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# Resistance to platformization: Palantir in the Norwegian police

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**ABSTRACT**

In 2016, the Norwegian police signed a contract with Palantir Technology for the provision of the surveillance platform Gotham, a platform that enables agencies to integrate data stored in different databases from internal and external sources. The project was to be ready for operation in 2018. In February 2020, the Norwegian Police Directorate announced the project had ended. When they signed off the contract, they had spent around NOK 100 million for nothing. Drawing on documents and interviews with police managers and officers involved in the Gotham project, we explore how platformization represented a conflicting institutional logic which collided with the dominant one and threatened established power structures. Platformization, understood as an organizational process, competes with professionalism and bureaucracy as established institutional logics in the police to control and coordinate work. The analysis of conflicting institutional logics stemming from socio-technical and material objects, reveals how police staff experiences of the symbolic, material and cognitive aspects of logics are of importance in domestication processes. The struggle for market dominance also fueled the conflict between established and new suppliers. The totalizing tendencies of platform policing may explain why the project went on for so long before it was terminated. To a certain degree, our findings show data becoming a major currency, and there is a calculative logic in this type of policing. Platform policing has user activity as its source, and non-use stops the business.

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## Introduction

> (…) Swedish police spend 15 min searching for results from 20 EU countries, while it takes the Norwegian police at least five days to get the same answers. Despite spending NOK 100 million [EUR 9 million] on Omnia, the Norwegian police still take the same amount of time as before (Mortvedt, 2020).

In 2016, the Norwegian police signed a contract with Palantir Technology for the provision of Gotham, a platform that enables agencies to integrate data stored in different

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databases from internal and external sources. Since the goal of the platform is to analyze data for future decision-making, it needs to collect a lot of data. Because it gathers a lot of data and aims to use it for prediction, it is also defined as a surveillance platform (Iliadis & Acker, 2022). As we will show, this capacity has also led us to identify what we term Gotham's surveillance logic. Palantir builds and deploys the software that makes data interoperable and is according to Iliadis and Acker (2022) one of the most secretive and understudied surveillance companies in the world. In Norway, Gotham was supposed to connect data from 19 major police registers and the DNA database, for everything from vehicles to DNA. The project was named Omnia, meaning 'everything'.

Primarily, Gotham was purchased to fulfil the police's obligations under the Prüm framework, signed up to in 2009: this allows for automated data exchange between member states to query DNA, fingerprints, and vehicle registration data in the Member States' national databases. The aim is to support cooperation between European law enforcement authorities to fight cross-border crime.

Omnia should have been ready for operation in 2018. In the procurement process, it was specified that a case management system was required, and Gotham won the contract for EUR 7,3 million in 2016 (Stolt Nilsen & Johansen, 2019). In February 2020, the Norwegian Police Directorate announced the project had ended. The implementation budget was initially EUR 4,5 million. When the contract was signed off, around EUR 9 million had been spent with nothing to show for it (Østli, 2022).[1] The police's 'superweapon' was a EUR 9 million failure, and it still does not meet Prüm obligations.

Drawing on documents and interviews with police managers and officers involved in the Gotham project, we will explore how platformization represented a conflicting institutional logic that collided with the dominant one and threatened established power structures. The aim is to unpack the tensions and processes related to the domestication of police platformization and analyse Palantir's failure in Norway. Following Egbert (2019, p. 86), we understand the platformization of police work as an:

> (…) organizational process in which manifold data sets and databanks – especially from police-external sources – are cross-linked, creating information retrieval and production networks designed to improve police work on numerous levels by facilitating knowledge creation (e.g., patrol allocation, police management, crime investigation, etc.)

Several studies have considered the surveillance rationalities undergirding the contemporary digital platforms that can fundamentally transform social practices and relations and themselves become dominant social structures (Wood & Monahan, 2019). Defining platformization as an organizational process (Egbert, 2019) requires particular attention to the actors affected by the organizational changes and how the changes relate to knowledge creation. Implementation of Omnia represents a new set of actors, regulations, routines, values, cognitions, and ideas about the coordination of organizations. In this article, we analyse how this project, which aims to build a data-driven digital infrastructure, collides with the police's demands for accuracy and reliability. Drawing on the theory of conflicting institutional logics, we analyse how this conflict plays out in different facets.

First, we analyse why Palantir's Gotham was chosen, and relate this to the business model. Second, we explore the project's work processes and the tensions between the actors involved. We then analyse resistance to automation and discussion in the police

about tolerating uncertainty in data quality. Finally, we discuss how the identified logic of platformization interacts with police professionalism, manageralism, and bureaucracy.

