DIGITAL LEGIBILITY:

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS

Brenda Isabel Murrugarra Retamozo



COLEX

COLEX READER

Disfrute gratuitamente **DURANTE UN AÑO** de los eBook y audiolibros de las obras de Editorial Colex*

- Acceda a la página web de la editorial **www.colex.es**
- Identifíquese con su usuario y contraseña. En caso de no disponer de una cuenta regístrese.
- Acceda en el menú de usuario a la pestaña «Mis códigos» e introduzca el que aparece a continuación:

RASCAR PARA VISUALIZAR EL CÓDIGO

- Una vez se valide el código, aparecerá una ventana de confirmación y su eBook y audiolibro estará disponible **durante 1 año desde su activación** en la pestaña «Mis libros» en el menú de usuario.

* Los audiolibros están disponibles en las ediciones más recientes de nuestras obras. Se excluyen expresamente las colecciones «Códigos comentados», «Biblioteca digital» y los productos de www.vademecumlegal.es.

No se admitirá la devolución si el código promocional ha sido manipulado y/o utilizado.



¡Gracias por confiar en Nosotros!

La obra que acaba de adquirir incluye de forma gratuita la versión electrónica.

Acceda a nuestra página web para aprovechar todas las funcionalidades de las que dispone en nuestro lector.

Funcionalidades eBook

Acceso desde cualquier dispositivo con conexión a internet

Idéntica visualización a la edición de papel

Navegación intuitiva

Tamaño del texto adaptable

Síguenos en:

DIGITAL LEGIBILITY:

Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and the Human Rights of Migrants

DIGITAL LEGIBILITY:

Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and the Human Rights of Migrants

Brenda Isabel Murrugarra Retamozo

Science and Technology Studies – Anthropology – Law

COLEX 2026

Copyright © 2026

Queda prohibida, salvo excepción prevista en la ley, cualquier forma de reproducción, distribución, comunicación pública y transformación de esta obra sin contar con autorización de los titulares de propiedad intelectual. La infracción de los derechos mencionados puede ser constitutiva de delito contra la propiedad intelectual (arts. 270 y sigs. del Código Penal). El Centro Español de Derechos Reprográficos (www.cedro.org) garantiza el respeto de los citados derechos.

Editorial Colex S.L. vela por la exactitud de los textos legales publicados. No obstante, advierte que la única normativa oficial se encuentra publicada en el BOE o Boletín Oficial correspondiente, siendo esta la única legalmente válida, y declinando cualquier responsabilidad por daños que puedan causarse debido a inexactitudes e incorrecciones en los mismos.

Editorial Colex S.L. habilitará a través de la web www.colex.es un servicio online para acceder a las eventuales correcciones de erratas de cualquier libro perteneciente a nuestra editorial.

© Brenda Isabel Murrugarra Retamozo

© Editorial Colex, S.L.
Calle Costa Rica, número 5, 3.º B (local comercial)
A Coruña, C.P. 15004
info@colex.es
www.colex.es

I.S.B.N.: 979-13-7065-212-8
Depósito legal: C 1996-2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.69592/979-13-7065-212-8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION 11
BOOK ORGANIZATION 15

CHAPTER 1
ANTHROPOLOGY OF SURVEILLANCE: PERSPECTIVES, DEBATES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Theoretical Framework 18
From classical surveillance to contemporary forms 18
Transparency, Participation, and Neoliberal Rationalities 20
Social worlds, agency, and differential effects 21
Data Coloniality, Racialization, and New Regimes of Visibility 22
Methodology 24
Approach and design 25
Corpus and selection criteria 26
Results 27
Discussion 32
Conclusions 34

CHAPTER 2
ALGORITHMIC SURVEILLANCE AND INEQUALITY: DIGITAL LEGIBILITY, PREDICTIVE CONTROL, AND SUBJECTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

Introduction and Theoretical Foundations of Algorithmic Surveillance 37
Literature Review Methodology 41
Inclusion criteria 42

Results.....44
2. Digital precarity and algorithmic vulnerability.....48
3. Digital life, data production, and algorithmic vulnerability.....49
4. Cases regarding digital precarity and algorithmic vulnerability.....52
5. Cases regarding digital precarity and algorithmic vulnerability in Latin America.....53
6. The moral economy of surveillance.....55
7. Algorithmic control and subjectivity.....60
8. Epistemic inequality and digital exclusion.....64
9. Data justice and ethical governance.....69
Final insights from anthropology.....73
Technopolitical resistance and collective agency: the case of the MigrarSinVigilancia (MigrateWithoutSurveillance) Coalition.....75
a) From digital precarity to practices of care.....76
b) Subjectivities, visibility, and agency.....76
c) Disputes regarding the legitimacy of surveillance.....77
d) Data justice and social participation.....77
e) A multiscalar reading of resistance.....78
Conclusions.....79

