1. Smartphones as Survival Tools: Mapping Resistance on the Balkan Migrant Route

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This research analyzes the lived experience of migrants who travel into the European Union (EU) along the 'Balkan route' and their use of technology to navigate and resist border controls. The EU employs a range of advanced border technologies, including but not limited to biometric identification systems, drones, and automated surveillance systems, to prevent migrants from crossing its external borders. These technologies force migrants to use more dangerous and difficult routes. Although the EU's approach to these technologies aims to reduce uncertainty regarding migration mobility, the methods used and the constantly changing border dynamics deepen migrants' experiences of uncertainty. There is an abundance of literature describing the violent effects of control and surveillance technology, but there is limited research focusing on how migrants are resisting and circumventing increasingly technologized border controls. This research addresses the important gap by focusing on the evolving use of in ten years. Migrants use technology, particularly smartphones, as a means of empowerment. Smartphones provide them with access to information and a platform for communication, enabling them to share crucial information in uncertain times. This research will explore in detail the double-edged sword of how technology can be a tool of control and empowerment within the context of the Balkan Route. The research is based on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with 25 migrants who traveled and are on the move to Europe through North Macedonia in the last ten years. Three-month ethnographic field research was conducted to explore migrants' evolving smartphone usage practices. Findings reveal that migrants continuously adapt their digital strategies to navigate uncertainty. This research contributes to the literature by conceptualizing technology as a tool for managing uncertainty, shedding light on the dynamic interplay between surveillance and resistance in migration.