Title: The Glitch in the Machine: Biometric Governance of Child Migrants in the EU
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Abstract

This thesis investigates the constitution of the unaccompanied minor as a political subject within the European Union's biometric border infrastructure. Moving beyond traditional narratives of humanitarian vulnerability or sociological agency, the research employs the heuristic device of the 'unfingerprinted child' - a 'glitch' in the administrative machine - to interrogate the operational logic of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Utilising a poststructural policy analysis based on Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach, the study traces the governance of the minor across three legislative regimes: the Dublin III Regulation, the 2024 Eurodac Recast, and the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Drawing on theories of data colonialism and the politics of possibility, the thesis argues that the EU's biometric architecture actively dehumanises the minor, transforming them from a subject of care into an object of data. The analysis demonstrates a trajectory of governance from logistical containment (where the child is mapped), to coercive extraction (where the child is mined as a resource), and finally to pre-emptive enclosure (where the child is commodified as a tradable asset). Ultimately, the research concludes that the 'unfingerprinted child' represents a persistent trace of human subjectivity that the totalising logic of the biometric state seeks to render impossible.

Keywords: Biometric Borders, Child Migration, Data Colonialism, Eurodac, WPR Approach, EU Asylum Policy.

1. Introduction: The Glitch in the Machine

1.1. Vignette

In 2022, while working for an NGO in an area in the United Kingdom with a high level of asylum seekers, I worked with a young unaccompanied minor who had recently arrived via a dangerous small boat crossing after a complex journey across Turkey and the EU. During our work together, the conversation turned to their journey across the continent. With an almost weary, but slightly cheeky, sense of accomplishment, they mentioned that despite traversing multiple European borders, they had never once had their fingerprints taken.

They, unsolicited, described a navigational strategy, describing how they had avoided police checkpoints and resisted attempts at registration in transit countries, only having their fingerprints taken by authorities once reaching the UK. This was not a story of triumphant evasion, but a recounting of survival. This young person possessed a profound working knowledge of the European asylum system, understanding that to give up their biometric data was to be tied to a specific geographical point, in their case a stateon the periphery of the EU where they had no support network, and where conditions were known to be poor. To remain 'unfingerprinted' was to retain the right to future movement and the potential hope of family reunification. In that moment, the child before me was not just a vulnerable subject in need of care, but a knowledgeable actor navigating a hostile digital terrain.

This encounter serves as the foundational heuristic device for this thesis. By treating this narrative not merely as an anecdote but as a methodological tool, we can pry open the logic of European migration infrastructure to reveal the underlying friction. The vignette exposes a 'glitch' in the machine that is the EU's migration infrastructure: it reveals that the Eurodac system, designed to be a totalising database of all irregular entrants, is actually porous and somewhat opaque. Moreover, it highlights that the 'unfingerprinted child' is not merely a passive victim of the border, but a subject who actively interacts with, and resists, the technological infrastructure of

the state. The sad reality of this encounter lies in the necessity of this knowledge; it reveals a childhood suspended by logistics, where a minor must understand the intricacies of biometric databases, borders and migration infrastructure simply to maintain agency over their own future and safety.

1.2. The Empirical Puzzle: The Glitch

This young person represents a limit case for the EU's migration machine. The entire logic of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), from the Dublin III Regulation to the Eurodac database, is built on the assumption that the migrant body is legible, trackable, and datafiable. The system assumes that the body is the identity and is there to be readily recorded.

However, when the child refuses to be fingerprinted, or when their biological features fail to register on the scanner, the machine stalls. The system cannot calculate their risk, determine their responsible Member State, or process their deportation. This thesis takes this specific moment of friction, the collision between the 'unfingerprinted' subject and the totalising database, as its primary object of analysis.

1.3. Research Question and Significance

Traditional scholarship on child migration often splits into two distinct narratives: a humanitarian critique that focuses on the child's vulnerability and need for protection, or a sociological focus on the child's agency and resilience in navigating borders. While valuable, these approaches often overlook the technological infrastructure that creates these conditions.

This thesis shifts the analytical lens to a techno-political critique. It uses the figure of the 'unfingerprinted' child not as the sole object of study, but as a critical lever to expose the wider operational logic and violence of the EU's biometric migration infrastructure.

The central research question guiding this inquiry is:

'How is the minor constituted as a political subject within the EU's biometric infrastructure?'

This question is analytical. It avoids assuming a fixed 'child' that is simply acted upon and instead

asks how the 'machine' actively produces a new type of subject – one from which data is to be extracted. This allows the thesis to argue that the minor is constituted through two distinct logics: first, as a resource constituted through extraction, and second, as a risk constituted through calculation.

By answering this, the research contributes to the field of critical migration studies by revealing that the biometric border does not merely track the child, but fundamentally alters their political existence, transforming them from a subject of care into a unit of data, a package of logistics, or a tradable, valuable financial entity.

1.4. Methodology: Investigating the Machine

To interrogate this problem, this thesis conducts a poststructural policy analysis, specifically utilising Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach (2009; Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). This methodology challenges the assumption that policies are neutral 'solutions' to fixed problems. Instead, it asks how the 'problem' (e.g., the unfingerprinted child) is constructed by the policy itself.

The analysis is conducted on a specific archive of texts, that form the foundation of biometric migration governance in the EU: the Dublin III Regulation, the Eurodac Regulation, and the newly adopted New Pact on Migration and Asylum. These texts were selected as they all reveal different facets of how a child experiences biometric data collection while migrating irregularly into or across the EU. The vignette of the unfingerprinted child is used throughout as a heuristic device, a lever to pry open these legal texts and expose the silences, assumptions, and violences embedded within them.

1.5. Outline

Following this introduction, the thesis establishes its academic and theoretical grounding. Chapter 2 is a literature review, situating the research within the intersection of sovereignty, the 'digital turn' at the border, and child migration studies. Chapter 3 details the WPR methodological approach. Chapter 4 explains the theoretical framework, drawing on concepts of data colonialism,

biometric borders, and legibility. Chapter 5 provides the context to the research, in the form of a genealogy of the current system, tracing the historical shift from territorial borders to the post-2015 emphasis on biometric compliance.

The analysis turns to three layers of EU legislation over three chapters. Chapter 6 examines the Dublin III Regulation, arguing that its hierarchy of evidence constitutes the minor as a logistical unit. Chapter 7 analyses the Eurodac Recast, demonstrating how the lowering of the fingerprinting age and the use of coercion constitute the child as a raw resource for extraction. Chapter 8 investigates the New Pact's Screening Regulation and AMMR, arguing that the 'fiction of non-entry' constitutes the child as a tradable asset. Finally, Chapter 9 synthesises these findings, looks at limitations of this thesis, reflects on difficulties facing migration governance in the EU, and proposes further lines of study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Nation-State and the Management of Mobility

The relationship between the modern nation-state and the control of human mobility is a foundational theme in political sociology and migration studies. While contemporary debates often focus on the 'crisis' of arrival, historical scholarship reminds us that the regulation of movement is intrinsic to the formation of the state itself. As John Torpey argues in *The Invention of the Passport*, the modern state is defined not merely by its monopoly on violence, but by its monopolisation of the 'legitimate means of movement' (2000, p.6-10). Torpey traces how, prior to the late 19th century, movement was relatively unregulated or controlled by local entities. The introduction of the passport and the border checkpoint represented a shift towards a nationalised control grid, creating a world where the 'right to move' became dependent on state authorisation. In this view, the border is the physical manifestation of sovereignty, establishing the legal threshold that distinguishes the citizen, they who belongs, from the alien, who must ask for permission (Ibid.).

However, a significant body of critical migration studies literature argues that this control is not purely administrative but deeply performative. De Genova (2013) posits that the border is a 'spectacle', or a scene of exclusion where the state performs its sovereignty for a domestic audience. He argues that 'illegality' is not a natural characteristic of a person, but a legal status produced by the law itself. Building on this framework, Scheel (2019, p.182-203) argues that biometric databases like Eurodac intensify this production of illegality by establishing a condition of 'cyber-deportability', where the migrant is haunted by their data even when physically evading capture – their biometrics have already been captured. By creating laws that are impossible to comply with, the state manufactures a population of 'illegal' migrants whose eventual deportation or detention serves as a public demonstration of state power.

Yet, there is a tension between this literature of exclusion and the specific legal architecture governing the European asylum system today. The Dublin Regulation, which assigns responsibility for asylum claims to the first country of entry, relies on a foundational legal fiction known as the 'presumption of safety' (European Parliament and Council 2013, p.31). This presumes that all Member States adhere to identical human rights standards, rendering the transfer of an asylum seeker from Northern Europe to the external frontier (e.g., Greece or Bulgaria) a mere internal, administrative transfer rather than a deportation to danger. While the

'sovereignty' literature effectively critiques the state's intent to immobilise, it often treats the border as a static line on a map. It establishes why states control movement, but it is less equipped to explain the evolving technological infrastructure. Specifically, how this control survives when the physical wall is replaced by an entry in a database.

2.2. The Digital Turn: From Territorial to Biometric Borders

In response to the limitations of physical border studies, a distinct wave of scholarship has engaged with the 'digital turn' in migration management. Scholars such as Broeders (2007) and Amoore (2006) argue that the border has effectively delinked from the geographic edge of the territory and relocated into the database. In this paradigm, the border is no longer just a physical barrier to be crossed but a status to be carried. Broeders (2007) describes this as the emergence of the 'smart border', where surveillance is ubiquitous and access to mobility is differentiated based on data profiles.

