

## Ethical Considerations of Open-Source Intelligence: A Study on Bellingcat's Online Investigations Patterns

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**Abstract :** With the proliferation of social media and free digital information tools, more and more Internet users can participate in intelligence collection through open-source investigations - an area previously reserved for government agency professionals with access to classified information. The availability and easy access to open-source information, however, has raised some ethical issues over time. Some arguments were expressed in the literature, according to which some of the most popular open-source investigation platforms collect and use information sometimes at the expense of the safety of users who posted the information online, unaware of how it was going to be used. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the elements of open-source investigations by one of the most popular platforms - Bellingcat. Specifically, the following variables are considered in the dataset: the year of the investigation, the issue it focuses on, whether any pictures/videos are mentioned, and which is the primary source of information for the investigation. The results from our analysis are discussed, and implications are provided. This study's findings help us understand the context of open-source investigations and contribute to the discussion about their ethical aspects.

**Keywords :** ethics, open-source intelligence, OSINT, technology, open-source investigations

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