?

3) How do professionals of service make themselves visible to the field of (in)security, while presenting themselves as disinterested experts? And, what does this mean for the emergence of new lines of competition in the field of (in)security?

Each question reflects the process of negotiating and presenting my findings as part of the wider effort to consider eu-LISA’s role in terms of service, vis-à-vis its work and role in relation to the field of European border security and migration management.

Existing research on eu-LISA is primarily based on secondary documentary analysis and one-off interviews. Like other researchers, I analysed key Agency documents. However, the empirical contribution of the thesis is based on a period of fieldwork embedded in the Agency headquarters in 2018, where I carried out semi-structured expert interviews with both external stakeholders and eu-LISA staff (n = 36). In addition, two focus groups were held with eu-LISA staff from both the headquarters and operational sites. Fieldwork provided an opportunity to work in a mode of engagement and collaboration, and I was close to the struggles of making sense of life at eu-LISA, often being surprised by the accounts of my counterparts. It was within this context that I was able to trace the nuances and contradiction of the relationship between security and service, as service was identified inductively from the data collected. Therefore, across the three articles presented in this thesis, I explore the significance of a logic of service in
the field of European (in)security, specifically focusing on how security is being delimited, the (de)politicisation of expertise, and how service is converted into capital in this field.

In the first article of the thesis, I expanded on existing efforts to attend to the role of new players in the field of (in)security, going beyond current analyses of eu-LISA’s work and role, by offering a situated account of professional practices of service. Specifically, I have responded to recent work analysing eu-LISA as part of an emerging “guild of ‘digital technologies’ managing security” (Bigo, 2020, p. 76), arguing they are better understood as a guild of IT service managers. Having given the case example of the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL), I introduced the new concept of ‘delimiting security’ as a means to describe competing expert knowledge claims that are distinct from but are nonetheless integral to securitisation. Delimiting security denotes the novel ways in which actors are seeking to construct their relationship to the field of (in)security, drawing new lines around what they understand as security or not. Therefore, I recast the securitisation/desecuritisation dualism as a continuum along which actors construct and delimit a range of relationships to processes of (in)securitisation.

The second article demonstrates that although presented as a neutral body of expert knowledge and practice service does not result in a straightforward depoliticisation of security, rather what we find is a constant shifting back and forth between de-politicisation and politicisation, often occurring at the same time, as multiple logics (both security and service) are at play in how eu-LISA makes sense of its work. If we are to understand how actors make sense of security, we must consider the forms of practical knowledge that they draw on in their day-to-day work and how they approach this work. In the case of eu-LISA, service is the framework through which they make sense of their role in the wider field of border security and migration management. A role that is strongly shaped by the fact service is not only a matter of technical system management but is also a particular mode of stakeholder management, which is strongly informed by the fact that eu-LISA is an EU agency. Mapping out the lines along which the
politicisation of service and (de)politicisation of security intersect and diverge adds further empirical depth and nuance to our effort to study (in)security.

In the third article of the thesis, I further demonstrated how new actors in the field of (in)security are competing to support their stakeholders but this support is packaged as neutral, objective, and disinterested expertise. Similar to the previous articles, I explored the tension between being a disinterested expert while being clearly interested in, or having a stake in, the field of (in)security. In the third article, drawing from Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, I introduced the concept of service capital, denoting the resources that accrue from the provision of service to stakeholders such as security professionals and policymakers. In his analysis of forms of capital, Bourdieu (1986) challenged the distinction between economic capital as self-interested and other forms of capital as “disinterested”, calling attention to social relations of power. The logic of service operates on disinterestedness as opposed to self-interestedness, and I introduce service capital to expose a critical tension in the field, arising from how an important new player is accruing resources, legitimacy, and authority from the provision of service to policy and professional stakeholders.

eu-LISA seeks to make visible its work to established professionals of (in)security. As I have shown, they must strike a balance between making their work visible to these professionals, as the users of the systems they manage, in order to accrue service capital and be recognised as legitimate. Yet they must delimit their role by arguing the work they do is not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of their stakeholders, thus framing their efforts in terms of disinterestedness. I also demonstrate that service capital draws from pre-existing notions of service, most notably public service. Service is not just a matter of technical management but is also a moral and political practice. Moreover, service capital is not an intangible concept. On the contrary, it is mapped and measured by the EU as European Added Value. Because European
Added Value is connected to budgets, service capital becomes the key source of competitive advantage, legitimacy, authority, reputation, and resources for institutional growth.