This shift fundamentally alters the subject of border control. As Lyon articulates, the physical body of the traveller is increasingly secondary to its 'data double' (2014, p.6), the digital profile composed of biometric identifiers, travel history, and risk scores. For the border guard, the 'truth' of the subject is found not in the person standing at the desk, but in the screen. If the data double is 'clean' (no hits in Eurodac or SIS), the physical body is allowed to pass; if the data double is 'contaminated' (a hit, or a flag), the physical body is detained. This creates a dangerous hierarchy of evidence where the algorithmic output is privileged over the human narrative, and the data that 'travellers' and 'migrants' produce becomes something to be tapped for algorithmic risk pre-emption.

This body of work also highlights a temporal shift in governance. Bigo (2014) and Amoore (2006) further argue that biometric borders operate on a logic of pre-emption. Unlike traditional criminal justice, which punishes past acts, the biometric border seeks to identify and neutralise future risks. Large-scale databases like Eurodac do not only record who has entered; they are used to calculate what kind of person might move to which places, and what risk that might pose. By sorting travellers into categories of risk, the state attempts to manage the uncertainty of the future. However, as Ajana (2013) critiques, this process is not neutral. Biometric technologies do not simply 'read' identity; they construct it, reducing the complex, messy reality of human life into a binary code that the state can process.

Crucially, this technological infrastructure cannot be understood separately from the

history of colonial extraction. Recent scholarship has begun to bridge the gap between surveillance studies and postcolonial theory. Jacobsen (2015) has documented how humanitarian interventions in the Global South, such as UNHCR refugee camps, often serve as laboratories for biometric technologies that are later deployed at the European border. Similarly, Couldry and Mejias (2018) introduce the concept of 'data colonialism', arguing that the contemporary era is defined by the appropriation of human life so that data can be extracted from it for value.

In this framework, the migrant's body is treated as a natural resource; a site of extraction. Just as historical colonialism justified the seizure of land by declaring it terra nullius (nobody's land), data colonialism justifies the seizure of biometric data by framing it as 'exhaust' or a 'security necessity' that is naturally available to the state. However, while this literature provides a powerful critique of the machinery of control, it frequently treats the data subject as a generic adult, ignoring the extra rights that are usually afforded to children. There is a scarcity of research investigating how these extractive logics apply to those who fall outside standard categories of security risk, such as children.

2.3. Children in Migration: Vulnerability and Agency

Parallel to the literature on surveillance is the extensive scholarship on child migration, which has traditionally been split into two distinct narratives: the child as passive victim and the child as active agent.

The dominant legal and policy discourse frames the unaccompanied minor primarily through a lens of vulnerability. This literature is heavily influenced by analysis of the 'Best Interests of the Child' (BIC) principle enshrined in international and EU law (See Dublin III Regulation; European Parliament and Council 2013, p.32). While they admit it to be well-intentioned, scholars like Bhabha (2009) have critiqued this framework for its tendency to depoliticise the child. In order to receive care, the child must perform the role of the innocent victim, stripping them of political agency. Bhabha argues that this creates a conditional inclusion where the child has rights only as long as they remain a child; the moment they age out, the state's benevolence evaporates, revealing the violence of the border regime that was always present.

Conversely, a growing body of sociological and anthropological work has sought to highlight the 'agency' of migrant children, shifting focus from the regulations themselves to how children navigate them. These studies emphasise the resilience of young people, exploring how they navigate complex migration regimes, maintain transnational family networks, and make strategic decisions about their mobility (see Ni Laiore et al, 2010). For example, research on

secondary movements often reveals that what the state categorises as absconding is, for the child, a rational strategy to reach family support networks that the legal system fails to recognise.

However, a critical gap remains. The literature on child migration focuses heavily on the social and legal navigation of the border but rarely engages with the technological infrastructure. While we know how children navigate social networks, there is limited understanding of how they navigate the biometric border. The 'unaccompanied minor' is extensively studied as a legal subject and a social being, but rarely as a 'data point'.

2.4. Conclusion: The Analytical Gap

A review of the existing state of the art reveals a distinct gap at the intersection of these three fields:

1. The Sovereignty literature explains the state's intent to immobilise and the performative nature of the border.
2. The Surveillance literature explains the machinery (databases, biometrics, risk calculation) used to achieve this, and the colonial logic of extraction that underpins it, yet it implicitly assumes an adult subject.
3. The Child Migration literature explains the subject (the child) and their social agency, but often isolates them from the technological context of their governance.

There is a scarcity of research that examines how the 'machine' of biometric datafication specifically targets the 'minor'. A fingerprint does not recognise 'agency', nor does an algorithm account for 'vulnerability'. This thesis seeks to fill that gap. By treating the 'unfingerprinted child' as a critical case, it analyses what happens when the logic of biometric capture collides with a subject defined by legal exception and biological instability. It asks how the EU's migration architecture attempts to process a subject that does not fit neatly into its algorithmic logic, and what this friction reveals about the system itself.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction to the Methodological Approach

This thesis adopts a poststructural approach to policy analysis to investigate the intersection of biometric data systems and the migration of unaccompanied minors. Traditional approaches to policy analysis often operate within a 'problem-solving' paradigm, assuming that 'problems' are fixed, exogenous entities waiting to be addressed by government interventions (Bacchi, 2009, p.1). In contrast, this research proceeds from the premise that policies are constitutive; they do not merely address problems but actively shape and produce them as particular types of problems (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.13-14).

Consequently, this thesis does not ask 'how well' the Dublin Regulation or Eurodac systems function in managing the movement of children. Instead, it asks: *how is the 'problem' of the child migrant represented within these legal and technical architectures?* By shifting the focus from 'problem-solving' to 'problem-questioning' (Bacchi, 2009, p.xvii), this methodology exposes the deep-seated assumptions, silences, and effects that underpin the European border regime.

To operationalise this poststructural critique, the research employs Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach. This analytical strategy is applied to a specific archive of legal and technical documents ('The Machine') and interrogated through the use of a narrative vignette constructed as a 'Glitch'; an anomaly derived from professional practice that disrupts the smooth functioning of the policy logic.

3.2. The Analytical Framework: Bacchi's WPR Approach

The WPR approach is a framework intended to facilitate critical interrogation of public policies (Bacchi, 2009). It challenges the assumption that policy is a neutral, technocratic exercise, arguing instead that 'we are governed through problematisations', instead of being goverened by standalone policies, which have not been produced by trying to fix some kind of problem (Bacchi, 2009, p.xi). A 'problem representation' is the understanding of the 'problem' implied in any specific policy proposal. For instance, a policy that proposes increased biometric surveillance implies that the 'problem' is a lack of data or insufficient levels of identification.

Bacchi (2009, p.2) outlines six interrelated questions to guide this interrogation. In line with

Bacchi and Goodwin's (2016, p.24) advice that researchers may draw selectively upon these questions depending on the specific analytical task, this thesis focuses primarily on four of the six questions, mapped across two analytical chapters. See below for a precise mapping of where these questions are used, and how.

3.2.1. Application of WPR Questions

The analysis is structured to move from the legal construction of the problem to its lived effects:

- For Chapter 6 (The Legal Machine): The analysis focuses on Question 1 (*'What's the 'problem' represented to be?'*) and Question 2 (*'What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?'*). This allows for an excavation of the 'unexamined ways of thinking' (Foucault, 1977, cited in Bacchi, 2009, p.xv) regarding sovereignty and mobility that underpin the Dublin III Regulation.

- For Chapter 7 (The Infrastructure & The Glitch): The analysis builds on the problem representations identified in the legal framework (Q1 and Q2) to interrogate the specific technological implementation. It specifically pivots to Question 4 ('What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?') to expose the erasure of coercion, and Question 5 ('What effects are produced?') to examine the 'dividing practices' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.51), separating subjects into 'readable' data packets and 'unreadable' anomalies.

- Finally, for Chapter 8 (The Architecture of Pre-emption), the analysis returns to Question 1 to identify the new problem representation of 'illegibility' itself, while using Question 4 to critique the silence around the production of vulnerability and Question 5 to examine the commodifying effects of migration regulation on the migrant subject.

3.3. The Analytical Process

To move from theoretical questions to concrete analysis, the research followed a three-step iterative process:

1. Immersion and Identification: The selected legal texts (Dublin III and Eurodac Regulations) were subjected to keyword searching to identify references to biometrics, children, families, coercion, among other terms. Subsequently, a close reading of identified sections of the regulations to identify key binaries, frictions and 'prescriptive logics' (e.g., adult/child, authorised/unauthorised, trusted/untrusted). This stage mapped

the construction of the EU's biometric border in the regulation.

2. Juxtaposition (Creating Friction): The analysis then moved to a process of juxtaposition. The static logic of the regulations ('The Machine') was read against the narrative beats of the vignette ('The Glitch'). This involved placing specific articles of the law side-by-side with the specific systemic failures depicted in the narrative to identify points of friction.

3. Interrogating the Silence: Where the narrative revealed a complexity that the law could not account for (e.g., the child's refusal of biometrics, biometrics of children not being easy to capture, testimony vs biometrics), this was coded as a 'silence' or a 'glitch.' The analysis then asked: *What assumption about the human subject was incorrect to produce this glitch? How has the subject of the child migrant been produced by this regulation?*

3.4. The Vignette as a Methodological Device

A central challenge in this research is rendering visible the 'lived effects' of abstract policy documents Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.23). To achieve this, the thesis begins with a vignette (the story of 'The Unfingerprinted Child') as a heuristic device, which will be referred back to in the analysis.

