In December 2023, Reuters reported on a curious novelty in a Brazilian prison: Geese were now patrolling a green space between the prison's inside fence and main outer wall. "Staff say the vigilance of the geese make them excellent guard animals, even more so than dogs." These geese make an outstanding addition to the security guards already patrolling the prison, its electronic surveillance systems, and, last but not least, its architectural design. Such an interplay of heterogeneous components is of great interest to the Collaborative Research Center 1369 "Cultures of Vigilance", which investigates the historical and cultural foundations of vigilance. Constellations of vigilance not only occur in areas that are normally associated with surveillance, such as prisons or public security. Constellations of vigilance can be found across the entire spectrum of vigilance cultures examined by the CRC, be it when safeguarding the law, within the fields of public health or religious salvation, as well as in the designs of cultural staples aimed at captivating and holding attention, e.g. in literature, theatre and cinema. The CRC's annual conference will address the difference that arises between the dominant idealization of individuals as vigilant subjects ('the attentive individual') and the tacit realization of vigilance in the form of distributed acts of vigilance in which the individual is only partially and temporarily involved. Our conference in 2024 seeks to attend to the manifold configurations of vigilance, its mechanisms and conditions.

For one, spatial conditions have an impact on forms of vigilance, which is why the CRC conceptualizes these assemblages of heterogeneous elements as 'settings'. Various forms of architecture can, for example, structure what can be perceived from different positions in a given space. In addition, technologies can further diversify how attention is distributed. Such technologies need not be high-tech cameras with facial recognition software, but can also be low-tech in nature. The bells attached to sheep by shepherds, for example, let them know when a herd requires attention. Spiritual beings, such as guardian angels, are often integrated into constellations of vigilance where they can both activate and direct attention.

For the conference in particular, the following aspects are of importance to us. It is crucial to clarify how the above-mentioned diverse elements interact and how their interaction is perpetuated, for example through modes of mutual observation, warnings, eye contact, sounds, changes in behavior, etc. Moreover, it is also necessary to shed light on the distribution of agency within a given setting. When is the attention of those involved required and when not? To whom is it attributed, who demands it, and by whom is it negated?

We are also interested in how discourses, ideologies, semantics and encodings shape a setting and provide scripts that define processes, responsibilities, the distribution of tasks and handover points within it, but also dramatize the failure of a constellation of vigilance. The question of the degree of planning involved in a respective constellation must be specified and examined: Was a given constellation of vigilance deliberately arranged or did it emerge as an efficient interaction historically? It is also very important to take the role of media into account.

Did the instruments employed serve to expand or improve the cognitive range of vigilant individuals (e.g. through telescopes, directional microphones, lighting conditions) or did they stimulate, focus and stabilize the directing of attention (warning signals, devotional images, etc.)? Continuities and discontinuities that take place over time must also be examined, i.e. the historical specificity of certain constellations as well as their adaptation due to new threats or past failures. In short, how are constellations made permanent, and who is responsible for the repair work?

Given the complexity of this topic, contributions to the conference should aim to highlight the historical diversity and variability of these constellations of vigilance through the analysis of particularly striking examples. Further attempts to systematize the interaction of the various heterogeneous elements involved are also welcome.

## Abstracts

**Sonja Dümpelmann (Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society)**
*Planting Vigilance:*
*Philadelphia's Twentieth-Century Window Gardening Campaigns and the Safety of Public Space*

In late nineteenth-century Philadelphia window gardening became an integral component of Progressive reform and social charity. In the mid-twentieth century, window gardening received renewed attention as a means of grassroots activism to counter urban decay resulting from racism and public disinvestment. This lecture shows how female philanthropists and grassroots activists used outdoor window boxes and their plants to protect domestic private space and increase the safety of urban public space. Plant growth, wellbeing, and care became a proxy for the health, comfort, and vigilance of humans, their homes, and neighborhoods.

**Christian Hummert (Agentur für Innovation in der Cybersicherheit)**
*From Resilience to Vigilance – Is it Smart to Hand over Responsibility to Machines?*

In the wake of the recent history of increased cyberattacks through fake news and propaganda, but also increased incidents of cybercrime, cyber resilience has been widely discussed, but wouldn't it be wiser to demand cyber vigilance? Before society endures cyberattacks, it would be better to ward them off. Furthermore, we are currently transferring more and more responsibility to machines, in particular through the increased use of so-called artificial intelligence. As a result, we are increasingly losing our sense of personal responsibility. How does this coincide with the demand for vigilance?

