



# “All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace”

Activist Practices in an Era of Mediatized Surveillance

Ilkin Mehrabov

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Media and Communication Studies

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DOCTORAL THESIS | Karlstad University Studies | 2017:8

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## **Abstract**

One of the defining features of contemporary zeitgeist is that we live in an era of mediatization – a metaprocess, through (and by) which all everyday relations increasingly depend on networked media technologies and online communication channels.

Due to rapid developments in digital electronics, all these Internet- or mobile-enabled platforms, and devices, are prone to the processes of quantification and datafication, and as such, surveillance is a principal dimension that lies at the core of mediatization.

Through five peer-reviewed academic articles and the cover text, this dissertation provides a multi-faceted analysis of the complex relationships – built by Azerbaijan’s and Turkey’s state intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies with a number of local, and global, private information, entertainment and telecommunications companies. The articles are focused on different cases: the complete dispersion of commercial social media based oppositional activists in Azerbaijan, and the arrests of Anonymous led hacktivists in Turkey, both happening in 2011; and, the mass mobilization of millions of Turkish citizens during the Gezi Park protests of 2013. The current compilation puts forth in-depth accounts and scrutiny of how various social movements (in general), and individual activists (in particular), are affected by an amalgamation of public, political; and, private, economic, surveillance practices and seeks to illuminate the abusive extents of this transformation – vis-à-vis the changing media and communication environment – by way of using mediatization as an analytical tool.

Overall, this dissertation contributes a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between the increasingly mediatized natures of activism and surveillance in semi-authoritarian states. The conclusions have relevance and significance – in considering both similar country contexts and on a global scale – in the light of contemporary technological and political transformations.



## Acknowledgements

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Articles // and //V evolved out of two conference presentations, which on both occasions – in Paris and Stockholm – were commented on by my dearest Liudmila Voronova and Ekaterina Kalinina. In a similar fashion, articles /, /// and V owe very much of their development to the positive critique I received from Maria Bakardjieva and Christian Fuchs in Lisbon, Uppsala and Prague.

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Last, but not least, I am really thankful to my wife Gulshan Gulu-Zada and my daughter Aelita for the understanding they showed during the ‘long Swedish night’, as well as all the weekends – that I had to spend away from them, succumbed in writing. This dissertation is dedicated to them – for what it is worth.

Karlstad  
December 2016

## List of papers

This dissertation is based on five articles – all published/under review in peer-reviewed, open-access academic journals – which are referred to within the cover text by their Roman numerals.

**I.** Mehrabov, I. (2015). Exploring Terra Incognita: Mapping Surveillance Studies from the Perspective of Media and Communication Research. *Surveillance & Society*, 13(1), 117-126.

**II.** Mehrabov, I. (2015). Gendered Surveillance and Media Usage in Post-Soviet Space: The Case of Azerbaijan. *Baltic Worlds*, 8(1-2), 44-48.

**III.** Mehrabov, I. (2016). When States Strike Back: Failures of Mediatized Activism in Azerbaijan and Turkey. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. Open Access Journal for a Global Sustainable Information Society*, 14(2), 496-515.

**IV.** Mehrabov, I. (2016). Azerbaijani Women, Online Mediatized Activism and Offline Mass Mobilization. *Social Sciences*, 5(4), 60: 1-17. DOI: 10.3390/socsci5040060

**V.** Mehrabov, I. (Un)Lonely Impulse of Delight: Rhizomated Subactivism and the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey. Submitted to *PArtecipazione e CONflitto*. ISSN: 1972-7623 (Print); 2035-6609 (Online).





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## I: Introduction and general overview

[I]n the past no government had the power to keep its citizens under constant surveillance. The invention of print, however, made it easier to manipulate public opinion, and the film and the radio carried the process further. With the development of television, and the technical advance which made it possible to receive and transmit simultaneously on the same instrument, private life came to an end. Every citizen, or at least every citizen important enough to be worth watching, could be kept for twenty-four hours a day under the eyes of the police and in the sound of official propaganda, with all other channels of communication closed. The possibility of enforcing not only complete obedience to the will of the State, but complete uniformity of opinion on all subjects, now existed for the first time.

**George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four***

We live in a world which shapes, and is shaped *by*, the increasing use of online communication platforms and networked media technologies in all spheres of social and private life – from the most banal purposes to high politics. What once was lived in offline (public) domains is now mediated, via various websites. What was once conducted face-to-face is now done through social media. What once was experimented privately is now possible through mobile apps. What once was experienced physically is now tried virtually.

Considered as part and parcel of the mediatization metaprocess, these changes are induced by means of a plethora of websites, devices, apps, gadgets, platforms, and mediums – technologies, that are adapted for individual uses; networked with each other in complex ways; and, all having Internet and mobile connectivity, (potentially) make their data public.

The entire span and texture of everyday life – from the period of pre-birth, such as a hand-held ultrasound scanner with smartphone connectivity, to the post-mortem period, such as a remote controllable tombstone video screen – is now media saturated. Networked connectivity, as well as mediated practices and interactions (that increasingly seep into even the most mundane realms, if and where there is potential for commodification), remain as major aspects to be analyzed in

various considerations of how the form and content of social relationships between people and institutions are rapidly being transformed.

Of particular interest in this dissertation is the tightly interwoven relationship between the metaprocess of mediatization and surveillance practices. Almost every communication technology available at consumer mass markets comes with a whole range of in-built sensors and software kernels. Such embedded sensors and kernels are responsible for the device's Internet connectivity; for automatically downloading operating system patches; for making sure that the most updated mobile app versions are installed; and for synchronizing this device's functions with other digital tools – like smartphones and tablets. In addition, these units are capable of verifying user identities; of monitoring consumption; of tagging access; of logging activity; of recording utilizations; of tracking time; of watching the use – shortly, of surveilling their user. These deeply embedded functions, which enable data collection and information collation, are standard components of any electronic media. These capacities make such instruments invaluable for the contemporary economic practices of technology companies – which generate revenue and accumulate surplus value by making use of vast amounts of raw, unfiltered individual and institutional information.

The value placed upon pristine meta-data (obtained through monitoring of mediatized activities), drives various law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies, secret services, and state entities to establish very close links with private corporations that thrive on data acquisition. The amalgamation of the practices on the part of such actors consequently translates into a radical transformation of the ways modern surveillance functions.

The most known – and financially most valuable – of these surveilling technologies are social media networks which *quid pro quo* offer their users communicative, entertaining, and informative services. What is being exchanged is the right to infiltrate users' privacy – in return for free services. The dominant business model of these commercial, for-profit social networking platforms is no secret to (most of) their users. In academic and journalistic accounts, the ways these sites – and their

technologies and practices – are analyzed, and understood, vary: with, in some cases, a high praise accorded to technological mediation, and its social and political use. The so-called ‘Arab Spring’ and subsequent global revolts are cases in point. Although concrete evidence was lacking, some opinion leaders – including eminent representatives of the Swedish state – quickly declared for-profit social media the key facilitators of such struggles for social change – especially during the initial stages (C. Christensen, 2011).

Partly due to such claims and perceptions, partly to reach global audiences, and (partly) because of the unavailability of other options, substantial numbers of oppositional activists around the world organized themselves (almost) exclusively on these platforms. This folly led to a series of dramatic failures, where, in some particular cases, many protesters were raided, detained and arrested – some even *before* joining the protest they intended to organize and participate in.

## **Aims**

In academic analyses of media uses, technological features, and social change, one finds certain examples where surveillance is regarded as one of the (intrinsic) features of mediatization (Jansson, 2012; Christensen & Jansson, 2015). Media technologies that change the shape of daily communication practices are all prone to acts of datafication and quantification – obtaining information and gathering data about their users. These forms of surveillance are changing the understanding of what intelligence and user data is, and where it can be acquired from – and, as such, potentially link closer together the interests of various commercial social media sites; telecommunications, information and entertainment companies; states; and their different law enforcement and security agencies.

Within this context, the current compilation dissertation aims to address the overall changes in the manners the state and the private sector (jointly) exert surveillance today. Of special interest are the ways these radical transformations affect media-based practices of social movements (in general) and of activists (in particular) – as well as the

tactics developed and enacted by the movements and individual activists in order to fight back. This investigation has even higher significance within the context of semi-authoritarian states – where contradictions and shortcomings inherent in the technology use for social change are more evident and consequences are direr.

By focusing on various cases from Azerbaijan and Turkey, this dissertation also aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on the centrality of utilizing a paradigmatic scope such as mediatization, in order to accurately pin down and analyze the factors that shape expressions of dissent and counter-dynamics within such geo-political contexts. Approaching mediatization as an on-going, globally transformative and locally specific, force in communicative practices and communication infrastructures also helps to (meaningfully) situate the particular cases of uprisings and persecutions of dissent in Azerbaijan and Turkey within a broader context.

In the five articles that constitute the dissertation, the (complete) dispersion of corporate social media-based activists in Azerbaijan in 2011 and arrests of Anonymous-led hacktivists in Turkey (the same year), as well as the rejuvenation of belief in social change, instigated by the Gezi Park protests in Turkey, are analyzed in a complementary manner.

The articles detail and discuss interlinked aspects of increased mediatization of activism on the one hand, and of state backlash on the other, with one discussion point being the possibilities of forming alternative communication platforms and invigorating street-based political mass mobilizations.

On the whole, the dissertation primarily aims to contribute to an empirically-based, nuanced conception of the shortcomings and the contradictions of mediatized activism today, in the face of pervasive surveillance, practiced by states and companies. It also offers reflections on the significance of reconsidering the potentials for *actual* forms of mass mobilization and street-based collective action as media continues to permeate social life and politics (Morley, 2011).

## Research questions

The main aims of the dissertation are addressed through the following three questions, which are sought to be addressed by five articles. The first question is more of an inquiry into surveillance – vis-à-vis media and communication research – i.e. surveillance as a distinct subject of academic investigation, and increasingly so in media and communication studies. Questions // and ///, on the other hand, are posed in an inter-related manner. Raymond Williams' assertions about the socialist (and academic) responsibility to resume, change, and extend peace campaigns – for “making hope practical, rather than despair convincing” (1989, p. 209) – provided a significant starting point here.

In this respect, whereas Question // is formulated in an effort to capture and describe how ‘despair’, materialized through pervasive public political and private economic surveillance, can be convincing, and as such obstruct chance(s) of social change, Question /// aims to address what the possible venues and actions against oppressive surveillance are – how ‘hope’ can be given flesh and maintained alive through various practical possibilities and different counter-measures.

- I. What are the emerging trends and topics in surveillance research, and how can these be linked with a perspective such as that of mediatization?**
- II. How do pervasive surveillance practices intervene with individual liberties (in particular) and social movements (in general) in Azerbaijan and Turkey?**
- III. How could Azerbaijani and Turkish individual activists (in particular) and social movements (in general) potentially develop viable options and organize resistance against pervasive surveillance – and how can this be understood within the scope of mediatization?**



In conjunction, these three questions enable inquiries into the complex dimensions and aspects that I scrutinize as parts of my research scope.

In order to generate the necessary data sets to address the questions, combined methods were used during the processes of gathering and analyzing the empirical material. A summary of the methodological tools and the findings of the five articles, together with a discussion of their significances, are provided in Part V.

## II: Theoretical framework

If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it ... Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a *sense* of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change.

**Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451***

Despite being a relatively recent conceptual and paradigmatic framework in academic research, mediatization is already considered to be a prominent approach to understand contemporary society – vis-à-vis its media saturatedness. Mediatization, as a term, is often used to signify the numerous theoretical conceptualizations of the phenomenon of vast media diffusions, and, according to Sonia Livingstone, refers to a metaprocess, *by* and *through* which “everyday practices and social relations are historically shaped by mediating technologies and media organizations” (2009a, p. x).

As Stig Hjarvard claims, mediatization as a perspective offers a third position in relation to the academic approaches of media effects and uses and gratifications and is better suited to capturing the relation of media to culture and society (2011, p. 121). It is important to emphasize here that *culture* used within this sense means “*not* a bounded or spatially bordered culture” – but rather “*any* way in which everyday practices of sense-making hang together” (Couldry, 2012, p. 159; italics in the original).

Although there are already a number of academic studies that connect mediatization with other aspects of everyday life – such as, of religion (Lövheim, 2011); of tourism (Jansson, 2002); of journalism (Kammer, 2013); or, of politics (Strömbäck, 2008) – mediatization as a concept is not a homogenous one. The first distinction pertains to the question

of how exactly mediatization is different from *mediation* – and, especially from cultural mediation, another relatively long tradition of research in media studies (Silverstone, 2002, 2005; Couldry, 2008). A second question, resonating with the first one, is related to situating mediatization within contemporary media environments in regard to whether it is just the further institutionalization of the media or a process in its own right.

Two factions, forming themselves almost as camps, can easily be detected in the theoretical conceptualizations of the notion – and especially in Germanic and Scandinavian academia, where the debate is an intensive one. Whereas the first scholarly group evaluates mediatization as an “intrinsic and operative logic in a specific constellation of media”, the second treats it as a long-term, historical and “developmental relationship between old and new media” (Finnemann, 2011, p. 71).

### **Mediatization: Institutionalism vs. social-constructivism**

One of the most prominent members of the first group, Stig Hjarvard, defines mediatization as the “process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” – a process “characterized by a duality in that the media have become *integrated* into the operations of other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of social institutions *in their own right*” – which, as the end result, promotes all social interactions to take place mostly via the media: “within the respective institutions, between institutions, and in society at large” (2008, p. 113; italics in the original).

Mazzoleni and Schulz offer an interesting and quite radical outlook on the distinctions of mediation and mediatization. In their formulation, mediatization as a term “denotes problematic concomitants or consequences of the development of modern mass media” – which, according to the authors, is quite different, as well as (easily) distinguishable from mediation, which as a concept refers to any acts of “intervening, conveying, or reconciling between different actors, collectives, or in-

stitutions” (1999, p. 249). In his later studies, Winfried Schulz (2004) further developed his mediatization model – as a four-stage process of changes – where media, at first, extends the “natural limits of human communication capacities”, followed by media’s substitution for “social activities and social institutions”, which later amalgamates “with various non-media activities in social life”, and the last change occurring when the “actors and organizations of all sectors of society accommodate” to the dominant logics of media (p. 98).

One of the best known representatives of the second fraction is Friedrich Krotz, who defines mediatization as a “historical, ongoing, long-term process in which more and more media emerge and are institutionalized” (2009, p. 24). He further states that mediatization actually describes the “process whereby communication refers to media and uses media so that media in the long run increasingly become relevant for the *social construction of everyday life*” (p. 24; emphasis added).