It is important to clarify that this vignette is not a 'case study' in the traditional sociological sense, nor does it attempt to claim a representative sample size. Instead, consistent with poststructural analysis, the child's narrative serves as a counter-code or lever; a lens through which the policy documents are read, to uncover previously unseen frictions.

Bacchi (2009, p.2) argues that we must look for where the policy 'fails' or what is left 'unproblematic.' In this thesis, the child functions as the 'Glitch' in the system. In technical terms, a glitch is a short-lived fault in a system that reveals issues with the underlying system; it is an error that the software or hardware cannot process. Similarly, the 'Unfingerprinted Child' represents the limit of the 'Machine's' logic. The child is an anomaly that the legal and technical infrastructure of Eurodac cannot fully calculate, categorise, or deport.

By placing the narrative of the 'Glitch' alongside the rigid text of the Eurodac Regulation, the methodology functions to disrupt the taken-for-granted logic of the policy. It allows the research to move beyond a textual analysis of the law and ask: *what happens when the binary logic of the algorithm encounters the ambiguity of the human subject?*

3.5. Data Selection

Consistent with Foucault's suggestion to analyse 'prescriptive texts' (Foucault, 1986, cited in Bacchi, 2009, p.34), the primary data for this thesis consists of the legislative and technical documents that constitute the European migration control apparatus. Following the work of Stoler (2002), this archive is read 'against the grain' to reveal not just what the EU explicitly says in its legislation, but the anxieties and silences within legislation that help to structure the production of the 'unfingerprinted child' as a subject.

The specific documents selected for analysis are:

1. The Legal Framework**:** Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 (or Dublin III Regulation). This text is analysed to understand how the 'problem' of secondary movement is legally constructed. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014 will be used a supporting document here, as it legislates the criteria of evidence accepted under the Dublin Regulation.
2. The Technical Framework**:** Regulation (EU) No 603/2013 (or Eurodac Regulation). This text is analysed to understand the presuppositions regarding the 'truth' of the body and the reliance on biometric data as a tool of governance.
3. The Future Totalising Framework: The documents analysed here will be Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 (or the Screening Regulation) and Regulation (EU) 2024/1351 (or Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR)). These texts represent the future architecture of the regime. They are analysed to expose the construction of the 'fiction of non-entry' and the shift towards pre-emptive containment at the external border.

Inclusion Criteria:

This archive is intentionally limited to the constitutive legal texts. Implementation reports, NGO critiques, and wider policy debates have been excluded from the primary analysis. This is to ensure the focus remains strictly on the internal logic and infrastructures embedded within the laws themselves, rather than their variable application by individual states.

3.6. Positionality and Ethical Considerations

The vignette used in this thesis is derived from the author's professional practice in migration support services in the UK. All effort has been named to anonymise the interaction, with no exact location, gender, age or other potentially identifying features discussed.

Ethical Considerations:

While the narrative is grounded in real encounters, it has been constructed as a composite narrative. It does not depict one specific identifiable child, which would raise complex ethical issues regarding consent and data protection. Instead, the 'Glitch' is a crystallization of multiple professional recollections, abstracted to serve as a methodological tool. It represents a recurring systemic failure rather than a singular biography.

The use of this narrative acknowledges the researcher's positionality not as a distant observer, but as a participant who has witnessed the system 'error' firsthand. This aligns with the WPR directive to apply questions to one's own problem representations (Bacchi, 2009, p.19). Using the vignette of the 'unfingerprinted child' as a heuristic device is therefore an exercise in 'reflexivity' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.24), using the interaction between professional experience and public policy to generate new knowledge, and reveal points of friction within policy and its problem representations.

3.7. Methodological Limitations

This research is a policy analysis, not an ethnography. Its conclusions are drawn from the logic of the texts and the structural violence inscribed within them. While the vignette provides a glimpse into the lived reality, this study does not claim to document the empirical or narrative experiences of a wide range of children, nor the discretionary practices of individual border guards. Instead, the focus remains strictly on the 'problem representations' (Bacchi, 2009) embedded in the legislation and the systemic effects they produce.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Introduction: The Child as Data Point

This thesis investigates the collision between the biological and lived realities of the child migrant and the digital rigidity of the European border regime. To understand this collision, it is insufficient to view the border merely as a line on a map, a wall/fence, or a site of humanitarian crisis. Instead, this research frames the border as a site of data extraction, risk calculation, and state legibility. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that guides the analysis, consisting of Data Colonialism as articulated by Couldry and Mejias, Biometric Borders and Risk as defined by Amoore, and Legibility as conceptualised by Scott. Together, these theories provide the vocabulary to interrogate the glitch, or the unfingerprinted child, not as a simple administrative failure, but as a subject who is forced to resist the fundamental logic of the state; the need to reduce human life into a processable data flow.

4.2. Data Colonialism: The Appropriation of Life

The primary theoretical lens for this thesis is Data Colonialism, as articulated by Couldry and Mejias (2019). This framework posits that we are witnessing a new phase of colonialism that is not defined by the seizure of land, but by the appropriation of human life so that data can be extracted from it for value (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p.336). Crucially, this theory challenges the assumption that data is a naturally occurring resource. Just as historical colonialism required the legal fiction of terra nullius to justify land seizure, data colonialism relies on the naturalisation of data capture (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p.339). Data is framed as exhaust that is simply there for the taking (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p.340). This extraction is not merely administrative; it follows a capitalist logic of accumulation. The datafied subject becomes a tradable commodity within the state's economy, an asset to be stored or a liability to be offset, as will be shown in Chapter 8.

However, this thesis contends that Couldry and Mejias do not go quite far enough in exposing the stark brutality of this regime of data colonialism, as they apply it solely to the context of Big Tech and the massive increase in social media use and subsequent data extraction. While the border regime has undoubtedly learnt or borrowed extraction techniques from the commercial

data sector, there is a fundamental divergence in the method of capture. Ultimately, profit-making companies such as Facebook or Google do not physically coerce six-year-olds into handing over their biometric data. The underbelly of data colonialism in the context of migration infrastructure is the state monopoly on violence, which transforms data extraction from a transaction of convenience into an act of physical coercion. In the context of this thesis, the migrant child is not viewed by the state as a subject of care, but as a site of involuntary and/or coerced extraction of data. The EU biometric infrastructure, specifically Eurodac, operates on a colonial logic in that it claims an inherent right to mine the child body for biometric data to fuel its administrative systems. When the child in the vignette refuses to be fingerprinted, they are not just breaking a rule but resisting the colonial claim that their body is a natural resource readily available to the state for extraction.

4.3. Biometric Borders and the Politics of Possibility

To understand how this extraction operates at the border, the thesis draws on the work of Louise Amoore.

4.3.1. The Biometric Border

Amoore (2006, p.338) argues that the border has shifted from a static geopolitical line to a portable 'biometric border' carried by the body itself. In this paradigm, the border is not a place one crosses, but a status one carries. The body becomes the 'indisputable anchor' of identity.

Crucially, this process creates a 'data double'; a digital abstraction of the subject (Haggerty and Ericson, cited in Amoore, 2006, p.340; Lyon, 2014, p.6). The state governs this digital shadow rather than the human being, allowing it to ignore the physical reality of the child if it conflicts with the data. This concept is essential for analysing the 'New Pact' (Chapter 8), particularly the 'fiction of non-entry', where the child can be physically present on EU soil but legally 'outside' because their biometric status has not been validated.

4.3.2. The Politics of Possibility

Furthermore, this thesis engages with Amoore's (2011) concept of the 'data derivative' and the shift from probability to possibility. Traditional border control managed probable risk based on past history (e.g., criminal records). The contemporary biometric regime seeks to pre-empt possible future risk. By flagging a child as a 'security risk' in Eurodac (Chapter 7) or detaining them for screening in a legal but fictitious state of 'non-entry' (Chapter 8), the system acts on what the child might become, rather than what they have done. The 'glitch' of the unfingerprinted child is dangerous precisely because it is a variable that cannot be calculated.

4.4. Legibility: Seeing Like a State

Finally, to understand the state fixation with the unfingerprinted status, and fingerprint data more generally, the thesis employs James C. Scott's concept of legibility (1998). Scott argues that the modern state cannot govern complex, messy social realities and instead must simplify them into standard grids to make them legible for administration (Scott, 1998, p.2–3). He explicitly notes that for officials to comprehend a population, 'complex reality must be reduced to schematic categories' (Scott, 1998, p.3). The grid, whether an urban plan or a biometric database, is the tool that makes this oversight possible, allowing the state to locate and identify subjects within a uniform field of vision. In the migration context, the child's narrative, consisting of their family links, history and potential of trauma or vulnerability, is illegible to the database. It is complex, qualitative, and unverifiable. The fingerprint, however, is a perfect unit of legibility as it is unique, binary, and machine-readable; a modern digital equivalent to the 'permanent surname' Scott identifies as the state's first attempt to fix the identity of its mobile subjects (Scott, 1998, p.65). This theory supports the analysis of the Dublin III hierarchy in Chapter 6, where List A evidence or biometrics trumps List B evidence or testimony. The violence of the state, whether through the logistics of transfer or the coercion of fingerprinting, is fundamentally an attempt to force the illegible human subject into a legible data format. The glitch is the moment where the subject refuses to be simplified.