As more new agencies and actors enter the field of (in)security, it will be crucial for critical security scholarship to understand how they contribute to the production of processes of (in)security, how they exercise power, and how they achieve their position in the field. Taken together, the articles in this thesis advance critical research on security by exploring the work and role of data infrastructure managers and IT professionals participating in the field of (in)security through a logic of service. The thesis has demonstrated that rather than straightforwardly joining the ranks of professionals of (in)security, these actors view themselves as service providers, which on the surface appears as a form of apolitical technocratic expertise. However, as I have shown, service is highly politicised, encompassing managerial, technical, and even moral practices.

References


## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Listening Participation; Interviews; Focus Groups; Documents

#### Listening Participation

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#### Interviews

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Focus Group 1

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Appendix 2: Interview Guide; Focus Group Discussion Questions and Topics

Interview Guide (eu-LISA Staff)

Objective 1: To gain insight into the day-to-day work of eu-LISA; Objective 2: To elicit their opinions on how they feel research activities (current and future) effects their own work and the work of eu-LISA; Objective 3: To elicit their expectations for the new mandate, with a particular focus on Article 10 and how it might affect their work; Objective 4: To elicit how they understand the changes taking place within eu-LISA in relation to their own work activities.

Topic 1: Background

- Q1a: Name and position in the organisation
- Q1b: Ask about how they came to be at eu-LISA, especially as SNE. – new question added post interview 3.

Topic 2: Day-to-day work

- Q2: Can you give me an outline of the major duties associated with your position?
- Q3: Can you describe, in as much detail as possible, what you are working on currently?
- Q4a: If you were asked to list the key skillsets you use in your everyday work what would they be?
- Q4b: If you were asked to list the key resources you use in your everyday work what would they be? (i.e. funding, IT support, international standards)
- Q5: Can you tell me how your work supports the overall objectives and goals of eu-LISA?

Topic 3: Research

- Q6: Can you tell me what you know about the research activities eu-LISA carries out?
- Q7: Are there particular research areas or priorities you think eu-LISA should focus on, and if so, why?
- Q8: Based on what you know of eu-LISA, what role do you think they could play under Article 10, and why?
- Q9: Based on the role you think eu-LISA should play in research, describe what you think this would involve, in as much detail as possible.
- Q10: Do you think eu-LISA’s participation in European research will help it achieve its strategic goals? If so, why and how? And, if not, why and how not?
- Q11: Do you think that participation in research, in any capacity, will add value to your own day-to-day work? If yes, why and how? If not, why and how not?

Topic 4: The Mandate
Q12a: Are you familiar with the new mandate?
Q12b: Why do you think the new mandate was proposed?
Q13: Do you think the new mandate will affect the way you do your work? If so, why and how? If not, why and how not?
Q14: How do you think the new mandate will affect the way eu-LISA works?

Topic 5: The Future of eu-LISA

Q15: Do you think eu-LISA participation in research will shape its future operations?
Q16: eu-LISA is experiencing a lot of change, new systems, new buildings, mandates, what do you think are the next steps for eu-LISA?
Q17: Can you tell me the ways you feel you have participated in these changes?
Q18: Earlier you described the main responsibilities of your position, if you had to describe the responsibilities for the same position five years from now, what do you imagine they would involve?

Topic 6: Closing

Q19: Do you have anything else you would to add or think is important for me to know about how your experience with eu-LISA?

Thank you.

