Academics Against Mass Surveillance


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Last summer it was revealed, largely thanks to Edward Snowden, that American and European intelligence services are engaging in mass surveillance of hundreds of millions of people.

Intelligence agencies monitor people's Internet use, obtain their phone calls, email messages, Facebook entries, financial details, and much more. Agencies have also gathered personal information by accessing the internal data flows of firms such as Google and Yahoo. Skype calls are "readily available" for interception. Agencies have purposefully weakened encryption standards - the same techniques that should protect our online banking and our medical files. These are just a few examples from recent press reports. In sum: the world is under an unprecedented level of surveillance.

This has to stop.

The right to privacy is a fundamental right. It is protected by international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. Without privacy people cannot freely express their opinions or seek and receive information. Moreover, mass surveillance turns the presumption of innocence into a presumption of guilt. Nobody denies the importance of protecting national security, public safety, or the detection of crime. But current secret and unfettered surveillance practices violate fundamental rights and the rule of law, and undermine democracy.

The signatories of this declaration call upon nation states to take action. Intelligence agencies must be subjected to transparency and accountability. People must be free from blanket mass surveillance conducted by intelligence agencies from their own or foreign countries. States must effectively protect everyone's fundamental rights and freedoms, and particularly everyone's privacy.

January 2014

Signatories

Subscription to the Declaration is now closed.
Thank you for your support.

- Ian Brown (Associate Director of Oxford University's Cyber Security Centre)
- Douwe Korff (Professor International Law, London Metropolitan University)
Serge Gutwirth (Professor of Human Rights, Comparative law, Legal Theory and Methodology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Bart Jacobs (Professor of Software Security and Correctness, Radboud University Nijmegen)

Bert-Jaap Koops (Professor Regulation & Technology, Tilburg University)

Roger Clarke (Visiting Professor, Faculty of Law, UNSW and Research School of Computer Science, ANU)

Roger Brownsword (Professor of Law, King's College London)

Bruce Schneier (Fellow, Berkman Institute for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School)

Katherine Strandburg (Alfred B. Engelberg Professor of Law, New York University)

Dirk Helbing (Professor of Sociology, in particular of Modeling and Simulation, ETH Zurich)

Ulrich Beck (Professor of Sociology, University of Munich and London School of Economics)

David Lyon (Professor, Queen's Research Chair in Surveillance Studies, Queen's University)

Yves Poullet (Professor of Law, University of Namur)

Colin Benett (Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria)

Joel Reidenberg (Visiting Professor, Princeton University; Stanley D. and Nikki Waxberg Chair in Law, Fordham University)

Mary deYoung (Professor, Department of Sociology, Grand Valley State University)

Catherine Dwyer (Associate Professor, Seidenberg School of Computer Science & Information Systems, Pace University)

Anne-Lise Sibony (Professor of European Law, University of Liége)

Laurent de Sutter (FWO Senior Researcher, Free University Brussels; Visiting Honorary Research Scholar, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law)

Jay Rosen (Associate Professor of Journalism, New York University)

Marc Rotenberg (Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University Law Center)

Peggy Valcke (Professor in Law, KU Leuven)

Sarah Spiekermann (Professor for Information Systems, Vienna University of Economics and Business)

Barbara Fister (Professor, Library, Gustavus Adolphus College)

Oscar Gandy (Emeritus Professor Communication studies, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania)

Leonhard Grill (Professor for Physical Chemistry, University of Graz)

Wolfgang Hofkirchner (Associate Professor, Vienna University of Technology)

Antonius Kies (Project Assistant, Institute for ICE and Thermodynamics, TU Graz)

Ludo Abicht (Professor Department of International Relations, University of Antwerp)

Daniel de Beer (Researcher, Research Group on Law Science Technology & Society, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Jenneke Christiaens (Professor of Law and Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Laurence Claeys (Assistant Professor of Communication Sciences, Free University Brussels)
Eric Corijn (Professor Social and Cultural Geography, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Tom Daems (Lecturer in Criminology and Sociology of Law, Ghent University)
Jonas Degrave (Ph.D Researcher, Department of Electronics and Information Systems, Ghent University)
Marie-Sophie Devresse (Professor of Law, Université catholique de Louvain)
Claudia Diaz (Assistant Professor Computer Security and Industrial Cryptography, KU Leuven)
Els Dumortier (Professor Department of Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Veerle Draulans (Associate Professor, KU Leuven)
Gloria Gonzalez Fuster (Researcher, Research Group on Law Science Technology & Society, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Paul de Hert (Professor, Criminal Law, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Diete Humblet (Ph.D Researcher, Department of Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Dan Kaminski (Professor of Criminology, Université catholique de Louvain)
Joachim Koops (Professor of International Affairs, Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Margo de Koster (Professor of Historical Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Laurens Lavrysen (Ph.D Researcher, Human Rights Centre, Ghent University)
Hans Lammerant (Researcher, Research Group on Law Science Technology & Society, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Koen Lefever (Lecturer at Vesalius College, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Philippe Mary (Professor of Criminology, Université Libre de Bruxelles)
Saïla Ouald Chaib (Ph.D researcher, Human Rights Centre, Ghent University)
Paul Ponsaers (Emeritus Professor, Ghent University)
Anna Leander (Professor (MSO), Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, Copenhagen Business School)
Bart Preneel (Professor of Information Security, KU Leuven)
Wolfgang Stein (Professor of Neurophysiology, Illinois State University)
Markus Thiel (Assistant Professor; Acting Co-director, EU Center of Excellence Department of Politics & International Relations School of International & Public Affairs, Florida International University)
Justus Verhagen (Associate Fellow, The John B. Pierce Laboratory; Associate Professor, Department of Neurobiology, Yale School Of Medicine)
Bertrand Renard (Visiting Professor, Law and Criminology, Université catholique de Louvain)
Herwig Reynaert (Professor & Dean, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Ghent University)
Antoinette Rouvroy (FNRS Research Associate, Research Centre Information, Law and Society, University of Namur)
Bart de Schutter (Emeritus Professor of Law, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
Olivier de Schutter (Professor, Université catholique de Louvain)
Antoinette Verhage (Postdoc Researcher, Department of Criminal Law and Criminology; Director Institute for Urban Security & Policing Studies, Ghent University)
Gert Vermeulen (Professor of International and European criminal law, Ghent

http://www.academicsagainstsurveillance.org/
- Dirk Voorhoof (Professor of Media Law, Ghent University)
- Isabelle Wattier (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law and Criminology, Université catholique de Louvain)
- David Wright (Managing Partner, Trilateral Research, London; Researcher, Free University Brussels)
- Jennifer Barrigar (Professor, Law & Legal Studies, Carleton University)
- Greg Elmer (Professor of Media, Ryerson University)
- Heather Morrison (Assistant Professor, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa)
- David Murakami Wood (Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Surveillance Studies; Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Queen's University)
- Robert Park (Professor and Associate Dean of Arts, Computing, University of Waterloo)
- Valerie Steeves (Associate Professor of Criminology, University of Ottawa)
- Roel Vertegaal (Professor of Human-Computer Interaction, Queen's University)
- Michael Fellhauer (Associate Professor, Department of Astronomy, University of Concepcion)
- Peter Blume (Professor of Data Protection Law, University of Copenhagen)
- Thomas Heimburg (Associate Professor, The Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen)
- Carsten Bagge Laustsen (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Government, Aarhus University)
- Wouter De Tavernier (PhD researcher, Department of Political Science, Aalborg University)
- Kai Kimppa (Post-Doctoral Researcher of IT and Ethics Turku School of Economics, University of Turku)
- Alberto Alemanno (Jean Monnet Professor of EU Law & Risk Regulation, HEC Paris; Global Clinical Professor, New York University)
- Emma Bell (Senior Lecturer, University of Savoie)
- Didier Bigo (Director of the Centre d' etudes sur les Conflits, la Liberté, la Sécurité; Professor Department of War Studies King's College London; Research professor (MCU) Sciences Po Paris)
- Roberto Di Cosmo (Professor of Computer Science, University Paris Diderot)
- Paul Egré (Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, Visiting Assistant Professor, New York University)
- Rafael Munagorri (Professor of Law, Université de Nantes)
- Gloria Origgi (Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique and EHESS, Paris)
- Philippe Schlenker (Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, Global Distinguished Professor, New York University)
- Anastassia Tsoukala (Associate Professor Criminology, University of Paris XI)
- Marion Albers (Professor of Public Law, Information and Communication Law, Health law and Theory of Law, Hamburg University)
- Maria Beimborn (International Center for Ethics in Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen)
Christian Berndt (Professor of Marine Geophysics, Christian-Albrechts-University of Kiel)