4.5. Conclusion

This theoretical framework provides the necessary tools to interrogate the specific types of subjectivity constructed by the EU's biometric infrastructure. By synthesising these frameworks, the analysis moves beyond a critique of policy failure to expose how the biometric regime actively constitutes the minor as a political subject across three distinct legal regimes.

In the analysis of the Dublin III Regulation presented in Chapter 6, Scott's concept of 'legibility' reveals how the minor is constituted as an administrative subject. The regulation privileges machine-readable biometric data (categorised as 'List A' evidence) over the child's complex, qualitative testimony. Through this hierarchy of evidence, the state attempts to simplify the messy reality of the child's life into a manageable logistical unit. In this regime, the minor's capacity to speak is effectively erased; they are rendered not as a subject with rights, but as a legible parcel to be transferred within the administrative grid.

Chapter 7 utilises Couldry and Mejias' concept of 'data colonialism' to interrogate the Eurodac Recast Regulation, arguing that the minor is constituted here as a resource for extraction. The legislative expansion of the biometric dragnet, specifically the lowering of the fingerprinting age and the authorisation of coercion, is not merely a security measure but a colonial claim to the child's body as a natural resource that must be mined to fuel the state. Within this framework, the 'glitch' is identified as the critical moment where the minor reasserts their political agency by resisting this appropriation.

Finally, Chapter 8 employs Amoore's 'politics of possibility' to analyse the New Pact, specifically the Screening Regulation and the AMMR. These new laws constitute the minor as a risk subject. Through the 'fiction of non-entry', the state governs the child based on algorithmic predictions of what they might become (a security threat or an economic burden) rather than who they are in the present. In this architecture, the subject is pre-emptively enclosed before they even legally arrive on European soil. In summary, this theoretical triad provides the vocabulary to understand the 'unfingerprinted child' not merely as a technical error, but as a political figure whose very existence challenges the totalising logic of the biometric state.

5. Context: A Genealogy of the Biometric Border

5.1. Introduction: How did we get here?

To understand how the 'unfingerprinted child' has come to be represented as a systemic threat, we must apply Carol Bacchi's third question: How has this representation of the 'problem' come about? This requires a genealogical approach. As Bacchi (2009, p.10-11) argues, genealogy does not seek to trace the gradual evolution of progress, but to identify the accidents, struggles, and shifts in power that constitute the present moment.

The current EU migration architecture, defined by the imperative to extract biometric data from children, is not the result of a single coherent plan. Rather, it is the product of a specific historical trajectory where the 'freedom' of the internal market (Schengen) was made conditional on the 'security' of the external frontier (Eurodac).

This chapter traces three specific genealogical threads that have converged to create the 'glitch' in the system that is represented by the 'unfingerprinted child':

- The Technological Shift: The move from territorial borders to 'smart' biometric databases, which creates the "Machine" analysed in Chapter 6.
- The Political Catalyst: The 2015 'migration crisis', which reframed the lack of data as a security deficit, leading directly to the coercive measures analysed in Chapter 7.
- The Legal Construction: The emergence of the 'unaccompanied minor' as a distinct, contradictory category of governance, a tension that the New Pact attempts to resolve in Chapter 8.

5.2. From Borders to Databases

The origins of the Eurodac system lie in the foundational paradox of the European project: the abolition of internal borders necessitated the hardening of external ones. When the Schengen Agreement (1985) dismantled physical checkpoints between EU Member States, it created a perceived 'security deficit'. To compensate for this loss of internal control, the state required a

new method to track movement.

This introduced the logic of 'compensatory measures' (Broeders, 2007). This marked the birth of the 'smart border', where the physical wall was replaced by the digital firewall. The border was no longer a line on the ground, but a status check in a database.

Eurodac (or the European Dactyloscopy) was established in 2003 not primarily as a counter-terrorism tool, but as a bureaucratic device to prevent 'asylum shopping'; the practice of applying for asylum in multiple Member States. Its original problem representation was administrative; how to enforce the Dublin Convention by linking an applicant to their first country of entry.

This historical shift establishes the 'machine' that will be deconstructed in Chapter 6 (The Logistics of Containment). By reducing the asylum seeker to a fingerprint, the system created a new hierarchy of truth where the biometric match became the 'indisputable anchor' of identity (Amoore, 2006, p341-2). The 'problem' was no longer just unauthorised entry; it was illegibility. As Scott argues, the state began to require further 'schematic categories' to better manage its population through migration (1998, p.2-3), rendering the unfingerprinted child an anomaly from the beginnings of the system.

5.3. The 2015 'Crisis'

If Eurodac provided the infrastructure, the 2015 'long summer of migration' provided the political imperative to tighten the screws (Kasparek and Speer, 2015). The collapse of the Dublin system during this period, when hundreds of thousands of people moved from Greece to Northern Europe without registration, was framed by EU policymakers not merely as a humanitarian emergency, but as a systemic failure of identification and data capture.

As the European Commission (2015a) stated in the European Agenda on Migration, the immediate priority was to restore "control" over the external border, explicitly linking the crisis to a failure to "swiftly identify, register and fingerprint" incoming migrants. The inability of frontline states to register arrivals was identified as the root cause of "secondary movements", which had caused the collapse of the Dublin system, and threatened the integrity of the Schengen zone.

This genealogical pivot is crucial for understanding the analysis in Chapter 7 (Governing the Glitch). The 'problem' was no longer about managing asylum applications; it was about 'regaining control' of the migrant's digital shadow. This shift legitimised a new level of violence against the subject.

In May 2015, the Commission issued a Staff Working Document on the implementation of the Eurodac Regulation. For the first time, this document explicitly argued that Member States were permitted to use "coercion as a last resort" and detention to obtain fingerprints, provided it was 'proportionate' (European Commission, 2015b, p.5). While the document ostensibly retained safeguards, the message was clear: the integrity of the database superseded the bodily integrity of the subject. This moment historically reveals the 'legislative war against biology' that we will observe in the 2024 Eurodac Recast (Chapter 7).

5.4. The Legal Unaccompanied Minor: Between 'Child' and 'Migrant'

The final piece of this genealogy is the construction of the 'unaccompanied minor' (UAM) itself. This category is not a neutral descriptor, but a legal construction born from the friction between two competing frameworks: International Human Rights Law (specifically the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and EU Migration Law.

Smyth (2023) conceptualises this not merely as a tension between care and control, but as a systemic conflict between the 'principle of mutual trust' and fundamental rights. In her analysis of the Dublin system, she demonstrates that the minor is torn between two legal identities.

As a 'child': They are a subject of rights, theoretically shielded by Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which mandates that the 'best interests of the child' must be a primary consideration in all actions taken by public authorities.

As a 'migrant': They are a subject of administrative distribution, governed by the 'principle of mutual trust'. This principle, which Smyth identifies as the "cornerstone" of the EU's area of freedom, security, and justice, creates a legal presumption that all Member States are safe. It prioritises the "swift processing of asylum applications" and administrative efficiency over the individual circumstances of the applicant.

Crucially, Smyth argues that despite the rhetorical prominence of the 'best interests' principle, the Court of Justice of the EU has failed to carve out any significant "exceptionality for children" within the Dublin regime (2023, p.260). By refusing to disapply the principle of mutual trust for minors, the legal system effectively allows the 'migrant' status to override the 'child' status. This legal prioritisation sets the stage for the analysis in Chapter 8, where the New Pact does not

resolve this tension but codifies the victory of the 'migrant' logic, merging the child into a pre-emptive security workflow where 'mutual trust' silences the claim to protection.

5.5. Conclusion: The Production of the Glitch

By tracing these three threads, the technological reliance on the 'smart border', the post-2015 obsession with 'secondary movement', and the erosion of the child/migrant distinction, we can see that the 'unfingerprinted child' was not produced as a subject by accident. They are the inevitable product of a system that has, especially in its most recent developments, made datafication the prerequisite for political existence.

The 'glitch' identified in the vignette is the result of a specific historical process that stripped the border guard of discretion and replaced it with the binary logic of the database. The child who says "they never got my prints" is speaking back to a twenty-year history of identifying security with biometrics.

6. The Logistics of Containment: Analysis of the Dublin III Hierarchy

6.1. Introduction

This chapter interrogates the foundational legal architecture of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), specifically focusing on Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, hereafter referred to as the 'Dublin III Regulation'. The Dublin System is an agreement where EU member-states agreed to place responsibility for the care of asylum-seekers on the individual state where the asylum seeker first entered the EU.

The stated intent of this regulation, as outlined in its preamble, is to provide a 'clear and workable method' for determining which Member State is responsible for an asylum application, ostensibly to ensure 'rapid access' to protection (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.31). However, traditional policy analysis often accepts these stated goals at face value, measuring the system's success by its efficiency or processing speeds. By contrast, shifting the analytical lens from 'problem-solving' to 'problem-questioning' through Carol Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach allows for a deeper excavation of the political rationalities embedded within the text.