**Saki Kikuchi (CRC Cultures of Vigilance)**
*Constellations of Heaven and Earth: Stargazers in the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century BC*

In ancient Mesopotamian cosmology, events and natural phenomena were believed to be governed by the will of the gods. Stars and planets, literally "constellations" in the night sky, were considered divine manifestations and their messages. To seek divine guidance, Assyrian kings in the 7th century BC employed stargazers and organized a reporting system for celestial observations. However, these observations were still made with the naked eye, without instruments like telescopes or specialized observatories. The talk investigates whether any mechanisms in Assyrian stargazing regulated or enhanced the observer's attention, despite the absence of specialized instruments or spatial conditions.

**Andrew Lakoff (University of Southern California)**
*Warding off Extinction: Endangered Species Protection as a Constellation of Vigilance*

As a mode of attention, vigilance is concerned to detect—and avert—the onset of an impending threat. In the case of endangered species protection, a heterogeneous arrangement of actors and devices is brought together to track and care for a threatened collective of nonhuman beings. In this paper, I look at a setting in which the effort to measure and protect endangered species is both technically controversial and politically fraught: the management of water operations in California, which endangers the existence of native species of fish, and which engages multiple actors with conflicting aims in a struggle over how to interpret and act upon the signals produced by an apparatus of vigilance.

**Anna Meiser (CRC Cultures of Vigilance)**
*Forest, Village, Resources – Who Watches What and Why in the Amazon?*

There are various actors watching over the Amazon Rainforest: Indigenous inhabitants, the state, (inter)national NGOs, resource extraction companies and non-human beings. Each has distinct interests: the integrity of one's own territory and social relations, environmental protection, the technological infrastructure of resource extraction, and the spiritual order of the forest. That leads to different constellations of vigilance within the rainforest, which accordingly results in different networks of vigilance. The presentation will discuss the initial findings from field research conducted as part of subject A10 and the resulting extensions and modifications to the theoretical model of "setting".

**Fabrizio Nevola (University of Exeter)**
*Looking Up and Looking Down: Eyes on the Street in Early Modern Italy*

Terminology describing the practices of surveillance and vigilance post-date the early modern period in Italy. Yet a range of evidence from the material culture of public space, as well as various social practices, attest to sensory regimes that could be both formally imposed or more collectively adopted to regulate urban behaviours. Focusing on such visual traces this talk explores how the metaphor of wakefulness might serve as a way to think about the agency of public space at this period.

**Jörg Oberste (Universität Regensburg)**
*The Dark Metropolis. Disputes on Public Safety and Neighborly Self-help in Late Medieval Paris*

When King Louis IX first took precautions to light the streets of his capital Paris at night in 1254, it was out of concern for public safety in the rapidly growing metropolis. Further measures to curb crime and establish a central police authority led to constant conflicts with the Parisian landlords, who exercised jurisdiction in the city's neighborhoods with their own organs and resources, as late as the 13th century. In everyday life in Paris in the late Middle Ages, the population's need for security and the struggle for control of the city can be seen from a comparison of the records from the royal institutions and from the various neighborhoods

**Brendan Röder (CRC Cultures of Vigilance)**
*Of Men, Animals, and Instruments: Early Modern Alarm Systems as Constellations of Vigilance*

The wind blowing from a certain direction moves a weather vane, which sounds a specific bell. The toll of this bell causes a specially trained dog to bark, which in turn wakes up the sleeping human guard. Such was the mechanism that artisans in 17th-century Augsburg reportedly used to warn of wind conditions unfavorable to wax production. The talk analyzes alarm mechanisms composed of heterogeneous elements that were employed in urban contexts. I argue that their significance went beyond mere playfulness and curiosity, illustrating crucial issues surrounding early modern ideas of vigilance. Alarm systems served a variety of important functions, including security, quality control, and the self-promotion of cities. At their core, these mechanisms celebrated human ingenuity while simultaneously highlighting the limits of human vigilance alone. While some thinkers and planners developed increasingly elaborate mechanisms to compensate for and overcome such limitations, theologians drew on images of these alarm systems to illustrate the futility of relying on worldly security and the need for spiritual rather than material vigilance.