The late Roger Silverstone’s media sociology and his takes on mediation have been highly influential in strands of media research that focus particularly on everyday life. As Silverstone contended:

Mediation, in the sense in which I am using the term, describes the fundamentally, but unevenly, dialectical process in which institutionalized media of communication (the press, broadcast radio and television, and increasingly the World Wide Web) are involved in the general circulation of symbols in social life. That circulation no longer requires face-to-face communication, though it does not exclude it (2002, p. 762).

Nick Couldry, building on Silverstone, provides an interesting analysis of how to distinguish between mediatization and mediation. Clearly in favor of using mediation as the general (all-encompassing) term, he criticizes mediatization theory by saying that it has tendencies to “claim that it has identified one single type of media-based logic that supersedes older logics”, and after providing numerous examples of social changes, concludes that the number of influences, initiated by these changes, are just “too heterogeneous to be reduced to a single” media logic – “as if they all operated in one direction, at the same speed, through a parallel mechanism and according to the same calculus” (2008, p. 378). It should be obvious that Couldry’s critique is

mainly addressed towards the early definitions and conceptualizations of the term by the first group, as he later reevaluated his take on the mediatization metaprocess. For example, in his joint article with Andreas Hepp, Couldry provides a more nuanced interpretation, arguing that mediatization, essentially, “reflects how the overall consequences of multiple processes of mediation have changed with the emergence of different kinds of media” (Couldry & Hepp, 2013, p. 197).

Respectively dubbed in academic literature as the institutionalist tradition and the social-constructivist tradition, what generates a shared understanding between these approaches is the consensus that, as a fundamental scholarly concept, mediatization is increasingly used to “*carry out a critical analysis of the interrelation between the changes of media and communication, on the one hand, and the change of culture and society on the other*” (Hepp & Krotz, 2014, p. 3; italics in the original).

A heated debate unfolded when an article by David Deacon and James Stanyer provided empirically-grounded critique of current mediatization scholarship – and, labeling mediatization as a “concept of no difference”, argued that we might be witnessing a “morass of conceptually muddled research in which mediatization is all-powerful and everywhere” (2014, p. 1042). While debating on the points of concern highlighted by the publication, Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard and Knut Lundby drew certain comparisons with the early academic discussion of individualization and globalization, ending their responses with a remark about a shared hope, that the “institutionalization of mediatization research represents the beginning of a similar nuanced discussion” (2015, p. 322). Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone’s commentary on (both of) the above-mentioned articles calls on (all) mediatization sceptics: to articulate “their critique constructively and by reference to a careful reading of the now sizeable” accumulated body of writing on the term (2016, p. 469). The proponents of mediatization, on the other hand, are advised to consider whether and how “existing research on media’s changing role within a variety of domains can be productively reinterpreted within a mediatization frame” as well as the “implications of such work for existing theories”, and lastly, how to ad-

vance analyses of the “relations between mediatization and the other metaprocesses of modernity” (p. 469).

### **My own private mediatization**

Both of the mediatization factions have their own strengths as well as weaknesses and have already received (at times harsh) critique. For example, Krotz is skeptical of the ‘media logic’-based approach, where the term ‘media logic’, according to Hjarvard, mainly refers to the “*institutional and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of formal and informal rules*” (2008, p. 113; emphasis added). Krotz firmly emphasizes that “there is no (technically based) media logic” – the media logic of television broadcasting today is different from the logic, dominant a decade ago, and the media logic of a “mobile phone is quite different for a 14-year-old girl as compared to a 55-year old banker” (2009, p. 26). Although I am generally in agreement with definitions of the social-constructivist tradition, my take on this discussion, based on my research, is that Krotz’s arguments certainly require to be revisited.

Stig Hjarvard’s definition of media, as an independent institution that stands “between other cultural and social institutions and coordinates their mutual interaction” (2008, p. 106), is no longer valid. The point missed in this definition is skillfully critiqued by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, when he contends that “the media do not defend corporate capitalism, they *are* corporate capitalism” (2010, p. 174; italics in the original). Krotz himself argues that the metaprocess of mediatization cannot be comprehended in isolation from the other three metaprocesses – of globalization, individualization, and commercialization – where commercialization is the most “basic process providing the stimulus to all action” – since in capitalist societies everything depends on the economic dimension (2007, p. 259).

As Raymond Williams emphasized, an intelligent interpretation of the social uses of technology would (necessarily) “restore *intention* to the process of research and development” – so that any technology would

be seen as “being looked for and developed with certain purposes and practices already in mind” (2003, p. 7; italics in the original). In this respect, while one could discern a certain sense of ‘media logic’, this is not in the sense defined by Hjarvard – or critiqued by Krotz. Especially in view of the rapid development of transistor technology and electronic computing, and the emergence of the Internet, the logic of digital mediums can be seen at the very core of modern media systems: based on a set of a computable, one-zero, combinations; quantifiable data packages, transferred between different sender-receiver nodes; and various network protocols, capable of converting transmitted information configurations into a multiplicity of mutually exchangeable formats. As Friedrich Kittler underlined, everything goes with, and through, numbers – “[m]odulation, transformation, synchronization; delay, storage, transposition; scrambling, scanning, mapping” (1999, p. 2). After all, what we call electronic media today are forms of communication infrastructure, and their changing nature is the direct result of growing “*intersections* between technological, economic, social and political forces” (Couldry, 2012, p. 13; italics in the original).

In that sense, although the *use* of specific media might be different for a high-school pupil and a pensioner, the *technological apparatus* itself and *in-built capacities* to provide certain media functions would have commonality for all users and would be based on the logic of the digital, the logic of the architecture of the system: that is, datafication and quantification. Affordances, provided by these technological environments, motivate use in different contexts – although how everyday use is shaped needs to be seen in a *situated* way. Geographic, spatio-temporal, demographic, gender and lifestyle related factors play into how technology use is shaped in different space-time configurations. For instance, the following excerpt (from an interview with a middle class, young, male resident of inner-city Stockholm) is a telling example:

I’m on FB every hour if I can. It’s up to you. If you don’t participate you don’t get anything back so it stimulates rewards. For example I put out a picture of my 1<sup>st</sup> hand rental apartment contract and got 42 likes (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, p. 1487).

Still, the definition provided by Krotz, and his firm insistence on the necessity of linking mediatization with the other three metaproceses – where each one in itself is an “ordering principle”, helping us to categorize specific developments and historical events as belonging together (2009, p. 25) – is (especially) significant in the context of this dissertation, which seeks to meaningfully link mediatization with an intrinsic, crucial dimension, namely *surveillance*, reshaped and continuously intensified through mediatization.

According to Sonia Livingstone, there is a (strong) need to more often question who is in control of the media institutions of everyday life – “whether global corporation or the state” – as well as to “critically observe how mediated communication is subordinated to, shaped by, the inexorable logic of global capitalism—commodification, standardization, privatization, co-option, surveillance, and the rest” (2009b, p. 5). As the revelations of the National Security Agency (NSA) contractor Edward Snowden and the whistle blower organization WikiLeaks about pervasive global surveillance explicitly showed, surveillance already has multi-level social, political and cultural implications.

Theoretically, this phase of ubiquitous surveillance has (already) been scrutinized extensively. The *who*, the *what*, the *how* and the *where* of such pervasive surveillance have been addressed in numerous studies in various contexts. New concepts – such as lateral surveillances, participatory surveillance, complicit surveillance, social surveillance, and interveillance – were introduced, in the efforts to grasp the complexities of contemporary societies when it comes to the available sets of practices in relation to ambient surveillance and its social and historical contingencies. More discussion about these approaches is provided in Part IV.

### **Situating mediatization**

As Hjarvard emphasizes, it is impossible to determine whether mediatization has positive or negative consequences, in general terms. Thus, conducting research on the consequences of mediatization is a “concrete, analytical question that needs to be addressed in terms of spe-



cific contexts” (2008, p. 114). In a similar vein, Mats Ekström, Johan Fornäs, André Jansson, and Anne Jerslev identify the main transdisciplinary and transparadigmatic aspects that mediatization research needs to (further) explore as historicity, specificity and measurability (2016). Thus, there is a dire need for locally specific research in under-explored geographies on how mediatization and surveillance are transforming daily life and cultural practices – as well as the political spectrum of activities.

In addition, as already noted in academic literature, although inter-governmental and national communication policies, on a global scale, have played central roles in the development of mass broadcast media and information and communication technologies (ICTs), these issues rarely, if at all, surface within discussions of mediatization or surveillance (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014, p. 1034).

Public communication policies become even more crucial in studying the current context of semi-authoritarian countries such as Azerbaijan and Turkey – where the mediatization phases, as modernization projects, were facilitated by various technical upgrade and infrastructure upscale enterprises, driven largely by different information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) initiatives, as well as their related discourses, thus maintaining the state as a major player in the media environment.

### III: Research background

Despots and ruling cliques can succeed in dominating and exploiting their fellow man, but they cannot prevent *reactions* to this inhuman treatment. Their subjects become frightened, suspicious, lonely and, if not due to external reasons, their systems collapse at some point because fears, suspicions and loneliness eventually incapacitate the majority to function effectively and intelligently. Whole nations, or social groups within them, can be subjugated and exploited for a long time, but *they react*. They react with apathy or such impairment of intelligence, initiative and skills that they gradually fail to perform the functions which should serve their rulers. Or they react by the accumulation of such hate and destructiveness as to bring about an end to themselves, their rulers and their system. Again their reaction may create such independence and longing for freedom that a better society is built upon their creative impulses. Which reaction occurs, depends on many factors: on economic and political ones, and on the spiritual climate in which people live. But whatever the reactions are, the statement that man can live under almost any condition is only half true; it must be supplemented by the other statement, that if he lives under conditions which are contrary to his nature and to the basic requirements for human growth and sanity, he cannot help reacting; he must either deteriorate and perish, or bring about conditions which are more in accordance with his needs.

**Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society***

The turbulent ‘Arab Spring’ – intensifying between the years 2011 and 2012 – has led to radical changes in the political geographies and the communicative spaces of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Christensen & Christensen, 2013). It has also inspired various sorts of new insurgent oppositional movements all around the world. Azerbaijan’s online opposition, enthused by the early success of revolutions in the MENA area and organized (almost) exclusively on social media sites, was not an exception. As the socio-political retransformations of (primarily) Muslim geographies of the region were rapidly gaining pace, it was not long before Azerbaijani activists, impressed by the possibilities purportedly brought about by social media’s online networking affordances, started to organize the planning of their protests and to launch announcements mainly on commercial social media platforms.

Added to this was a curious incident, which took place in early 2011. On January 21, 2011, the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation (part of the Swedish Foreign Ministry), Gunilla Carlsson, published an article in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen*. In her opinion piece she argued that all foreign aid and development grants originating from Sweden needed to “take into account the rapid spread and use of social media in the service of global democratic change and the expansion of freedom of speech rights” – thus, placing herself among the number of the media pundits and opinion leaders of the period, including other Swedish state officials, who, despite the lack of any concrete evidence, were too quick to call social media networks the “key tools in the battles over freedom of speech rights and democratic change in developing nations” (C. Christensen, 2011, p. 234).

What I mean by activism needs to be defined at this point. As a term, I employ *activism* mainly in relation to social movements, and individual dissenters, who call for *progressive* social changes such as societal egalitarianism and social justice or advancement of respect for human rights and gender equality. Thus, although there are quite a number of social movements with very retrogressive and discriminatory agendas – religiously fundamentalist; anti-abortionist; or, extreme right nationalist (with pro-life, homophobic, misogynist, xenophobic, sexist, transphobic, racist, or chauvinist discourses) – in my dissertation the focus is on individuals and movements that originate from leftist and liberal perspectives. This distinction is important for underlining what exactly I mean when I say activism.

### **Defining mediatized activism**

Azerbaijani activists were among those who took this unsubstantiated claim (of social media being a key component of democratic struggles) uncritically, and without any proper analysis of the *actual* outcome of the so-called ‘social media revolutions’, started to organize themselves and to put out calls for demonstrations on commercial social media networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. The response of the Azerbaijani government to the events, where hundreds of activists took to the

streets of the capital Baku to protest during the period of March-April 2011, was (very) harsh. State officials immediately halted all demonstration authorizations – and police officers quickly (and quite often violently) dispersed unauthorized ones. As such, with all the demonstrations forcefully dismantled, and a number of protesters detained (including all of the leading oppositional activist leaders), the Azerbaijani government was able to (completely) liquidate, in a record period of time, this wave of ‘Arab Spring’-inspired protest rallies in the country.

Something similar, but contextually different, happened almost in the same period of time in Turkey as well. In the early months of 2011, Turkish state officials announced their plans for the implementation of a new centralized Internet filtering system – supposedly introduced to protect (especially minors) from the harmful online contents, but in reality blocking access to many progressive websites. The suggestion was met with the harsh criticism of Turkish Internet users. After numerous (unsuccessful) online and offline protests against the plan, the hacktivist group Anonymous called for an act of solidarity with Turkey on June 6, 2011 – through what they called #OpTurkey, a series of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on the Turkish (critical) online infrastructure. The coordinated campaign lasted only four days and abruptly ended when 32 people across Turkey were pressed with charges accusing them of participating in these actions, and, later on, arrested. I define both of the instances as examples of failures of what in this dissertation is called *mediatized activism*.

According to Krotz, there is a structural difference between basic face-to-face, mediated (historically interpersonal, interactive or mass), and contemporary mediatized forms of communication (2009, p. 24). In a similar fashion, communicative forms of activism could also be differentiated in terms of face-to-face, mediated (both in offline and online forms), and mediatized activism.

Traditional face-to-face activism comprises instances where activist formations and individuals physically interact with each other – from political agitprops to workers’ council conventions; from protest rallies to unions’ picket lines. Mediated offline activism includes the cas-

es of broadcast (radio and television channels) and print mass media (newspapers, magazines, books and pamphlets) – as well as ephemera such as graffiti, fanzines, leaflets, brochures, and posters (Gerbaudo, 2014a). Among the forms of mediated online activism are: the sites of video activist collectives; non-commercial portals of user-generated content; online news outlets for citizen reporting; repositories of open source software; autonomous blogs, run by user-administrated servers; closed and open groups for live-streamed podcasting; email lists; and discussion forums of bulletin board systems. Mediatized activism, on the other hand, is a very specific type of mediated activism – which is professed by individuals using the corporate media platforms and commercial tools. Instead of investing time, energy and resources to develop their own arsenal – setting up computer servers; modifying software code to build online portals; or re-appropriating web administration – mediatized activists rely on Blogspot to keep blogs, upload videos to YouTube, and use Facebook and Twitter to communicate. As such, mediatized activism depends on the infrastructure of networked digital technologies and online communication channels – over which activists have very little or no control at all. Thus, mediatized activists do not possess networks or devices, entirely or at times even partially, through which they conduct their political actions.

Especially in the Azerbaijani case, the dubiousness of conducting mediatized activism via Facebook (explicitly) reveals itself in the face of facts about the Internet connectivity rate and the number of Facebook users in the country, as in 2011 approximately 50% of the Azerbaijani population had online connectivity in some form (Freedom House, 2012, p. 53) – and only 7% of the (total) population had Facebook accounts, including the passive users of the network (Pearce, 2012).