This analysis argues that Dublin III does not represent the 'problem' as the protection of a vulnerable child or the 'equitable' distribution of humanitarian responsibility; instead, it problematises unauthorised mobility as 'secondary movement', a logistical 'error' in the inventory management of humans that must be corrected. To explore this, this analysis employs the heuristic device of the 'glitch in the machine': the narrative of the 'unfingerprinted child' who declared, 'they never got my prints'. This child functions as a disruption to the smooth logic of the law regarding biometric anchoring to physical locations. By reading the Dublin III Regulation with the vignette in mind, we can see how the child's lack of biometric data functions as a systemic anomaly that exposes the rigid, data-dependent assumptions of the CEAS 'machine'. Using Louise Amoore's (2006) concept of 'biometric borders', Scott's (1998) concept of legibility, and Couldry and Mejias' (2019) theory of 'data colonialism', this chapter reveals how Dublin III seeks to extract administrative value from the body, transforming the refugee into a 'data double' that can be managed, stored, and 'taken back' to the periphery of Europe.

6.2. Problematising Mobility: 'Secondary Movement'

Applying Bacchi's (2009, p.2-3) first question ('What is the "problem" represented to be?') reveals that the Dublin III Regulation is constructed around a central representation of unauthorised mobility between Member States not as an act of survival, but as a threat to systemic integrity. This mobility is legally codified as 'secondary movement', which the administrative 'machine' represents as a risk that must be managed through the fixedness of biometric data.

Article 7 of the Regulation establishes a strict hierarchy of criteria to 'fix' an applicant to a single jurisdiction (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.39). While Articles 6 and 8 ostensibly prioritise the 'best interests of the child' and family reunification, a critical WPR reading exposes a deep tension between these humanitarian goals and the Regulation's operational need for calculability. Under Article 8(1), an unaccompanied minor's responsible state is determined by the presence of a family member or sibling (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.39). However, the definition of 'family member' in Article 2(g) is restrictively narrow, confined largely to the nuclear family unit which may not reflect the child's lived reality or extended kinship networks (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.36).

For a child to invoke Article 8, they must provide verifiable information that satisfies a heavy evidentiary burden. In the absence of 'hard' evidence (such as DNA tests or official documentation like birth certificates) the system defaults to Article 13: the 'Entry and/or stay' criterion. This article assigns responsibility to the Member State whose border the applicant irregularly crossed, binding the child to the point of biometric capture rather than the point of safety (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.40). This default mechanism reveals the Regulation's underlying logic: the preservation of the 'first country of entry' principle often overrides the rhetoric of child protection.

As Amoore notes, the allure of biometrics for state actors is that the physical body becomes an 'indisputable anchor to which data can be safely secured' (2006, p.342). This default to Article 13 exemplifies James C. Scott's logic of 'legibility', the state's drive to simplify complex social reality into readable, 'schematic categories' (1998, p.2-3). The state cannot process the messy, human complexity of family ties or the desperate motivations for travel; it requires a readable grid of geographical entry points and timestamps. By prioritising Article 13 in practice, the Regulation writes a script where the child's narrative is irrelevant unless it can be verified with the same 'scientific' certainty as a fingerprint.

In practice, the child's existing community networks (an uncle in Germany, or a cousin in Sweden, for example) are rendered invisible to the 'machine' if they cannot be proven through the 'hierarchy of evidence'. When the 'Unfingerprinted Child' skirts around the system, they act as the 'glitch'. By denying the state his fingerprints in a country like Greece, they refuse to be anchored to a specific set of coordinates. He creates friction that forces the 'machine' to stall and, however reluctantly, engage with the child's narrative voice rather than their digital data. Their refusal to be readable is an act of resistance against a system that seeks to reduce them to a set of datapoints.

6.3. The 'Take Back' Mechanism: Commodification and Logistics

To further understand how the 'problem' is represented (Bacchi 2009, p.2-3), we must examine the administrative language found in Chapter VI of the Regulation, specifically Articles 23, 24, and 25, which govern the procedures for 'Take Back' requests. The terminology of 'Take Back' is revealing; it employs the logic of logistics and warehousing rather than the language of rights or welfare. It frames the asylum seeker not as a subject with agency, but as a parcel that has been misdelivered, and must be 'taken-back' by those who have responsibility for it.

Under Article 18(1)(b), a Member State is 'obliged' to take back an applicant who has lodged an application in another Member State or who is on the territory of another Member State without a residence document (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.42). This process is often an automated 'bureaucratic trigger' initiated by a Eurodac match, referred to in Article 24(2) as a 'Eurodac hit' (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.45). The use of the word 'hit' further dehumanises the subject, reducing their history to a binary data match.

This process exemplifies what Couldry and Mejias (2019, p.336) define as 'data colonialism': the 'appropriation of human life so that data can be extracted from it for value'. In the CEAS, the 'value' extracted is administrative efficiency and border integrity. The child's body is treated as a natural resource that must be 'owned' by a specific territory to ensure the database remains a complete and closed loop. Under Dublin III (Article 18), the child is reduced to a transferable unit of responsibility (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.42). If the child from our vignette were fingerprinted in Italy and later apprehended in Denmark, the 'Take Back' mechanism under Article 23 would categorise them as an object to be returned within strict time

limits; two weeks if based on a Eurodac 'hit' (Article 25(1)) (European Parliament and Council, 2013, p.45).

The state's concern in this transaction is not the child's welfare, but the management of external borders through biometric and legal infrastructure. By remaining 'unfingerprinted', the child forces the system to treat him as a human subject whose location cannot be automatically 'corrected' by a database query. The child disrupts the commodification of his body into a logistical unit.

6.4. The Hierarchy of Truth: Analysing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014

The 'deep-seated assumptions' (Bacchi 2009, p.2) regarding the nature of truth and evidence in the CEAS are codified in the evidentiary rules of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 118/2014. This regulation establishes two distinct lists of evidence that govern the determination of responsibility: List A ('Probative evidence') and List B ('Circumstantial evidence') (European Commission, 2014, p.10-16). A close reading of Annex II of this Regulation reveals a profound epistemic bias.

List A contains 'formal proof which determines responsibility... as long as it is not refuted by proof to the contrary' (European Commission, 2014, p.10). The primary item in List A is a 'positive match by Eurodac' (European Commission, 2014, p.11). Other items include DNA or blood tests (European Commission, 2014, p.10). These are biological, data-driven markers that the state considers irrefutable.

Conversely, List B consists of 'indicative elements' which are merely 'refutable' and require the claimant to provide 'detailed and verifiable statements' (European Commission, 2014, p.10). This includes the child's own testimony or statements from family members. The Regulation explicitly states that List B evidence is insufficient on its own unless it is 'coherent, verifiable and sufficiently detailed' (European Commission, 2014, p.44).

This hierarchy creates a profound epistemic violence. The Regulation assumes that the 'truth' of the asylum seeker is found on the screen of the border guard, not in the person standing at the desk. As Couldry and Mejias argue (2019, p.339), this process 'naturalises' data capture, stripping the subject of their own history until it is processed into a format legible to the state. The child's voice is rendered suspect, while his fingerprint is rendered authoritative.

When the child refuses fingerprinting, he denies the Machine its 'List A' truth. This forces the bureaucracy to descend into the 'messy', qualitative world of 'List B' evidence, the child's narrative. The 'glitch' is the moment the machine is forced to 'hear' the human voice because the biometric output is missing. It is a moment where the administrative and biological certainty of biometric databases collapse, and the state must grapple with the ambiguity of the human subject, coming face-to-face with that which is outside of easily codifiable 'schematic categories' (Scott, 1998, p.2-3).

6.5. The Fiction of Safety and the M.S.S. Judgment

The Dublin system relies on a foundational legal construction: the 'presumption of safety' or 'mutual trust' (European Parliament and Council 2013, p.31&33). The Regulation assumes that all Member States adhere to identical human rights standards, making the transfer of a child from the UK to Greece only an administrative act, rather than a violent deportation to danger. This presumption is embedded in the very structure of the Dublin III Regulation, which allows for transfers to occur almost automatically once responsibility is established.

This fiction was severely challenged by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece (2011) case. The Court found that the presumption that all EU states are safe is rebuttable. Specifically, it ruled that 'the Greek authorities have not had due regard to the applicant's vulnerability as an asylum-seeker and must be held responsible, because of their inaction, for the situation in which he has found himself for several months, living on the street, with no resources or access to sanitary facilities' (ECtHR 2011, p.53).

Crucially, the Court found that Belgium had violated Article 3 of the Convention because the authorities 'knew or ought to have known that he had no guarantee that his asylum application would be seriously examined by the Greek authorities' (ECtHR 2011, p.75). By transferring the applicant back to Greece, the Belgian authorities 'knowingly exposed him to conditions of detention and living conditions that amounted to degrading treatment' (ECtHR 2011, p.77).

While Dublin III includes Article 3(2), which binds states to this case law and prevents transfers where there are 'substantial grounds for believing that there are systemic flaws' (European Parliament and Council 2013, p.37), the operational logic remains unchanged. The 'default setting' is still that the system is entirely safe, and 'secondary movement' is a criminal act of evasion rather than a rational flight from violence, detention and living conditions which amount to degrading treatment.

The child's 'illegibility' is a rational response to this fiction. When the 'Unfingerprinted Child' navigates the gap between the 'legal map' (which claims Greece is safe) and the 'territorial reality' (which proves it is not), their refusal to provide prints can be viewed as a survival strategy. He knows that to be fingerprinted is to be 'fixed' in a place of potential danger. The child's status as a 'glitch' is their only remaining defence against a totalising system that values his data more than his life.