## Platformization as an institutional logic in action

As a data mining and integration platform, Gotham has a vision of unlimited searchability and automatic pattern detection (Egbert, 2019, p. 87), facilitating interoperability between disparate police databases that makes possible quick and easy searches across databases through a single point of entry (see also Brayne, 2021). The term 'platform' can be understood as a metaphor for infrastructures establishing contexts for practice, which enable and support certain practices while disabling, eroding, and resisting others (Wood & Monahan, 2019). We will discuss to what degree platformization as a new form of (market) logic and knowledge sharing has been adopted as an institutional logic in police organizations. The approach is inspired by the institutional logic perspective adopted by Thornton et al. (2012) to guide empirical research analysis on both the micro and macro levels and integrate the two. Institutional logics are defined by them as:

> the socially constructed, historical patterns of cultural symbols and material practices, including assumptions, values, and beliefs, by which individuals and organizations provide meaning to their daily activity, organize time and reproduce their lives and experiences (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 2).

The institutional logics perspective therefore represents a frame of reference that impacts actors' choices for sense making, the vocabulary they use to motivate action, and their sense of self and identity and their socio-material surroundings. The principles, practices, material objects, and symbols of multiple institutional orders give rise to different types of reasoning and different perceptions of rationality. The most important aspect of platformization from the IT companies' point of view is its ability to help them expand and dominate the market by outcompeting other software providers. The customer, lured in by the offer of free services (Zuboff, 2019), is locked into a supplier's products and services.

Institutional logics in the police has mainly been discussed in relation to police reforms (Terpstra, 2020), and police professionalism (Gundhus, 2017; Martin, 2022). However, in line with recent research on institutional logics (see Noordegraaf, 2007, 2016, 2020), these authors argued for a hybrid of logics in the police organization. According to Berg et al. (2017) theorizing 'hybrid logics' refers more to the coexistence of two different logics inside one organization, rather than to the development of new hybrid forms of logics. Freidson's (2004) concepts of bureaucracy, free market, and professionalism have been a starting point; while the logic of professionalism controls work through quality assurance, discretion, and standardisation, the logic of bureaucratic rationality bases the control of work on formal rules and work processes. Scott et al. (2000) analysed the market and bureaucracy as part of the logic of managerialism as opposed to professionalism. The hybrid approach points out how these logics co-exists in police organization (Martin, 2022; Rautiainen et al., 2017; Terpstra, 2020).

The literature on competing institutional logics suggests that, under conditions of institutional complexity, individual's agency plays an important role in shaping organizational outcomes – which may be described as institutional logic in action (Lounsbury &

Boxenbaum, 2013). This shift has led to more fine-grained studies of how logics can lead to resistance and conflict, and of how they affect the behaviour of both individuals and groups in and across organizations. This is how we apply the concepts; we analyse tensions and the variety of responses in the building and deployment of the platform. Previous research on police organizations has in similar ways looked at shifts in the logic of community policing (Terpstra & Salet, 2019), and how intelligence logic collide with traditional crime prevention (Gundhus et al., 2023). Organizations can have multiple identities with various, sometimes conflicting, views on their central mission (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). As we will see, the introduction of Gotham as a new data mining platform highlights how interoperability brings sophisticated data, together with new conflicting norms and ideas that some actors perceive as profound and boundary-breaking, but most are critical towards. Drawing on empirically identified institutional logics as professional, managerial, bureaucratic, and agile logics, we will explore conflicting institutional logics in action during platformization processes.

Decisions and behaviours are conditioned by the way interests, norms, and identities are enabled or constrained by institutional logics. Studies of institutional logics in action have also led to renewed interest in the material dimensions of logics (Jones et al., 2013), which are particularly significant when considering platformization processes. Kjekshus and Bygstad (2021) see digitalism as an institutional logic explaining tensions in the implementation of major ICT systems at a Norwegian hospital in 2015. In digital logic, the central actors are IT consultants, suppliers, the IT industry, and companies. These might collaborate, or compete, because of differences in actors, regulation, values, cognition, and coordination (Kjekshus & Bygstad, 2021, p. 4). Kjekshus and Bygstad argue that ICT systems are carriers of values and norms that shape actions and beliefs in an organization and constrain the possibility of change. In this case, the logic of platformisation, aiming for changing working practices through data integration and analysing, will be explored. The context this is applied in is ICT used to support and enabling professionalism and standardisation of skills, and ICT to support management by objectives aiming for managerialism.

Our focus will therefore be on practices and technologies related to platformization that 'invite' (rather than direct) particular actions. The assumption is that socio-technical relationships do not necessarily have fixed outcomes but exert important influences on how problems and solutions are 'framed' and what forms of action are invited. This means that how work is organized and which methods are used are *politics*, and that new types of organization may create and legitimize new logics. This study therefore follows on from recent user-oriented research on police and technology which examines how applications develop in a socio-technical context (Brayne, 2017; Egbert & Leese, 2021; Egbert & Krasmann, 2020; Ericson & Haggerty, 1997; Egbert, 2019; Kaufmann, 2018; Kaufmann et al., 2019; Marciniak, 2023; Sanders & Condon, 2017; Sanders & Hannem, 2012; Sanders & Henderson, 2013; Sanders et al., 2015; Weston et al., 2020), but differs in focusing on competing institutional logics in domestication processes. In line with Leese's (2023) recent study on police critical approach to private sector technology in favour of in-house tools, we study the variety of responses in the building and deployment of the platform. It also draws on the above-mentioned research on platformization that makes clear how companies expand to maintain a huge range of services (Srnicek, 2016), and particularly how platformization affects policing (Egbert, 2019; Wilson,

2021). Increased data gathering and greater interconnection of police registers and data mining impact police working conditions (Egbert, 2019, p. 86). In view of this, we will analyse tensions between empirically identified competing logics during the Omnia project. We will look closely at how Palantir's business model and the political economy of platformization affect resistance and power play in the police.

