TAMING THE MACHINES

AI, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE SURVEILLANCE STATE

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PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

About the lecture

Facial recognition technology has rapidly transitioned from the realm of science fiction to everyday life, monitoring our activities in public spaces, securing our devices, and being heralded by law enforcement as a crucial tool against crime. While various entities employ this technology, State, and in particular law enforcement, use of facial recognition is widely regarded as 'more permissible'. This use case straightforwardly illustrates the difficulty in addressing the harms caused by pervasive surveillance through a traditional human rights law lens.

This talk discusses facial recognition technology as illustrative of, and central to, the emerging pervasive surveillance ecosystem. Despite growing concerns, criticism of the advent of pervasive surveillance has struggled to gain significant traction in legal and policy discussions. There appears to be a prevailing sense of inevitability surrounding its adoption, with the focus primarily on establishing limitations and safeguards rather than fundamentally questioning its societal impact or the appropriateness of certain applications. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that in failing to pay sufficient attention to the emergence of a new pervasive surveillance ecosystem we have made – or more optimistically are making – a huge collective mistake. This talk will address the impact of pervasive surveillance on individuals' ability to freely develop their identity, and what this means for the evolution of democratic society, highlighting the challenges posed to the enduring relevance of the human rights framework.

**Tuesday, 10. June 2025
18:15–19:45 (CEST)**

ETHIK IN DER
INFORMATIONSTECHNOLOGIE

**Flügelbau West, 2. OG, Raum W 221
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If you like to join us virtually, register at uhh.de/inf-eit.