CHAPTER 3

ALGORITHMIC BIASES AND HUMAN RIGHTS: SURVEILLANCE, CLASSIFICATION, AND INEQUALITY IN THE AGE OF AI

Introduction.....83
Theoretical Framework.....84
Algorithms, Artificial Intelligence, and Social Classification.....84
Definition and origin of algorithmic bias.....87
Narrative case study: *Invisible Threads: AI, Social Media, and Latin American People on the Move* (2025–2026).....100
Legal and Ethical Perspectives on Algorithmic Bias.....105
Recommendations and strategies for mitigating algorithmic bias.....111
Conclusions.....116

CHAPTER 4

PLATFORMS, SURVEILLANCE, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: MIGRANT INFORMATIONAL ECOLOGIES

Introduction....121
Theoretical Framework....123
Surveillance Capitalism and the Algorithmic Economy....123
Big Data, prediction, and new forms of social control....124
Algorithmic moderation, biases, and digital inequalities....124
Sociopolitical implications: disinformation, deepfakes, and democratic erosion....126
Ethical and regulatory responses....126
Methodology....127
Results and Discussion....129
a) Transit and digital compasses....129
b) The lived experience of misinformation....129
c) Arrival and the exploitation of vulnerabilities....130
d) Low-cost interventions with measurable effects....130
A brief anthropological-legal reading of the findings....133
Conclusion....134

CHAPTER 5

GOVERNING THROUGH DATA: DIGITAL SURVEILLANCE AND ASYLUM AT THE US-MEXICO BORDER

Introduction....137
How surveillance is experienced: three mediated ethnographic scenes....138
a) Racialization, visibility, and concealment....138
b) Automation and digital poverty....139
c) Deportation as a condition (deportability)....139
Theoretical Framework....140
Methodology....143
Research Design....143
Corpus and Source Selection....144
Procedure....146
Ethical considerations and study limitations....146
Results....147

1. Dominant frameworks: security and technological modernization.....147
2. U.S.–Mexico border: technology that redistributes risk.....147
3. Digital governance of asylum: CBP One as digital metering.....148
4. Infrastructure and data: private intermediation and accumulation.....149
5. Asymmetries and harms: who bears the costs.....149
Discussion.....150
Conclusions.....152

CHAPTER 6

DIGITAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND EUROPE

Introduction and Analytical Framework.....153
The State: Transformation and Power in the Digital Age.....155
State surveillance and digital migration management.....158
Algorithmic bias and exclusion: AI as a mechanism for classifying migrants.....162
Digital rights at risk: privacy, data, and technological surveillance.....166
Ethical and legal regulation: effective protection or a façade of safeguards?.....169
Conclusions.....175

GENERAL CONCLUSION.....179
REFERENCES.....183

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, the expansion of digital technologies has profoundly transformed how people are observed, classified, and governed. Biometric systems, algorithms, digital platforms, interoperable databases, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools increasingly play a role in processes related to security, human mobility, public administration, and daily life. These transformations have given rise to new forms of surveillance that operate through the continuous collection, circulation, and analysis of data.

This book stems from a central concern: understanding how these digital infrastructures generate new forms of power, inequality, and exclusion. More specifically, it examines how AI, biometric systems, digital platforms, and algorithmic classification mechanisms intervene in the governance of migrant populations and other socially marginalized groups. It also analyzes the legal tensions arising from these processes, in particular regarding human rights, privacy, personal data protection, access to justice, and contemporary forms of technological regulation.

Although anthropology has historically been associated with ethnographic fieldwork involving specific communities and social groups, this book proceeds from a different premise. Its primary focus is not the individual trajectories of migrants, but rather the sociotechnical infrastructures that enable new forms of classification, surveillance, and governance of human mobility. Ergo, the research concentrates on the documents, regulations, databases, digital platforms, biometric systems, algorithms, and institutional mechanisms that generate knowledge about specific populations.

This methodological choice responds to a fundamental transformation of our time. In societies increasingly governed by data, a significant portion of social control occurs not merely through face-to-face interactions, but through infrastructures that operate remotely, classifying risks, generating profiles, and making decisions about individuals and collectives. Understanding these processes requires expanding the traditional scope of anthropology to incorporate the study of technologies, documents, platforms, and information systems as legitimate sites of cultural and political production.