## Methodology

This study of the implementation of Gotham is part of a broader project investigating digitalization and the use of technology by Norwegian police from 2021 to 2024. The empirical data includes analysis of documents relating to police digitalization, interviews, and observations of police officers on patrol in two related projects, Agopol and CUPP.[2] Since 2021 we have interviewed 57 (39 in Agopol/ 18 in CUPP/) officers from four police districts and spent 174 h observing police practice. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The broad empirical data on the digitalisation of policing has not been relevant for the detailed study of the case, but for the broader historiography approach we provide – were attention has been to the historic values and imaginaries informing the political-legal discourse on the digitalization of the police. This approach also includes drawing on news media and articles, political strategies, policy documents, reports, and public procurement processes around police data-driven technologies. However, of the 58 interviewees, only a selection of interviews has been analysed for this purpose, and no observational data. Thirteen police ICT-related employees from Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos), Oslo Police District (OPD), Police Directorate (POD), Police IT centre (PIT), and Police university College (PHS) have been particularly relevant, the same four lawyers working on the topic. News media and documents about the Palantir project have also been analysed and referred to in the paper.

As a methodological framework, situational analysis has been used as a research strategy (Clarke et al., 2018). Situational analysis is an extension of grounded theory, to address shortcomings with a strictly inductive approach (Clark, 2005, pp. 11–16). It is inspired by Foucauldian discourse analyses and social studies of science and technology, and therefore suitable for this study of the implementation of a data analysis platform. The focus is on the analysis of the situation being researched: the elements in it, the relations among elements, the conditions of possibility for action, and related discourses, to ensure that differences become more visible. The purpose of situational analysis is namely to provoke and emphasise complexities and diversities, in ways that disrupt or shift known or tacit hierarchies of power.

In this case, data were drawn from interviewing, historical accounts, document analysis and media news articles. Human actors, nonhuman actants in addition to discursive, structural, cultural, and other elements were contained in the mapping process. In the first open coding, we were oriented towards action, processual analyses, and negotiation among actors to anticipate instabilities. We made three simple analytical maps to stimulate data analysis. The first maps are situational maps that lay out the main elements in the research situation of focus, to specify what we need to gather data about to map relations among the different elements. This also helped us to 'see' heterogeneous data in unexpected ways, particularly the hybrid collaborations with different private companies and vendors, concultants inside and outside the police, and different proferssional

competencies. Further, the social worlds/arenas map lay out the engagement in ongoing discourse and negotiations. This map offers meso-level interpretations of the situation, taking up its social organizational, institutional, and discursive dimensions. Mapping the different social worlds by relating them to positionalities and their wider relations and connections, has been a way to identify differences and complexities in professional approaches. The positional map lay out the major positions taken, and *not* taken, in particular discourses in the data, to get an overview of the variation, differences, and conflicting institutional logics. The aim was to map controversies found in the situation to represent the full range of discursive positions taken on key issues in the situation. Situational analysis with its mapping strategy therefore provides tools for how to analyse the data and requires a more abduction than inductive approach from researchers. In this case, the pre-existing theoretical background before starting our project has been institutional logic theory. The maps have been important for identifying and theorizing different institutional logics that actors use and relate to in their practices, including the material, symbols, and discourse.

The project received special approval from the Police Directorate to observe the police. Interviews and observation of humans were conducted after approval was obtained from the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (SIKT), which is responsible for enforcing ethical guidelines, and after the police chiefs of the police districts and Police Directorate had given the go-ahead. Each participant, recruited on a voluntary basis, received, and signed an information sheet about the project, outlining the aims, methods, and implication of research, the process of anonymization, ethical guidelines, and data management as well as the possibility to withdraw from the project at any point. We have anonymized the interviewees according to the branch they were working in during the Palantir-project, but they may have been working elsewhere when interviewed.

## Ambitions and procurement

The Palantir project came about because in 2016 Norway entered into the EU's Prüm Agreement, originally signed in the German city of Prüm in 2005 by seven EU countries: Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Spain, and Austria (European Commission, 2023). Norway and Iceland followed suit in 2009, but due to legislative work, court hearings, investigations, and frequent changes of Justice Minister, it was seven years before Norway's agreement was approved by Parliament. About 20 countries have now joined Prüm. Participation in it meant the Norwegian police needed better case management software to check and pass on DNA profiles, vehicle details, driving licenses, and fingerprints.