6.6. Conclusion: The Unprocessable Child

This WPR analysis has moved beyond the binary of the 'passive victim' versus the 'heroic resister'. The 'unfingerprinted child' is an unprocessed subject in a datafied border regime. Dublin III represents the state's attempt to logistically map the migrant, converting human life into a 'data flow' that can be managed and stored.

When the data is missing, the Machine stalls. The 'Glitch' reveals the system's fragility and the extractive, colonialist logics that underpin it. It exposes the fact that the system is designed to manage data, not people. As the analysis moves to the Eurodac Expansion in Chapter 7, we will see how the state attempts to eliminate this friction by lowering the threshold of capture to children as young as six, seeking to make the 'unfingerprinted body' a legal and practical impossibility.

7. Governing the 'Glitch' (The Eurodac expansion)

7.1. Introduction

The 'unfingerprinted child' is not merely an administrative anomaly; within the logic of Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 (the Eurodac Regulation Recast), the unfingerprinted child represents a profound epistemic failure. This chapter employs Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach to interrogate the text of the 2024 Recast.

Bacchi (2009) argues that policy is not a neutral response to existing conditions, but a 'representation' that constructs the 'problem' it claims to solve. By analysing the discursive shift in the 2024 Recast, this chapter argues that the Regulation constructs the absence of biometric data not as a technical limitation, but as a security deficit. The 'problem' represented is that the child is 'illegible', and the solution offered is a massive expansion of coercive extraction.

Through the lenses of Couldry and Mejias' (2018) 'data colonialism' and Amoore's (2011) 'data derivatives,' this analysis reveals how the 'glitch' triggers a violent reassertion of the state's desire to render human life into a calculable risk score.

7.2. The Logic of Extraction

Applying Bacchi's first question: 'what is the 'problem' represented to be?' (Bacchi, 2009), reveals that the EU legislature frames 'illegibility' as a primary threat to the bloc's asylum and migration management system's integrity.

7.2.1. The Expansion of Legibility (Article 14)

The 'extraction imperative' is most visible in the aggressive lowering of the biometric threshold. Article 14(1) mandates that 'biometric data of minors from the age of six shall be taken' (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.26). This represents a significant expansion of the state's gaze, effectively treating the six-year-old child not as a subject of care, but as a resource for data extraction.

Crucially, Recital 44 frames this expansion as a protective measure, claiming it will 'assist

Member States in guaranteeing the adequate protection of children' (ibid, p.8). However, the operational logic of the text enacts what Couldry and Mejias (2018) define as 'data colonialism': the 'appropriation' of human life so that data can be extracted from it for value. In this context, the child's biological data is appropriated not for their own benefit, but for the value of administrative efficiency in the Dublin system. The text constructs a representation where an 'unfingerprinted' child is inherently unsafe, justifying the invasive biometric mining of their body as a necessary act of kindness, protection and care.

7.2.2. Naturalising Extraction (Article 42)

How does a state justify extracting biological data from a six-year-old? Bacchi's second question asks us to identify the presuppositions or assumptions that underpin a specific policy representation (Bacchi, 2009, p.11). The Regulation assumes that the violence of extraction can be neutralised through specific methods of sharing information with children as young as 6 years old.

The provision on information (located in the transparency obligations) mandates that 'the procedure to capture biometric data shall be explained to minors by using leaflets, infographics or demonstrations... specifically designed in such a way as to ensure that minors understand it' (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.49).

This provision performs a distinct ideological function, which Couldry and Mejias describe as the 'naturalisation' of data relations (2018, p.339). For colonial extraction to succeed, social life must be reframed as an 'open resource' for extraction. By using 'leaflets' and 'infographics,' the Regulation attempts to mask the coercive nature of the interaction (a uniformed official pressing a child's hand onto a glass plate, with no right to refusal or the ability to give informed consent) and reframe it as a neutral administrative procedure. The 'problem' is represented not as the coercion itself, but merely a lack of explanation. The text assumes that if the child 'understands' the procedure via a cartoon or mime, the ethical violation of using extractive practices on their body for data is resolved.

7.3. The Assumption of Availability of Data

The Regulation proceeds from the assumption that the refugee body is naturally available to the state. The 'glitch' arises when the body resists this availability, either through biological

immaturity or active refusal. When the child from the vignette in the introduction states 'they never got my prints', they are effectively removing themselves as a 'resource' for data to be extracted from, protecting themselves from the regulation that seeks to geographically anchor them. The regulation operates on the logic that the biometric data exists and is there to be captured for the sake of 'national security' or 'migration governance'. By refusing to have offered their hand for fingerprinting, the child in the vignette disrupts the extraction of data. It is this refusal that Article 13(3) seeks to crush. This article aims to ensure that the 'glitch' of the unfingerprinted child is corrected by force if no other means are successful.

7.3.1. Coercion as 'Last Resort': Article 13

The tension between fundamental rights and administrative extraction of biometric data is most visible in Article 13(3). The text authorises 'the possibility to use means of coercion as a last resort' to ensure compliance (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.25).

While Article 14(1) qualifies this for minors by stipulating that 'a proportionate degree of coercion may be used', the Regulation remains silent on what constitutes 'proportionate' force against a 6-year-old (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.26). Bacchi (2009, p.12-14) urges us to look for 'silences' in the policy representation. Here, the Regulation leaves unproblematic the physical violence required to coerce a child's hand onto a scanner, and despite mentioning proportionality, and distinguishing between acts of 'force' and 'coercion', make no specific reference to what level of violence is acceptable as a 'proportionate degree of coercion' (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.26).

The text creates a legal paradox: Article 13(1) commands that Member States 'shall require those persons to provide their biometric data'. Because the data must be obtained to solve the 'problem' of illegibility, 'last resort' does not mean 'optional'; it means 'inevitable.' The child who resists extraction is not viewed as a subject exercising rights, but as a resource refusing to be mined.

7.3.2. Retaking the Fingerprint: Article 15

The 'glitch' surfaces where the legal mandate crashes against biological reality. Article 15(1) demands that if fingerprints are of poor quality, Member States must 'retake the fingerprints... no later than 48 hours' after the failed attempt (European Parliament and Council,

2024c, p.27).

This assumes that the failure to capture data is procedural. However, the requirement to 'retake' presupposes that the body can be read if simply subjected to more administration. The 'glitch' here is the friction between the developing human body (often with damaged fingertips from travel or manual labour) and the rigid technical standards of the state's biometric extraction architecture. The Regulation legislates against biology itself, punishing the child for their physical opacity. The EU's own research backs up this argument.

Research by the European Commission (2013) challenges the idea that the 'unfingerprinted' status is just a procedural failure that requires a retake. In a technical study on fingerprint recognition for children, the Commission found that biological growth does not theoretically stop automated recognition. However, the interaction between the child and the scanner causes significant friction. The study notes that the smaller ridge distance in children creates specific problems for standard 500dpi scanners (European Commission, 2013, p.28-9). This distance is roughly 0.3 to 0.35mm for a ten-year-old. Crucially, the 'glitch' is often caused by the softness of the child's fingertip. The paper itself admits, in quite stark language, that children can 'have a significantly **different behaviour**' during the process, due to different understandings of the process or, put plainly, 'their children-specific attitude' (European Commission, 2013, p.29-30, emphasis in original). This behaviour can be viewed as 'less "cooperative" with respect to the objective of obtaining fingerprint images of an adequate quality' (Ibid.) This shows that the 'retake' rule in Article 15 does not merely correct a data collection error; it legislates against the child's natural behaviour and biology, demanding they suppress their biological and social reality to become legible to the machine.

7.4. The Logic of Calculation

Once the data is extracted, the Regulation shifts from a logic of identification (who is this?) to a logic of risk calculation (what threat might this be?). This operationalises what Louise Amoore (2011, p.2) describes as the 'data derivative,' where the goal is to 'derive a risk score or flag' for individuals based on disparate and often quite abstract data sources.

7.4.1. The Security Flag (Article 17)

Article 17(2)(i) introduces a new, potent data category: the 'security flag.' It mandates the

recording of whether a person 'could pose a threat to internal security' if they are found to be armed, violent, or if there are mere 'indications' of involvement in serious offences (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.29).

The use of the verb 'could' is revealing here; it signals a shift from a legal logic of punishment for past acts to a pre-emptive logic of security prediction against future threats. As Amoore (2011, p.25) argues, contemporary border security operates on a 'risk-based system' that relies on 'inferences' rather than certainties. By flagging a subject based on 'indications' rather than convictions, the Regulation unmoors the child from their factual history and anchors them instead in a speculation about their future criminality. In Amoore's terms, this security flag functions as a 'data derivative', a visualised risk score that abstracts the subject from their complex biography and renders them as a single, actionable signal on a screen (Amoore, 2011, p.24). The 'problem' represented here is not necessarily that the person is dangerous, but that they represent an unknown variable that must be flagged for the 'screens of border guards' (Ibid.). By bringing a possible future threat into the present, the security flag authorises immediate intervention, ensuring that the 'data double' travels ahead of the child, pre-emptively defining them as a risk before they even speak.

7.4.2. Defining 'Violent Behaviour'

How is this threat defined? Recital 8 states that a security flag should be applied if a person is 'violent' (European Parliament and Council, 2024c, p.2). It defines 'violent' as displayed behaviour that 'results in physical harm to other persons'.