Roland Bless (Associate Professor, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)

Ralf Bieber (Researcher, Ruprecht-Karls-University)

Franziska Boehm (Assistant Professor for IT-Law, University of Münster)

Rainer Böhme (Professor of IT Security, University of Münster)

Gerhard Dannemann (Professor, Centre for British Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Jens Dittrich (Professor of Computer Science: Data Management and Big Data; Saarland University)

Michael Friedewald (Head of ICT Research Unit, Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research)

Klaus David (Professor, Chair for Communication Technology, University of Kassel)

Markus Deimann (Assistant Professor, FernUniversität in Hagen)

Jeroen Dickschat (Professor of Organic Chemistry, Technical University of Braunschweig)

Roy Baker (Lecturer, Macquarie Law School, Macquarie University)

Angela Daly (Research Fellow, Swinburne University of Technology)

Jessica Heesen (Research Associate, Interdepartmental Centre for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen)

Petra Hiller (Professor of Organization and Governance, Nordhausen University of Applied Sciences)

Thomas Hoeren (Professor of Information, Media and Business Law, University of Münster)

Werner Janjic (Research & Teaching Assistant, Software-Engineering Group, University of Mannheim)

Christian Joerges (Professor of Law and Society, Hertie School of Governance; Research Professor, University of Bremen, Centre of European Law and Politics)

Hans Joosten (Professor of Peatland Studies and Palaeoecology, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität Greifswald)

Jochen Kerdels (Researcher, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Hagen)

Guenther Koehnken (Professor of Psychology, University of Kiel)

Katrin Kämpf (Research Assistant, Media Studies, University of Paderborn)

Johannes Kaspar (Professor of Criminal Law, University of Augsburg)

Wolfgang Kilian (Professor Emeritus for Legal Informatics, Legal Theory and Civil Law, Leibniz-University Hanover)

Christian Klinke (Heisenberg scholar, University of Hamburg)

Jan Krämer (Associate Professor; Head of Research Group Telecommunications Markets, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)

Peter Lampe (Professor of Theology, University of Heidelberg)

Thomas Lemke (Professor of Sociology, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Kai von Lewinski (Associate Professor (Privatdozent), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Daniel Loick (Philosopher, Goethe University Frankfurt)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- Alexander May (Professor of Cryptology, Ruhr University Bochum)
- Franz Mayer (Professor, Chair of Public Law, European Law, Comparative Law, Law and Politics, University of Bielefeld)
- Axel Metzger (Professor of Civil Law, Intellectual Property, Information Technology Law and Private International Law, University of Hanover)
- Thomas Mittmann (Professor, Institute for Physiology, Johannes-Gutenberg University Mainz)
- Rosamunde van Brakel (PhD researcher Surveillance Studies and Criminology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)
- Eva Brems (Professor Human Rights Centre, Ghent University)
- Wolfgang Mueller (Professor, Department of Media Education and Visualization, University of Education Weingarten)
- Christof Paar (Professor, Chair for Embedded Security, Ruhr University Bochum)
- Günther Pernul (Professor for Information Systems, Universität Regensburg)
- Benjamin Rampp (Research Associate, Interdepartmental Centre for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen)
- Kai Rannenberg (Professor Mobile Business & Multilateral Security, Goethe University Frankfurt)
- Aljoscha Rheinwalt (Ph.D Researcher, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research)
- Theo Röhle (Research Associate, Braunschweig University of Art)
- Alexander Rossnagel (Professor of Public Law, University of Kassel)
- Jens Schade (Researcher, Dresden University of Technology)
- Heidi Schäfer (Fellow at the International Centre of Ethics in The Sciences and Humanities, University of Tübingen)
- Sebastian Schelter (Ph.D Researcher, Database Systems and Information Management Group, Technische Universität Berlin)
- Karin Schermelleh-Engel (Professor of Psychology, Goethe University)
- Britta Schinzel (Professor of Informatics and Society, University of Freiburg)
- Henrike Schmidt (Private Lecturer, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Thomas Schmitz (Professor of Philosophy, University of Bonn)
- Heinz Schweppe (Professor em. of Databases and Information Systems, Freie Universität Berlin)
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- Werner Sobek (Professor and Chair for Lightweight Structures, Stuttgart University, Germany)
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- Indra Spiecker (Professor of Law, Goethe University Frankfurt)
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- Elly Spijkerman (Researcher, University of Potsdam)
- Rob van Son (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands Cancer Institute/Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital)
- Piet Hein van Kempen (Professor of Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure, Radboud
University Nijmegen)
- Feer Verkade (Emeritus Professor Special aspects of Private Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Michael Vliek (Lecturer, Department of Psychology, University of Amsterdam)
- Titus Stahl (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Goethe University Frankfurt)
- Fritz Strack (Professor of Psychology, University of Würzburg)
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- Gunther Teubner (Professor of Law and Legal Sociology, Goethe Universität Frankfurt)
- Michael Waidner (Professor for Security in Information Technology, Technische Universität Darmstadt; Director, Fraunhofer Institute for Secure Information Technology)
- Jutta Weber (Professor for Media Studies, University of Paderborn)
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- Marcelo Thompson (Assistant Professor of Law, Hong Kong University)
- Majtényi László (Professor for Information and Media Law, University of Miskolc)
- Katalin Parti (Senior Researcher, National Institute of Criminology, Budapest)
- Ivan Szekely (Research Professor, Open Society Archives at Central European University and Budapest University of Technology and Economics)
- Tom Felle (Lecturer in Journalism, University of Limerick)
- Paddy Hillyard (Professor Emeritus Queen's University, Belfast)
- TJ McIntyre (Lecturer in Law, University College Dublin)
- Michael Birnhack (Professor, Faculty of Law, Tel Aviv University)
- Giusella Finocchiaro (Professor of Internet Law and Private Law, University of Bologna)
- Chiaria Fonio (Senior Researcher in Sociology, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Milan)
- Maximilian Mayer (Senior Fellow, Center for Global Studies, University of Bonn)
- Fabio Massacci (Professor of Computer Security, Universita' di Trento)
- Andy Moore (Associate Professor, Information School at the University of Washington)
- Milton Mueller (Professor, Syracuse University School of Information Studies)
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- Morton Canty (Research Scientist, Institute for Bio- and Geosciences, Juelich Research