In 2015, a large-scale project called Merverdiprogrammet, which was supposed to be revolutionary, ended in failure (Sletteholm & Ekroll, 2015). It should have been a major case management solution for the Norwegian police, and while the Prüm project was being planned, the database was called 'a record keeping solution'. Between 2010 and 2015, the Norwegian Police Directorate spent EUR 21,5 million on preparations for the Merverdiprogrammet: on choosing a concept, preliminary projects, and quality assurance. The Minister of Justice claimed that, although very large projects have a high risk of failure, ending the Merverdiprogram meant that the risk of cost overruns and delays was limited. After the scrapping of the project, new services had to be

added to computer systems that had been described as vulnerable and outdated. The police needed a success story, and Police Directorate staff were positive about Palantir. The Prüm project gave the management hope:

> And then the Merverdi project failed, and this is all part of the story. For various reasons, it failed, and then, and this is sort of my perception of the world. Some of these IT managers in the police saw that this Prüm project was doing exciting things, and they probably hoped it might be something that could be introduced first in international co-operation, and then they could perhaps look at how it could be extended to other areas. (Kripos)

It was hoped that Prüm could be expanded eventually. Several informants said the police wasted resources and expensive consultant hours on tinkering with obsolete IT systems. There are 19 data systems – some of them contain registers following police register regulations[3], and others are tools for entering data into registers, or for carrying out other tasks. The common perception was that the basic police systems were old and unable to 'talk' to each other. In Norway, as in Germany, the 'the standard information system infrastructure is much dominated by data silos and selected access permissions' (Egbert, 2019, p. 86). Police officers must log out and log in from different systems to find and retrieve information, and data often has to be transferred manually from one system to another. Both PO (PolitiOperativt system), used for planning and carrying out operational tasks, and BL (Basic Solution in prosecution cases), used for storing and systematizing all documents and information from underlying systems in the chain of criminal proceedings, were developed in the 1990s. The international IT case management system, dating from the 1990s, was perceived as antiquated.

The system resembling Gotham most closely is Indicia, the criminal intelligence register, but it lacks integration and data visualization and analysis capacities (Politiregisterforskriften, 2013). Indicia provides process support for prevention and intelligence-led policing, and serves as a tool for planning and managing investigation. It provides registers for concerns about youth and digital tips and a search engine with access to 14 other police systems/registers.

### *The promise that all would be included*

In 2016, the Norwegian Police Directorate (POD) purchased the American computer system Palantir Gotham for EUR 7,3 million, Palantir having won the contract to build and deploy the platform. The state procurement system weighted tenders according to quality, expertise, and price. It was also decided how much weight should be given to each of the criteria. According to our informants, Palantir won on price and quality combined, but one reason for their success was that they priced all the data integration work at zero:

> Yes, and in the end, Palantir won that procurement. And what they did then, and I think this is public knowledge, was to price all these options for integration at zero. So, many other suppliers said, yes, here's the price for integrations. If you want Indicia integration, it costs three million. If you want BL integration, it costs three million. If you want this, you want that, right? Whereas Palantir said, 'We'll do it all, at zero cost to the customer.' Yes, they just said, 'All inclusive, we'll work with you, partner, with the Norwegian police to do this.' That's kind of their business value too, that they're super good at creating … that's how they sell themselves, creating a data repository for the whole thing. Yes, but as I said, there was competition, there was real competition. Several other companies making similar products were involved. But not with that pricing. (Kripos)

Providing services for free is a way to gain a market position, and get the contract. To do so, a company needs the financial ability to outplay the competition, combined with the technological ability to make the customer dependent on their services. Google spent years giving free services to collect enough behavioural data to dominate the market in their field (Zuboff, 2019) and Amazon spent years accepting deficits in various segments to outperform competitors (West, 2022).

After winning the contract, Palantir engineers moved into the Criminal Investigation Service, as they usually do (Iliadis & Acker, 2022). Project Omnia was scheduled to be ready for operation in 2018. Terrorism was not included, and big data was not to be used. The aim was for the police to be enabled to look for links between tracks, find connections between criminal cases, and solve them faster, by accessing analysis of persons, networks, and incidents, and retrieving information from the DNA database.

## *Competing suppliers, different logics*

The Omnia project was owned by the Norwegian Police Directorate, (POD), but organized by the Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos), which represented the professions. Actors with various roles were involved in the project: the management group for the project, the Kripos officers who specialized in international policing, criminal case register, criminal intelligence system and forensic scientists, IT contractors, and data protection officers inside the police, external IT companies that had existing contracts with the police, and Palantir. IT consultants representing the police were consultants on contract, including IT architects and procurement managers.

Omnia was designed as a standard police project, with managers from Kripos, some police districts and POD in the steering group and professional groups. It soon became clear that they had conflicting interests and values related to different logics in the implementation process.