### **Introducing mediatized surveillance**

The violent dispersions of demonstrations were not the only response the protesters got from the Azerbaijani state. Police, law enforcement agencies and intelligence services cracked down on all forms of online dissent through a series of interrogations, detainments and imprisonments of key rally organizers. The repression of online forms of ac-

tivism was, shortly after, followed by a clampdown on critical media venues and oppositional publications; arrests of prominent politicians and activist leaders; restrictions on international travel of civil society representatives; smearing campaigns against disagreeable journalists; defamations of political opponents; and freezing of funds and changing of legal status of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). All of these changes were initiated through a series of digital interventions into the Internet and mobile telecommunications infrastructures of Azerbaijan with the close collaboration of, and intensive help received from, a range of global companies specializing in various surveillance hardware, software and services provision.

For example, closely cooperating with Swedish TeliaSonera, owner of the major Azerbaijani mobile service provider Azercell, the Azerbaijani intelligence gained access to the mobile telecommunications infrastructure, with the legislation forcing mobile service providers to keep detailed logs of users' telephone interactions coming into force shortly after. In addition, the Azerbaijani state turned into one of the major customers of the Italian cyber investigation company Hacking Team. By obtaining the firm's advisory services, as well as acquiring and using the corporation's advanced spyware, Azerbaijani security agencies and secret services managed to (radically) improve their surveillance capacities – and to dramatically reduce their response time for detecting, and pinpointing, any troublesome activists. Thus, the protests of 2011, and the following repercussions, revealed the fact that Azerbaijan is now one of the best examples demonstrating that a tech-savvy state and its surveillance capabilities are constantly developing themselves through what I in this dissertation call *mediatized surveillance*.

In parallel with the social-constructivist conceptions of mediatization developed by Krotz, and taking on board the (technologically) in-built qualities of digital media, I characterize mediatized surveillance as a new form of monitoring, which permeates on a global scale – and is conducted by different state intelligence, police and law enforcement agencies in concordance with commercial companies. This is a novel type of watching, which gets its raw materials out of the communicative practices and media uses of individuals. This is a recent breed of tracking, which increasingly relies on information flows, continuously

obtained from the data logs of user interactivity on Internet websites, electronic media platforms, and networked devices. As such, mediatized surveillance is also an emerging variety of intelligent analysis of extracted meta-data – scrutinized through artificial neural networks; advanced computational and machine learning algorithms; artificial intelligence-based, autonomous, decision making expert systems; and predictive analytics methods, fine-tuned for recognition of individual communication patterns, as well as automated detection of potentially suspicious online activities.

What generates common grounds between the practices of mediatized activism and the processes of mediatized surveillance is that both are enacted through, and enabled by, the same online media technologies. The case of the smartphone is the most fitting example here. Even in 2007 its early predecessor mobile phone was argued to be “fast becoming the hub of much of our electronic communications” – not only for “phone calls and text messages, but for access to e-mail and other computer-enabled activities such as finding your way round a strange city via GPS systems” (Morley, 2007, p. 301). Kent Asp contends that, from the beginning of the 2000s, the fifth phase of the mediatization metaprocess, where *integration* of media with the social and political institutions can be openly observed, began to evolve (2014, p. 355).

This phase can be best described through the emergence of polymedia – a term introduced by Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller to define a novel communication environment, constituted by a “plethora of internet- and mobile phone-based platforms such as email, instant messaging (IM), social networking sites (SNS) and webcam via voice over internet protocol (VOIP)” (2012, p. 1). In this vein, the smartphone is the direct embodiment of the concept of polymedia: “both indicator and motor” of the metaprocess of mediatization (Miller, 2014, p. 219).

As within every other sphere of everyday life, smartphones are already extensively used for activist purposes and allow protesters to cheaply communicate and easily coordinate among themselves; to shoot videos and take pictures of protest rallies as well as of abusive police practices; to inform general publics of the movement’s demands and aims; and to stream, spread and propagate their message. Nevertheless, the

smartphone, at the same time, is an inevitable component of the ways contemporary surveillance mechanisms function. The smartphone is a geo-locator – which pinpoints the geographic coordinates of the user (through the global positioning system’s satellite triangulation) and continually updates the geo-tagging registries; a broadcast center – as its video cameras and microphone are (physically) prone to be hacked into, and remotely activated, unbeknown to the user; and a personality inventory – as its operating system is vulnerable enough (especially if used on an unsecured wireless network connection) to be accessed from afar, and all the user preferences; contact and application lists; Internet browsing, instant messaging and text message histories; and (even) music playlists, stolen. Thus, the smartphone symbolizes the current phase of mediatization – “dialectically refracting the utopic technological optimism ... and dystopian worries” (Ribak & Rosenthal, 2015).

### **Explaining the research contexts**

The current conditions in Azerbaijan – in relation to increasing pressure on alternative media, regular crackdowns on activist movements, and increased pervasive surveillance of personal communication – are not unlike what has happened in Turkey. There is affinity between the two countries in terms of religious, cultural, linguistic, and partly ethnic orientations. Despite having different historical backgrounds, both countries have undergone (very) similar transformations during the past decade. New governments were formed in both countries in 2003 – a development which elevated hopes for increased democratization and liberalization, in both contexts. Yet, these processes resulted only in (increased) authoritarianism of the state in both: soaring levels of human rights violations; clampdown of critical voices; and the erosion of privacy and communicative capacities. Because of its post-Soviet history, and the fact that both are hybrid regimes, where “authoritarian control coexists with legally sanctioned, if limited, competition for political office” (Robertson, 2011, p. 5), Azerbaijan is quite frequently compared to Russia. Nevertheless, the historical proximity of Azerbaijan to Turkey, the frequent claims from certain factions in both countries to be ‘one nation, two states’, and the similarities of recent devel-



opments, gradually transitioning both countries towards sultanistic semi-authoritarianism (Guliyev, 2005), call for an analysis of the dispersions of online dissent forms in Azerbaijan to be complemented by a similar analysis of Turkey's situation.

Such an analysis helps establish the telling similarities between these semi-authoritarian states and their ensuing dynamics. It also makes it possible to discern considerable differences in the techniques and tactics that Azerbaijan and Turkey employ to silence opposition, causing the Azerbaijani type of governance to be labeled hegemonic authoritarian (LaPorte, 2015), and Turkish regime to be called weak authoritarian (Akkoyunlu & Öktem, 2016). This difference in state approaches could be associated with the long history of different Turkish oppositional political parties and progressive social movements, which, for more than six decades, have had numerous experiences in protest organization and mass mobilization. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, was part of the Soviet Union for the most part of the 20th century – and, according to the (leaked) secret communication cable of the U.S. embassy in Baku, is currently governed in a “manner similar to the feudalism found in Europe during the Middle Ages” as a “handful of well-connected families control certain geographic areas, as well as certain sectors of the economy” (WikiLeaks, 2010). In the end, an analysis of the Azerbaijani context, complemented with an analysis of Turkey's conditions, opens up new thematic routes – and helps to reflect back upon mediatization, surveillance, and social change processes in situated contexts.

The relation of the mediatization metaprocess to surveillance practices, which gives rise to formation of mediatized surveillance, is a complex one, calling for in-depth scrutiny. As such, Part IV is completely dedicated to this task.

## IV: Mediatization and surveillance

His strongest belief was that he should continue to live off the Grid. In the dictionary, a grid was defined as a network of evenly spaced horizontal and vertical lines that could be used for locating a particular object or point. If you looked at modern civilization in a certain way, it seemed like every commercial enterprise or government program was part of an enormous grid. The different lines and squares could track you down and fix your location; they could find out almost everything about you.

**John Twelve Hawks, *The Traveler***

This part aims to further dissect the relationship between the mediatization metaprocess and the practices of surveillance – and as such, it intends to contribute to an in-depth understanding of the interlaced relationship of these processes in the media-saturated modern world. The concept of *surveillative apparatuses*, which was briefly touched upon in the published articles but not explored due to journals' space limitations, is introduced as well. Lastly, and additionally, the ICT4D initiatives in the developing world and the increasing levels of surveillance they potentially might lead to are discussed.

### Placing mediatization within the history of the media

As was already explained in earlier parts, the metaprocess of mediatization constitutes a central theoretical ground of operation (and plays a key role) in this dissertation. It is through the dramatically pervasive use of networked devices and platforms in the course of everyday life, as well as celebratory discourses of this development, that oppositional activists in Azerbaijan were compelled to organize themselves (almost) exclusively on social networking platforms – as well as place all their calls for action in this domain. But as their defeats clearly show, the use of communication mediums only by themselves is not enough to achieve any meaningful social change. The same applies to the case of the defeat of hacktivists in Turkey, failing to involve the (necessary) critical mass of people otherwise required in DDoS attacks to ensure that the identities of the individual users are concealed.

Mediatization is further helpful in tracing the historical development of media technologies and placing them within the broader discussion of transformation of earlier Internet cultures by a handful of mega-corporations, based on “computing as labor and information as property” and perceiving the freedom of information as a very serious “obstacle to its development as a commodity” (Wark, 2006, p. 321). In close cooperation with their respective states and their bureaucratic bodies responsible for governing telecommunications infrastructures, a handful of companies changed the way information is perceived and used in Western societies. Such changes further contributed to the reformation of the knowledge society – a society which is mostly based on data; is fueled by an economic model, monetizing on information gathering; and benefits from the increased commodification of users’ data, generated through commercial for-profit social media networks, heavily embodied with the constant monitoring and perpetual surveillance of their customers and consumers – in which “information generation, processing, and transmission” turned to the most “fundamental sources of productivity and power” (Castells, 2010, p. 21).

In his, now classic, book *The Digital Sublime*, Vincent Mosco claims that the “conventional and therefore solid sediment of meaning and common sense that gives cyberspace a normality and indeed a certitude of superiority” needs to be challenged – and in order to obtain a better understanding of its real role, needs to be put into its own place (2004, p. 15). Such myth-breaking is of extreme importance – especially when it comes to the further de-mystification of the latest products of electronic communication such as social media sites and Web 2.0. While doing this, the more general, meta-notion of the *Internet* itself needs to be re-analyzed as well. After all, as David Morley notes, as some of the greatest philosophers of 19th century such as Auguste Comte and Henri de Saint-Simon “worshipped the beneficially transformative powers of the new communications systems of their day” – and as “both early twentieth-century American capitalists and Soviet communists worshipped the benefits of electricity” – within the heavily media-saturated contemporary world it is the “Internet which is enshrined as the ultimate source of goodness and progress” (2007, p. 314).

Critical analysis of the functions served by the Internet and communication technologies in the course of everyday life is also needed for better understanding of contemporary social movements and the possible changes they can bring into the functioning of modern societies. As such, by skeptical investigation of the myths about the mediatized communication – by “splitting open the solidly constructed images of technical progress and juxtaposing them with other images” – one can aptly “contribute to productively destabilizing the dominant representations of what we are supposed to be and where are we going” (Mosco, 2004, pp. 15-16). The insistence on critical analysis without being cynical and the assertion of distancing oneself from an excessively applauding rhetoric were already made (nearly a century ago) by Bertolt Brecht – who by focusing (specifically) on the radio, the most prized mass medium of his times, in an almost prophetic manner said:

If I believed that our present bourgeoisie were going to live another hundred years, then I would be certain that it would continue to babble on for hundreds of years about the tremendous ‘possibilities’ that the radio, for example, contains... I really wish that this bourgeoisie would invent something else in addition to the radio - an invention that would make it possible to preserve everything the radio is capable of communicating for all time. Future generations would then have the opportunity to be astounded by the way a caste made it possible to say what it had to say to the entire planet earth and at the same time enabled the planet earth to see that it had nothing to say. A man who has something to say and finds no listeners is bad off. Even worse off are listeners who can't find anyone with something to say to them (Brecht, 1927; as cited in Negt & Adelson, 1978, p. 61).

Within such historical scope, Morley's assertions become even more pertinent, as he claims that “media studies, in particular, as presently constituted, suffers from a drastically foreshortened historical perspective, the absence of which is all the more critical now” (2007, p. 2). According to Nick Couldry, this is happening mainly due to the fact that media studies as an academic discipline has distanced itself too much from media, its real “object of analysis” – thus leading towards formation of myopia, which very much “prevents media studies from grasping the broader landscape of how media *do*, and *do not*, figure in people's lives” (2006, p. 177; emphasis added). As such, it is highly important to “place contemporary developments, such as the constitution of cyberspace ... in a much longer historical perspective”,

especially as we now have entered into an “era of digitalisation, technical convergence, individualized and interactive media” and communication systems (Morley, 2007, pp. 2-3).

Done otherwise – without taking into consideration the general myths about the rise of “global computer communication systems, particularly those identified with the Internet, the World Wide Web, and cyberspace” (Mosco, 2004, p. 19) – it becomes (rather) inconceivable to meaningfully evaluate the place of computer communication technologies within the scope of the current phase of mediatization. Correct conceptualization of the roles played by the mediatization of everyday relations (and the structural change this might lead to) can further be clouded by a common and alarmingly “widespread tendency to the overestimation of the ‘newness’ of the digital era, which, after all, is probably best understood as having begun with the telegraph itself in the 1840s” (Morley, 2007, p. 243).

If it was not for such widespread myths about the alleged benefits of the Internet, the hype created over the role commercial social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, played in the ‘Arab Spring’ uprisings might have been investigated in a more critical way from the onset. Instead, quite a number of leading opinion formers – including journalists, communication analysts, media pundits and an alarming score of academics – chose to submerge into the myths of a ‘Facebook Generation’ (ESI, 2011) or ‘Twitter Revolution’ (Morozov, 2009). Besides the apparent danger that the labels, coined to emphasize the role of social networking sites, might easily have run the “risks of reducing movements to their infrastructures” (Gerbaudo, 2014b, p. 266), these reductionist denominations were put together despite the wide availability of ethnographic data pointing into a completely opposite direction. For example, according to the public opinion survey, conducted by the International Republican Institute with 1,200 adult Egyptians during April 14-27 of 2011, only 23% of interviewees were using Facebook and only 6% had Twitter accounts, and an astonishing 82% considered television as the most likely source to get local news and information (IRI, 2011). This study is especially important, since it was conducted right after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak – and at the height of protests in other countries, where Cairo’s Tahrir Square al-

ready had turned into the main symbol of the ‘Arab Spring’. Evgeny Morozov is quite right then in mockingly remarking that tweets “don’t topple governments; people do” (2011, p. 19).

So, even if Twitter and Facebook had (indeed) fulfilled an important function of enabling (to a certain degree) a “coalescence of the initial revolutionary nucleus around which a number of ‘rings’ of participants would progressively cluster”, overall, it can still be said that “social media played only a *limited* and *very specific* role in that process” (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 49; emphasis added).