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Center)
- Wolfgang Coy (Professor of Informatics, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
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- Frank Pasquale (Professor of Law, University of Maryland Carey School of Law)
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- Thomas Meier (Professor of Pre- and Protohistory, Ruprecht-Karls-University, Heidelberg)
- Juan Carlos de Martin (Associate Professor; Co-director Nexa Center for Internet & Society, Politecnich University of Turin)
- Marco Ricolfi (Professor of Intellectual Property, Turin University)
- Alessandro Spina (Fellow in Economic Law, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Milan)
- Mathias Vermeulen (Research Fellow, European University Institute)
- Francesca Vianello (Lecturer in Sociology of deviance, European group for the study of deviance and social control, University of Padua)
- Andrew Adams (Professor of Information Ethics, Meiji University Tokyo)
- Itsuko Yamaguchi (Professor of Information Law and Policy, University of Tokyo)
- Peter Ryan (Professor of Applied Security, University of Luxembourg)
- Christiaan Alberdingk Thijm (Lecturer in Intellectual Property and Information law, University of Amsterdam)
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- Arie den Boon (University of Amsterdam, Department of Communication Science)
- Kelly Breemen (Ph.D researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Vicky Breemen (Ph.D researcher, University of Amsterdam, Institute for Information Law)
- Josep Domingo-Ferrer (Professor of Computer Science, UNESCO Chair in Data Privacy, Universitat Rovira i Virgili)
- Nico van Eijk (Professor of Media and Communications Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Michael Faure (Professor of Comparative and International Environmental Law, Maastricht University)
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- Marieke de Goede (Professor of Politics, University of Amsterdam)
- Stef van Gompel (Senior Researcher, Institute of Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Katja Franko Aas (Professor of Criminology, University of Oslo)
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- Michael Falgoust (Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Twente)
- Elspeth Guild (Jean Monnet Professor ad personam of European Immigration Law, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Natali Helberger (Professor of Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Mireille Hildebrandt (Professor of Smart Environments, Data Protection and the Rule of Law, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Wouter Hins (Professor of Media Law, Leiden University; Associate Professor Constitutional and Administrative Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Jaap-Henk Hoepman (Associate Professor in Computer Security, Privacy and Identity Management, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Thomas Hoogeboom (Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Epidemiology, Maastricht University)
- Bernt Hugenholtz (Professor of Intellectual Property Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Henrik Jensen (Professor of Mathematical Physics; Leader of the Complexity & Networks Group, Imperial College London)
- Roman Brinzanik (Researcher, Department of Computational Molecular Biology Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics)
- Bernhard Schiekel (Retired Researcher in Mathematical Physics, University of Würzburg and University of Munich)
- Lochlan Morrissey (Ph.D researcher, School of Language and Linguistics, Griffith University, Australia)
- Markus Arnold (Professor of Philosophy, Institute of Science Communication & Higher Education Research, Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt, Austria)
- Thomas Egli (Professor Emeritus, ETH Zürich; Eawag, Swiss Federal Water Research Institute)
- Ruben Flores (Assistant Professor of Sociology, National Research University - Higher School of Economics, Russian Federation)
- Erik Huizer (Professor of Internet Applications, Utrecht University)
- Jan Kabel (Emeritus Professor Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Gerard Kempen (Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Psychology, Leiden University)
- Corné van den Kieboom (Ph.D. Researcher in Cellular and Molecular Biotechnology, Radboud University Medical Centre)
- Merel Koning (Ph.D Researcher, Privacy & Identity Lab, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Salomon Kroonenberg (Emeritus Professor of Geology, Delft University of Technology)
- Richard Lamb (Lecturer, University of Delft; Member of the Advisory Board, Inter College Business School Amsterdam)
- Ronald Leenes (Professor of Regulation by Technology, Tilburg University)
- Hans Lindahl (Professor of Legal Philosophy, Tilburg University)
- Arno Lodder (Professor on Law and Internet, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
- Marco Loos (Professor of Private Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Michael Nagenborg (Assistant Professor for Philosophy of Technology, University of Twente)
- Ton Nijhuis (Professor of German Studies, University of Amsterdam)
- Andrew Roberts (Senior Lecturer, Melbourne Law School, Melbourne University)
• Ingo Petzke (Emeritus Professor, University of Applied Sciences, Wuerzburg; Adjunct Professor, James Cook University Australia)
• Mareike Foecking (Professor of Photography, Fachhochschule Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts)
• Christoph Gossing (Research Assistant, Universität Trier)
• Samuel Greef (Postdoc Researcher, University of Kassel)
• Axel Groenemeyer (Professor Theorie und Empirie der Sozialpädagogik, Dortmund University)
• Christian Grothoff (Emmy-Noether Research Group Leader, TU Munich)
• Krista Grothoff (Researcher, Technical University of Munich)
• Guido van 't Noordende (University of Amsterdam, Informatics Institute)
• Manon Oostveen (Ph.D researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
• Jacco van Ossenbruggen (Researcher Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
• Mathieu Paapst (Assistant professor Law and IT, University of Groningen)
• Ruud Peters (Emeritus Professor Islamic Law, University of Amsterdam)
• Matthijs Pontier (Postdoctoral Researcher, VU University Amsterdam)
• Robin Geiss (Professor, Chair of International Law and Security, University of Glasgow)
• Adam Fish (Lecturer, Lancaster University)
• Nicola Green (Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of Surrey)
• David Harper (Reader in Clinical Psychology, University of East London)
• Johan Pouwelsen (Assistant professor, Delft University of Technology)
• Jason Pridmore (Associate Professor, Department of Media and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
• Niels Birbaumer (Professor, Institute of Medical Psychology, University of Tuebingen)
• Guido Fioretti (Assistant Professor of Organization Science, University of Bologna)
• Zamira Xhaferri (PhD Researcher, Department of International and European Law, Maastricht University)
• Michael Hagner (Professor of Science Studies, ETH Zurich)
• Daniel Hebenstreit (Assistant Professor for Molecular Systems Biology, University of Warwick)
• Kirstin Goth (Ph.D Researcher, Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University Basel)
• Dino Pedreschi (Professor of Computer Science, University of Pisa, Italy)
• Corien Prins (Professor Law and Informatisation and Dean Tilburg Law School, Tilburg University)
• Beate Roessler (Professor of Ethics and its History, University of Amsterdam)
• Rob van der Sandt (Emeritus professor Philosophy of Language and Logic, Radboud University Nijmegen)
• Bart Schermer (Assistant professor of Law, Leiden University)
• Vittorio Rosato (Head, Computing and Technological Infrastructures Lab., ENEA Casaccia Research Centre, Italy)
• Fotis Jannidis (Professor, Institut für Deutsche Philologie, Universität Würzburg)
Aaron Clauset (Assistant Professor of Computer Science, University of Colorado Boulder, and External Faculty, Santa Fe Institute)

Thomas Fuhrmann (Professor for Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, OTH Regensburg)

Andrew Clement (Professor, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto)

Moritz Wildgruber (Researcher, Department of Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology; International Graduate School for Science and Engineering, Technische Universität München)

Lisa Austin (Professor of Law, University of Toronto)

Melanie Ehrlich (Professor, Human Genetics, Tulane University)

Sebastian Göndör (Computer Scientist and Researcher, TU Berlin)

Siegfried Loeschke (Assistant Professor, Institute for Regional Health Research, University of Southern Denmark)

Jan Smits (Professor of European Private Law, Maastricht University)

Bald de Vries (Associate Professor, Institute for Jurisprudence, Constitutional and Administrative Law, Utrecht University)

Tijmen Wisman (Ph.D Researcher, Transnational Legal Studies, VU University Amsterdam)

Sally Wyatt (Professor Digital Cultures in Development, Maastricht University)

Marjoleine Zieck (Professor of International Refugee Law, University of Amsterdam)

Gerrit-Jan Zwenne (Professor of Law, Leiden University)

Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius (Ph.D researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)

Miriam Lips (Professor of e-Government, Victoria University of Wellington)

Scott Poynting (Professor in Criminology, University of Auckland)

Hans-Peter Müller (Professor of Periodontology, Faculty of Health Sciences, The Arctic University of Norway)

Ann Rudinow Sætnan (Professor of Sociology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Andrzej Adamski (Professor of Criminal Law and Computer Law, Nicolaus Copernicus University)

Beer Franken (Chief Information Security and Privacy Protection Officer, Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam)

Catarina Frois (Professor of Anthropology, Lisbon University)

Matjaz Jager (Director, Senior Researcher, Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana)

Katja Šugman Stubbs (Professor of Criminal law and Criminology, University of Ljubljana)

Aleš Završnik (Assistant Professor, Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law, University of Ljubljana)

Miquel Peguera (Associate Professor of Commercial Law and Internet Law, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

Tarlach McGonagle (Senior Researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Johan Messchendorp (Associate Professor Subatomic Physics, University of Groningen)
- Antoni Roig (Professor Constitutional Law, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona)
- Héctor Silveira (Professor in Philosophy of Law, University of Lleida)
- Sonja Buchegger (Associate Professor Computer Science, KTH Royal Institute of Technology)
- Ingo Fetzer (Researcher, Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University)
- Mathias Klang (Lecturer, Universities of Göteborg & Borås)
- Susanne Wigorts Yngvesson (Associate Professor in Ethics, Stockholm School of Theology)
- Oliver Bendel (Professor of Information Systems and Ethics, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland FHNW)
- Herbert Burkert (Professor Emeritus, President, Research Center for Information Law, University of St.Gallen, Switzerland)
- Bertil Cottier (Professor of Communication Sciences, University of Lugano)
- Joram Feldon (Emeritus Professor, ETH Zurich)
- Peter Glassen (Lecturer of Media Science, Bern University of the Arts)
- Francisco Klauser (Assistant Professor, Institut de Géographie, University Neuchâtel)
- Daniel Kressner (Professor of Mathematics, EPF Lausanne)
- Marc Langheinrich (Associate Professor for Computer Science, University of Lugano)
- Hüseyin Levent Köker (Professor of Public Law, Atilim University Ankara)
- Andrew Adam (Senior Tutor, St Stephen's House, University of Oxford)
- Ross Anderson (Professor in Security Engineering, University of Cambridge)
- Kristie Ball (Reader in Surveillance and Organization, Open University Business School)
- Paul Bernal (Lecturer, UEA Law School, University of East Anglia)
- David Berry (Reader in School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex)
- Saúl Ares (Systems Biology Programme, Centro Nacional de Biotecnologia)
- Alejandro Forero Cuéllar (Researcher, Observatory of the Penal System and Human Rights, University of Barcelona)
- Eerke Boiten (Senior Lecturer and Director of Centre for Cyber Security Research, University of Kent)
- Christin Bolewski (Senior Lecturer, School of the Arts, English and Drama, Loughborough University)
- Victoria Canning (Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Liverpool John Moores University)
- Tom Crick (Senior Lecturer in Computing Science, Cardiff Metropolitan University)
- Simon Davies (London School of Economics, Information Systems and Innovation Group)
- Lilian Edwards (Professor of E-Governance, Strathclyde University)
- Karen Evans (Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, University of Liverpool)
- Thomas Gross (Director Centre for Cybercrime and Computer Security; Lecturer Security, Privacy and Trust, Newcastle University)
- Ben Hayes (Fellow, Transnational Institute)
- Jim Hollinshead (Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Liverpool John Moores University)

