'Medical border making' and the absence/presence of 'migration' in the production of digital healthcare in Germany

Interdisciplinary research symposium
University of Göttingen
19 - 20 November

Location: Alte Mensa, Emmy Noether Saal, Wilhelmsplatz 3, 37073 Göttingen

PROGRAMME

Day 1: November 19, 2025

11:30 - 13:00 Keynote 1	**DIVIDUALS, INDIVIDUALS, AND DIGITALISATION IN AN ERA OF MIGRATION**
	Digitalization is megatrend and defining feature of contemporary societies, which intersects (among others) with migration, mobility and immobility on a large scale. The trend is not uniform, and different societal systems use digitalization as a tool to facilitate and achieve goals within their own system's logic. This keynote highlights the tensions between immigration policy and health policy, which follow different logics of inclusion and exclusion. It shows how the logic of otherness, and of selective permeability which is innate to immigration policy, facilitates bordering not only within their own system but re-produces socio-technical borders within the domain of health. Digitalisation emerges hence in a contested field, in which its use or deliberate non-use can either foster securitisation, exclusion and control, or be used to facilitate inclusive, diversity-sensitive health systems, for the benefit of health of migrants and the overall societies alike. This contested field is not dichotomous, but can regarded as spectrum or continuum, that depends on the power relations between societal (sub)systems, such as immigration policy, health policy, as well as their interrelation with a complex, multi-level web of overarching rules and norms (e.g., human rights, citizen rights, EU-GDPR, and national laws) which seek to the protect individual rights and sovereignty of data. The extent to which this is achieved determines whether migrants, understood as human beings in new environments, remain in-dividuals in an era of digitalisation, or are

	reduced to dividuals and objects of political and economic considerations of nation-states and powerful private or industry actors. • **Kayvan Bozorgmehr** (School of Public Health / AG 2 Population Medicine and Health Services Research, University of Bielefeld, Germany)
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 15:30 Panel 1	**DIGITAL HEALTH AND MIGRATION: MAPPING THE FIELD** *Thi1s panel explores the entangled relationship between migration and the production of digital health in Germany. It asks how migration is positioned not merely as a demographic variable but as a constitutive element in the shaping of digital health infrastructures, policies, and imaginaries. While digital health is often framed as a universal solution for improving access and efficiency, this panel aims to interrogate if/how this discourse incorporates or marginalizes migration as a key factor. It further examines the socio-technical assemblages through which digital health and migration intersect: Who are the central actors, institutions, and technologies involved? What, policy frameworks, and epistemic practices shape this field? By mapping these dynamics, the panel aims to situate migration as an analytical lens for understanding the broader logics and inequalities embedded in Germany's digital health landscape.* **Speakers:** • **Johanna Hanefeld** (Vice President (acting) & Head of Department of the Centre for International Health Protection, Robert Koch Institute, Germany) • **Katrin Amelang** (Institute for Ethnology and Cultural Studies, University of Bremen, Germany) • **Tanja Ahlin** (Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology (CADS), Leiden University, Netherlands) **Chair: Reza Bayat** (Centre for Global Migration Studies (CeMig), University of Göttingen, Germany)
15:30 - 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00 - 17:30 Panel 2	**DIGITAL HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES AND APPLICATIONS; DEMOCRATISING THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

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This panel examines the development and implementation of digital health interventions for migrants and individuals with limited local language proficiency, exploring how technological solutions can bridge communication gaps while addressing systemic inequities in healthcare access. Drawing on expertise from the United States and different European Union countries, panelists will discuss challenges in developing culturally competent eHealth and mHealth technologies that serve diverse populations effectively. The session will highlight participatory development approaches that center migrant voices in the design process, examining both successful implementations and persistent barriers that contribute to the exclusion of migration perspectives in digital health innovation. Key topics include intercultural communication strategies in telemedicine, the role of video technology in urgent primary care settings, telehealth platforms to overcome language barriers, and the risks of perpetuating inequitable access through poorly designed digital interventions. Through case studies, panelists will discuss best practices for creating inclusive digital health systems that recognize migration as a fundamental consideration rather than an afterthought. The discussion will address why migration experiences are often marginalized in health technology development and propose frameworks for ensuring that digital healthcare solutions serve all community members, regardless of linguistic background or migration status.

Speakers:

- **Steven Ondersma** (Charles Stewart Mott Department of Public Health, Michigan State University, USA)
- **Barbara Schouten** (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)
- **Philipp Geisler** (aidminutes.org gUG, Hamburg, Germany)

Chair: Eva Maria Noack & Frank Müller (Department of General Practice and Family Medicine, University Medical Centre Göttingen, Germany)

18:30	Joint Dinner

Day 2: November 20, 2025

09:30 - 11:00 Keynote 2	**TRANSFORMATIVE TECHNOLOGIES: FOSTERING HEALTH JUSTICE WITH DIGITAL HEALTH** *Despite having many novel aspects, digital health technologies have incorporated gendered and racialised imbalances, gaps and inaccuracies, dominant in standard medicine and healthcare. As such, these technologies have been critiqued for reinforcing and exacerbating old structural inequalities. Segments of digital health, such as the 'Femtech' sector have been celebrated by some as a much-needed response to the ongoing legacy of structural sexism in medicine and healthcare. However, this talk will argue that instead of placing hopes into narrowly construed sectors, an intersectional health justice perspective needs to be implemented across the whole digital health field. Taking a closer look at examples of poor practice, we will contend that to deliver relevant and genuinely beneficent health services, all digital health technologies will need to be designed to facilitate health benefit across the whole target population, not only its selective parts. To that effect, we will envision the idea of transformative technologies, capable of positively transforming human health.* • **Tereza Hendl** (Institute for Ethics and History of Health in Society (IEHHS), University of Augsburg, Germany)
11:00 - 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 - 13:00 Panel 3	**WHOSE DATE COUNTS? WHO IS SEEN, INCLUDED, AND CARED FOR** *As health systems become increasingly data-driven, the presence - or absence - of migrants in digital infrastructures reveals deeper structures of inclusion, exclusion, and control. Who appears in health datasets? Who remains invisible or misrepresented? And how do digital technologies shape notions of who is seen as legitimate, treatable, or worthy of care? Bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives, the panel investigates the political, ethical, and social dimensions of data practices in healthcare, with a focus on how they reflect and reinforce broader dynamics of mobility, belonging, and justice.* **Speakers:** • **Anamika Kundu** (Department of Law, European University Institute, Florence, Italy) **& Farid Mahsouli** (Department of Private Law, Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands)

Chair: Louisa Peters (Chair of Information Management, Digital Health Research Group (DHRG), University of Göttingen, Germany)	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 - 16:00 **World Café & Wrap-Up**	• **Sinje Gehr** (School of Engineering and Health Sciences, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Göttingen, Germany)

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