Forward

This book builds upon my Master's thesis, defended in June 2022 at the University of Florence. To maintain the integrity of the original work, I have not incorporated subsequent developments or contributions to the literature. However, a couple of years later, the themes discussed in these pages seem even more pressing and relevant.

In December 2023, the European Union reached a political agreement on the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, intensifying the role of risk assessments and screening procedures in migration governance. In August 2024, the Artificial Intelligence Act came into force. While it represents a partial response to some of the questions raised in this book at the crossroads between human rights protection and technological experimentation, it nonetheless largely falls short in regulating the complexities of AI in border management. Today, the digitalisation of borders, particularly in terms of surveillance and patrolling, remains a central and growing concern.

At the same time, encouraging efforts are emerging to challenge digital patrolling practices at the European Union's external borders, with cases being brought before national and supranational courts. These cases often tell the story of tragic incidents, such as the shipwreck off the coast of Pylos, Greece, in June 2023, resulting in the deaths of over 600 people. Despite the ongoing investigation, it has become increasingly clear that the vessel was detected long before the disaster through aerial patrolling activities.

The academic debate surrounding these topics has expanded considerably and continues to shape my current research, which now focuses on the datafication of human mobility in West Africa as part of my PhD studies. The reflections in this book form the foundation of my ongoing work and mark an important step in this journey.

FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)
Alice Fill, *Digital Patrolling. Emerging Bordering Practices around Europe*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0,
published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0577-1, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0577-1

This work has greatly benefitted from the vibrant collective debate within the emerging field of digital migration studies, which explores the intersections of technology, human rights, and border practices. While I cannot mention here everyone who dedicated time to explore these questions together, I am deeply grateful. My deepest thanks go to my supervisor, Veronica Federico, for her unwavering guidance, support, and invaluable advice. I am also very grateful to Georgios Glouftsios, whose insights were precious in the early stages of this project. Special thanks to Francesco Strazzari, Francesca Capone, and Luca Raineri, whose generous mentorship has inspired me since I first stepped into a university classroom. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Peter Burgess and Alice Riccardi for their invaluable supervision during my doctoral journey, as well as for encouraging me to develop my Master's thesis into this book. I am further grateful to Davide Tomaselli for his attentive reading and his cherished friendship. Finally, I would like to thank the Guido Galli Award Committee for making this publication possible. Any remaining errors, of course, are entirely my own.

Lastly, my deepest thanks go to Giulio, my family, and my friends. Your love, care, and support sustain me every day, and I am profoundly grateful to have you by my side.

Paris, September 2024