Palantir presented Omnia as a development operational (DevOps) project, with agile processes. Coordination of the project was to be done through DevOps, which meant close end-user integration and extensive testing early in the process to increase relevance and quality and reduce the risk of user resistance, by avoiding the usual 'waterfall' of large-scale processes when an end-product is implemented. The IT consultants from Palantir therefore wanted the project to be coordinated by agile processes. Since agile processes are the opposite of bureaucracy's stability and emphasis on predictability, Kripos employees reacted negatively to the impossibility of predicting the nature of the process or its outcome. For them, the guiding principle in implementation projects was to plan in more detail and create requirements specifications, in line with the proof of concept approach.

However, interviews show there was disagreement on whether the coordination of the process could be described as agile. Agile processes need to start on a small scale, but this was not a small project – it was the integration of more than 10 police registers. They started with fewer but even so, this required time, planning, testing, and testing again. The coordination of the project called for agile processes, but these were discouraged by police IT consultants:

> So, they threw in quite a lot of people, but not as many as you would normally have to do all these integrations. And there … and they also wanted to work in a very agile way, and that

> was probably a few years too soon. (…) When they came and said they were going to work flexibly on these integrations, (…) they met a lot of resistance and people said, 'No, we're not going to do that. You can't work flexibly, and you can't test it. This has to be thoroughly developed, thoroughly documented and thoroughly tested before you can start using something yourself, in line with the proof-of-concept approach. We weren't equipped for that at all, to develop these according to a waterfall methodology, as it's called. We hit a lot of grey areas in getting it up and running, and we're still … we still haven't succeeded. (Kripos)

The resistance mentioned in the quote indicates the tensions between Palantir's IT consultants and police data protection officers. The latter were characterized by a bureaucratic logic, while Palantir, the external supplier, was the proponent of an agile digital logic. Bureaucratic logic requires government purchases to satisfy requirements regarding testing, quality, time, etc., while agile digital logic involves testing and adjustment along the way. In addition, the data protection officers draw on professional logic, primarily because they know the content of the police databases in more detail.

Among the most important entities that Palantir was seen to threaten were the established police IT suppliers, which now had a new rival or competitor. They were threatened by loss of market and sales, but also under threat were the existing trust relations between such private companies and the police. While the established IT providers represented a digital logic that was in line with the bureaucratic logic, Palantir, both in the way they designed the tenders and the IT solutions they delivered, represented a digital logic that structures the forms of governance that emerge in new ways (Wood & Monahan, 2019). In this case, the new way of working threatened the established logic and was met with resistance by key personnel.

Looking more closely at the attitudes of employees, police employees can be divided into those who supported the project, those who were opposed, and those who were neutral. The argument for the status quo seems to be anxiety about the quality of the data and concern that agile processes went against the hierarchical structure, formal rules, and professional quality assurance standards. Palantir also challenged the working methods and processes of the suppliers of existing IT solutions, threatening the long-established balance of power. This is typical of the way digital platforms intend to fundamentally transform social practices and relations (Wood & Monahan, 2019).

Interviews with Kripos employees tell that while the old suppliers raised the question of the risk of errors in the database and the lack of transparency in the analyses, the new supplier pointed to the possibilities for efficiency and more accuracy in the future. IT personnel representing the old and new suppliers competed for the market by promoting solutions inspired by their own logic. The values and norms of bureaucratic logic left little room for agile processes and gave high priority to data security, while the logic of digital agile processes saw, as we will see, the quality of data as a question of quantity.

The point at issue was therefore the choice of method for the platformization process and it is a fundamental one, because it affects not only the planning process, but also the soul of professionalism (Freidson, 2004). Freidson claims that, although many professions have been put under economic pressure to reduce the cost of the services they provide, the most important problem for the future of professionalism is not economic but cultural and ideological: it is its soul (Freidson, 2004, pp. 213–214). The spirit of professionalism is expressed through the freedom to choose methods to achieve goals, which requires a balance between the logics of the market, the bureaucracy, and the professions

(Freidson, 2004, p. 181, 217). There was resistance to allowing Palantir and Omnia to control the digital platform because it could also change the balance between these three logics.

## Errors or uncertain data

By 2017–2018, there was so much resistance to the project that it was difficult to work on it. The opposition came from various professional groups, and the main positions taken were based on different views on the data basis and the dissemination of the data. ICT staff at Kripos warned the police chiefs, urging the need for specificity in data and stressing that flawed data was clearly an obstacle to integration. They emphasized that the aim of the project was to gain accurate output and optimalization of data exchange. As a group, police professionals were also concerned about how data was stored after being deleted, how it would meet the Data Protection Agency's standards, and other changes in how data was to be registered. Both technically and legally, dealing with the integration of 19 registers was a major undertaking. The Palantir consultancies working at Kripos were considerably less well-informed than insiders about the complex history of the different police registers. Data protection staff at Kripos believed that the integrations that had been developed were of inferior quality, because of a lack of resources:

> Firstly, it was … it was felt that the quality was not good enough. Well, there were data protection environments at Kripos, and let's say the executive data processors at Kripos. They believed that the integrations that had been developed were poor quality, and that the testing had revealed this, and that they had not prepared at all for the thorough work that needs to be done to actually carry out the integrations in a satisfactory way. Neither Palantir nor the project resources were capable of doing this, according to these data controllers. (Kripos)

When the information in Omnia was checked against the original registers, errors, and information that should not have been there were found. For example, a police officer said that the data produced by the project showed a convicted person to have received prison sentences that were twice as long as what was recorded in the criminal case register.