It becomes extremely useful then – especially in order to “salvage the Internet’s promise to aid the fight against authoritarianism” – (to try) to avoid the *net delusion*: a term coined by Morozov to depict an unhealthy situation, where one starts with a “flawed set of assumptions (cyber-utopianism)” and acts on them using a “flawed, even crippled, methodology (Internet-centrism)” (2011, p. xvii). It will not be totally wrong to argue that this was exactly the case with the extreme exaggerations of the roles performed by commercial social media during the ‘Arab Spring’ protests. The sites did indeed play an important role in the demonstrations, but only on a very *limited scale* and with a very *limited number of actors* involved. So, it will be more realistic to see the social media platforms only as the modern equivalents of what the “newspaper, the poster, the leaflet or direct mail were for the labour movement” (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 4).

The exaggeration of the roles played by social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, during the protests of ‘Arab Spring’, or, even more riskily, the ongoing discussion about the roles they *might* play for various social movements, are not worrying only because of their naiveté. The commercial social media platforms (in particular) and all ICTs (in general) bring in another risk element, associated with the narratives about their potential, as well as actual, use. As Juliet Lodge firmly observes:

The days of ICT adoption being simply a cool status symbol, a manifestation of modernity and power have passed. Their potential to be used for particularistic interests has been recognised. Within the nebula of the dis-

course about the benign impact of ICTs and their claimed benefits to boosting 'citizen' participation, lurks the dust of mixed purpose use, the abrogation of the precautionary principle, the lie of disembodied information, the reality of unobservable data mining, the erosion of the principle of consent as the levels of application criss-cross leisure, pleasure, domestic convenience and bureaucratic efficiency fields. Inter-operability is the new utopian goal (2012, p. 316).

It is (exactly) these intermixed relationships and multiple functions – the increased fusions of labor with play activities; the growing intimacies between information and entertainment processes; and the interfered procedures of production and consumption – that have given rise to formation of a new surveillance paradigm, which in this dissertation is called *surveillative apparatuses*.

In a certain parallel with the Louis Althusser's well-known *ideological state apparatuses*, which teach individuals the sundry know-how, but in "forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'" (1971, p. 133; italics in the original), surveillative apparatuses do also possess a sort of embedded ideology. But instead of being based on and guided by a set of political beliefs, this ideology is governed by an economic model which commodifies online and offline user data and monetizes on exploitation of communication practices of consumers and customers. This embedded ideology goes hand in hand with a "neo-liberal philosophy, embodied ... in the call to deregulate and privatize" all public telecommunications infrastructures (Mosco, 2004, p. 142).

Before engaging into deeper discussion of these apparatuses, an overview of contemporary surveillance practices in relation to functioning of the modern world is required.

### **Academic conceptualizations of pervasive surveillance**

As the groundbreaking revelations of the whistle blower organization WikiLeaks and the NSA contractor Edward Snowden clearly showed, the claims about the pervasive global surveillance, conducted by the U.S. and European intelligence agencies, in close cooperation with a

number of private companies, are true. Although for a very long time claims like these were simply called a conspiracy theory, stash of documents smuggled from the computer servers of secret services clearly indicated that we are indeed living in a type of society which, long ago, was dubbed a *surveillance society* (Lyon, 1994), or more recently, a *surveillant society* (Mathiesen, 2013).

The theoretical (and practical) effects of widespread surveillance have been a subject of research for many different investigations by a number of academics all around the world – who through various conceptualizations addressed the questions of how to treat; what to call; and, where to place, the pervasiveness of such surveillance. A number of different ‘-veillances’ were coined to (better) grasp the reality of being watched in a real-time manner by a number of public – as well as private – players in the field of data gathering.

One of the early examples of this set of new theoretical conceptualizations about the differing roles played by surveillance in contemporary mediatized society is Mark Andrejevic’s *lateral surveillance*. He describes the term as the “not the top-down monitoring of employees by employers, citizens by the state, but rather the peer-to-peer surveillance of spouses, friends, and relatives” (2005, p. 481). Yet, curiously enough, one of the examples he gives of this type of surveillance is the invitation sent out by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the residents of Virginia residing near the headquarters of the agency. According to Andrejevic, this was an invitation for participation in mutual monitoring between a state entity – responsible for watching over the specific neighborhood – and the neighbors themselves. And this invitation was quite a success, since the “threat of a pervasive and indiscriminate risk” underwrote the invitation of participating in the policing functions by “providing for the capillary extension of surveillance into households and surrounding neighborhoods – a strategy that enlists the appeal of participation as a form of shared responsibility” (p. 486).

Shortly after, in 2008, Anders Albrechtslund introduced the concept of *participatory surveillance*, by arguing that it “changes the role of the user from passive to active, since surveillance in this context offers



opportunities to take action, seek information and communicate”, and further claiming that “online social networking therefore illustrates that surveillance – as a mutual, empowering and subjectivity building practice – is fundamentally social” (2008a). By further exploring Hille Koskela’s (2004) notion of *empowering exhibitionism*, Albrechtslund (together with Louise Nørgaard Glud) later on claimed that participatory surveillance is a “way of maintaining friendships by checking up on information other people share” – which stresses that the person being “surveilled *acts with the technology*” (Albrechtslund & Glud, 2010, p. 240; italics in the original). In a similar vein Alice E. Marwick defines her concept of *social surveillance* as the “ongoing eavesdropping, investigation, gossip and inquiry that constitutes information gathering by people about their peers” – that is, as the processes, that were “made salient by the social digitization normalized by social media” and where practices of surveillance take place “between individuals, rather than between structural entities and individuals” (2012, p. 382).

Although all three concepts acknowledge the existence of other, more sinister forms of surveillance, they still mainly claim that surveillance does not necessarily have to be a scary practice, and can easily employ entertaining elements. As such, these concepts all involve an uncritical approach to the phenomenon as surveillance is conceptualized in a manner that actually celebrates the increasing monitoring of everyday life, and especially of the social media platforms. These studies are not alone – since there has been “surprisingly little use of Karl Marx and the Frankfurt School’s works for studying surveillance and privacy” (Fuchs, 2015, p. 6). Yet, not all of the recently introduced academic concepts are so naïve in their treatises.

André Jansson’s *interveillance*, and Miyase Christensen’s *complicit surveillance* are concepts that distance themselves from the celebratory approach to surveillance and instead call for analyses, which take into consideration various existent forms of control over the users of media platforms. *Interveillance*, as a term, places its focus on “people’s mutual practices of mediated expressivity and control, through for example online networking” and argues that “contemporary forms of *mutual* online expressivity, sharing and observation are to be un-

derstood as the outcome of identity work, and a desire for integration” – “rather than as an ambition to systematically supervise and control other people’s activities” (Jansson, 2012, pp. 414-415; italics in the original). Although the practices of interveillance are mostly “inseparable from societal surveillance processes, foremost algorithmically based commercial surveillance (datafication)” (Jansson, 2015, p. 85), they lack other features, usually associated with conventional forms of surveillance. Since a “relation between those *watching over* and those being watched” is not involved in these processes, and there is no systematic top-down hierarchy, the “horizontal monitoring of everyday activities, in its basic form, follows a more open-ended social logic” (Jansson, 2012, p. 415; italics in the original). Interveillance also defines a process of normalization and internalization of values usually associated with the Internet or digital technologies, as the users of social media platforms increasingly “come to understand and define the relations between themselves and others via automatically generated recommendations” – such as of “contacts and commodities (connectivity) and quantified simulations of social status (popularity)” (Jansson, 2015, p. 85).

According to Miyase Christensen, *complicit surveillance* is facilitated through a multidimensional “interplay between the *surveillant gaze*—intricately embedded in communication technologies (mobiles, email lists, online fora, social network sites, etc.)—and *everyday communication routines*” that operate at the subjective level (2011, p. 230; emphasis added). Thus, the term refers to structural macro formations that rely on complicity, and is also used in relation to the “technologically enhanced production of spatial and positional morality” (Christensen & Jansson, 2015, p. 1479). Overall, complicit surveillance provides (as a conceptual realm) a rounded and critical framework, which enables us to “consider social practices and human–technology interactions, economic structures and accompanying power hierarchies that produce particular forms of social relations”, thus entailing that “surveillance, in its liquidified forms, seeps into every aspect of life” (Christensen, 2016, p. 181).

All of these terms were introduced into academic literature to better grasp the complexity of contemporary societies regarding the availa-

ble set of practices in relation to pervasive (ambient) state and private surveillance. By focusing on the practices of everyday users of media platforms and Internet technologies, these concepts mostly deal with how ordinary people – in order to establish and maintain their daily interactions with friends and relatives – are using the same logic sets, which can be associated with the logic of digital media: quantification and datafication. Nevertheless, almost all of these terms, with the exceptions of complicit surveillance and interveillance, rarely touch upon the subject of *scale of surveillance*, involved in this human aim of staying in touch with each other. As such, these lacks require a more structuralist (and more critical) analysis of the ways modern surveillance functions.

### **Surveillance in a heavily mediatized world**

There is an epistemological gulf between the depth of surveillance involved in an instance when an average Eve checks the Facebook status updates, Twitter posts, or the Instagram photo flows of an average Ivy – the proverbial social media women who most of the time are already friends, acquaintances, peers or colleagues in the offline world. Due to the availability of different privacy and access settings, an average Eve cannot obtain the same magnitudes of information about someone who is not on her friends list on this specific social network. Still, the plethora of status updates, received by Eve about Ivy (who is already her friend), dwarfs in comparison with all the information this specific social media is able to get about Ivy – as the website, along with the specified updates, is not only able to obtain Ivy's geo-locational data, but also to keep the complete browsing logs of Ivy's usage of the platform and to follow all the links she clicked in and out of the network.

To further emphasize the significance of scale in surveillance practices, a comparison can be made between a singular social media platform and a state intelligence gathering agency – like the NSA, CIA, or the Department of Defense's Total Information Awareness (TIA) program. All of the above-mentioned information pieces about Ivy, obtained by a singular social media site (despite the fact that the majority of technology companies started to harvest all sorts of user infor-

mation from multiple meta-data sources) will pale in comparison with the complete fused profile of Ivy, compiled from digital as well as analog resources, and comprising information from the online as well as the offline realms. In this distinct 'data double' (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000), the logs of Ivy's online activities will be cross-referenced with her biometric identifications; border controls checks; detailed graphic of her local (traffic) and international (travel) grids; credit card usage; financial history; and her utilities' (water, electricity or gas) consumptions – just to name a few of the possible add-ons to Ivy's social media usage registry.

Thus, the personalized access of Eve to the publicly shared photos and videos of her friend Ivy – much celebrated by scholars like Anders Albrechtslund and Alice E. Marwick as fitting examples of participatory or social surveillance practices (which are argued to be free of vertical power dynamics) – quickly fades away in comparison with the surveillance capabilities of state intelligence agencies: for example, with the amount of information obtained by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and NSA, hacking into Gemalto, a Dutch SIM card manufacturer and “stealing encryption keys that allowed them to secretly monitor both voice calls and data” of billions of cellphones (Rushe, 2015); or the surveillance capacity of the mysterious Equation Group, an efficient cyberattack actor that “has been engaged in multiple CNE (computer network exploitation) operations dating back to 2001, and perhaps as early as 1996”, by using extremely complex, sophisticated and encrypted, malwares, which deeply root themselves in the hard drives of personal computers (Kaspersky Lab, 2015, p. 3).

Interviewees in André Jansson's study about the perceptions of surveillance in Sweden differentiate between what they believe still to be separate and “broad realms of *state surveillance*, *commercial surveillance* and *interveillance*” (2012, p. 411; italics in the original). However, as Gene Hackman's character Edward Lyle, a former NSA communication analyst in Tony Scott's 1998 movie *Enemy of the State*, explains to Will Smith, an unsuspecting labor lawyer, accidentally mixed up in a secretive cover up:

The government's been in bed with the entire telecommunications industry since the 40s. They've infected everything. They can get into your bank statements; your computer files; e-mail; listen to your phone calls. Every wire, every airwave. The more technology you use, the easier it is for them to keep tabs on you ... Fort Meade has 18 acres of mainframe computers underground. You're talking on the phone and you use the word, "bomb", "president", "Allah", any of a hundred key words, the computer recognizes it, automatically records it, red flags it for analysis; that was 20 years ago ... In the old days, we actually had to tap a wire into your phone line. Now calls bouncing around on satellite, they snatch right out of the air (Bruckheimer & Scott, 1998).

Although this quote comes from a feature film, the highlighted (close) collaboration of government agencies with telecommunications companies is not fictional, and is well documented in real life. The notorious room 641A, based in AT&T's San Francisco office and used to directly send filtered data to NSA headquarters, is a good example of such close cooperation, as the data it was filtering were obtained from "placing fibreoptic cable 'splitters' in major Internet switching centres, and triaging the enormous volumes of traffic in real-time with a small high-performance scanning computer" (Bowden, 2013, p. 12).

Forcing companies to do the dirty work of law enforcement and intelligence agencies; forcing them to monitor Internet "according to a set of some broad guidelines" is most definitely a dream coming true for any government (Morozov, 2011, p. 101). But most of the time there is no need to force the collaboration, as (within the system of fast capital accumulation) corporations should more properly be "understood not as victims of the state, but its for-profit accomplices" (Davis, 2014). A punctilious observer will not experience any difficulty in sighting that in the course of just a few decades an "annihilation of the distinction between government and business interests" has been silently taking place (Mosco, 2004, p. 112). So, quite a number of technology companies voluntarily line up to conspire with secret services or intelligence agencies. For example, the very same Amazon – that took down WikiLeaks' content from its servers in 2010, and tried to justify doing this by saying that the data shared by WikiLeaks was not "rightfully theirs" – did not see any (moral) dilemmas in signing a (very) lucrative \$600 million contract with the CIA for building cloud computing, storage, collaboration and analysis services, and providing "all 17 [U.S.] intelligence agencies unprecedented access" to untold numbers of servers

and computers (Davis, 2014). The same goes for thousands of other technology, manufacturing and finance companies (including makers of software and hardware, Internet security providers, banks, satellite telecommunications firms and many others) that willingly collaborate with the NSA, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and branches of the U.S. military, and provide sensitive information in order to receive benefits like accessing classified intelligence or infiltrating adversaries' computers (Riley, 2013).

Trevarian's bestselling thriller novel *Shibumi*, published in 1979, depicts a very different type of collaboration between the secret services and private companies. The roles are reversed and in this case it is not the state officials who give orders to firms – but the Mother Company, a consortium of major multinational communication, oil, and transportation corporations. In the novel these companies effectively control the U.S. government and all of its agencies and maintain a strong grip on the flows of information, money and energy in Western world, by means of the enormous financial revenues they are in possession of – as well as the political power this capital brings.