The book's central argument posits that AI and contemporary surveillance systems are contributing to the production of new forms of legibility regarding migrant populations. Through mechanisms of data collection, automated classification, and risk assessment, these technologies transform complex human experiences into manageable categories that allow states, corporations, and institutions to intervene in mobility, access to rights, and social participation.

From this angle, surveillance is understood neither merely as a technology nor solely as an administrative practice. Alternatively, it is approached as a sociotechnical process that actively participates in constructing categories, hierarchies, and forms of knowledge about populations. Digital systems do not merely record information; they produce new forms of visibility and new capacities for governance that redefine who can move, who can access protection, and who remains exposed to intensified mechanisms of classification and control.

The notion of legibility serves as the unifying thread of this work. Through biometric systems, digital platforms, classification algorithms, and automated decision-making mechanisms, migrants are progressively transformed into datasets subject to observation, assessment, and administration. In this process, human mobility ceases to be solely a matter of territorial displacement and becomes a phenomenon governed by digital infrastructures.

The production of legibility is not merely a technological issue. It also raises fundamental questions regarding the

limits of state and corporate power, the protection of fundamental rights, the unequal distribution of risks, and how societies regulate technologies that are increasingly influential in everyday life. Hence, the book engages simultaneously with the anthropology of surveillance, critical studies on AI, digital governance, and human rights.

Overall, this research proposes that comprehending contemporary surveillance requires a simultaneous analysis of technologies, power relations, and normative frameworks. Rather than studying isolated tools, the book examines how digital infrastructures participate in the contemporary reorganization of human mobility, the production of inequalities, and the construction of new forms of data-driven governance.

This work is intended exclusively for academic and research purposes. It aims to analyze sociotechnical, political, and legal processes linked to digital surveillance, AI, human mobility, and data governance, drawing on specialized literature, public documentation, and other research sources. As a result, the analysis focuses on understanding these phenomena and does not purport to represent institutional positions or constitute an evaluation of the intentions or actions of specific governments, organizations, or entities.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

The book is organized into six chapters that progress from the conceptual foundations of contemporary surveillance to an analysis of its manifestations in migration and border contexts.

The first chapter, *Anthropology of Surveillance: Perspectives, Debates, and Contemporary Challenges*, presents the key theoretical approaches that have guided the study of surveillance in the social sciences and establishes the conceptual groundwork for the analysis developed throughout the rest of the book. In particular, it proposes comprehending surveillance as a cultural and relational practice that plays an active role in the production of categories, differences, and forms of social legibility.

The second chapter, *Algorithmic Surveillance and Inequality: Digital Legibility, Predictive Control, and Subjectivities in Latin America*, examines the transformations introduced by algorithmic systems, exploring how new data technologies participate in processes of classification, prediction, and the production of subjectivities. The chapter demonstrates how historical inequalities are reorganized through new forms of digital legibility and automated surveillance.

The third chapter, *Algorithmic Biases and Human Rights: Surveillance, Classification, and Inequality in the Age of AI*, analyzes the ethical, legal, and social implications arising from automated decision-making systems and contemporary mechanisms of algorithmic discrimination. Its central argument is that algorithmic biases constitute mechanisms of social classification capable of translating pre-existing inequalities into decisions with concrete effects on rights and opportunities.

The fourth chapter, *Platforms, Surveillance, and Artificial Intelligence: Migrant Informational Ecologies*, studies the role of social media and digital platforms in the circulation of information, the creation of informational vulnerabilities, and the shaping of new forms of surveillance targeting migrant populations. Drawing on the concept of informational ecologies, the chapter examines how information, risk, care, and surveillance intersect within the digital environments that accompany human mobility.

The fifth chapter, *Governing through Data: Digital Surveillance and Asylum at the US-Mexico Border*, explores the use of digital technologies in migration management and border control processes, specifically analyzing the integration of digital systems into asylum access procedures. Through the case of CBP One (a mobile application developed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the chapter demonstrates how digitalization transforms the exercise of rights and shapes new forms of asylum governance.

Finally, the sixth chapter, *Digital Migration Governance: Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and Rights in Latin America and Europe*, expands the scope of analysis to comparatively examine the regulatory and institutional transformations associated with the digitalization of migration management. The chapter analyzes how AI generates new forms of state legibility regarding migrant populations and addresses the legal and political challenges this poses for the protection of fundamental rights.

