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 Poulet (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)
Diepe 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 University)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- 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)
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- 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)
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- Emma Bell (Senior Lecturer, University of Savoie)
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- 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)
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- 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, Fern Universität 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)
Guenter 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)
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Kai von Lewinski (Associate Professor (Privatdozent), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
Daniel Loick (Philosopher, Goethe University Frankfurt)
- 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)
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- 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)
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- 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 Schwegge (Professor em. of Databases and Information Systems, Freie Universität Berlin)
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University Nijmegen)
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- Jan Wehrheim (Institut für Soziale Arbeit und Sozialpolitik, Universität Duisburg-Essen)
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- Ivan Szekely (Research Professor, Open Society Archives at Central European University and Budapest University of Technology and Economics)
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- Andy Moore (Associate Professor, Information School at the University of Washington)
- Milton Mueller (Professor, Syracuse University School of Information Studies)
- Steffen Burkhardt (Professor of Media and Cultural Theory, Hamburg University of Applied Sciences)
- Morton Canty (Research Scientist, Institute for Bio- and Geosciences, Juelich Research
Wolfgang Coy (Professor of Informatics, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
Michael Ott (Associate Professor of Sociology, Grand Valley State University)
Frank Pasquale (Professor of Law, University of Maryland Carey School of Law)
Ugo Pagallo (Professor of Jurisprudence, University of Torino)
Thomas Meier (Professor of Pre- and Protohistory, Ruprecht-Karls-University, Heidelberg)
Juan Carlos de Martin (Associate Professor; Co-director Nexa Center for Internet & Society, Polytechnic 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)
Krzysztof Apt (Fellow at Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica; Professor of Computer Science, University of Amsterdam)
Britta Böhler (Professor of Legal Practice, University of Amsterdam)
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)
Matthias Werner (Professor of Computer Science, TU Chemnitz)
Ferdinand Feldbrugge (Emeritus Professor Eastern European Law, Leiden University)
Stan Gielen (Professor of Biophysics; Dean Faculty of Science, Radboud University Nijmegen)
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)
Svein Johan Knapskog (Emeritus Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
Lucie Guibault (Associate Professor, University of Amsterdam)
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)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- 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)
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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 Biotecnología)
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)
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)
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Andrew McStay (Lecturer in Media Culture, Bangor University)
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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)
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Luc Boerboom (Assistant Professor Spatial Planning and Decision Support Systems and Infrastructures, University of Twente)
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Charles Raab (Professor of Government, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh)
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- Valeska David (PhD Researcher, Human Rights Centre, Ghent University)
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- Bob Askwith (Subject Leader in Cyber Security, Liverpool John Moores University)
- Shaughan Lavine (Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of
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Arizona)

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- Martin Arnold (Research Assistant; Start-up Service, University of Applied Sciences Erfurt)
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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)

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Anja Schäfer (Postdoctoral Fellow, Biomedical Engineering, Eindhoven University of Technology)

Ricardo Morte Ferrer (Tutor of Law, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

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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)
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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)
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Lina Dencik (Lecturer, School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, Cardiff University)
Philipp Birken (Associate Professor for Numerical Analysis and Scientific Computing, Lund University)
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- Robert Vermeiren (Professor child and adolescent psychiatry, Leiden University Medical Center)
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Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research