The Mother Company's complete control of the intelligence streams is achieved through a centralized computer, satirically dubbed Fat Boy. This mainframe is both a digital repository system, which stores massive amounts of data generated by various surveillance techniques as well as a super-computer, simultaneously responsible for the filtering and analysis of this data. This bulky and overwhelming database consists of a

medley of information from all the computers in the Western World, together with a certain amount of satellite-stolen data from Eastern Bloc powers. It was a blend of top-secret military information and telephone-billing records; of CIA blackmail material and drivers' permits from France; of names behind numbered Swiss bank accounts and mailing lists from direct advertising companies in Australia. It contained the most delicate information, and the most mundane. If you lived in the industrialized West, Fat Boy had you. He had your credit rating, your blood type, your political history, your sexual inclinations, your medical records, your school and university performance, random samplings of your personal telephone conversations, a copy of every telegram you ever sent or received, all purchases made on credit, full military or prison records, all magazines subscribed to, all income tax records, driving licenses, finger-

prints, birth certificates - all this, if you were a private citizen in whom the Mother Company had no special interest. If, however, the Mother Company or any of her input subsidiaries, like CIA, NSA, and their counterparts in the other democratic nations, took particular notice of you, then Fat Boy knew much, much more than this (Trevanian, 1979/2011, p. 19).

It should be noted that there exists a structural difference in how surveillance functions within the Anglo-American (as well as, to a certain degree, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand) and continental European contexts. Whereas especially in the U.S. and UK public state-private company distinction is (practically) non-existent – and in reality almost impossible to make, because of governmental acts like USA PATRIOT and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act in the U.S., which legally bind data companies to closely cooperate with the NSA; or the recently passed Investigatory Powers Act 2016 in the UK, nicknamed as the Snoopers' Charter – in European countries surveillance is still conducted (mostly) on the state level.

This type of surveillance is de jure restricted in many of the EU states, which – due to historical reasons – have passed strict laws on the protection of private data and the restriction of access to personal information. Yet, especially in the heydays of the post-1968 period – when different urban guerrilla movements engaging in violent acts of armed struggles emerged in Europe – European states also started to experiment with various data-gathering (and analysis) techniques and installed massive computerized databases to scientifically single out terrorist suspects. This process is vividly depicted in Uli Edel's 2008 film *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* – which realistically portrays countermeasures, taken by the West German state against the militants of the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF). As Horst Herold, the director of the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt), played in the film by Bruno Ganz, explains, his agency prepares to take steps to detect potential members of the RAF:

We plan to computerize identity papers. I'll explain by giving you an example. Underground terrorists naturally hide their identities from authority. Without the new ID card no bank account. Now they'll find it hard to rent somewhere to live. Everything will require the new cards: gas, water, electricity. In Frankfurt alone, 16,000 customers usually pay bills in cash. We will no longer accept cash. All customers will have to use their new ID.

No ID – no health care, either ... Then we take it further. For example, no ID: no driving license, no child support payments. If everyone has to have an ID, the last handful who don't are suspects. That is a mathematical certainty (Eichinger & Edel, 2008).

A majority of the state bureaucracies, and intelligence agencies, of the Western world have been in a close collaboration with each other – at least since the end of 1940s (Hager, 1996). Through different alliances and joint operations – such as XKeyscore system; the Five Eyes program (ECHELON); and the UKUSA cooperation agreement – the NSA has been gathering intelligence from all over the world, with the assistance of its sister organizations, such as UK's GCHQ; Australia's Australian Signals Directorate (ASD); France's Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE); Sweden's National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA); and Germany's Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND). But this does not necessarily mean that all these agencies are (always) on friendly terms with each other.

Edward Snowden's leaks showed that, contrary to existing agreements with its global counterparts, the NSA was still secretly engaged in data gathering and information monitoring processes in all of these countries, thus causing a range of tensions between the EU and the USA as well as a public outcry from some individual European governments. This incident clearly showed that global surveillance does not involve only one actor – and as such, quite naturally, is not based on a singular logic. Modern surveillance practices form a complex web of intertwined relations – facilitated by multiple power dynamics; filled with various hegemony struggles; and enacted by an extremely wide range of (different) actors with competing interests: multinational companies; supranational defense entities; state bodies; secret services; law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies; data brokerage firms; and black-hat hackers. Thus, accurate studies of contemporary surveillance praxis require analyses, which should be “predicated on the origins and actors involved” and, as such, should conduct surveillance research in “situational, contextual, and historically specific” manners (Fernandez & Huey, 2009, pp. 199-200).



## Surveillative apparatuses

In his 1970 essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser introduced the concept of state apparatuses – abstract machinery, which runs through material means, and aims to ensure the continuation of the domination of the specific social class in any given society. According to Althusser, the state apparatuses can be differentiated as Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). Whereas RSA is a singular mechanism, functioning “massively and predominantly by repression” (1971, p. 149), ISA have plural forms and function by ideology, although repression and ideology are present in both. Another crucial difference between the two is that whereas the RSA “belongs entirely to the *public* domain”, larger parts of ISA “(in their apparent dispersion) are part, on the contrary, of the *private* domain” (p. 144). ISA emerge in different formats, and according to Althusser, can manifest themselves in educational, religious, family, legal, political, trade-union, communications, and cultural manners (p. 143). What unites their wide diversity is (precisely) such functioning – “insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite, its diversity and its contradictions, *beneath the ruling ideology*, which is the ideology of ‘the ruling class’” (p. 146; all italics in the original).

ISA theory is an important conceptual contribution to social sciences, and has been explored in very different academic fields. It is also useful when applied in the studies of surveillance, as it might help to explain (quite) a number of phenomena. *Surveillative apparatuses* is a conceptual term which I developed while analyzing the new paradigm of surveillance, emerging *by* and *through* the intermixed relationships and multiple functions of contemporary online media platforms. I call it a paradigm because of the involvements of two (intertwined) layers: the *material* (physical) and *immaterial* (cultural).

First of all, I employ surveillative apparatuses as a meta-term to discern a constellation, which forms the *material layer*, and is constituted by a plethora of actors involved in different-level constant surveillance and monitoring of users, consumers and ordinary citizens. This pool includes: different state law enforcement, military and intelli-

gence agencies; public and private security concerns; technical transmission hardware manufacturers; consumer electronics producers; commercial social media platforms; various Internet service providers (ISPs); giant software houses; bureaucratic communication regulatory bodies; e-commerce websites; online game developers; border, population, and health management organizations; transnational media moguls; mobile network operators; and divergent data brokerage firms. All of the above are entities that (in one way or another) thrive through commodification of online and offline user information, as well as collection of all sorts of raw and filtered meta-data. These data sets are massively accumulated by watching and recording all online activity logs; by monitoring and detecting the use of various media types; by surveilling and storing locational geo-position data; and by keeping tabs on (and recognizing) individual patterns of communication. Especially in the context of for-profit social media environments it is this perpetual and consistent surveillance of prosumers, “who dynamically and permanently create and share user-generated content, browse profiles and data, interact with others, join and build communities, and co-create information” (Fuchs, 2011a, p. 302), that these entities benefit from.

Some of these units are headed by technologically savvy state officials and bureaucrats: publicly controlled and civically operated. Yet more are privately owned bodies, enabled through the (still on-going) processes of the constant “commodification of computing networks in the interests of restricting the free movement of information and the expansion of the concept of information as private property” (Wark, 2006, p. 321). Although the exact number of these private data harvesters is constantly changing (because of acquisitions and mergers), the expansion of their commercial sphere(s) of influence – as a direct consequence of numerous Federal Communications Commission deregulations – concluded with the “growing concentration of communication power in a handful of transnational media businesses” (Mosco, 2004, p. 19).

From time to time these actors might engage in antagonistic relations with each other. This was for example the case in the UK phone hacking scandal, involving Rupert Murdoch’s *News International* group –

which resulted in the closure of the *News of the World* tabloid (Global Media and Communication, 2012). Similarly, in the case of NSA, the secret PRISM program was used to directly access user data from several online ICT companies: Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, Yahoo, Skype, Google, Paltalk and AOL (Fuchs, 2014, p. 83). Yet, most often, all of these actors, both public and private ones, act in concert – as they all mutually benefit from the continuous online monitoring of user activities and personal data sets generated from this tracking. These data sets, after being properly logged, analyzed and cross referenced, allow them to “create detailed user profiles and to know about the personal interests and online behaviours” (Fuchs, 2011a, p. 302).

Although increasingly used by others too, especially among the GAFAs firms – that is, the four major technology companies of digital enclosure, Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon, with their combined 2016 market capitalization values surpassing 1.9 trillion USD – the (most common) surplus accumulation strategy is to provide users with “free access to services and platforms, let them produce content, and to accumulate a mass of prosumers that are sold as a commodity to third-party advertisers” (Fuchs, 2012, p. 144). The majority, if not all, of for-profit social media networks are based on content, created solely by their users – to a degree that their commercial logic is (completely) in line with the recognition of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno that “entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism” (1944/2006, p. 41). Such an economic model, made possible through the neoliberal transformation of everyday life, also parallels the “post-Fordist regime with customized interests, niche markets, and the narrowing and increasing specification of issues which speak to a narrowcast rather than broadcast mentality” (Mosco, 2004, p. 112).

There are other academic terms which capture the complexities of different actors involved in widespread surveillance. One of them is *surveillance-industrial complex* – which Ben Hayes uses to explore the “confluence of political, economic and social relations”, by focusing on the set of relationships initiated between the “private sector and the state in developing and implementing surveillance systems” for security and law enforcement purposes (2012, p. 167). Among examples he cites as physical manifestations of this complex are identification sys-

tems, critical infrastructure protection, various command-and-control centers, 'megavents', interception technologies, border controls apparatuses, mobile surveillance devices (e.g. drones), smart cameras, crisis management, dataveillance, nano-surveillance, public surveillance and open-source intelligence gathering (p. 174). As Hayes argues, majority of these different technologies can be detected through careful analyses of information, easily obtainable from the "Freedom of Information requests, corporate literature, technology exhibitions and the reconstruction of public-private security dialogues from the conference presentations of think-tanks, lobbyists, security agencies and civil servants" (p. 174). The wealth of the sources Hayes cites (necessarily) invokes a need for a deeper analysis of all the actors involved in surveillance practices.

The much-cited term of *surveillant assemblage*, introduced by Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson, is a concept<sup>1</sup> that touches upon that wealth, albeit briefly, as the authors use the term to depict a system, which "operates by abstracting human bodies from their territorial settings", and re-assembling "into distinct 'data doubles' which can be scrutinized and targeted for intervention" (2000, p. 606). As the authors themselves admit, the surveillant assemblage, as a theoretical concept, is based on a rhizomatic, almost chaotic, understanding of surveillance. The surveillance-industrial complex, on the other hand, revolves around the discussion focused on the economic activity, which (frequently) occurs as a result of secret agreements, signed behind closed doors by industrial conglomerates and public bureaucracies, and, as such, resonates with older discussions about military-industrial complexes. What both of these concepts lack in their treatises is an analysis of *how* and *why* the general population members give consent in the matters of surveillance; *why* they do not mind being continuously monitored – and instead (themselves) increasingly started to share the intimate, personal details of their social lives with

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<sup>1</sup> While developing the concept, the authors also provide well-founded criticism of Michel Foucault's formulations of panoptic surveillance. According to Haggerty and Ericson, Foucault failed to "directly engage contemporary developments in surveillance technology, focusing instead on transformations to eighteenth and nineteenth century total institutions" – a curious situation, since it is exactly "these technologies which give his analysis particular currency among contemporary" scholars of surveillance" (2000, p. 607).

an audience of online strangers: by keeping public Internet diaries; by delivering audio podcasts; by turning the gaze of camera upon themselves and broadcasting these video feeds live.

The proposed term of surveillative apparatuses involves a more structuralist understanding of surveillance – since, what the concept offers, as a meta-term, is (besides the detection of actors, who comprise the material level) a focus on the transformation of everyday life culture: towards a normalization of surveillance, and even making it desirable. Thus, the second layer of surveillative apparatuses (*immaterial* level), focuses on cultural transitions such pervasive surveillance facilitates – and how the dominance of this cultural model is then extensively used for the further justification, normalization and internalization of society, which is permeated by surveillance.

According to David Lyon, the social acceptance of surveillance, which at “its social and etymological core is about watching”, was extremely easy because “all sorts of watching have become commonplace within a ‘viewer society’ encouraged by the culture of TV and cinema” (2006, p. 36). The rise of Reality TV – which introduced a new TV format, based on the footage of closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, together with a constant surveillance of participants of shows using this broadcasting format – further contributed to the wide acceptance and recognition of the existence of surveillance cameras. If it was not for Reality TV, CCTV systems, mushrooming all around the world, would not have been so easily embraced, for example, becoming a “‘normalized’ feature of British urban life” in the course of the last two decades (Norris, 2012, p. 252). In this sense, the image of CCTV cameras, in an unquestionable manner, became the most known and accepted visible symbol of surveillance, establishing itself as a cultural icon, and used (both) by public bodies and ordinary people when referring to surveillance practices.

This happened despite the availability of empirical data, which clearly showed that they are nearly useless in fighting crime: their main promotional forte (Hope, 2009). CCTV cameras only recently started to be really efficient. Through the development of intelligent video analytics software, and convergences of it with the biometric identifica-

tion infrastructure, video surveillance networks are (only now) able to “follow individuals, detect anomalies, anticipate potential danger and take appropriate action, all in real-time” (Ferenbok & Clement, 2012, p. 224). As such, the allocation of so much public funding to installing CCTV systems would not have been possible without Reality TV and the promise that “submission to comprehensive surveillance is not merely a character-building challenge ... but a way to participate in a medium that has long relegated audience members to the role of passive spectators” (Andrejevic, 2004a, p. 2).

The cultural transformation of surveillance as something (extremely) necessary for the proper functioning of society is an idea which is constantly pushed by the Hollywood films that depict surveillance in uncritical manners, thus normalizing its dominance in everyday life – as one of the main ingredients of the set of tools, available for states, in order to overcome security threats. Especially from the late 1980s on, in parallel with the advancements in computer and telecommunications technologies used in monitoring practices, cinematic genres of thrillers and crime movies started to cheer for an “overwhelming, allegedly all-trumping reason for surveillance” (Albrechtslund, 2008b, p. 138). Showing video surveillance techniques, especially CCTV cameras, became so common in modern action films that it seemed to be a natural imperative that any movie had to include “at least one scene in which a surveillance camera” can be clearly seen (Kammerer, 2004, p. 468).

This trend became (especially) common after the rise of social media platforms and technologies of Web 2.0 – only in the period of 2009-2013, at least 26 popular Hollywood films using video surveillance as a plot element were produced (Lippert & Scalia, 2015, p. 30). According to John Patterson, since the late 1940s, the NSA and Hollywood have been “feeling each other up at arm’s length”, thus indicating that a frequent depiction of surveillance in U.S. movies was a purposeful strategy intending to soften cinema and television audiences – “accustoming us to the notion that our spending habits, our location, our every movement and conversation, are visible to others whose motives we cannot know” (2013).

