MIGRATION IN A DIGITAL WORLD

The use of new technologies is rapidly changing global migration policies. **Jessica Bither** studies the effects this is having for the foundation.

Ms. Bither, you've examined the entire migration process, from ways of predicting migration, border controls, and asylum processes in the destination country. What is your overall impression?
JESSICA BITHER: Technologies like blockchain, which makes it easier to transfer money to other countries, open up new opportunities. On the flip side, however, the use of new technologies raises a number of ethical and human rights issues, as we have seen in other areas of our lives. Refugees and immigrants are in a unique position. Decisions are often made for them. In many cases, they are not in a position where they can refuse to give their consent. If they want to get a visa or obtain benefits, they have to hand over their personal and biometric data. In addition, new technologies have the potential to increase discrimination if algorithms are trained on data that reflects human biases.

Where are new technologies already playing a key role?
Major organizations like the World Food Program and UNHCR that focus on humanitarian issues and refugee protection have set up registration systems that work with biometric data. In Jordan, for example, registered refugees can use iris scanners to pay at the supermarket. The scan verifies their identity and allows them to draw on the funds made available to them.

Where is the trend heading?
Countries around the world are developing digital ID management programs. The biggest is in India, with 1.2 billion records. There are pros and cons to digital IDs, which combine biometric and biographical data. On the plus side, people without a legal ID document can take part. But what happens if you can't access the system or if you are not registered correctly? Do you have any say in how your data is used? In Kenya, for example, the supreme court blocked a digital ID system over privacy concerns.

What steps do you recommend to avoid these types of risks when using new technologies in immigration management?
We have to use new technologies in a way that meets our future needs. We should always ask ourselves, what problem are we looking to solve? Once we've answered that, we can look at how technology can help us achieve our goal. At the same

Jessica Bither
(right) hard at work

time, we need to assess the risks and make sure that basic liberties and human rights are always upheld. We also have to change the way in which immigration policy is made. There needs to be dialogue among the public and private sectors, members of the public, and immigrants that is not influenced by political or business considerations. Foundations could help to facilitate this.

The Covid-19 pandemic struck while you were in the middle of your research. Has it had any effect in relation to your research topic?
Covid-19 has given a boost to new, digital work methods. It's conceivable that work will go to people, and not the other way around. It's easier than ever to split up tasks and collaborate with people in other countries. It's also conceivable that, as a direct result of the pandemic, even more digital information, such as a person's health data, will be recorded when people travel abroad. ◤

4

Technologies such as blockchain, AI, digital identities, and biometrics all help determine the future course of immigration policy. Jessica Bither and Astrid Ziebarth from the German Marshall Fund of the United States provide a brief analysis for the Robert Bosch Foundation.
bosch-stiftung.de/techinmigration

A ROADMAP TO THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

The UN is taking proactive measures to ensure the digital era benefits everyone.

The digital future should be inclusive of all peoples and nations, built on a foundation of human rights and universal values such as respect, humanity, transparency, and sustainability. This is the goal set by the United Nations. UN Secretary-General António Guterres *(right)* presented the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation in New York.

In 2019 a group of international experts, with help and support from the Robert Bosch Foundation, prepared a list of recommendations for how increased global cooperation in the digital era can help to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals *(see article in Zünder 03/2019).*

The recommendations were discussed with politicians, the public, international organizations, representatives from business, and professionals in the field. Eight core areas were identified where the UN will become active. These include protection of human rights in the digital world, new models of international cooperation, and methods to achieve digital inclusion for all by 2030.

In order to reduce the digital divide, an annual scorecard and the definition of success factors are intended to make digital participation measurable and to promote it. The coronavirus pandemic, said Guterres, illustrates just how much people are depending on digitalization to meet global challenges. ◤

"Roadmap for Digital Cooperation" by UN Secretary-General António Guterres
www.bosch-stiftung.de/UNRoadmap