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- Sylvia Kierkegaard (Professor, Cyber Security Research - EPSRC/GCHQ and ILaws, University of Southampton)
- Bev Littlewood (Professor of Software Engineering, City University London)
- Fiona de Londras (Professor of Law, Durham University; Co-Director, Durham Human Rights Centre)
- Andres Guadamuz (Senior Lecturer in Intellectual Property Law, University of Sussex)
- Anil Madhavapeddy (Senior Research Fellow, Computer Laboratory, University of Cambridge)
- Chris Marsden (Professor of Media Law, University of Sussex)
- Karen Mc Cullagh (Lecturer in Law, University of East Anglia)
- Andrew McStay (Lecturer in Media Culture, Bangor University)
- Christopher Millard (Professor of Privacy and Information Law; Director of the Cloud Legal Project, Queen Mary University of London)
- Philip Moriarty (Professor of Physics, University of Nottingham)
- Geraint Bevan (Lecturer in Applied Instrumentation and Control, Glasgow Caledonian University)
- Axel Arnbak (Ph.D researcher, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam; Research Fellow, Berkman Center for Internet & Society)
- Bodó Balázs (University of Amsterdam, Institute for Information Law)
- Suki de Boer (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Art History, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
- Luc Boerboom (Assistant Professor Spatial Planning and Decision Support Systems and Infrastructures, University of Twente)
- Saleem Bhatti (Professor, School of Computer Science, University of St Andrews)
- Mike Nellis (Emeritus Professor Criminal and Community Justice, University of Strathclyde)
- Clive Norris (Professor of Sociology, The University of Sheffield)
- Charles Raab (Professor of Government, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh)
- Gemma Galdon Clavell (Researcher, Sociology Department, Universitat de Barcelona)
- Massimo Ragnedda (Lecturer in Mass Communication, Department of Media and Communication Design, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne)
- Ana Ramalho (Associate Professor, University of South Wales)
- Krzysztof Kulakowski (Professor of Physics, AGH University of Science and Technology, Cracow)
- Debora Weber-Wulff (Professor for Media and Computing, HTW Berlin)
- Johanna Söderström (Post-doc Researcher, Department of Government, Uppsala University, Sweden)
- Henderik Proper (Professor, Enterprise Engineering Team, Public Research Centre - Henri Tudor, Luxembourg)
- Dirk Brockmann (Professor, Institute of Biology, Humboldt-University Berlin; Robert-Koch-Institute Berlin)
- Judith Rauhofer (Lecturer in IT Law, University of Edinburgh)
- Brian Randell (Emeritus Professor of Computing Science, Newcastle University)
Mark Ryan (Professor of Computer Security, University of Birmingham)
Burkhard Schafer (Professor of Computational Legal Theory and Director SCRIPT Centre for IT and IP, University of Edinburgh)
Joe Sim (Professor of Criminology, Liverpool John Moores University)
Ann Singleton (Senior Research Fellow, University of Bristol)
Peter Sommer (Visiting Professor, de Montfort University; Visiting Reader, Open University)
Michael Taylor (Research Associate, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol)
Robin Celikates (Associate Professor on Political and Social Philosophy, University of Amsterdam)
Mireille van Eechoud (Professor of Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
Waqas Tufail (Lecturer in Criminology, Manchester Metropolitan University)
Luca Viganó (Professor of Computer Science, King’s College London)
Ian Walden (Professor of Information and Communications Law, Queen Mary University of London)
Lynne Wrennall (Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Liverpool John Moores University)
Joss Wright (University of Oxford, Oxford Internet Institute)
Bendert Zevenbergen (DPhil Researcher, Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford)
Alessandro Acquisti (Associate Professor of Information Technology and Public Policy, Carnegie Mellon University; co-director of CMU Center for Behavioral Decision Research)
Robert Boltje (Professor of Mathematics, University of California, Santa Cruz)
Stephen Checkoway (Assistant Research Professor, Department of Computer Science, Johns Hopkins University)
Stuart Chen-Hayes (Associate Professor, Counselor Education/School Counseling, Lehman College of the City University of New York)
Samir Chopra (Department of Philosophy, Brooklyn College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York)
Seda Gürses (Research Fellow, New York University and KU Leuven)
Jeff Jarvis (Professor of Journalism, City University of New York, Graduate School of Journalism)
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Andrea Tinnes (Professor of Type and Typography and Co-director, Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle)
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Dirk Fröhling (Vice Dean Mechanical Engineering and Facilities Management, Mathematics and Computer Science, Gelsenkirchen Bocholt Recklinghausen University of Applied Sciences)
Gunter Schütz (Professor, Institute of Complex Systems II, Juelich Research Center) Germany
Peter Grassberger (Researcher, Juelich Research Center)
Steve Tombs (Professor of Criminology, The Open University)
Evelien Brouwer (Associate Professor, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
Aleecia McDonald (Director of Privacy, Center for Internet & Society, Stanford University)
Jasmine McNealy (Assistant professor, School of Library and Information Science, University of Kentucky)
Heather Patterson (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Information Law Institute, New York University)
Neil Richards (Professor of Law, Washington University in Saint Louis)
James Rule (Distinguished Affiliated Scholar, Center for the Study of Law and Society, University of California)
Klaus Usadel (Emeritus Professor of Theoretical Physics, University Duisburg-Essen)
Franz Mertens (Emeritus Professor of Theoretical Physics, University of Bayreuth)
Bob Hoogenboom (Professor Policing and Security, Nyenrode Business University; Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
Mark Thornton (Senior Fellow, Ludwig von Mises Institute)
Kristina Musholt (Juniorprofessor, Philosophy Department, University of Magdeburg)
Wiebren de Jonge (Associate Professor of Computer Science, VU University Amsterdam)
Rohangis Mohseni (Researcher, Center for Information Management and Virtual Teaching; Psychological Institute, Osnabrück)
Walter Privitera (Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Milan-Bicocca)
Marnix Eysink Smeets (Lector Veiligheidsbeleving, Hogeschool Inholland Rotterdam)
Juergen Seefelder (Faculty Speaker Dep. Jazz&Popular Music, University of Music a. Performing Arts Mannheim)
Edith Rost-Schaude (Retired, Hochschule Darmstadt, University of Applied Sciences)
Gerhard Rogler (Professor of Medicine, University Hospital of Zürich)
Klaus Schäfer (Professor of urban design, Hochschule Bremen)
Peter Mantello (Professor of Media, Politics and the Cyber Realm, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University)
Philipp Klaus (Lecturer Sociology in Architecture, ETH Zurich)
Martin Saar (Visiting Professor, Goethe University Frankfurt)
Myriam Dunn Cavelty (Lecturer for Security Policy, ETH Zurich)
Wojciech Piotrowicz (Research Fellow, University of Oxford)
Werner Breitung (Professor, Department of Urban Planning & Design, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University Suzhou, China)
Philipp Otto (Research Fellow, Microeconomics Department, European University Viadrina)
Francisco Pérez Bes (Professor of Advertising Law, University of Barcelona)
Dominic Dyck (Research Associate, Institute for Ergonomics, Technische Universität Darmstadt)
Valeska David (PhD Researcher, Human Rights Centre, Ghent University)
Diederik Wagenaar (Legal Spanish language teacher, University Lille 2)
Gerhard Kongehl (Professor Emeritus of Privacy Protection and Information Security, Ulm, University of Applied Sciences)
Andrea Riemenschneider (Chair, Modern Chinese Studies, University of Zurich)
Veronica Bala (Ph.D Researcher English Literature, University of Antwerp, Belgium)
John Domingue (Professor of Computer Science, The Open University)
Selva Kaynak Koç (Research Assistant, Faculty of Law, Yeni Yüzyüzlî University, İstanbul)
Simon Parker (Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of York, UK)
Willem Kox (Information manager (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, University of Amsterdam)
Yannick Chatelain (Associate Professor, Digital Marketing; Head of Development, Grenoble école de Management)
Godelieve van Heteren (Director Rotterdam Global Health Initiative, Erasmus University)
Spyros Voulgaris (Assistant Professor in Computer Science, VU University Amsterdam)
Stefan Münker (Associate Professor, Humboldt University Berlin)
John R. Venable (Associate Professor, Curtin University) Australia
Dominik Herrmann (Research & Teaching Assistant at Department of Computer Science, University of Hamburg)
Muir Houston (Lecturer, University of Glasgow)
Tobias Vahlpahl (Program Director, Heidelberg University)
Edouard Kestemont (Emeritus Professor Computer science, Universite Libre de Bruxelles)
Julio Hernandez-Castro (Lecturer in Computer Security, School of Computing, University of Kent)
Eike Bernhard (PhD Candidate, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia)
Johannes Müller (Doctoral Student, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary)
Elisabeth Heinemann (Professor for Mobile Computing, University of Applied Sciences Worms, Germany)
Anastasios Sivridis (Alumnus Researcher, Faculty of Law, University of Regensburg)
Martin Stift (Professor, Vienna University)
Thomas Schwentick (Professor of Computer Science, Technische Universität Dortmund)
Norbert Fuchs (Senior Research Fellow, Department of Informatics & Institute of Computational Linguistics, University of Zurich)
Diego Latella (Computer Science Senior Researcher, Italian National Research Council)
Carsten Vogt (Professor of Informatics, Cologne University of Applied Sciences, Germany)
Dirk van der Marel (professor, University of Geneva)
Nikolaas Oosterhof (Postdoctoral Researcher, Trento University; Dartmouth College; Harvard University)
Karl-Dieter Opp (Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Leipzig; Affiliate Professor of Sociology, University of Washington)
Jürg Diemand (Assistant Professor, Computational Science, University Zürich, Switzerland)
Tamás Czárán (Research Professor, Research Group of Theoretical Biology and Evolutionary Ecology, Hungarian Academy of Science and Eötvös University, Budapest, Hungary)
Muhittin Mungan (Professor of Physics, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey)
Henri Huijberts (Director of Taught Programmes; Reader in Control and Dynamics, School of Engineering and Materials Science, Queen Mary University of London)
David Phillips (Associate Professor, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto)
Alexander Borbély (Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Zurich)
Christos Papadimitriou (C Lester Hogan Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, University of California at Berkeley)
Dieter Armbruster (Professor, Mathematics, Arizona State University)
Dimple Patel (Assistant Professor, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, India)
Dietmar Vogel (Group Manager, Fraunhofer Institute for Electronic Nano Systems ENAS)
Uwe Vagelpohl (Senior Research Fellow, Department of Classics & Ancient History, University of Warwick)
Louk de la Rive Box (Honorary Professor of International Cooperation, Maastricht University)
Pieter Verdegem (Assistant Professor in New Media & ICT, Department of Communication Sciences, Ghent University)
Gary Holden (Professor of Social Work, New York University)
Douglas Maraun (Assistant Professor, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel)
Carsten Kessler (Assistant Professor for Geographic Information Science , Hunter College, City University of New York)
Machteld Vonk (Lecturer/Research Fellow of Law, Leiden University)
Daniel Howe (Assistant Professor, School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong)
Khalil El-Khatib (Associate Professor, University of Ontario Institute of Technology)
Orla Lynskey (Lecturer in Law, London School of Economics)
Dunja Seselja (Postdoctoral Researcher, Ghent University)
Carlos Serrão (Assistant Professor, ISCTE-IUL School of Technology and Architecture, ISCTE - Lisbon University Institute)
Carel van Rooyen (Web and Multimedia Computing, Faculty of Information & Communications Technology, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa)
Bob Askwith (Subject Leader in Cyber Security, Liverpool John Moores University)
Shaughan Lavine (Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- Walter Selke (Emeritus Professor of Physics, RWTH Aachen)
- Hans-Johann Glock (Professor, Chair for Theoretical Philosophy, University of Zürich)
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- Tristan Henderson (Senior Lecturer in Computer Science, University of St Andrews)
- Feng Hao (Lecturer in Security, Newcastle University)
- Ville Oksanen (Researcher, Technology Law Group, Aalto University, Finland)
- George Danezis (Reader in Security and Privacy Engineering, University College London)
- David Vaile (Co-convenor, Cyberspace Law and Policy Community, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales)
- Jonneke Bekkenkamp (Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam)
- Angela Sasse (Professor of Human-Centred Technology; Head of the Information Security Group; Director for Industrial Liaison, University College London)
- Mark Handley (Professor of Networked Systems, University College London)
- Fritz Schweingruber (Emeritus Professor, Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL)
- Hamed Haddadi (Lecturer/Assistant Professor in Digital Media, Queen Mary University of London)
- Masrour Zoghi (Ph.D. Candidate, Informatics Institute, University of Amsterdam)
- Nils-Hennes Stear (Ph.D Candidate, Department of Philosophy, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)
- Kavé Salamatian (Professor of Computer Science, Savoy University)
- Neil Mennie (Assistant Professor in Visual Neuroscience, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Malaysia)
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- Beatrice de Graaf (Professor of Conflict and Security History, Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism Leiden University)
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- William Gunn (Head of Academic Outreach, Mendeley)
- Nikolai Mnev (Senior Researcher, Steklov Mathematical Institute at St. Petersburg)
- Martin Arnold (Research Assistant; Start-up Service, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt)
- Urs Zimmermann (Ph.D researcher Theoretical Physics, Heinrich-Heine-Universität)
Düsseldorf)