When placed alongside the previously discussed Article 13(3) concerning the legal right for states to 'coerce' children into handing over biometric data, a potentially dangerous feedback loop emerges. If a border guard applies 'coercion' to a child, and the child flails, pushes back, or scratches the guard in panic, this reaction results in 'physical harm' to the border guard. Under the Regulation's logic, the child is now legally 'violent', and a security flag will likely be applied to that child in the Eurodac database.

This illustrates the generative power of the security algorithm. The child's defensive reaction to state violence is stripped of its context and converted into a data point that can be used to pre-empt future risk. The system does not record 'child panicked during coerced scan'; it records 'violent subject'. The 'glitch', or the refusal to submit to biometric data extraction, is therefore productively transformed into a risk category. In this way, the Regulation manufactures the very risk it claims to manage, using the child's resistance to justify their future intensified

surveillance and regulation of their mobility.

7.5. Conclusion: The Glitch as Systemic Friction

The WPR analysis of Regulation (EU) 2024/1358 reveals that the 'unfingerprinted child' figures in the EU's biometric imaginary not as a vulnerable subject requiring protection, potentially being at risk of trafficking, abuse or violence but as a systemic error that threatens the integrity of the biometric data infrastructure. The Regulation resolves this 'problem' of the unmapped body by operationalising two distinct yet interlocking logics: colonial extraction and biometric calculation.

First, the legal text enacts a colonial appropriation of the child's body. By lowering the fingerprinting age to six and authorising 'coercion as a last resort' (Articles 13 and 14), the Regulation treats the child's biology as a raw resource to be mined for administrative value, and implements legal infrastructure to aid this extraction. This extraction is justified through what Couldry and Mejias (2018) term the 'naturalisation' of data relations; the use of 'child-friendly' information materials serves to mask the structural violence and coerciveness of the encounter, reframing the invasive capture of biometric data as a benign and inevitable administrative task.

Second, the Regulation attempts to manage any residual resistance through a logic of calculation. The introduction of the 'security flag' in Article 17 ensures that any refusal to submit to extraction carries a probability of being converted into a data derivative of risk. Following Amoore (2011), this shifts the governance of the child from a factual assessment of history to a probabilistic calculation of future threat. The child's refusal is stripped of its political and social contexts and datafied as a security risk, in some ways manufacturing the very risk the system claims to manage.

Ultimately, the 'glitch' is not a technical failure, but a moment of profound political friction where the biological reality of the child refuses to be smoothed into a seamless data flow. The Eurodac Recast serves as a technological attempt to eliminate this friction, ensuring that no body remains unfingerprinted. As the analysis moves to the wider architecture of the New Pact (AMMR, screening regulation), it becomes clear that this drive for total legibility is not merely about identification, but about the pre-emptive enclosure of the migrant subject.

8. Moving forward: Analysis of the AMMR and the New Pact

8.1. Introduction

Throughout the preceding chapters, the figure of the 'unfingerprinted child' has been used to reveal a 'glitch' in the machine of European migration infrastructure, a moment of friction where the biological and lived reality of the child resists the administrative and extractive logics of the database. If the Dublin III Regulation (analysed in Chapter 6) represented the state's attempt to map the child logistically, and the Eurodac Recast (analysed in Chapter 7) represented the attempt to capture the child's data coercively, the newly adopted 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum' represents the system's ultimate attempt to eliminate the possibility of the glitch entirely.

This chapter applies the WPR approach to two foundational texts of this new legislative architecture, adopted in May 2024: the Screening Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1356) and the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) (Regulation (EU) 2024/1351). These texts do not merely update existing laws; they fundamentally reconfigure the epistemology of the border. By reading these texts with the vignette of the 'unfingerprinted child' in mind, this analysis argues that the New Pact does not solve the 'problem' of the child migrant's vulnerability, nor the danger of the child being coerced into handing over biometric data, which can result in deportation to an unsafe and/or relatively unknown EU country. Rather, applying Bacchi's first question: what is the 'problem' represented to be? (Bacchi, 2009, p.2), reveals that the New Pact problematises the existence of any subject who is 'illegible' to the state.

Through the theoretical lens of data colonialism, the New Pact acts as a mechanism of total enclosure. It seeks to close the loop on the 'unfingerprinted child' by creating a legal and technical environment where the body is captured, processed, and commodified before it legally enters the territory.

8.2. The Fiction of Non-Entry: The Biometric Limbo

A key pillar of this new architecture is the Regulation (EU) 2024/1356 (hereafter known as the Screening Regulation; European Parliament and Council, 2024b). This regulation introduces a uniform screening procedure for all third-country nationals who cross the external borders

without authorisation, apply for international protection at the border, or are disembarked following search and rescue operations (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.13). Its stated objective is to ensure that all such persons are identified and checked against relevant databases to verify whether they 'might pose a threat to internal security' (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.12).

Crucially, the Regulation constructs a specific legal status for these individuals, colloquially known as the 'fiction of non-entry'. Article 6 explicitly states that 'During the screening, the persons... shall not be authorised to enter the territory of a Member State' (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.14). This creates a profound legal paradox: the child's body is present on EU soil, detained by state authorities, and subjected to invasive biometric processing, yet legally remains in a state of suspension outside the territory, potentially with impending threats of removal.

This reveals what Louise Amoore describes as the 'biometric border', where the border has shifted, to no longer being a static line on a map, but a mobile status carried by the body (Amoore, 2006, p.338). By seperating physical presence from legal presence, the Regulation creates a legal limbo where the child can be managed as a data subject without being allowed the full set of rights normally associated with physically being in a territory. As Amoore notes, the border becomes 'portable' (2006, p.338); under the New Pact, the child carries the border with them until the state grants them the status of 'entered'.

This 'fiction' serves a specific colonial function. As Couldry and Mejias (2019, p.336) argue, colonialism requires the 'naturalization' of appropriation. By legally positioning the child as 'not yet entered', the state naturalises the extraction of their data as a prerequisite for entry, and therefore legal existence. The child in the vignette who refuses fingerprints is no longer just resisting a bureaucratic procedure; under Article 6 of the Screening Regulation, they are resisting the only mechanism that grants them legal reality. Without the data, they do not 'exist' within the territory, even as they stand upon it.

Furthermore, the Regulation extends this logic inwards. Article 7 mandates that screening also applies to persons 'illegally staying within their territory' if there is no indication that they were subject to controls at the border (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.14). This effectively extends the external border into the interior of the state, ensuring that the 'unfingerprinted child' can be retroactively subjected to the screening procedure and the fiction of non-entry, regardless of where they are apprehended.

8.3. Datafying Vulnerability: The Health and Security Nexus

If the 'fiction of non-entry' secures the child's physical body, the Screening Regulation's provisions on health and vulnerability secure their 'data double' (Amoore, 2006, p.337). Article 12 mandates a 'preliminary health check' and a 'preliminary vulnerability check' to be carried out by qualified personnel (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.17). On the surface, this appears to address a key humanitarian critique of the border regime: identifying special needs, torture victims and minors to provide support.

However, applying Bacchi's fourth question, 'what is left unproblematic in this problem representation?' reveals a critical silence (2009, p.12-14). The Regulation problematises the identification of vulnerability but remains silent on the production of vulnerability by the border regime itself. The 'problem' is represented as a lack of information about the child's body, which must be solved by extraction, which can occur under coercive conditions.

This process transforms the child's trauma into a data point. Under the 'logic of calculation' identified in the previous chapter, vulnerability becomes a sorting mechanism. Article 17 requires the completion of a 'screening form' which includes 'relevant information on the preliminary vulnerability check' (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.21). This form determines whether the child is channelled into the asylum procedure or the return procedure.

From a data colonialism perspective, this is the appropriation of human life 'so that data can be extracted from it for value' (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p.336-7). The value here is administrative sorting. The child's 'special needs' are not treated solely as a call for care, but as a variable in a risk algorithm that decides their fate. The 'glitch' of the traumatised child is smoothed out by converting their suffering into a standardised code on a screening form, rendering the messy reality of their suffering legible to the machine.

This is reinforced by the coupling of vulnerability checks with the mandatory 'security check' under Article 15 (European Parliament and Council, 2024b, p.19-20). The child's body is queried against databases including ECRIS-TCN (criminal records) and Europol data. As Amoore argues, this uses databases to 'profile and encode people according to degrees of riskiness' (2006, p.340). The child is thus constructed simultaneously as a subject of vulnerability (to be saved) and a subject of risk (to be secured against), with data serving as the deciding factor between these two states.

8.4. The Market of Biometrics: The AMMR and Solidarity

The final component of this pre-emptive architecture is the commodification of the migrant subject through the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) (Regulation (EU) 2024/1351). This Regulation repeals Dublin III and establishes a 'common framework' for managing asylum, based on the 'principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility' (European Parliament and Council, 2024a, p.1). This refers to solidarity and fair sharing between EU member states.

While the AMMR retains the core hierarchy of responsibility criteria found in Dublin III (family members, visas, irregular entry), it introduces a new 'solidarity mechanism' to assist Member States under 'migratory pressure'. Article 56 establishes an 'Annual Solidarity Pool' consisting of three types of measures: 'relocation' of persons; 'financial contributions'; and 'alternative solidarity measures' (European Parliament and Council, 2024a, p.52).