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- Gilbert Bernstein (Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Computer Science, Stanford
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- Sait Baskaya (Research Assistant, Business Administration, University of Duisburg-Essen)
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- 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)
- 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 McCallig (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 Fritzche (Researcher, German Institute for International Educational Research)
- Elvezio Morenzoni (Professor Experimental Physics, Paul Scherrer Institut and University of Zurich)
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- Gunnar W. Klau (Senior Researcher at Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI), Professor for Bioinformatics and Operations Research at VU University Amsterdam)
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Iris van Domselaar (Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam)
Ivan Herman (Senior Researcher, Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI))
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Johann-Christoph Freytag (Professor of Computer Science: Databases and Information Systems (DBIS), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
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Kari Käsper (Lecturer, Tallinn Law School, Tallinn University of Technology) Estonia
Albert Merón-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
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  - Andrew S. Tanenbaum (Professor of Computer Science, Vrije Universiteit)
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  - Kirsty Kitto (Research Fellow, Queensland University of Technology)
- University of Oslo
  - Kjetil Kjernsmo (Ph.d. Research Fellow, University of Oslo)
- Department of Computer Science, VU University Amsterdam
  - Klaas Andries de Graaf (PhD Researcher, Department of Computer Science, VU University Amsterdam)
- Auckland University of Technology
  - Krassie Petrova (Senior Research Lecturer (Information Systems and Technology), Auckland University of Technology)
- Erasmus University Rotterdam
  - Valerie Frissen (Professor of ICT and Social Change, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
- Medical University of Vienna, Austria
  - Rupert Lanzenberger (Associate Professor, MD, Medical University of Vienna, Austria)
- University of Queensland
  - Liam Pomfret (PhD Student Online Consumer Privacy, UQ Business School, University of Queensland)
- VU University Amsterdam
  - Maarten van Steen (Professor of Distributed Computer Systems, VU University Amsterdam)
- University of Gloucestershire, UK
  - Malcolm MacLean (Reader in the Culture and History of Sport, University of Gloucestershire, UK)
- Department of Earth Sciences, Geography and Astronomy; Department of Geodynamics and Sedimentology, Vienna University
  - Thomas Payer (Lecturer (Faculty of Earth Sciences, Geography and Astronomy; Department of Geodynamics and Sedimentology, Vienna University)
- Universidad Simon Rodriguez, Venezuela
  - Marcos Bompart (Professor of Elearning, Universidad Simon Rodriguez, Venezuela)
- University of Cyprus
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  - Martin Scharm (PhD at the Department of Systems Biology and Bioinformatics, University of Rostock)
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  - Mathieu d’Aquin (Research Fellow, The Open University)
- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
  - Thomas Morgenstern (Institut für Informatik, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
- University of Marburg, Germany
  - Timo Féret (Research Assistant in Computer Science, University of Marburg, Germany)
- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
  - Matthias J. Sax (PhD Student, Databases and Information Systems Group, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
- University of Hamburg, Germany
  - Matthias Riebisch (Professor Computer Science, University of Hamburg, Germany)
- Technical University of Munich
  - Matthias Wachs (Researcher, Technical University of Munich)
- UCL England
  - Michael Edwards (Senior Lecturer, UCL England)
- University of Amsterdam
  - Sanne van der Ven (Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Amsterdam)
- Monash University
  - Sarah Joseph (Professor of Human Rights Law, Monash University)
- University of Vechta
  - Nadia Kutscher (Professor for Social Work and Ethics, University of Vechta)
- Technical University Dresden, Germany
  - Pascal Beckstein (PhD-Student in Magnetohydrodynamics, Technical University Dresden, Germany)
- University of Twente
  - Nanda van der Stap (PhD candidate, Robotics and Mechatronics, University of Twente)
- University of Würzburg, Germany
  - Olaf Sosnitza (Professor of IP Law, University of Würzburg, Germany)
- German Aerospace Centre
  - Peter Wagner (Researcher, Institute of Transportation Systems, German Aerospace Centre)
- Akademie der Bildenden Künste München, Germany
  - Stephan Dillemuth (Professor, Akademie der Bildenden Künste München, Germany)

