Dr. habil. Nils Zurawski, Hamburg University
Position: Senior Researcher at the Institute for Criminological
Research at the University of Hamburg

Research interests: surveillance, security, urban studies, violence
and conflict, identity

Migration, Security and communal stress – what is at stake and are cameras the only solution?

Migration, mass migration in particular is always a challenge for the receiving countries and societies, on any level. Human history is a history and migration and adaption to migration, changes, challenges , successes and failures. The local or communal level is the place where immigrants meet the locals, the autochthonous and where society has to interact with migrants, This has always been a stressful situation, but it is fair to say that discourses have changed over time and currently the migrant signales danger, threat, terror and has become an issue of security.

Security itself has changed the debate around migration. It almost has become interchangeable. And when speaking of security or insecurities as being raised by migrants and other potential public dangers the solutions seem foremost technical, i.e. video surveillance, biometric passports, increased border controls and so forth. The latest surge of measures that have been discussed by the conference of the German home ministers is a catalogue just now, highlight this appetite for technological solutions to a human issue, often framed as a problem. Migrants from this perspective have almost become a moral panic, to which a very limited understanding of the concept of security seems to be the only answer.

But what actually is at stake when communities, cities, neighbourhoods are confronted with numbers of migrants? What are their problems, challenges and their resources? How can new relations be established, what are good ways of communication and an overall framing of the often stressful and difficult situations? And finally are the proposed security measures the appropriate means to tackle those problems and if, at what costs?

Or, do these measures and means aim at an altogether different goal – if so which?

In my presentation I want to discuss the potential for technological security measures in relation to issue of migration, analyse their consequences for society at large and offer ideas and interventions to think about different ways of engaging with potential threats, i.e. in a more emancipatory manner, as I would argue that such security measures and the employed

rhetoric also hold the mainstream society hostage to unwanted effects and harmful consequences.