Crucially, the Regulation posits that these measures 'shall be considered of equal value' (European Parliament and Council, 2024a, p.52). The Commission's proposal sets a baseline for the pool at '30,000 for [the number of] relocations' and 'EUR 600 million for financial contributions' (European Parliament and Council, 2024a, p.25). Implicitly, this establishes a financial equivalency: the 'value' of relocating one human being is equated to a financial contribution of €20,000 (€600M / 30,000). This is a sum that reduces the 'unfingerprinted child' introduced in the introduction to a tradeable, €20,000 liability to be potentially exchanged between EU member states.

This represents the ultimate realisation of data colonialism in the migration sphere: the 'capitalization of life without limit' (Couldry and Mejias, 2019, p.336). The child migrant is no longer just a security risk or a logistical problem to be resolved; they are now a tradable asset/liability on the EU's balance sheet.

Applying Bacchi's fifth question (what effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'? (Bacchi, 2009, p.15-18)), we can see a profound dehumanisation. By constructing the migrant as a unit of 'solidarity' that can be offset by cash, the AMMR creates a market for bodies. Member States can pay to avoid the 'burden' of the child. This commodification strips the child of political subjectivity. They are not a subject with a right to asylum; they are a unit of 'migratory pressure' that can be traded, relocated, or paid off to maintain the equilibrium of the system.

This market logic connects back to Amoore's concept of 'risk pooling' (Amoore, 2006,

p.343). The Solidarity Pool functions like an insurance market, where states can hedge against the risk of 'mixed arrivals'. The 'unfingerprinted child' represents a claim that cannot be easily securitised or traded, thus threatening the rigidity of this infrastructure.

8.5. Conclusion: The Totalising Loop

The transition from Dublin III to the New Pact marks a shift from a reactive border regime to a pre-emptive, totalising architecture. The 'glitch', the child who exists but cannot be processed, is addressed not by accommodating the child's reality, but by constructing a legal and technical cage where 'non-existence' is the penalty for opacity.

By establishing the 'fiction of non-entry' through the Screening Regulation and the 'market of bodies' through the AMMR, the EU attempts to close the gap between the biological body and the data body. In this system, the child is governed through a 'politics of possibility' (Amoore, 2006, p.337), where their potential risk is calculated before they legally arrive, and their physical presence is managed as a logistical asset. The New Pact does not solve the humanitarian crisis of child migration; it datafies it, attempting to render the 'unfingerprinted child' impossible by making the extraction of data the absolute condition of human recognition.

9. Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This thesis began with an encounter: a young person being supported by an NGO in the UK, who, declared that they had traversed Europe without ever having their fingerprints taken. This encounter served not merely as an anecdote, but as a heuristic device, to reveal a 'glitch' in the machine. Through a poststructural policy analysis, utilising Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach, this research has interrogated how the European Union constitutes the minor not as a subject of care, but as a data point to be extracted, calculated, and managed.

The central research question asked: 'How is the minor constituted as a political subject within the EU's biometric infrastructure?'. The analysis reveals that the minor is constituted through a tension between their biological reality, which resists biometric data capture, and the state's imperative to collect such data, in a demand for legibility. By tracing the trajectory from the logistical management of the Dublin III Regulation to the coercive extraction of the Eurodac Recast, and finally to the pre-emptive enclosure of the New Pact, this thesis argues that the EU is moving from a system that manages the 'glitch' to a system designed to eliminate the possibility of the 'unfingerprinted' subject entirely.

9.2. Synthesis of Findings

9.2.1. From Logistics to Pre-emption

The analytical arc of this thesis traces a fundamental shift in the logic of European border governance: a move from reactive logistics to pre-emptive containment.

Logistics (Chapter 6): Under the Dublin III Regulation, the child was constituted as a logistical unit. The system sought to map the child after their arrival, using the hierarchy of evidence to anchor them to their first point of entry. Here, the 'glitch', or the absence of biometric data, caused the machine to stall, forcing the state to rely on 'List B' evidence and human testimony, which it deems less reliable than the 'List A' truth of the database (European Commission, 2014).

Coercion (Chapter 7): The 2024 Eurodac Recast represents the state's violent reaction to this glitch. By lowering the fingerprinting age to six and authorising 'coercion as a last resort' (Article 13), the system attempts to force the biological territory of the child onto the digital map. The focus shifts from managing the data to extracting it by any means necessary, legislating against the 'children-specific attitude' and biological characteristics that resist the scanner (European Commission, 2013).

Pre-emption (Chapter 8): Finally, the New Pact, specifically the Screening Regulation and AMMR, seeks to capture the data before legal entry occurs. Through the 'fiction of non-entry', the child is held in a biometric limbo, processed and risk-scored before they are legally recognised as present on the territory.

9.2.2. The 'Unfingerprinted Child' as Resistance

Throughout this inquiry, the 'unfingerprinted child' has functioned as a necessary site of resistance. This is not a romanticised resistance of heroic agency, but a systemic friction created through biology, migration and survival. As Scott (1998) argues, the state relies on 'schematic categories' to render the population legible. The child, with their growing fingers and non-compliant behaviour, is inherently illegible to the rigid grid of the database.

When the child refuses to submit to the scanner, or when their fingers are too small to be read, they disrupt the totalising nature of the database simply by being human. In a regime where the data double supersedes the physical body (Amoore, 2006), remaining unfingerprinted is the only way for the child to retain the potential for future movement and family reunification. The 'glitch' is, perhaps, the persistence of the human subject in a system designed to process data.

9.2.3. Data Extraction Can Be Violent

Theoretically, this thesis has extended Couldry and Mejias' (2019) concept of 'data colonialism'. While they argue that human life is appropriated as a 'natural resource' for value extraction, this research highlights a critical distinction in the migration context: the necessity of state violence for this extraction.

Unlike the data extraction practiced by technology giants, which often relies on user consent or concealment, the extraction of biometric data from a six-year-old requires the state's monopoly on violence, as is explicitly revealed in in the Eurodac Recast's provisions for coercion of biometrics from children. The child's body is treated as a raw material that must be mined to

fuel the administrative efficiency of the Dublin system. This violence is then naturalised through information campaigns and child-friendly leaflets, which attempt to mask the brutality of the extraction process (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; European Parliament and Council, 2024c).

9.3. Discussion

9.3.1. Security vs. Humanity: The EU Perspective

To provide a balanced critique, it is necessary to acknowledge the rationale of the state. If one sees the perspective of the EU legislator, the drive for total legibility is not motivated purely by administrative zeal, but by a logic of national security. In a post-2015 context, the 'unfingerprinted' status is viewed as a security deficit; a gap through which potential threats might enter. The system acts to protect the integrity of the Schengen zone and the internal security of Member States.

However, this thesis argues that the pursuit of national security through biometric totalisation inherently compromises human security, and by extent the security of children. The system treats the child's rights as collateral damage in the quest for data integrity, with the aim of children. By prioritising the fast and accurate identification of the migrant over the individual circumstances of the child, the EU constructs a hierarchy where the safety of the database is valued above the safety of the subject.

9.3.2. The Child as a Critical Case

Methodologically, this thesis focused on the child not merely because they are a vulnerable group, but because they represent a critical case for the biometric regime. The child is the figure that exposes the violent structure of the system most clearly. If the machine cannot process a child without resorting to 'coercion as a last resort', then the machine itself is fundamentally violent. The 'unfingerprinted child' serves as the case that reveals the boundaries of the EU's technological capability and ethical framework.

9.3.3. Reflexivity and Limitations

This research was not conducted from a distance; it emerged from professional practice in the UK and internship in Denmark, working with asylum-seeking and refugee children, and

having witnessed many of the 'lived effects' of these policies firsthand. The vignette of the 'unfingerprinted child' was not an abstract metaphor but a manifestation of professional recollections, being used as a heuristic device to aid research.

However, this study is a poststructural policy analysis, not an ethnography, despite the seemingly ethnographic nature of the opening vignette. It has analysed the 'prescriptive texts' of the EU (how the state 'thinks'), rather than the discretionary practices of individual border guards. Consequently, there are silences, gaps and omissions within this research. We know how the Eurodac Regulation constructs the child, but we do not know the perspective of the extended families (i.e. the previously mentioned uncles in Germany or cousins in Sweden) whose existence is rendered illegible to the Dublin Regulation. Even more fundamentally, this study offers no attempt to offer a narrative to those many thousands of young children who, with or without their families, brave long and treacherous journeys to reach a place of safety and perceived prosperity. Future research should seek to bridge this gap through ethnographic work that explores how families and children experience and navigate these new digital barriers.

9.4. Final Reflection

The 'unfingerprinted child' is not merely a technical error to be fixed. It is the last remaining trace of human subjectivity in a system designed to eliminate it. The 'glitch' reminds us that beneath the algorithms, the biometrics, and the security protocols, there remains a human life that refuses to be reduced to a data point, for whatever reason that might be. The tragedy of the New Pact is that it seeks to silence this refusal, ensuring that in the future, there will be no glitches, only data. The techniques currently being written in law for use on the 'unfingerprinted child' (coercion, biometric surveillance, and pre-emptive risk scoring) are likely the testing ground for the future of border infrastructure globally. Looking at the EU's new interoperability regulation, it seems that the infrastructure is heading in a direction where biometric data extraction and subsequent risk calculation take even more precedence over the narratives, lives and biologies of children navigating this infrastructure. However, human ingenuity, biology and the need to migrate will always manage to create further 'glitches' in whatever future iteration of the 'machine' appears.

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