The normalizations of practices of surveillance, conducted in everyday life through the cooperation of Reality TV and Hollywood brought in cultural transformations which made the (later) attempts of introducing even more expansive surveillance regulations pass practically unnoticed. The list of the (increasingly intrusive) methods by which personal information can be obtained and processed is (constantly) expanding and started to include even the most mundane activities, as modern surveillance systems are now able to capture their raw materials from unsolicited marketing practices; video surveillance; identity cards; biometric identifiers; the retention of communications traffic data; radio frequency identification devices (RFIDs); the use of tracking devices in vehicles; cookies, adware and spyware by Web sites; as well as the monitoring of employees (Bennett, 2008, p. ix).

Overall, the rate at which surveillance technologies seep into everyday practices is (very) high, and surveillance now permeates every front of daily existence. For example, it can be detected in the latest Wi-Fi enabled Barbie dolls – which can be remotely hacked and used for “spying on children and listening into conversations without the owner’s knowledge” (Gibbs, 2015). It can be seen in the case of In-Q-Tel – an economic incubator firm, used by the CIA as a covert investing fund – which provides financial backing for sentiment analysis start-ups, that is, companies that are tracking social media for the “emotional indicators that correlate with desired outcomes” (Andrejevic, 2013, p. 46). It can be observed in the plain-spoken declaration of James Clapper, the national director of U.S. intelligence – about the very distinct possibility for smart household devices to be used for the purposes of surveillance of their users (Ackerman & Thielman, 2016). People are accustomed to the idea that their interactive television sets are sending information about the cable TV viewing preferences to electronic hardware manufacturers, but the notion of a networked espresso machine or thermostat being used for spying on their users is something new!

These are the times of socio-economic changes – where the “privatization of both public space and public interest reaches a new level”, and leaves states and governments, especially in the Euro-Atlantic region, with a highly uneasy choice: “either disappear or operate like a business” (Mosco, 2004, p. 112). After all, the acts of the state bureaucra-

cies' demographic categorization of people; the profiling practices and threat analyses of intelligence agencies; and the packaging of users into clusters – in order to sell them as commodities to third party advertisers – as done by the commercial social media platforms; obtain their pre-processed raw material through the praxis of extensive data- and information-gathering. In this sense all the physical actors of surveillative apparatuses, and all interactions between them, very much resemble (and form) a “symbolic version of *The Matrix*, living not off the physical or biochemical energy of their pod people, but from their communicative productivity” (Andrejevic, 2013, p. 44).

The news about the former Google CEO Eric Schmidt having been selected to lead the U.S. Department of Defense's newly established Defense Innovation Advisory Board, and to advise on “Google-y topics as rapid prototyping, iterative product development, business analytics, mobile apps, and the cloud” (Alba, 2016), makes explicit the deep web of murky relationships – established between the states and commercial companies and based on the mutual economic and social benefits. Thus, as Robert W. McChesney emphasizes, it is worrying to observe that this enmeshed bonding is initiating a series of rapid social changes – where the emerging net veers towards the standard definitions of fascism: states and mega-corporations are “working hand in hand to promote corporate interests”; and state bureaucracy is “preoccupied with militarism, secrecy, propaganda, and surveillance” (2013, p. 171).

These structural and cultural transformations – bringing global scale dystopian totalitarianisms, where all the power and control is concentrated in the hands of few companies (closely) collaborating with the state bureaucracies – are closely linked with the rise of participation and transparency as the imposed ideologies on the individuals (Fuchs, 2011b, pp. 255-292). As in the case with the Reality TV, where the deployment of interactivity later on assimilated into the deployment of surveillance, the for-profit social media sites' “promise of participation serves the same function as that of surveillance within the workplace” – as means to (effectively) rationalize production (Andrejevic, 2004a, p. 217).



Various social networking sites strongly urge and encourage their users to share cores of themselves – in the form of their personal beliefs, ethnic and racial identities, ideological and religious inclinations, and organizational memberships; educational backgrounds, employment histories and personal interests; locative, current and previous, geo-positional data, in the forms of traveled countries, visited places and attended events; consumption habits, ranging from the favored television programs, films and music fandoms, to the preferred brands of chocolate; and a lot of other, otherwise extremely private, data. Still, billions of social media users continue to engage with these platforms, and to (willingly) provide their personal data. This permanency might be related to the interlocked relationships between the embedded ideology, and the cultural rituals (and practices) of everyday life. As Althusser emphasized, the continuation of all social systems is dependent on everyone's "submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology" (1971, p. 132). Frequently, compliance with the ruling ideology is achieved through socio-cultural pressures: through the fear of being potentially excluded from social life.

Thus, this peer-pressure ensures that a person submits to the dominant ideas and practices – without even realizing that they (by themselves) are the forms of ideology. As such, business professionals feel urged to join LinkedIn, to spread out their associate networks, and to learn about new career opportunities; scholars feel the need to set up an Academia.edu account, to be able to distribute their published articles and research results; journalists believe in becoming more visible through Twitter; teenagers feel pressured to use Snapchat, for sending each other short-lived pictures and videos, as well as to be (regularly) available on Facebook. This fear of social exclusion (and the constant peer-pressure to follow others) is a tendency that is in line with Horkheimer and Adorno's assertions about consumers – who turn themselves into the dominant ideology (the institutions of which they cannot otherwise escape), since, (just) like everyone else, one also "has to have seen Mrs. Miniver, just as one must subscribe to *Life* and *Time*" (1944/2006, p. 66).

As such, the (overall) transformations of cultural activities and social participations lead the way towards the formation of an everyday culture – where it is no longer the surveillance itself “that is stigmatized, but the *fear* of it” (Andrejevic, 2004b, p. 201; emphasis added). As an end result, what emerges is a Kafkaesque climate – where any attempt to conceal oneself might only result in being “regarded with suspicion by the NSA” (Naughton, 2014). This climate echoes the general aim of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon (a fitting example for Althusser’s RAS) – inside of which, the “crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect” is abolished, and instead, gradually being “replaced by a collection of separated individualities”, with multiplicities “that can be numbered and supervised” (Foucault, 1975/1991, p. 201).

In this sense, surveillative apparatuses is a helpful term to better conceptualize, understand, and address this development – as it aims to capture both the plethora of *physical players* in the field of mass surveillance and data gathering, as well as the *cultural changes* these actors initiate through their practices of joint politico-economical monitoring. The intertwined natures of these interlinkages and juxtapositions become even more visible in the cases of developing countries – especially the ones under totalitarian and semi-authoritarian governments – where these repressive technologies and services are not indigenously developed or produced, but are imported from (or simply provided by) the developed states.

### **Mediatization, surveillance and the politics of ICT4D**

Mediatization is a metaprocess that shapes the (whole) texture of everyday life, the essence of social relations, and the general core of society itself. Still, in order for this shaping to happen, the metaprocess of mediatization requires that a constructed web of communication networks, technical platforms and telecommunications infrastructures is already well established. But, especially in authoritarian states, media platforms do not function solely as communicative mediums – as they also provide means for ruling regimes to engage in “invasive monitoring and surveillance to maintain control” of their populations (Human

Rights Watch, 2014, p. 2). So, the interlocked relation of surveillance to mediatization comes to the fore in the context of developing countries.

In a majority of the states (in Latin America, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa) mediatization most often occurs as an auxiliary consequence of demands for broadcasting deregulation and industry privatizations, as well as the technical infrastructure and legal legislation upgrades. Requests, placed by global players, ensure that telecommunications, computer and mobile standards of the country are compatible with the international ones – and as such, in many of the developing countries “Internet development forms part of a transition process aimed at integrating the country into the global market place” (Uimonen, 2003, p. 278).

The role played by ICT4D initiatives is (especially) important in these processes since ICT4D initiatives provide the necessary funds – in the form of financial aid, various grants, and advisory services for implementing small- and large-scale technical, infrastructural upgrade and computerization, projects. Most of the time these initiatives are proposed by the supranational entities (such as the United Nations and World Bank), or states’ aid agencies (such as USAID and SIDA), or a range of private donor organizations (such as the George Soros’ Open Society Foundations, formerly known as the Open Society Institute). As such, in theorizations of ICT4D, one can (too) often detect traces of Information Systems theory: a theory that historically dealt with the “ways in which hardware, software, data, people and process interfaces can contribute to the generation of reliable information” – which is (now) simply molded with buzz keywords, emphasizing social change (Thomas, 2015, pp. 74-75).

This is exactly the case with situations where commercial social media platforms started to pay closer attention to ICT4D projects. The key to economic surplus accumulation for most of these sites is the basic understanding of scale, as the “more users a platform claims, the higher the advertising rates” are going to be (Fuchs, 2012, p. 144). Due to the simple fact that raw meta-data, created by user interactivities, are the major source of income, technology companies are (more than) happy

to “offer, at highly subsidised rates, services and goods that yield even more data” (Morozov, 2016). This can clearly be detected in the recent Facebook-led initiative to introduce free Internet access in the developing world: *Internet.org*.<sup>2</sup> This initiative’s claim of having brought “more than 25 million people online who otherwise would not be”<sup>3</sup> – and introducing “them to the incredible value of the internet” – rapidly loses its goodwill intentions when evaluated in the light of the economic rationales behind this move.

The main U.S. motivation in the case of the Marshall Plan, one of the biggest aid initiatives in human history, for example, was the strong belief that the restoration of devastated “European economies would provide markets for US products” – and also would “contribute to the maintenance of a viable trading system” (Willis, 2011, p. 43). Similar aims can be detected in Facebook’s initiative as well. *Internet.org* had already been heavily criticized for limiting the number of (free) websites one can easily connect to, and it was debated whether Facebook was falling short of its own goals – since the company was not “investing in network extensions in developing countries, and its business practices, in many cases, had obligated Internet service providers” to frequently incur extra costs (Talbot, 2014, p. 77).

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, one of the leading researchers in the field of development studies, is a harsh critic of such ICT4D approaches. He contends that in reality these initiatives function only as “digital capitalism looking south” – to rapidly growing middle classes; rising educational levels; and cheap labor pools – and, as such, are (only) about “*market expansion* and converting unused capacity into business assets” on the premises that new technologies are the gateways to hope (2010, p. 173; italics in the original). Trumpeters of neoliberal policies never shied away from openly admitting Pieterse’s assertions, since in techno-utopian discourses about the role of the metaprocess of mediation, some of them have already declared that:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://info.internet.org/en/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://info.internet.org/en/impact/>

A modern telecommunication infrastructure is a great aid to economic development, and the Internet is becoming a crucial component of that infrastructure. Economic development, in turn, promotes and stabilizes democratic regimes. Ironically, it may be the commercial aspect of cyberspace, its ability to connect individuals and businesses to each other for commercial purposes, that will have a more profound effect on the increase and stabilization of democratic regimes than its ability to nurture online political life (Margolis & Resnick, 2007, p. 314).

Yet, as Veva Leye's interpretation of the role played by the ICT4D regulations in the developing world also indicates, it is (largely) ignored that there is scarcely any empirical or historical evidence of the "benefits of investments in ICT for development" – as, for example, in comparisons to other investments, like health or education (2007, p. 979).

So, in the end, what ICT4D initiatives are (mainly) designed and implemented for are the processes of "*deepening of the market* by pressing for liberalization, opening up spaces for competition and investment, bypassing regulations or devising new regulations" (Pieterse, 2010, p. 173; italics in the original). Many developing nations, albeit reluctantly, have had to accept these demands – forced upon them by global actors – as the "recognition of the growing significance of electronic communications in today's global" markets (Uimonen, 2003, p. 278). Besides being an instrumental tool – for interventions into economic matters – ICT4D cases can additionally be criticized for another (and a much more ominous) trait.

Most of the time, ICT4D discourses applaud the implementations of various ICTs, and are enwrapped with political beliefs that the "Internet will contribute to the spread of democracy" (Margolis & Resnick, 2007, p. 314). Such celebratory formulations do not consider the distinct possibilities of the negative outcomes of ICT4D, for example, the multiplying of (repressive) state surveillance that such an increasing reliance on digital technologies might introduce. But surveillance is not just a linear outcome of mediatization, caused by increased ICT4D initiatives. It is rather an internal (and inherent) component of ICT4D attempts from the early beginning. As was already mentioned, surveillance can be detected at the principal core of the metaprocess of mediatization. As such, surveillance is also an intrinsic feature of ICT4D.

Especially within the context of semi-authoritarian countries, media technologies and ICTs are not used only for the purposes of providing communication opportunities to connect people. They are also used to exercise control over the flows of information and news distribution; to heavily monitor, detect, detain, and later on silence individual dissident voices and general activist movements. The intertwined nature of mediatized electronic communication, the process of digitalization, and the convergence of various media forms (necessarily) lead to increasing monitoring possibilities. The inevitable comfort they offer for surveillance practices opens the way for the rapid dawn of an omnipotent *electronic eye* (Lyon, 1994).

This was the case in Ethiopia, where funding from the World Bank, as well as other donors, together with the outsourced management, provided by France Telecom-Orange, resulted in (significant) upgrades of telecommunications infrastructure and advancement of ICTs capabilities. But this breakthrough only (further) ensured that the Ethiopian state can now more “effectively limit access to information and curtail freedoms of expression and association” (Human Rights Watch, 2014, p. 2). The emergent situation proved Richard Heeks right, who, while calling for the reformulations of ICT4D discourses, pointed out that

the explosion of work on ICTs for development (ICT4D) has (unconsciously) followed Marx’s dictum: ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, to change it.’ There has been a bias to action, not a bias to knowledge. We are changing the world without interpreting or understanding it (2006, p. 1).

The pace to change developing countries, without trying to thoroughly interpret their (inner) dynamics, forced Tobias Denskus (communication for development lecturer at Malmö University, Sweden), to question the ICT4D side-effects that eventually come with “better connectivity, better data, better analytical tools” – as well as the “state agencies and companies with an insatiable hunger for data” (2014). Such questionings become more relevant in the face of cases where the intended and desired ICT4D functions such as the election monitoring, corruption tracking, and health observation – frequently given as perfect examples of a democratic empowerment – dramatically backfire,

and result in (increased) authoritarian oppression. For example, such was the case with the 2009 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan – where 500 webcams were installed at the country’s polling stations, under the pretenses of complying with Western democratic standards and ensuring transparency. This initiative was turned into a very good PR campaign; yet, it did not “make the elections any more democratic, for most manipulations had occurred before the election campaign even started” (Morozov, 2011, p. 88). A more sinister implication was that many “local executive bodies and organizations that are financed from the state budget” instructed their personnel on who they specifically should vote for, and terrified the hesitant ones with the webcams that were going to register their participations and who they voted for (p. 88).