Taken together, the six chapters address a shared analytical concern: understanding how digital technologies produce new forms of legibility regarding migrant populations and other marginalized groups, thereby reorganizing the relationships between surveillance, human mobility, inequality, and rights. Across various contexts, ranging from digital platforms and algorithmic systems to borders, biometric infrastructures, and regulatory frameworks, the book illustrates how AI is transforming contemporary forms of human mobility governance.

CHAPTER 1

ANTHROPOLOGY OF SURVEILLANCE: PERSPECTIVES, DEBATES, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

In recent decades, surveillance has ceased to be understood merely as a state instrument or a technology of control; instead, it has become a structural condition of social life (Lyon, 2004; Marx, 2015). From digital interactions to institutional decisions regarding mobility, risk, or citizenship, it operates across multiple scales and generates effects that unevenly traverse bodies, territories, and forms of belonging (Amoore, 2006). For anthropology and related disciplines, this landscape demands an examination not only of technical devices but also of the practices, affects, and relationships that shape and give meaning to them (Monahan, 2011; Ivasiuc *et al*., 2022).

This chapter argues that contemporary surveillance must be understood not merely as a set of technical devices or institutional strategies, but also as a cultural and relational practice that is learned, normalized, and reproduced within ordinary social dynamics under conditions of inequality. Rather than operating exclusively from the State or corporations, surveillance is consolidated through people's participation in contexts where seemingly individual decisions are mediated by sociotechnical infrastructures and political rationalities that guide action (Monahan, 2011; Lyon, 2004).

From this angle, the chapter proposes viewing surveillance as a sociotechnical assemblage that articulates technologies, practices, affects, and regimes of attention, producing differential effects shaped by histories of racialization, coloniality, and exclusion. Drawing on a synthesis of ethnographic literature and new critical frameworks, the chapter examines surveillance's manifestations across various spheres of social experience, the anticipatory logics underpinning it, and emerging forms of resistance and the reorientation of control over data.

To develop this proposal, it is necessary to review the key theoretical debates that have contributed to understanding surveillance beyond the scope of institutional control, while attending to its cultural, sociotechnical, and historical dimensions.

In this regard, the chapter's focus is not on describing specific surveillance technologies, but rather on knowing how various forms of observation, classification, and data collection render individuals and collectives legible. I argue that modern surveillance operates as a sociotechnical process that transforms ordinary practices, life trajectories, and social differences into information that can be managed, anticipated, and regulated.

Theoretical Framework

From classical surveillance to contemporary forms

Today, surveillance is not limited to state control; it is integrated into everyday routines and permeates digital interactions mediated by connections between companies, media outlets, and governments. Rather than merely observing from the outside, it envelops the user experience when people engage with communication and entertainment technologies, generating data flows that enable continuous monitoring. This exchange becomes normalized, and even valued, for the convenience and security it promises, even as it masks power asymmetries and reconfigures the boundaries of privacy and freedom (Christensen *et al*., 2016).

COLEX

LA EDITORIAL JURÍDICA DE REFERENCIA PARA LOS PROFESIONALES DEL DERECHO **DESDE 1981**



Paso a paso | Códigos comentados | Vademecum



Formularios | Flashes formativos | Colecciones científicas

DESCUBRA NUESTRAS OBRAS EN:

www.colex.es

Editorial Colex SL Tel.: 910 600 164 info@colex.es

Digital Legibility: Artificial Intelligence, Surveillance, and the Human Rights of Migrants examines how artificial intelligence has become increasingly involved in the governance of migration. As more decisions pass through digital technologies, personal information acquires growing importance in processes that can shape the future of millions of people. The book explores how this transformation is taking place and what it means for human rights. Through the concept of digital legibility, it considers how migrants come to be understood through information produced about their lives. The book offers a critical reflection on the expanding role of artificial intelligence and on the consequences of interpreting complex human experiences through automated systems.



BRENDA ISABEL MURRUGARRA RETAMOZO

Brenda Isabel Murrugarra Retamozo is a Ph.D. student in Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Royster Society of Fellows scholar. She holds a Licentiate Degree in Law (J.D.) and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Universidad César Vallejo, Peru. Her research examines artificial intelligence, digital surveillance, data governance, privacy, and emerging technologies from an interdisciplinary perspective. Drawing on training in law, public administration, and anthropology, she explores how technological change shapes rights, governance, inequality, and everyday life in an increasingly digital world.

PVP 20,00 €

ISBN: 979-13-7065-212-8