The solution was then to remedy the problems by testing, testing, testing, as part of the agile processes to adapt and work on integration. This was supported by the Police Directorate. However, the professional staff, including the criminal analysts specializing in DNA evidence, continued to report errors. This led to further repair work and new errors. According to agile logic, such processes are regarded as just part of the development, while according to bureaucratic logic, they are seen as failure.

The police professionals claimed Palantir was only working on the interoperability, analysis, and data visualization aspect of the Gotham application when the real problem was the bad quality of the data. Interviewees also told us that Palantir told the managers they were trying to solve quality problems but actually they kept on working on data integration and interoperability, and this increased the mistrust felt by the police. The emphasis on integration is characteristic of the surveillance logic that Wood and Monahan (2019) argue underlies the platformization process. It focuses on the quantity of data because the big picture can be right even if small pieces are not entirely correct. The problem was that the data integrated and visualized included a lot of material that should have been deleted from police registers:

> But there is also something about data quality at the bottom of all this. And … It is clear, if you add onto a 20-year-old system that we have … 40-year-old even, as some of the Norwegians police registers are. If you add so much powerful technology on top, it shows absolutely everything. Both what should have been deleted and what should not have been deleted, and so on. (…) What was not addressed is that basically the data is shit. There is far too much data that should have been deleted from intelligence registers and so on. And we saw that … When we hung up … When you extracted the information in that way, then … . There is a lot that should have been deleted. That was why the integration failed. (Police Directorate)

Basing things on police data from intelligence registers will always be problematic for the police, who are always drawing on masses of uncertain knowledge, as one interviewee describes it:

> And the challenge with data quality, it's in the police system. So, there are probably 50 different ways of writing Muhammad, and if you don't … Yes … It quickly becomes incorrect when such strong technology is added on top. (…), But I think the discussion about the quality in the police's computer systems is much bigger than the challenges with data quality in the project. (Police Directorate)

The police registers often contain four or five 'entities', people with the same name, with different middle names, misspellings, etc. There are no 'safe' identities of people, comparable to DNA, images, or fingerprints. There will always be uncertainty about identification based on name, date of birth, and ethnicity. And these small differences lead to huge mistakes when data are integrated. They tried to solve this problem by using common children as a proxy for relationships, but that was criticized by the data protection environment for being too unreliable.

Gotham's integration approach was in line with the digital surveillance logic; it was seen as just a matter of selecting all the variants of a person and pressing merge, as another interviewee described it. There was a further warning from police staff in 2017, and neither Palantir nor the project had enough people to test the various parts of the system before it was used. The digital agile logic of testing, adapting, and integrating created huge frustration for the police staff involved in the project.

### *Automatization versus human in the loop*

The DNA specialists had waited several years for the Prüm agreement to come into force, and was frustrated to be involved in implementing a broader platform because it was time-consuming and fundamentally different from what they expected:

> At least some of them were probably very frustrated that they had waited so many years to get the Prüm agreement and had tried in different ways to make it happen. And then … and then you got a new project with money and consultants and people who had to go in and make Prüm happen. Suddenly the Prüm project was scoped to become a very large case management project as well. (Kripos)

One reason for the frustration was that, while the Prüm database was an international database for such 'facts' as DNA profiles, vehicles, driving licences and fingerprints, Omnia included more complex and insecure data about people and incidents. Prüm was built around both bureaucratic and professional logic when it came to the production, compilation, storage and distribution of register information. This differed from the logic of Omnia which was supposed to generate new information by

automatically connecting different databases. The premises of the databases were also different; while the benefit of Prüm was the accuracy of information, Omnia was based on the surveillance rationalities undergirding contemporary digital platforms (Wood & Monahan, 2019): the more data you had, the better the quality of analyses. While Google did not have to promise complete accuracy when they commodified personal data and sold it on the commercial market (Zuboff, 2019), bureaucracy had different rules. Citizens' role as stakeholders could not so easily be commodified because the law regarding ownership of data was more complicated.

The same group was particularly critical of the digitalization and automatization of processes. Forensic scientists were against it, due to the absence of control. DNA specialists wanted analysis to be done manually. They emphasised that automatic analysis does not meet the quality standards they expect for creating DNA profiles. The most important thing was for them to be responsible for dealing with uncertainty about DNA before sharing it with the police districts.