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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, JLUGiessen, 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)
Séamas Kelly (Senior Lecturer, UCD School of Business, University College Dublin)
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)
- Tobias Kronenberg (Professor of Economics, Bochum University of Applied Sciences)
- Tom Bäckström (Professor, Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg)
- Sonja Borski (Researcher, University of Bremen)
- Toni Ferro (PhD Researcher, Human Centered Design and Engineering, The University of Washington)
- Joanna Hosoya (English Language and Culture Lecturer and Instructor, Seijo University)
- Henk van Elst (Professor für Angewandte Mathematik und wissenschaftliches Arbeiten, Karlshochschule International University)
- Kristian Fischer (Professor of Informatics, Cologne University of Applied Sciences)
- Tom Leinster (Reader in Mathematics, University of Edinburgh)
- Tyrone Grandison (Adjunct Professor, School of Computing, University of Technology, Jamaica)
- Ulrich Kleinwechter (Ph.D. Researcher in Agricultural Economics, Social and Health Sciences Global Program, International Potato Center, Lima, Peru)
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- Ayse Erzan (Professor, Istanbul Technical University)
- Rodolfo Coccioni (Professor of Paleontology, University of Urbino)
- Karl Aberer (Vice-president for Information Systems, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)
- Dejan Seatovic (Senior Research Associate, Zurich University of Applied Sciences)
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- Gerhard Hägeler (retired, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf)
- Nicholas Maxwell (Emeritus Reader, University College London)
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Ana Brian Nougrères (Professor, Institute of Legal Informatics and Computer Law, University of the Republic, Uruguay)
Ursula Kummer (Professor Modeling of Biological Processes, Heidelberg University)
Guenther Mahler (Professor, University of Stuttgart)
Sue Lea (Programme Leader, University of St Mark and St John)
Virginia Brown Keyder (Adjunct, SUNY Binghamton; Professor, Bogazici University and Sabanci University)
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CJ Hinke (Nonviolent Conflict Workshop, Thammasat University)
Dimitris Tsapogas (PhD Researcher, University of Vienna)
Gerd Gruenert (PhD Researcher, Friedrich Schiller University Jena)
Holly Smith (Lecturer in Higher Education, Univeristy of London)
Nicolas Suzor (Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology)
Christoph Zydorek (Student Counselor Media Economics and Media Management, Furtwangen University of applied Sciences)
Tobias Fritz (Postdoctoral researcher, Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics)
Frances Causer (Faculty of Arts & Literature, Seijo University)
Christoph Benzmüller (Heisenberg Fellow of the German Research Foundation, Free Univeristy of Berlin)
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Nils Brandt (Research Scienctist, Institute of Anatomy and Cell Biology, Saarland University)
Nina Schuster (Senior Lecturer (Urban and Regional Sociology, TU Dortmund))
Sjoert van Velzen (PhD Researcher, Radboud University Nijmegen)
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Bruno Friedmann (Professor, Furtwangen University)
Wolfgang Pippke (Institute für Administrative Sciences, Gelsenkirchen)
Jørgen Johansen (Researcher and lecturer, Hacettepe University)
John Holmwood (Professor of Sociology, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham)
Nils Carqueville (Research Assistant Professor, Stony Brook University)
Wiebke Willms (Lecturer, Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin)
Francisco de Castro (Senior Researcher, Queen's University Belfast)
Alexander Sedlmaier (Senior Lecturer in Modern History, Bangor University)
Lutz Prechelt (Professor, Freie Universität Berlin)
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)
Manfred Boni (Librarian, Bergische Universität Wuppertal)
Robert Sinnerbrink (Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Macquarie University)
Anthony Wasserman (Professor of Software Management Practice, Carnegie Mellon University - Silicon Valley)
Daniel Fetzner (Professor, Furtwangen University)
Uwe Friese (Researcher, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf)
Jörg Volbers (Researcher, Freie Universität Berlin)
Bert Vercnocke (Marie Curie IEF Fellow, University of Amsterdam)
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)
Pablo A. álvarez Morales (Lecturer, Autonomous University of Baja California, México)
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Kai Nagel (Professor for Transport Systems Planning and Transport Telematics, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany)
Ken W. Smith (Professor of Mathematics, Sam Houston State University)
David Yaghoubian (Associate Professor of History, CSU San Bernardino)
Gerald Teschl (Professor of Mathematics, University of Vienna)
Dietmar Zaefferer (Professor, Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich)
Frances Brazier (Professor of Systems Engineering, Delft University of Technology)
Peter Schwabe (Assistant Professor Computer Security, Radboud University Nijmegen)
Joos Vandewalle (Emeritus Professor in engineering, KU Leuven)
Tanja Lange (Professor Cryptology, Technical University Eindhoven)
Martin Spiess (Professor for Psychological Methods, Hamburg University)
Christophe Guéret (Researcher at Data Archiving and Networked Services, KNAW)
Carola Schulzke (Professor for Bioinorganic Chemistry, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt- Universität Greifswald)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- Rainer W. Gerling (Professor for IT-Security, Munich University of Applied Sciences)
- Hannes Federrath (Professor of Security in Distributed Systems, University of Hamburg)
- Johannes Bauer (Ph.D Researcher, University of Hamburg)
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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)
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- 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)
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- 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)
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- 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)
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- Keith Devlin (Executive Director, H-STAR Institute, Stanford University)
- Francesca Raimondi (Assistant Professor, Departament of Philosophy, Goethe University Frankfurt)
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- 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)
Academics Against Mass Surveillance

- James Wright (Professor of Mathematics, University of Edinburgh)
- Jean-Michel Beuken (Computer Scientist, Université catholique de Louvain)
- Peter Bloem (PhD researcher, Informatics Institute, University of Amsterdam)
- Spiros Koulouzis (PhD Candidate, University of Amsterdam)
- John Allen Paulos (Mathematics Professor, Temple University, Philadelphia)
- Jean-Pierre Antoine (Professor of Mathematical Physics, Université catholique de Louvain)
- Andreas Lianos (Ph.D Student, University of Portsmouth)
- Haluk O. Bingol (Professor of Computer Engineering, Bogazici University)
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- Konstantinos Ampountolas (Lecturer of Transportation Engineering, University of Glasgow)
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- Ulrich Grossbach (Professor of Developmental Biology, Goettingen Centre of Molecular Biosciences, University of Goettingen)
- Marietta Spangenberg (Professor, University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz)
- Klaus Dohmen (Professor of Mathematics, Hochschule Mittweida, Germany)
- John Lamp (Senior Lecturer, School of Information and Business Analytics, Deakin University)
- Camille Roth (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre Marc Bloch Berlin)
- Sandra Kluwe (Scientific Officer, University of Heidelberg)
- Alexander Beilinson (Professor of Mathematics, University of Chicago)
- Linnet Taylor (Research Fellow, University of Amsterdam, Governance and Inclusive Development research group)
- Celina Su (Associate Professor of Political Science, City University of New York)
- J. Magalhães Cruz (Assistant Professor, University of Porto)
- Anthony Carbery (Professor of Mathematics University of Edinburgh)
- Fjoralba Caka (Lecturer of European Union Law, University of Tirana, Albania)
- Peter Schreier (Adjunct Professor Genetics, University of Cologne, Germany)
- David G. Hebert (Professor, Faculty of Education, Bergen University College, Norway)
- Robert W. Gehl (Assistant Professor of Communication, University of Utah)

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