In this sense, mediatization – and *in-built* surveillance capacities, and *chosen* practices – constitute an ensemble which needs to be analyzed in locally situated and globally contextualized ways and understood as always in flux and never static.

## V: Methods, findings, and discussion

[T]o revolt against a government ... is to attack effects rather than causes; and as long as the attack is upon effects only, no change is possible. The true system, the real system, is our present construction of systematic thought itself, rationality itself ... If a revolution destroys a systematic government, but the systematic patterns of thought that produced that government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves in the succeeding government. There's so much talk about the system. And so little understanding.

**Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values***

Part V provides an account of all the methods, and the general methodology, used for the data collection and analysis in the five articles of this dissertation – together with a discussion of their findings, and the overall relevance to the research questions. The relation of research questions to the respective journal articles (and vice versa), together with the line of thinking, which led to the choice of subjects, topics, forms and contents of the articles, are given under the each heading.

### Question I

As already detailed in the introductory sections, the first question is more of an inquiry into surveillance vis-à-vis media and communication research – that is, surveillance as a subject of academic investigations, and (increasingly so) of media and communication studies. As such, Question I was formulated as:

**What are the emerging trends and topics in surveillance research, and how can these be linked with a perspective such as that of mediatization?**

The aim of Question I was to explore general and basic levels of where to place and how to treat surveillance related issues within the broader field of media and communication studies – that is, to map surveillance studies from the perspective of the academic field of media and communication research, as well as to investigate the emerging topics



in this previously unexplored crossroads territory. The secondary aim of Question 1 was to seek out the boundaries, limitations, weaknesses and strengths of the current research on surveillance. This aim is fulfilled by Article 1.

### **Article 1**

Article 1 was primarily initiated as a quest, directly in line with Pierre Bourdieu's indication that "by constructing the objective structure of the distribution of the properties attached to individuals or institutions, one acquires an instrument for forecasting the probable behaviors of agents occupying different positions within that distribution" (2004, p. 58) – thus contributing both to the current scope, as well as the future of the particular field.

The article is based on the content analysis of 296 pieces – published between 2002 and 2013 within 40 issues of the journal *Surveillance & Society*. The 296 pieces analyzed appeared in the form of original articles, essays, editorials, commentaries, opinion and debate pieces, research notes, artistic presentations, technical reviews – and even poems and a screenplay.

Qualitative content analysis is one of the most widely used methods in the social sciences, and is based on "allowing categories to emerge out of data", as well as on "recognizing the significance for understanding meaning in the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared" (Bryman, 2012, p. 291). The qualitative coding of the journal's special issue titles allowed for the initial mapping of the surveillance studies field. This early analysis was further tested against an in-depth (content) analysis of every piece that was published in the journal's 40 issues. In the end, after refining and fine-tuning the names, I was able to discern four general meta-themes (or related topics) – which, in their totality, form the actual backbone and infrastructure of possible intersections between surveillance research and media and communication studies. I named the four general meta-themes as follows:

- Classic Surveillance: “Discipline” and “Control”
- Identity-based Surveillance
- Mobility and Stasis
- Work, Power and Resistance

The most noteworthy contribution of Article / is the substantiation of how *identity-based surveillance* is becoming (increasingly) influential within the course of everyday life, and also is gaining greater influence within the academic research on surveillance.

Identity-based surveillance can be defined as the type of surveillance that involves focused tracking of children, women, LGBTTT, the elderly, the unhealthy, and homeless people – as well as racially discriminable and immigrant populations: in brief, all the ‘others’ of different social, cultural and economic contexts. It is closely related to the massive data profiles, constructed about every individual – from status of finances and of health to consumption and travel habits; from sexual orientations and political preferences to educational background and ideological, as well as religious, affiliations.

After giving the matter further thought, I decided (to try) to apply this concept (and to check for its repercussions, if any) within the context of semi-authoritarian countries, where the communication infrastructures are under close state control. As for case studies, I chose to focus on Azerbaijan and Turkey: two different, and yet similar, countries – the historical (and contemporary) contexts, languages, and cultures of which I am familiar with.

## Question II

Once again, as was already mentioned, Questions // and /// are posed in an inter-related manner. Raymond Williams’ assertion, that political campaigns must be extended and changed for “making hope practical, rather than despair convincing” (1989, p. 209), has provided a significant point of departure here. Question // is formulated as an attempt to capture and describe how the ‘despair’, brought in by in-

creased pervasive surveillance, can be convincing and obstructing social change. As such, Question // was formulated as:

**How do pervasive surveillance practices intervene with individual liberties (in particular) and social movements (in general) in Azerbaijan and Turkey?**

When I was reading the news about the Azerbaijani protests of 2011, I was intrigued by the lack of women among the detained, and later on, arrested activists. Yet, skimming through the videos and the photos of the protests, I was able to see that there were many women protesters actively participating both in the physical demonstrations, as well as in online debates. This dilemma encouraged me to focus on women activists in Azerbaijan as a particular case study of identity-based surveillance within the Azerbaijani context.

The main finding related to Question // was the theorization on *surveillative apparatuses*, a conceptual term which I am using in an attempt to describe a new paradigm of surveillance, emerging through the intermixed relationships and multiple functions of contemporary electronic media platforms – such as the intimacy of information and entertainment processes; interfered procedure of production and consumption; and the fusion of labor and play. I employ surveillative apparatuses as a meta-term to discern a constellation, constituted by a plethora of actors involved in different forms of surveillance and monitoring of users, consumers and ordinary citizens, as well as to explore the cultural changes this metamorphosis leads to.

Due to the journals' space limitations, the concept was not explored in its entirety in the published articles – but rather briefly outlined. The concept is detailed in Part *IV* of this cover text. Overall, Question // was addressed through Articles // and *III*.

**Article II**

Article // was an attempt at exploring the limits of gendered surveillance in Azerbaijan — that is, how and to what extent female activists

and women journalists are monitored and affected by the surveillative apparatuses of the state, both online and offline. The article also addressed, albeit very briefly, the gender dimensions of Azerbaijani political activism and protest practices; and how gender stereotypes, together with the more general problem of the gendered digital gap, are being used by the state authorities in order to control public opinion.

The (conceptual) framework of Article // was based upon two (main) sources of information: netnographic narrativization of Khadija Ismayilova's case (of being blackmailed by a sex video, secretly filmed by a camera, placed in her bedroom) in conjunction with electronic correspondence conducted with her on March 30, 2013; and quantitative analysis of Internet connectivity data in Azerbaijan, obtained from the Caucasus Research Resource Centers' (CRRC) *Caucasus Barometer 2011 Azerbaijan*<sup>4</sup> survey.

CRRC has an online tool<sup>5</sup> for conducting various analyses of the data sets, provided on the centers' website for free – without having to install numerical analysis programs. On the other hand, netnography is a (fairly) recently developed research method – which is defined as a “specialized form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer-mediated contingencies of today's social worlds” (Kozinets, 2010, p. 1). In this sense, netnographic narrativization is construction of narratives from the (exclusively) Internet-based information sources.

The main findings of this article are, first of all, that surveillative apparatuses of Azerbaijan are increasingly gaining gender-neutral positions and as such are used for offline defamation campaigns of women journalists and activists; and, secondly, only 15% of Azerbaijani women are using the Internet frequently (in 2011 figures). Thus, the low number of Internet-connected Azerbaijani households – combined with the much lower percentage of women, in comparisons with men,

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<sup>4</sup> *Caucasus Barometer* is the annual household survey about social and economic issues, as well as political attitudes. CRRC's *Caucasus Barometer 2011 Azerbaijan* survey was conducted nationwide between October 1 and November 2, 2011. In total 1,481 adults of at least 18 years of age – of which 48% were women – were interviewed face-to-face, using the Azerbaijani language.

<sup>5</sup> <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/>

using the Internet in everyday life – emerged as the main factors behind the lack of evidence for surveillance of women activists online, and were used in explaining why there were no women protesters detained as the result of crackdown on online dissent.

### **Article III**

Article III is an empirically grounded conceptual investigation of the failures of mediatized activism in Azerbaijan and Turkey. Through the analysis of two specific cases – the complete dispersion of commercial social media-based oppositional activists in Azerbaijan; and arrests of the Anonymous-led hacktivists in Turkey – I aimed to contribute to the discussion about the future of mediatized activism in the face of the growing pervasive surveillance – conducted by state intelligence agencies in collaboration with private infotainment and telecommunications companies.

In order to attend to the research aims of the article, in the Azerbaijani case, the *Global Digital Activism Data Set*, developed by the Digital Activism Research Project of the University of Washington, was used as a starting point. Into this set I then integrated the information obtained from the detailed yearly reports of *Human Rights Watch*, *Amnesty International*, and *Freedom House*, thus forming a database<sup>6</sup> with details of all the online and offline protests, which took place in Azerbaijan between 2003 and 2015. This data source was combined with thorough searches conducted in the online newspaper archives of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, *Yeni Müsavat*, and *Azadlıq Radiosu* in Russian, Azerbaijani and English languages.

I also closely followed the current feed, as well as the archived posts of two Facebook groups *HamamTimes*<sup>7</sup> and *AzTVdən Seçmələr*<sup>8</sup> – which are considered to be among the strongest critics of the ruling government in Azerbaijan. The groups (quite) frequently update their pages

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<sup>6</sup> The constituted database was partially used for Article II as well.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/HamamTimes/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pazaztv/>

with posts about the protests – where some of the updates had generated hundreds of comments.

For the Turkish case, I benefited from the written notes I took while attending *Surveillance, Censorship and Data Protection in Turkey* panel of ECREA's pre-conference *Imposing Freedoms*, organized in Istanbul on October, 23, 2012. The protests against Internet censorship, as well as the Anonymous' attacks of 2011, were among the main topics of presentations at the session, as well as of the informal discussions I chanced to have with the audience members and the presenters – Turkish academics, representatives of various NGOs, as well as the activists. I further compared these notes against the following resources: the massive debate page, stored on the website of *Alternative Informatics Association (Alternatif Bilişim Derneği)*<sup>9</sup>, a Turkish civil society organization focused on issues of Internet censorship and mass surveillance; the selected period (May 1-June 30, 2011) of #Op-Turkey hashtag's feed on Twitter; and archives of now defunct Facebook groups: *İnternetime Dokunma*<sup>10</sup>, established as the communication medium for the participants of May 15 demonstrations against the proposed Internet filter, and *İnternetime Dokunma-Sharpies Revolt*<sup>11</sup>, founded on May 18, 2011 as the main collaboration platform for dissemination of these protests' international news coverage.

I firstly looked into and analyzed how the protest events unfolded in Azerbaijan and Turkey. Based on this evaluation, I engaged into a discussion of factors, probably contributing to the failures of Azerbaijani and Turkish mediatized activisms. Later I reflected on the promises and shortcomings of social media-based activism and hacktivism; and in the end theorized on a formation of an alternative online platform, which can (possibly) bring these two forms of mediatized activism together – and help them in reinforcing each other in a complementary manner.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.alternatifbilisim.org/wiki/Ana\\_Sayfa](https://www.alternatifbilisim.org/wiki/Ana_Sayfa)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/15mayis/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/sharpiesrevolt/>

My general argument in Article *///* is that collaborations of activists with hackers, computer programmers, application coders, interface developers, and engineers is needed to create encrypted online spaces, where different social movements can come together. As hacktivists need to attract human resources for their attacks, and social media-based activists need secure spaces to communicate amongst themselves and to connect with the rest of their audience, the proposed alternative platform could assist them for coming together, planning their acts, debating their future tactics, developing their immediate strategies, and taking their actions to offline life. I further argued that the proposed alternative – by helping activists to reconnect with the rest of the society, especially the otherwise consenting middle classes – can be especially valuable in the context of semi-authoritarian countries, where governing regimes are in complete control of the Internet infrastructure and are closely monitoring commercial social media as well.

### Question III

In tandem with Question *II*, Question *///* aims to investigate what the (possible) venues and actions against oppressive surveillance are, and how ‘hope’ can be maintained alive through practical possibilities and counter-measures. As such, Question *///* was formulated as:

**How could Azerbaijani and Turkish individual activists (in particular) and social movements (in general) potentially develop viable options and organize resistance against pervasive surveillance – and how can this be understood within the scope of mediatization?**

Although Article *///* ends with a proposal for establishing alternative online spaces of communication among different activist movements, and their potential audiences, one major obstacle in relation to the healthy functioning of the proposed site remains. Even if protected by impenetrable firewalls, reinforced via unbreakable passwords, backed up with encrypted security precautions, and fortified through further

safety measures, no Internet space is truly failsafe and genuinely sheltered against electronic surveillance.

Each communication medium has its own material basis, which most of the time can be directly detected in its physical infrastructures. This materiality is not hidden – the Internet, as well as its earlier predecessors telegraph, telephone, radio, and television, were never intended to be truly transcendent technologies. In reality, all of these mediums comprise (physically) connected components – such as servers; routers; receivers; computers; antennas; terrestrial and undersea coaxial, copper and fiber-optic cables; modems; repeaters; transmitters; satellites, floating in outer space and satellite dishes, anchored on ground. Even the information these infrastructures transmit has its own material basis in the form of radiating sound and light signals, carried over the visible cables or invisible radio waves – and the bandwidth, amplitude and frequency of these signals can easily be manipulated.

The material basis of telecommunications technologies makes it possible for every form of broadcast media to be censored, its transmission signals to be jammed or distorted, and Internet websites, proxies and individual IP addresses to be banned. This was the case during the 2007 riots in Burma – when the ruling military junta decided to disable international mobile phone coverage and cut Internet connection (Willis, 2011, pp. 220-221); or the 2011 uprisings in Egypt – when Internet and mobile phone networks were shut down by the government (Aouragh & Alexander, 2011, p. 1351).

As such, the need to develop and strengthen various offline, alongside online, ties between different social movements and the rest of society turns into a pressing task. *Rhizomated subactivism* emerges here as a viable option. It is a conceptual term which I am using in an attempt of describing the climax moment, the culminating stage when various, otherwise small-scale, new social movements and activist collectives join in together and combine their respective forces in a united and unified struggle. Rhizomated subactivism first briefly appears in Article *IV*, and is explored in detail in Article *V*. Overall, Articles *IV* and *V* tackled Question *III*.



#### ***Article IV***

The database of Azerbaijani protests, explained under Article *III*, was compared against the information, obtained from three accounts of electronic correspondence and long-distance open-ended interviews (Hoffman, 2007), and two cases of face-to-face semi-structured interviews I conducted with activists and journalists from Azerbaijan. In addition, on July 23, 2015, a focus group with a number of Azerbaijani activists, mostly from left-wing political organizations and parties, was conducted in Baku. Both of the activists, with whom I initially engaged, belonged to the leftist side of the political spectrum. They were very helpful during the process of further recruitment of participants, but this snowballing ended up with the dominance of Marxist activists among the interviewees and focus group members.