> I think part of the discussion was that we in the project wanted information about such high-security meetings to be made available to the police districts. (…) … all the information that the police process has a greater or lesser degree of uncertainty, and in DNA in particular, even poor trace profiles at a crime scene … that information usually has less uncertainty than a lot of other information that the police use in an investigation. We wanted that it should be up to the local police district to assess DNA in the same way as all other information in an investigation. However, as I remember this case, and with all possible reservations, the DNA people probably thought, 'No, we can't pass on such uncertain DNA information. People should be confident that if they get a DNA match, it's absolutely certain.' (Kripos)

The quote above shows that the police actors disagreed on whether uncertain information should be shared with the police districts. The informant believes that the information should be shared and that it should be up to the local police district to assess DNA information, like any other information featuring in an investigation. This quote shows how the digital logic of information sharing influenced police actors and shaped ideas about the organization and regulation of knowledge sharing within the police (Wood & Monahan, 2019). The digital logic can therefore compete with bureaucratic institutional logics, as well as professional one. Forensic scientists wanted a more hierarchic top-down and bureaucratic process, while some police officers believed that it was up to police officers lower in the hierarchy to assess uncertainty.

Some proponents of Omnia therefore wanted to share high-security information with the police districts without it being assessed by a human being. The rationale for their opposition to making available all the information was that material that is searchable by the Norwegian police should have been assessed as relevant by a human being. This is in contrast to the logic of surveillance, which states that all data is relevant because, in some context, when put together with other data, it may become relevant, even if it does not initially appear so.

The resistance over DNA was also criticized by some police professionals, the argument being that civilians do not understand the need for efficiency in the police. However, the project was too radical for most of the participants, which overshadowed advocacy for interoperability:

> The point is that you can radically increase the speed at which we can disseminate information through digitalization, and in a way automate the processes that we currently do manually. That's where the shoe pinches the most … I think. There are so many nuances in that question, and there are so many things we could have done to increase accessibility and speed, say, and still comply with the regulations as they existed at the time. (Kripos)

The Prüm agreement aims to exchange very detailed information and covers the transfer of people between countries. Thus, it must be possible for convicted persons from other Prüm countries to be transferred from the country in which they were convicted to their home country to serve their sentences. A separate agreement with the United States (the PCSC agreement) will give access to the FBI's base of 70 million fingerprints.

Exchanging and sharing data entails a degree of uncertainty and willingness to accept loss of control over the interpretation and use of the information:

> I think it is useful to get a list of 100 people, where yes, there is a 20 per cent chance that each of them may or may not have match the DNA profile you have at the crime scene. In a major investigation, a list like that is very valuable, and you can start working on closing that list of people and looking at … are there any of them that we have other information about that could confirm the suspicion against them. Whereas what they thought .., at least that time, was, 'No, we shouldn't give out that kind of information.' (Kripos)

The DNA people wanted human beings in the loop and were against spreading uncertain information despite time considerations. Conversely, others argued for the need to disseminate information from abroad to the police districts much more quickly.

## *Expanding the platformization logic*

Interviews with participants in the project and the investigation report, sum up the 2017 year as: 'Omnia grew' (see also Østli, 2022). Kripos employees tell that registers were taken in, and others taken out, but the total number of police registers increased – from five to nine, then to fourteen – without the police's internal audit having found documentation on what information was to be loaded into Omnia and why. Palantir kept on with their enterprise of integrating more and more data. They were going to get the same payment, no matter how many registers were connected to Omnia. This ambition motivated police managers to collect everything, connect everything, and see what you got. In the quote below from a Police directorate leader, we see how the dream of unknown digital opportunities was still alive, two years after Omnia was closed down:

> I also think there is a lack of digital competence. What are the possibilities? We sit and think that we could do this, and we could do that, but I think it is very narrow compared to what we could actually achieve. We don't know, we're not good enough to go out and talk to those companies and hear what they can offer and what opportunities exist there, in the private sector. Because the police have no culture to do that, we don't do that (Police Directorate).

The manager sees the absence of a practice more in line with a digital surveillance approach where you look at the data you have and find the potential, rather than a bureaucratic approach where the goals come first, and the methods are connected afterwards. This manager's view can serve as an example of how the management logic has

put political management in the background to increase cost efficiency (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011). Although the police leadership in Norway is not politically elected, this becomes important when management logic has more room for action than political logic. The manager thus challenges the bureaucratic logic where the definition of problems and possible solutions is a matter for the state, with procurement rules regulating contact with private companies that may provide solutions.

While both Prüm and Omnia were operating in an inter-organizational system, Omnia also had the ability to collect data from open sources. Stretching the organizational boundaries for interaction and information exchange opens the way for other logics to penetrate and influence organizational norms. The growing tensions increased opposition between the managers and the part of the staff that was concerned about professional ideals and values:

> Many were in favour and some were against. And then there are some who are clearly much more forward-looking and want change, and there are some who were then … The reactions were almost like that … In such discussions, people become more Catholic than the Pope … So, there was really just very, very great resistance to change. They wanted to do it their way, and there was nobody who dealt with it … It was not addressed at any higher level either. That should have been done, between Kripos and POD at the highest level. (Police Directorate)

Another manager also says that the problem was that these challenges were not addressed higher up the hierarchy, between the Police Directorate and Kripos.