- Ulrich Greveler (Professor of Computer Science, Rhein-Waal University of Applied Sciences, Kamp-Lintfort, Germany)
- Berthold Dietz (Professor of Sociology, Protestant University of Applied Sciences Freiburg)
- Wouter Meuleman (Postdoctoral Associate, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Lab, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
- Andrew Urbaczewski (Chair, Department of Business Information and Analytics, Daniels College of Business, University of Denver)
- Jeroen van der Ham (Researcher, Informatics Institute, University of Amsterdam)
- Oswald Prucker (Senior Scientist, Department of Microsystems Engineering, University of Freiburg)
- Jens Kehne (Researcher System Architecture Group, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
- Arne Bernin (PhD researcher in Computer Science, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences)
- Anja Schäfer (Postdoctoral Fellow, Biomedical Engineering, Eindhoven University of Technology)
- Ricardo Morte Ferrer (Tutor of Law, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)
- Phillip Rogaway (Professor of Computer Science, University of California, Davis)
- Frank Römer (Postdoctoral Researcher, Institute of Complex Systems and Institute for Advanced Simulation, Juelich Research Institute)
- Christian Jessen (Researcher, Leibniz Center for Tropical Marine Ecology)
- Maria Nikolakaki (Associate Professor, University of Peloponnese) Greece
- Arie van Deursen (Professor in Software Engineering, Delft University of Technology)
- Maria Pentaraki (Senior Lecturer of Social Work, Liverpool Hope University)
- Flora Goudappel (Jean Monnet chair EU Trade Law in the Overseas Territories, Erasmus School of Law, Rotterdam)
- Ronald Deibert (Professor of Political Science, and Director of the Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto)
- Jeroen van de Graaf (Researcher in Cryptography, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais) Brazil
- Stephen Sachs (Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis)
- Gabriella Coleman (Wolfe Chair in Scientific and Technological Literacy Department of Art History & Communication Studies, McGill University)
- Samer Hassan (Assistant Professor in Computer Science, Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
- Peter Mantel (Professor of Business Administration, Hochschule für Wirtschaft, Technik und Kultur, Berlin)
- Thomas Meyer (Research Assistant, Idiap Research Institute, Martigny and EPFL, Lausanne)
- Sky Croeser (Adjunct Research Fellow, Curtin University)
- Mél Hogan (Postdoctoral Fellow in Digital Curation, University of Colorado)
- James Goetsch (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Eckerd College St. Petersburg)
Robert Volkhausen (Lecturer at the Center for Metropolitan Studies, Technische Universität Berlin)
David Johnstone (Senior Lecturer in Information Systems, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand)
Michael Gurstein (Adjunct Professor, School of Library, Information and Archival Studies, University of British Columbia)
Jonathan Askin (Founder/Director, Brooklyn Law Incubator & Policy Clinic, Brooklyn Law School)
Joel Federman (Director, Transformative Social Change Specialization, Saybrook University)
Lene Rimestad (Lecturer and Journalist Teacher, University of Southern Denmark)
Todd Davies (Lecturer, Symbolic Systems Program, Stanford University)
Jeffrey Heinz (Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science, University of Delaware)
Gordon Fellman (Professor of Sociology and Chair, Peace, Conflict, and Coexistence Studies, Brandeis University)
Mary Baine Campbell (Professor of English, Brandeis University)
Sable Cantus (Part-time Professor, Digital Media, Golden West College)
Zihni Özdil (Junior Lecturer & PhD Researcher, School of History, Culture and Communication, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
Adekunle Theophilus Tinuoye (Lecturer, Human rights and Labour Management Relations, Micheal Imoudu National Institute For Labour Studies, Nigeria)
Panagiotis Kitsos (IT Law Team, University of Macedonia)
Mathias Peters (Ph.D Researchar, Database and Information Systems Group, Humboldt University Berlin)
Ioannis Iglezakis (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Aristotle University)
Erik Boettger (Professor of Medicine and Microbiology; Director and Chairman, Institute of Medical Microbiology, University of Zurich)
Lina Dencik (Lecturer, School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University)
Philipp Birken (Associate Professor for Numerical Analysis and Scientific Computing, Lund University)
Martin Ziegle (Computer Scientist; Professor of Applied Logic, TU Darmstadt)
Friedrich Kirschner (Professor for Digital Media, University of Performing Arts “Ernst Busch” Berlin)
Fredrik Graver (Head of Studies / Associate Professor, The Norwegian Film School)
Denisa Kera (Assistant Professor, National University of Singapore)
Martin Billeter (Emeritus Professor Molecular Biology, University of Zurich)
Jérôme Lang (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Paris-Dauphine)
Rainer Mausfeld (Professor of Cognitive Science, University of Kiel)
Gunter Voss (Professor/Director, Sociological Department , Chemnitz University of Technology)
Jeroen de Kloet (Professor of Globalisation Studies, University of Amsterdam)
Andreas Wagner (Researcher, Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz)
- Patrick De Causmaecker (Professor of Computer Science, KU Leuven)
- Martin Risak (Associate Professor, Department of Labour Law and Law of Social Security, University of Vienna)
- Daniel Bernoulli (Professor Emeritus of Geology, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich)
- René Hoffmann (Group Manager, Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Solid State Physics)
- Yolanda Griff (Department of Law, Economics, and Governance, Utrecht University)
- Thomas Flüeler (Senior Research Associate, ETH Zurich; Institute for Environmental Decisions, Nuclear Technology Unit Head, Cantonal Directorate of Public Works)
- Peter Cornelius Claussen (Professor, Kunsthistorisches Institut, University Zürich)
- Diederik Stoffers (Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Sleep and Cognition, Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience)
- Pavlos Pantazis (Associate Professor in Clinical Social Psychology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)
- Christos Frouzakis (Senior Researcher, Department of Mechanical and Process Engineering, ETH Zurich)
- Michael Lobeck (Researcher, Department of Geography, University of Bonn)
- Anne Gjelsvik (Professor, Department of Art and Media Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- Robert Vermeiren (Professor child and adolescent psychiatry, Leiden University Medical Center)
- Peter-Paul Pichler (Postdoctoral Researcher, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research)
- Yolanda van Tilborgh (Ph.D Researcher Sociology of Culture, Art & Religion, University of Amsterdam)
- Jennifer Kanary (PhD candidate, Plymouth University)
- Björn Nykvist (Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute)
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- Stefano Balietti (Ph.D candidate in Sociology, ETH Zurich)
- Erik Plauschinn (Research Fellow, University of Padova)
- Mutlu Binark (Professor of New Media Studies, Baskent University Ankara, Turkey)
- Gerard Mom (Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Hannes Thiel (Research Assistant, University of Muenster)
- Nicole Maalsté (Senior Researcher Tilburg School of Politics and Public Administration, Tilburg Law School, Tilburg University)
- Melih Kirlidog (Associate Professor, Marmara üniversitesi Bilişim Merkezi, Turkey)
- John Kleinen (Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Amsterdam)
- Wolf-Christian Dullo (Professor Ocean Circulation and Climate Dynamic, GEOMAR)
Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research)  
- Vytautas Gontis (Principal investigator of Vilnius University, President of the Lithuanian Scientific Society)  
- Heinrich Voss (Professor of Mathematics, Hamburg University of Technology, Hamburg)  
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- William Greene (Instructor in Political Science, South Texas College)  
- Brigit van Loggem (PhD researcher, Open Universiteit, the Netherlands)  
- Yvonne Donders (Professor International Human Rights and Cultural Diversity; Executive Director of the Amsterdam Center for International Law, University of Amsterdam)  
- Robert Koch (Professor of law at the Faculty of Law, University of Hamburg)  
- Christian A. Meyer (Professor, Natural History Museum Basel)  
- Holger Braun (Visiting Professor, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Facultad de Ciencias Naturales y Museo, Argentina)  
- Markos Papageorgiou (Professor; Director, Dynamic Systems & Simulation Laboratory, Technical University of Crete)  
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- Roland Chrisjohn (Associate Professor, St. Thomas University, Canada)  
- Diana Murtaugh Coleman (Doctoral Candidate, School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, Arizona State University)  
- Johan Pålsson (Lecturer, Umeå University, Sweden)  
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- Angela Mansi (Senior Lecturer Psychology, University of Westminster)  
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- Andrzej Slaczka (Professor Emeritus, Institute of Geological Science, Jagiellonian University Kraków)  
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- Paul Deurenberg (Professor Emeritus, Nutrition Epidemiology and Physiology, Wageningen University; National University of Singapore)  
- Yngve Sundblad (Professor Emeritus in Human-Computer Interaction, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)  
- Ambjörn Naeve (Senior Researcher in Knowledge Management and Technology
Enhanced Learning, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm

- Bryan Ford (Assistant Professor, Yale University)
- Kathleen Barker (Professor, Department of Psychology, The City University of New York/Medgar Evers College)
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- Johann Petrak (Research Fellow, The University of Sheffield)
- Denny Vågerö (Professor of Medical Sociology, Centre for Health Equity Studies, Stockholm University)
- Thorsten Ries (Teaching Assistant, Department of German Literature, Ghent University)
- Ferdinand von Mengden (Professor of English Historical Linguistics, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Frederik Franke (Researcher, Fraunhofer Institute for Secure Information Technology)
- Daniel Lehmann (Researcher, Technische Universität Chemnitz)
- Frank Grossmann (Free Lecturer Pharmaceutical Science, ETH Zurich; Project leader at Institute of Anatomy, University of Zurich)
- Gary Anderson (Senior Lecturer, Drama and Theatre Studies, Liverpool Hope University)
- Werner Weissenhofer (Associate Professor, Medical University of Vienna)
- Roman Peperhove (Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Serkan Uysal (Ph.D Researcher, Department of Architecture, Yildiz Technical University, Turkey)
- Rania Astrinaki (Lecturer, Department of Social Anthropology, Panteion University, Athens)
- Roger S. Clark (Board of Governors Professor, Rutgers University School of Law)
- Matthias Kreck (Professor of Mathematics, Bonn University, Germany)
- Patrick McGovern (Reader, Department of Sociology, London School of Economics & Political Science)
- Johannes Fuernkranz (Professor of Knowledge Engineering, TU Darmstadt)
- Gabriel Istrate (Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, West University of Timisoara, Romania)
- Benjamin Kelly (Lecturer in Indigenous Studies, UNSW Australia)
- Frans van der Reep (Professor, Inholland University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands)
- Gilbert Bernstein (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Computer Science, Stanford)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- Arno Rolf (Professor of Informatics and Society, University of Hamburg)
- Peter Honeyman (Research Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)
- Dieter Flesch-Janys (Professor, Department of Cancer Epidemiology/Clinical Cancer Registry, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf)
- David Lindsay (Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Monash University)
- Alana Maurushat (Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, The University of New South Wales)
- Jon Crowcroft (Marconi Professor of Communications Systems, University of Cambridge)
- Alan Schmitt (Researcher at INRIA, France)
- Anton Eliens (professor creative technology / new media, University of Twente; VU University Amsterdam)
- Neel Krishnaswami (Birmingham Fellow in Computer Science, University of Birmingham)
- Bernhard Frevel (Professor of Social Science, University of Applied Science for Public Administration NRW)
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- Assia Soltani (Secretary of central gender office, Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany)
- Benjamin Lebsanft (Ph.D Researcher, Institute for Applied Physics, University of Hamburg)
- Ayhan Demiriz (Associate Professor, Department of Industrial Engineering, Sakarya University, Turkey)
- Benedikt Bauer (Researcher, University of Regensburg)
- Gerard Wiegers (Visiting Research Fellow, Ruhr University Bochum; Professor of Religious Studies, University of Amsterdam)
- David Chillingworth (Emeritus Research Fellow, University of Southampton)
- Kristina Lepold (PhD fellow, Institute for Social Research Frankfurt and Goethe-University Frankfurt)
- Aurélien Tabard (Assistant Professor, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, France)
- Ruth Rebecca Tietjen (PhD Researcher, Department of Philosophy, University of Tuebingen)
- Sands Fish (Data Scientist, MIT)
- Josef Früchtl (Professor of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam)
- Sait Baskaya (Research Assistant, Business Administration, University of Duisburg-Essen)
- Birgit Schneider (Professor for Paleoclimate Modeling, University of Kiel, Germany)
- Bob Eager (Senior Lecturer in Computer Science, University of Kent)
- Bodo Hattendorf (Senior Researcher, Analytical Chemistry, ETH Zurich)
- Bronwyn Jones (Lecturer in Journalism, PhD Candidate, Liverpool John Moores University)
- Canan Atilgan (Professor, Sabanci University, Istanbul)
- Carlos Gershenson (Research Professor, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- Carsten Tradowsky (Scientist, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
- Chirag Dhara (PhD researcher, Max-Planck-Institute for Biogeochemistry, Germany)
- Chris Lubbers (Adjunct Professor of Philosophy, Muskegon Community College)
- Christian Strasser (Postdoc Researcher, Ghent University)
- Christopher N. Bull (PhD Student, School of Computing and Communications, Lancaster University)
- Damien McCailig (Ph.D. candidate School of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway)
- Deborah Bowman (Lecturer in English, Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge)
- Dennis Andriesse (Ph.D. researcher System and Network Security Group, VU University Amsterdam)
- Dennis Grevenstein (Research Assistant, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg, Germany)
- Desiree Verberk (Managing Director Educational Development and Training, University of Utrecht)
- Bettina Fritzsche (Researcher, German Institute for International Educational Research)
- Elvezio Morenzoni (Professor Experimental Physics, Paul Scherrer Institut and Universiy of Zurich)
- Evert Haasdijk (Assistant Professor, VU University Amsterdam)
- William Outhwaite (Professor of Sociology, Newcastle University)
- Fabrizio Gilardi (Professor of Public Policy (University of Zurich, Switzerland))
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- Frank Liebisch (Research Associate (Institute of Agricultural Sciences, ETH Zürich)
- Frank van Harmelen (Professor of Knowledge Representation, VU University Amsterdam)
- Georg Neugebauer (Research Assistant, RWTH Aachen University)
- Gerben Zaagsma (Research Fellow, Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)
- Gerhard Krexner (Associate Professor, Faculty of Physics, University of Vienna)
- Gerhild Rose (Lecturer for English, Language Centre, Technical University of Dortmund)
- Gunnar W. Klau (Senior Researcher at Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI), Professor for Bioinformatics and Operations Research at VU University Amsterdam)
- H. Siegfried Stiehl (Professor of Informatics, University of Hamburg)
- Hans Kalliwoda (Ph.D. Candidate, PhD Arts, Universiteit Leiden)
- Harald Burgsteiner (Professor, Graz University of Applied Sciences)
- Harald Klinke (Lecturer, Department of Art History, University of Göttingen)
- Helena Banning (Research Assistant, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
- Henning Rosenau (Vice President, Professor for Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure, Biolaw and Medical Law, University of Augsburg)
- Herbert Jaumann (Prof. Emeritus of German literature, University of Greifswald)
- Holger Kantz (Professor for Theoretical Physics, Max Planck Institute for the Physics of Complex Systems and Technical University Dresden)