This bias in ideological inclinations had a negligible effect on the article, since both in interviews and in focus group discussions the main debate revolved around ontological conditions of activist practices in Azerbaijan. Thus, the ideological standpoint of (individual) activists was not a focal aspect of the data-gathering process, as the focus was placed instead on the general problems of Azerbaijani politics – such as the increased state authoritarianism and the rapid rise of surveillance practices, together with the more particular difficulties, experienced especially by women protesters.

Although the initial plan was to administer the focus group meeting with six people (four men, two women), a few other activists (all men) also joined in the discussion – and at some point the group included ten people. The focus group lasted for almost four hours, and a number of additional issues were covered in the debate. At many instances I chose to remain in a passive observer role, since the group's discussions already centered on matters that I wished to be open for debate in the focus group.

The discussions would have continued even longer – but, as the café where the focus group was conducted closed at 22:30, the group had to disperse. For reasons of personal security, neither the names of the interviewees, nor the focus group members were revealed in the arti-

cle; instead aliases were used. The only exception was Khadija Ismayilova, who is well known in Azerbaijan. For the same reasons I was not allowed to record the discussions, but only to take handwritten notes.

The resulting analysis, carried out with all these information sources, was aimed to generate a categorical map of protests in Azerbaijan and revolved around the questions of what the protest was about; what the gender distribution of protesters looked like; how many people were taken into custody or imprisoned (and of what gender); the extents of served jail terms or paid fines, if any; and so on. Based on the generated map, my analysis further focused on how certain social and political movements in general, and individual women activists involved in them in particular, were affected by increasing state authoritarianism in Azerbaijan.

The results were indicative of a situation where women activists, active on the oppositional scene (and in Azerbaijani cyberspace), shared some similar traits when it came to online organization of protests, or placing calls for collective action. Still, they also showed (some) structural differences which led me to discern four distinctive categories, based on their ties with the offline political structure and institutions, organizational support systems, and ideological inclinations. These four categories were broadly named as follows:

- Traditional Oppositional Political Activists
- Religious Islamic Activists
- Feminist Activists
- Liberal Activists

These categories were constructed and constituted in a general sense, and there exist a number of overlaps between them – for example, it is quite possible that many liberal women activists (might) hold feminist ideas and values as well.

The conducted analysis showed that among the four activist constellations, identified in Article *IV*, the only two categories where women were never subjected to physical (as in traditional oppositional wom-

en) or symbolical (as in religious Islamic women) state violence were feminist and liberal activist groups. Further analysis of the conditions of detected gendered activist groups showed that unlike the (almost exclusively) Internet-based presence and the issue-oriented political framework of feminist activists, liberal activist participants of flash mobs provided a unique way of combining a mediatized form of activism (and virtual community building) with the physical presence in public spaces (and concerted collective action).

Since flash mobs can be viewed as a representative of a power wave, gradually building itself using a bottom-up approach, they emerged as a promising practice which (might) lead towards an increased participation of (especially young) women in the political processes of Azerbaijan. In this way, flash mobs also resonated with rhizomated subactivism – which emphasizes that mediatized activism is not enough by itself, and street-based political action has to be put back into existence for thorough democratic development.

### ***Article V***

Article V looked at the Gezi Park protests, which took place in Turkey during the summer of 2013, and was based on the visual content analysis of (approximately) 19 hours of documentary films, 101 hours of unedited video footage, and 8,000 photos of the protests, mostly from the three biggest Turkish cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. This body of material was (closely) studied and all the (distinctive) audiovisual cues, such as the chanted slogans, displayed flags and banners, raised placards and posters, and otherwise distinguishing emblems, symbols, and regalia were categorized and included in the analysis in order to (be able to) classify the protesters and to map out the distinct participant groups. The findings from the visual content analysis were checked against the analyses of two surveys: 4,411 face-to-face interviews conducted during June 6-7, 2013 in the Gezi Park by KONDA consultancy, as well as the online questionnaire filled in by 3,008 participants during June 3-4, 2013 (conducted by academics from Istanbul Bilgi University). I also observed, and sometimes participated in, the debates on Facebook pages related to the Gezi Park events. These

communities were *Diren Gezi Parki*<sup>12</sup> – the largest Facebook group connected with the Gezi Park, and (still) liked by 488,474 people; and *Birleşik Haziran Hareketi*<sup>13</sup> – a political coalition, emerging after the Gezi Park protests as an alliance of socialist parties, left-wing NGOs and various social movements.

Information obtained from these sources was additionally complemented with two accounts of the electronic correspondence and long-distance open-ended interviews (Hoffmann, 2007) as well as five cases of face-to-face semi-structured interviews I conducted with activists of different social movements and political organizations, who all actively participated in the Gezi Park events. For reasons of personal security, names of the interviewees were not revealed in the article – instead aliases were used.

There is an ongoing debate about the ethical issues in research, which involves online data gathering from the social media platforms such as Facebook (Zimmer, 2010). My own case with the studied Facebook groups is similar to Hallvard Moe and Anders Olof Larsson's study on Twitter. As they rightfully ask, is there an ethical dilemma in studying an Internet resource – if “information has been given in a by default public mode of communication by the users' themselves, and identified by the users themselves as political expressions” (2012, p. 122)? In my articles, all the studied Facebook groups were group pages, not the private user profiles. Secondly, all of them were defined as public groups – not closed ones, which require moderator approvals to join, and entail respect for members' privacy. Moreover, (all of) the posts available on the studied group pages were configured in open public settings, thus making them accessible, and readable, by the entirety of Facebook's users, without a need to join these groups, or to like these pages.

The main argument of this article was that the Gezi Park protests can be seen as an example of rhizomated subactivism – a conceptual term which was employed in an attempt to describe an instance of climax, a

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/geziparkidirensi/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BirlesikHaziran>

culmination moment of revitalized collaborations between different political organizations, social movements, subactivist individuals, and mediatized activists. In essence, it is a transitional phase – an ephemeral stage where various (some of them large- and some small-scale, some political and some apolitical) social movements, activist collectives, citizen groups, and otherwise politicized ordinary individuals are able to come together, join in a collective effort, combine their respective forces, and unite in a common struggle. Based on the analysis of the Gezi Park events, five (main) tenets of rhizomated subactivism were discerned. I defined them as the spatial, cognitive, connective, temporal and emancipating dimensions. It is through these characteristics that rhizomated subactivism, as a conceptual realm, was differentiated from some other terms – which (also) aim to encompass the polymorphous nature of contemporary activist practices.

In the analysis of the repercussions of the Gezi Park events, one very curious aspect, related to the longitudinal dimension of the state control (through the mediatized surveillance), emerged. Although surveillative apparatuses were properly functioning, and all the logs of mediatized activisms (as well as of the ordinary communicative practices) were kept by the state, this set of data was used against demonstrators *long after* the protests ended, not *during the* Gezi Park events.

This situation is in a stark contrast to online protest waves of 2011. Thus, the instances of rhizomated subactivism correspond to ephemeral moments – when mediatized surveillance is temporarily crippled and halts to produce (meaningfully) informative results. This was explained in the article with incapacity of states to designate necessary (human) resources towards dismantling online dissents during time periods when there are millions, physically present in the squares and on the streets. Thus, as it was concluded, the sizes of protest movements – as well as volumes of partakers – have great significance. As more people participate in protests, it is less likely that law enforcement agencies will be able to single out individuals to press charges or persecute – as long as the protests go on.

## VI: Conclusion

When I came to mankind for the first time, I committed the hermit's folly, the great folly: I situated myself in the market place. And when I spoke to all, I spoke to none ... Have a good mistrust today, you higher men, you brave-hearted, you open-hearted ones! And keep your grounds secret! For this today is of the rabble. What the rabble once learned to believe without grounds, how could anyone overthrow that with grounds? In the market place one convinces with gestures. But grounds make the rabble mistrustful ... If you want to climb high and beyond, then use your own legs! Do not let yourselves be *carried* up, do not seat yourselves on strangers' backs and heads! But you mount your horse? You ride swiftly up to your goal? Well then, my friend!

**Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None***

The rapid emergence of surveillative apparatuses – and the pervasive mediatized surveillance they conduct in order to obtain vast amounts of users' data – turned the power relations between state entities and activist movements upside down. Whereas Internet-based practicing of activism was able to achieve some significant results in the past – as, for example, in the cases of Zapatista movement's informational war in 1994 (Martinez-Torres, 2001), or the emergence of Indymedia (Independent Media Center) network in 1999 (Pickard, 2006) – in an era of mediatization these early success stories are unable to be repeated, at least not in the same manner.

The online flows of information, once thought to be completely anonymous (and ephemeral), turned out to be kept under a very close eye. The folly to understand the transformations of the ways modern surveillance functions resulted in bitter defeats, as experienced by Turkish and Azerbaijani mediatized activists in 2011 – and led to detainments and imprisonments of many key leaders and protest organizers in Azerbaijan, and the arrests of hacktivists in Turkey.

In Azerbaijan, the situation resulted in a complete reevaluation of Internet dynamics, and especially of commercial social media sites, and

forced Azerbaijani activists to invest more energy and resources into establishment of their own online media sites. *Meydan.tv*<sup>14</sup>, emerging as a result of such attempts, was founded in 2013 by Emin Milli – the dissident blogger, imprisoned in 2009, together with Adnan Hajizada, for a humorous YouTube video – and has already established itself as one of the leading (independent) media organizations in Azerbaijan. Initially financed by offline crowd-funding campaigns – and currently sustained through online donations – Meydan.tv paved the way for more Azerbaijani oppositional media platforms to emerge.

In Turkey, in the aftermath of the Gezi Park protests of 2013, and in a more aggressive manner after the attempted coup of July 15, 2016, the ruling government clamped down on all forms of independent media. Under the pretense of cleaning Gulenists from the economic sphere, Turkish state representatives started a (punitive) witch-hunt against progressive media as well, and as a result, almost all available secularist, pro-Kurdish, pro-Alevite, center- and radical-leftist broadcast and print media (newspapers, magazines, television and radio channels, news agencies, and book publishers) were forcefully shut down – and access to numerous online media portals banned. Thus, (almost) every online and offline alternative media and critical citizen journalism outlet, named in Article V as examples of independent media reporting about the Gezi Park events, has either been closed or censored. At the current state, chances of the emergence of another wave of Gezi-like demonstrations in Turkey have been seriously undermined.

### **The limitations of the dissertation**

Because of my undergraduate background in electrical and electronics engineering, my senior year specialization in control systems, and my personal interest in the issues of surveillance, I have held employment positions, which, at times, put me into close contact with both sides of the topic. For example, in 1999, when I was working as a (part-time) junior systems administrator at the Middle East Technical Universi-

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.meydan.tv>

ty's (METU) Computer Center, I frequently had to deal with numerous hacking attempts. METU, my alma mater, is a technical university offering globally accredited engineering education. The university also has a number of graduate institutes where future Turkish cybersecurity experts are educated. Thus, the university is tolerant of insider attempts to penetrate firewalls or circumvent online protection mechanisms – and sees this as part of the necessary process to gain practice. Still, I was amazed at the number of (obviously) amateur hackers – all choosing to have glossy nicknames, and yet leaving behind so many digital crumbs that the IP addresses of their computers (plugged into specific network sockets of particular dormitory rooms) were easily traceable and their users effortlessly identifiable, sometimes in a matter of a few minutes.

Nevertheless, the experience which left a real lasting impact (and later on was decisive in selecting the topic for this dissertation) was in the spring of 2010, when I was working as a systems integration engineer for a Turkish technology company specializing in the provision of various technical equipment to police and law enforcement agencies. As a part of the company's deal, for three days I had to deliver a series of seminars focused on video analytics – special software algorithms for automatic content analysis of surveillance footage. My classroom consisted of a dozen police officers – technical experts of Turkish National Police's Ankara Directorate. During one of the breaks, the existence of a special taskforce was mentioned. Allegedly, this private team was entirely devoted to the real-time monitoring of social media, especially of Facebook. None of these officers were part of the team – as such, I still do not know whether this substantial claim about Turkish police being able to monitor thousands of Facebook accounts in a real-time manner was just an urban legend, an exaggeration, or simply a joke. Nevertheless, the incident shows that the idea of being able to monitor social media platforms was entertained among the Turkish cyber-crime experts in 2010.

Thus, one of the main limitations of this study is the lack of interviews with representatives from police or law enforcement agencies in Azerbaijan or Turkey. Such interviews would have shed better light on the



current surveillance practices of these agencies in relation to the increasingly mediatized nature(s) of activism.

### **Concluding remarks**

Accidental readers of this dissertation might ask themselves: What all this has to do with me? My answer to this question would be to repeat the Latin phrase Karl Marx wrote in the preface of *Das Kapital's* first edition: “De te fabula narratur” (1867/1976, p. 90). Of you the tale is told. Surveillance apparatuses are not unique to Azerbaijan or Turkey. On the contrary, the emerging situation in both of these countries is highly reminiscent of global trends of socio-political changes – and, increasingly so, in Europe and the USA.

The social history of Western democracies is crammed with different examples of how various disciplinary devices – “developed to try and assert control and dominance for colonizing powers within colonized cities” – were later “transmuted back into ‘homeland’ cities by military and political elites” (Graham, 2006, p. 264). As such, the abusive practices, implemented and experimented upon in peripheral geographies eventually find their way towards the center. Thus, as the oppressive regulatory practices of their colonies found their way back to the European continent, so the widespread usage of pervasive surveillance technologies might eventually find their way to the West as well – especially taking into consideration that surveillance hardware and software, mainly used by countries such as Azerbaijan and Turkey for these purposes, are (almost) exclusively of European origin.

Thus, although both Azerbaijan and Turkey are located on the periphery of Europe, the increasing penetration of online activities by these states’ surveillance apparatuses is a phenomenon which needs to be carefully noted and evaluated by the activists and social movements of all other countries as well. As the old Latin saying goes – forewarned is forearmed!

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## “All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace”

One of the defining features of contemporary zeitgeist is that we live in an era of mediatization – a metaprocess, through (and by) which all everyday relations increasingly depend on networked media technologies and online communication channels – and surveillance is a principal dimension that lies at its core.

Through five peer-reviewed academic articles and the cover text, this dissertation provides a multi-faceted analysis of the complex relationships built by Azerbaijan’s and Turkey’s state intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies with a number of local, and global, private information, entertainment and telecommunications companies. The current compilation puts forth in-depth accounts and scrutiny of how various social movements and individual activists are affected by an amalgamation of public, political; and, private, economic, surveillance practices and seeks to illuminate the abusive extents of this transformation by way of using mediatization as an analytical tool.

Overall, this dissertation contributes a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between the increasingly mediatized natures of activism and surveillance in semi-authoritarian states.

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