An internal audit concluded that the management of the project had too much faith in Palantir's ability to deliver integrations and interoperability. There were several clashes between the professional and platformization processes. Competition in the markets between suppliers played an important role. Loyalty to expertise clashed with loyalty to the system, and a more decentred distribution of professional power collided with a more self-regulated expansion of the platform. There was friction between loyalty to the system and the professional's loyalty to the output, aggravated by the managers' lack of collective responsibility and organizational loyalty. The managers and other leaders were too distant to handle disputes while the platform was being built, and the hierarchy lost the power to lead the project.

There was also disagreement among the police and data protection staff and managers about the legality of integrating the data. Critics of the project argued that ultimately Omnia went against Norwegian law. Both the Privacy Act and the Police Register Act stipulate that the police should only process information when it has a clear purpose and must process as little information as possible to perform the task. However, stakeholders and managers claimed in interviews that it was internal tensions and power play that ended the project, not the questionable legality of the data integration. By December 2019, the steering group for Omnia still did not know whether the disclosure of personal data in the system was legal (Mortvedt, 2020).

## Discussion and concluding remarks

This case demonstrates that the introduction of digitalization is not merely the use of a tool but can be described as socio-technical process of domestication marked by frictions

and tensions (Barley, 1990). Identical technologies can be implemented quite differently in similar organizations (Orlikowski, 1993). Implementing ICT systems must be understood as a process of social restructuring that involves new actors, logics, and systems of governance interacting with established institutional logics. Analysis of conflicting institutional logics stemming from socio-technical and material objects, reveals how police staff experiences of the symbolic, material, and cognitive aspects of logics are of importance in domestication processes. The struggle for market dominance also fueled the conflict between established and new suppliers. Reorganization of the police is thus a political question, and not just the choice of a tool, as is claimed in the Proposition to the Parliament on changes to the Police Act (Prop. 61 LS (2014-2015)). A central point is that the introduction of a new surveillance structure and logics may affect underlying power structures in the organization and trigger power struggles.

We have analysed how Palantir represented a different institutional logic. The agile implementation logic was met with resistance from internal staff who wanted control over the data integration process. The surveillance rationalities that underpinned the platform also faced resistance from the police, who needed accurate data. While Prüm was compatible with the bureaucratic logic, Omnia was inspired by a surveillance logic that would integrate more and more data, at the expense of data quality. The surveillance logic clashed with the police's professional logic. However, it was more compatible with the managerial logic because it placed more emphasis on efficiency and resource utilization than on considerations such as the processing of personal data and privacy. Accepting a lower level of accuracy was at odds with the professional logic's need for quality assurance. Any set of management practices must include some assumptions about how people think, and what motivates them (Pollitt, 2013, p. 347), and our analysis indicates that managers were motivated by the opportunity to connect data 'for free' and needed a success story. This brought the dream of 'knowing what the police know' closer.

According to Lounsbury and Boxenbaum (2013, p. 4), there is a 'growing recognition that conflicting and overlapping pressures stemming from multiple institutional logics create interpretive and strategic ambiguity for both organizational leaders and participants … '.

People may ignore, comply, or resist situations involving competing logics, but they can also be persuaded by rhetorics (Pache & Santos, 2013). In the present case, few were persuaded, and very few of those with practical involvement. Palantir's IT engineers were perceived as outsiders in the police organization and did not integrate smoothly into the established police environment. Police DNA specialists and police IT staff/data protection staff experiencing the project as end-users, found there were issues with the data visualizations and integration of the police databases. Palantir IT teams continued to work on what they were good at, the creation of interoperability, as in Egbert's (2019, p. 86) description of the platformization of policing:

> This implies a comprehensive datafication of policing, understood as the development of police work that is increasingly driven by data gathering and data mining with an internal drive toward a stronger interconnection of databanks, data sets, authorities, and offices.

However, there was too much resistance from various actors. In line with previously mentioned police research on data-driven policing, this finding shows that there are many manual processes that limit automation, skepticism towards private providers,

and obstacles to turning the police into a surveillance machine (Brayne, 2021; Egbert & Krasmann, 2020; Egbert & Leese, 2021; Leese 2023; Marciniak, 2023). In this case, the totalizing tendencies of platform policing can explain why the project went on for so long before it was halted. To a certain degree, our findings show data becoming a major currency, and there is a calculative logic in this type of policing. Platform policing has user activity as its source, and non-use stops the business.

## Notes

1. The *Morgenbladet* journalist Hanne Østli, published an important series of articles between 22 October 2021 and 6 January 2022, together with a methods report (Østli, 2022).
2. https://www.algorithmic-governance.com/agopol2021-2024, https://cuppresearch.info/
3. https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2013-09-20-1097/KAPITTEL_11#KAPITTEL_11

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