Focus Group Discussion Questions and Topics

- What does research mean to you?
- Where does research fit in the work you do?
- Research in eu-LISA means that…
- Collaboration and fragmentation
- Resources and responsibilities
- Future borders and future roles
- Next Steps (12 months, 1-3 years, 3-5 years)
- What are the benefits of these steps?
Appendix 3: Project Information and Informed Consent Sheets

Project Information Sheet

Background
Under Article 14 of its new mandate, eu-LISA now has the capacity to actively participate in the European Framework Programme. In response, eu-LISA would like to develop a new research strategy, reflecting its new responsibilities. As part of my PhD research, and to support the development of this strategy, I am carrying out interviews with eu-LISA members of staff to elicit their views on the potential contribution of eu-LISA to the Framework Programme.

Research Objectives & Activities
The aims of my project are three-fold. First, to explore how eu-LISA could best take up its newly mandated role for participation in the Framework Programme. Second, to explore what role eu-LISA foresees for itself in the future of European security management. And, third, to disseminate and share the findings from my research to relevant practitioners, policy makers and the academic community.

In order to complete the research, I will be carrying out a series of interviews, focus groups, surveys and workshops.

Data Processing & Expected Outputs
All data collected and processed as part of the research will be done so in compliance with GDPR. All data collected will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive. Every effort will be made to ensure the protection of your data.
Data collected from the interview will be used in three outcomes.

1. An internal report for use by eu-LISA;
2. A final PhD thesis;
3. Teaching, academic presentation and journal publications.

In the accompanying informed consent sheet, you will find further details on informed consent and data processing.

Contact
If you have any questions concerning the information provided here, or wish to discuss further details of the project, you make contact the principal researcher, Ms. Eileen Murphy, at emu.mpp@cbs.dk.
Informed Consent Sheet

Interview Description
As part of my PhD with Copenhagen Business School I am carrying out a series of interviews within eg-LISA, focusing on its future participation in the Framework Programme. The aim of the interview is to better understand the work eg-LISA currently carries out, and based on this, discuss how eg-LISA could move forward with its new role in research, as detailed in Article 14 of the new mandate. As part of this process, I am interested in hearing about the work you do, and in what ways you feel it relates to research activities. The interview should take roughly 45.00m – 1.00h. If you have any questions before, during or after the interview please feel free to ask.

Data Processing
As principal researcher, I will be processing your data. With your permission interviews will be recorded on a digital device. Copies of the recording will be sent to an approved professional agency for transcription. Once completed, a copy of the transcription will be made available to you to verify, correct and amend. This revision process will take place through a follow up conversation, to be scheduled at a time of your convenience.

Given the sensitive nature of the topics we will be discussing I will implement a traffic lights system in reviewing the transcript. Content you are satisfied to have included can be highlighted as GREEN, content that cannot be included can be highlighted in RED, and content that you wish to revise or discuss further can be highlighted in YELLOW. Only content that you are satisfied with will be included in the final outputs of the research.

Once a final agreed upon transcript of the interview has been reached, the data provided will be

- Development of a final report for internal eg-LISA use;
- Development of my final PhD thesis;
- Development of academic articles for presentation at conferences and publication in journals.

Excerpts from interview transcripts will be made available to my PhD supervisors, Professor Mitchell Dean, CBS and Dr. Anna Leander, CBS. Draft copies of all outputs that make use of your data will be provided to you in advance of publication, for further comments or amendments.

Full and original copies of the transcript will not be shared with anyone other than the transcription company, who are bound by a Non-Disclosure Agreement. All information discussed during the interview will be treated with the utmost discretion. Every effort will be made to protect the identity of interviewees through anonymisation of data collected. However, this may not always be possible, given the unique and publicly documented role eg-LISA occupies.

All information collected will be securely stored on an encrypted external hard drive and processed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A comprehensive data management plan has been prepared to ensure the proper storage of data across the lifecycle of the project.

Consent
The information you provide will be only processed with your consent. Please read the following information on what consent entails in relation to your participation in the research carefully.

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