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Holger Regenbrecht (Associate Professor Information Science, University of Otago, New Zealand)

Ian Towers (Professor, SRH Hochschule Berlin)

Igor Goychuk (Senior Researcher, University of Potsdam & University of Augsburg)

Ipke Wachsmuth (Professor and Chair of Artificial Intelligence, Bielefeld University)

Iris van Domselaar (Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam)

Ivan Herman (Senior Researcher, Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI))

Jakob Grue Simonsen (Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, University of Copenhagen)

Jan Kantelhardt (Researcher, Institute of Physics, Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg)

Jochem Jongma (PhD researcher, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Martin Fresow (Research Associate, Department of Educational Research, University of Wuerzburg)

Johann-Christoph Freytag (Professor of Computer Science: Databases and Information Systems (DBIS), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Jose Oramas (PhD Researcher, KU Leuven)

Wolfgang Schomburg (Professor International Criminal Law, Durham University)

Juergen Kramer (Emeritus Professor, Dortmund University)

Julian Saurin (Visiting Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Middle East Technical University NCC) Cyprus

Julio Camara-Cordova (Professor Titular "A" Universidad Juarez Autonoma de Tabasco; Profesor Invitado, Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Tabasco)

Jörg Fuchs (Researcher and Lecturer in European Ethnology, University of Würzburg)

Martin Kunz (PhD student (Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry, Jena))

Marc Witzel (Research Assistant, TU Dortmund)

Jørgen Kirksæther (Adviser, University of Oslo)

Andreas Busch (Professor of Political Science, University of Göttingen)

Andrew Sayer (Professor, Lancaster University, UK)

Jürgen K. Singer (Professor for Computer Graphics, Animation, and Virtual Reality, Harz University of Applied Sciences)

Kari Käsper (Lecturer, Tallinn Law School, Tallinn University of Technology) Estonia

Albert Meroño-Peñuela (PhD researcher, Department of Computer Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Malte Helmert (Assistant Professor, Research Group Artificial Intelligence, University of Basel)

Andrea Knaut (Research Associate, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Jürgen Taeger (Professor of Civil Law Trade and Business Law; Information Law, University of Oldenburg)

Anton Feenstra (Assistant Professor, VU University Amsterdam)

Katja de Vries (Ph.D. researcher, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Kerstin Fischer (Associate Professor, Institute for Design and Communication, University of Southern Denmark)

Andreas Ohliger (Research Assistant, Institute of Heat and Mass Transfer, RWTH
Aachen University)
- Andrew Brook (Chancellor's Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science Carleton University, Ottawa)
- Andrew S. Tanenbaum (Professor of Computer Science, Vrije Universiteit)
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- Krassie Petrova (Senior Research Lecturer (Information Systems and Technology), Auckland University of Technology)
- Valerie Frissen (Professor of ICT and Social Change, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
- Rupert Lanzenberger (Associate Professor, MD, Medical University of Vienna, Austria)
- Liam Pomfret (PhD Student Online Consumer Privacy, UQ Business School, University of Queensland)
- Maarten van Steen (Professor of Distributed Computer Systems, VU University Amsterdam)
- Malcolm MacLean (Reader in the Culture and History of Sport, University of Gloucestershire, UK)
- Thomas Payer (Lecturer (Faculty of Earth Sciences, Geography and Astronomy; Department of Geodynamics and Sedimentology, Vienna University)
- Marcos Bompart (Professor of Elearning, Universidad Simon Rodriguez, Venezuela)
- Marios Dikaiakos (Professor of Computer Science and Department Chair, University of Cyprus)
- Martin Scharm (PhD at the Department of Systems Biology and Bioinformatics, University of Rostock)
- Mary Bunch (Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Toronto)
- Mathieu d'Aquin (Research Fellow, The Open University)
- Thomas Morgenstern (Institut für Informatik, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
- Timo Féret (Research Assistant in Computer Science, University of Marburg, Germany)
- Matthias J. Sax (PhD Student, Databases and Information Systems Group, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
- Matthias Riebisch (Professor Computer Science, University of Hamburg, Germany)
- Matthias Wachs (Researcher, Technical University of Munich)
- Michael Edwards (Senior Lecturer, UCL England)
- Sanne van der Ven (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Amsterdam)
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- Nadia Kutscher (Professor for Social Work and Ethics, University of Vechta)
- Pascal Beckstein (PhD-Student in Magnetohydrodynamics, Technical University Dresden, Germany)
- Nanda van der Stap (PhD candidate, Robotics and Mechatronics, University of Twente)
- Olaf Sosnitza (Professor of IP Law, University of Würzburg, Germany)
- Peter Wagner (Researcher, Institute of Transportation Systems, German Aerospace Centre)
- Stephan Dillemuth (Professor, Akademie der Bildenden Künste München, Germany)
Tomer Broude (Vice-Dean and Sylvan M. Cohen Chair in Law (Faculty of Law and Department of International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Oliver Zöllner (Professor, Institute of Digital Ethics, Stuttgart Media University, Germany)

Eduard Heindl (Professor for eBusiness technology, Furtwangen University, Germany)

Rico Bergmann (Ph.D. student, Humboldt-Universitaet zu Berlin)

Oya Cingoz (Postdoctoral Research Scientist, Columbia University)

Pablo Gervás (Associate Professor, Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Paul Graham Raven (Postgraduate Researcher in Infrastructure Futures, University of Sheffield, UK)

Rafael Capurro (Emeritus Professor of Information Ethics, Stuttgart Media University, Germany)

Raimondo Catalano (Professor of Geology, University of Palermo, Italy)

Thomas Ludwig (Professor of Informatics, Universität Hamburg)

Tobias Columbus (Research Assistant, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)

Ralf Köhl (Professor of Mathematics, JLU Giessen, Germany)

Michael Tielemann (Professor of Computer Science, Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen- Nürnberg)

My Sellberg (PhD Student, Stockholm University)

Sabrina Krakau (Researcher, Institute of Computer Science, Freie Universität Berlin)

Rani Lill Anjum (Researcher, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway)

Ray Corrigan (Senior Lecturer (Maths Computing & Technology Faculty, Open University)

Ricardo Abdoel (Program Manager, Fontys University of Applied Sciences department Engineering)

Richard Beyer (PhD researcher, Institute of Physics, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)

Richard Jones (Professor of Computer Systems, University of Kent)

Richard Verkijk (Assistant Professor, Open University (Netherlands))

Roy Smith (Professor of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, ETH Zurich)

Ruud Mattheij (Ph.D researcher, Tilburg University)

Stephanie Thiel (Research Associate, University of Giessen, Germany)

Stephen Marsh (Assistant Professor of Information Systems, University of Ontario Institute of Technology)

Steve Strauch (Research Associate and Ph.D. Student, Institute of Architecture of Application Systems, University of Stuttgart)

Stoney Brooks (Clinical Professor of MIS, Washington State University)

Bertram Batlogg (Professor at the Physics Department, ETH Zurich)

Susanne Siebentritt (Professor, University of Luxembourg)

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Tanja Schilling (Professor for Theoretical Physics, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

Thomas Hales (Mellon Professor of Mathematics, University of Pittsburgh)
Tobias K. Kohoutek (Postdoctoral Researcher, Centro de Estudios Científicos, Valdivia, Chile)
Torsten Heinrich (Postdoctoral Researcher, Institute for Institutional and Innovation Economics, University of Bremen, Germany)
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Sonja Borski (Researcher, University of Bremen)
Toni Ferro (PhD Researcher, Human Centered Design and Engineering, The University of Washington)
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Christian Späh (Research & Teaching Assistant, University of Hamburg)
Rudy Ligtvoet (Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam)
Christian Wartena (Professor of Language and Knowledge Processing, Hochschule Hannover, University of Applied Sciences)
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Giampaolo D'Alessandro (Reader in Applied Mathematics, University of Southampton)
Patricia Stolz (Professor for User Interface Design, HFU Furtwangen)
Daniel May (Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Division of Social and Economic Psychology, Freie Universität Berlin)
Henrich C. Pöhls (Research Assistant at the Institute of IT-Security and Security Law (ISL), University of Passau)
Erhard Treutner (Professor of Sociology, retired from University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration, Cologne, Germany)
Dorien Baelden (Senior researcher, Department of Communication Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)
Gian Luca Lippi (Professor of Physics, Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, France)
Sonja Kolanowski (PhD candidate, University of Amsterdam)
Julie McBrien (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam)
Anna Hollendung (Research Associate, University of Bremen)
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- Paul Ralph (Lecturer, Lancaster University)
- Hans Bronkhorst (retired Information Manager, University of Amsterdam)
- Jan-Felix Schrape (Research Fellow, University of Stuttgart)
- Chris Jones (Professor of Research in Educational Technology, Liverpool John Moores University)
- Isabel Wagner (Lecturer in Computer Science, University of Hull)
- Carsten Allefeld (Research Associate, Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin)
- Michael T. Hannan (Stratacom Professor of Management; Professor of Sociology, Graduate School of Business, Stanford University)
- Steffen Reiht (Professor, Theoretical Computer Science, RheinMain University of Applied Sciences)
- Knut Hegna (Senior academic librarian, University of Oslo, Norway)
- Eke van Batenburg (Retired Associate Professor Bioinformatics, Leiden University)
- Nicolas Reynaud (PhD researcher, Technical University of Dresden, Germany)
- Nikolaos Gazeas (Research Associate, University of Cologne, Germany)
- Lorenz Boellinger (Professor Emeritus of Criminal Sciences Faculty of Law, University of Bremen)
- Christoph Weniger (Senior Research Fellow, Theoretical Physics, University of Amsterdam)
- Abhishek Saha (Lecturer in Mathematics at the University of Bristol)
- Martin Salaschek (Research Associate in Psychology, University of Münster)
- Claudia Müller-Birn (Assistant Professor, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Aron Fischer (Mathematics PhD student, City University of New York; Mathematics Graduate Teaching Fellow, City University of New York - Hunter College)
- Bernd Gärtner (Professor, ETH Zürich)
- Tobias Heindel (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Edinburgh)
- Pol Van Aubel (Ph.D. Researcher in Digital Security, Radboud University Nijmegen)
- Marius Oberle (Research Associate, Institute for Ergonomics, Technische Universität Darmstadt)
- Stephan Meister (Research Assistant, Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg)
- Burkhard Gniewosz (Professor for Adolescent Research, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich)
- Lilit Hakobyan (Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin)
- Yiannis Manetas (Professor of Plant Physiology, University of Patras, Greece)
- Gerard Prinsen (Lecturer Development Studies, Massey University, New Zealand)
- Patricia Schor (Affiliate Researcher, Utrecht University)
- Frieder Vogelmann (Researcher in Political Theory, University of Bremen)
- Krystyna Kolwas (Associate Professor, Institute of Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland)
- Dirk Oegema (Associate Professor, Communication Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)
- Thamar Klein (Independent Researcher & Research Partner, Working Group Medical Diversity, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Goettingen, Germany)
- Andreas Schmeil (Postdoctoral Researcher, Communication Sciences, University of Lugano)
- Robin van den Akker (Doctoral Researcher, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University)
- Han van Ruler (Professor of Intellectual History, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
- Jörg P. Bachmann (PhD Candidate, Databases and Information Systems Group, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
- Bruce Bartlett (Lecturer, Stellenbosch University, South Africa)
- Lee Altenberg (Research Scientist, Ronin Institute)
- Nathanael Hübbe (PhD student, University of Hamburg)
- Luis M. Rocha (Professor of Informatics, Cognitive Science, Computer Science, Indiana University, USA)
- Nikolas Mavrikakis (Researcher, Technical University of Delft, Materials Science and Engineering)
- Alexander Tsoutsanis (Senior Researcher and Lecturer in Intellectual Property Law, Institute for Information Law, University of Amsterdam)
- Christine Roloff (Retreated Social Science Researcher, TU Dortmund, Germany)
- Otto Roloff (Professor Emeritus of Economics, University Wuppertal)
- Djordje Krivokapic (Associate Lecturer, Faculty of Organizational Sciences, University of Belgrade)
- Pete Donnell (Senior Research Associate, University of Portsmouth)
- Vladan Joler (Professor; Head of New Media Department, Academy of Arts Novi Sad, University of Novi Sad, Serbia)
- Keith Devlin (Executive Director, H-STAR Institute, Stanford University)
- Francesca Raimondi (Assistant Professor, Departement of Philosophy, Goethe University Frankfurt)
- José Figueroa- O’Farrill (Professor of Geometric Physics, School of Mathematics, University of Edinburgh)
- Christiaan Oostdijk (Ph.D Researcher, University of Bristol, Department of Archaeology and Anthropology)
- ND Jebessa (PhD Candidate, University of Amsterdam)
- Andrew Baker (Reader in Mathematics, University of Glasgow)
- Ulrich Kraehmer (Lecturer, University of Glasgow, School of Mathematics and Statistics)
- Susan Sierra (Lecturer in Mathematics, University of Edinburgh)
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