## Doing Digital Methods by Richard Rogers.

I find this paper interesting. Although it shows the clear advantages in being able to use Google Analytics uncover hidden data and linked together networks, it makes one wonder where the line is drawn between legal and illegal activity.

The interlinked nature of the data that we use on a regular basis is becoming increasingly complex, as is the algorithms that control them. In this particular case, an investigative journalist uncovered links to a Russian propaganda troll that may or may not have been state controlled. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that state level actors are beginning to dominate the control of the digital landscape and the data that it contains. There is a saying that one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter. Our governments tell us outright that if we have done nothing wrong, then we have nothing to fear, but that feels disingenuous. It suggests that governments use of covert surveillance regimes should be normalised and that in essence, they are doing it to protect us, and that we should surrender our privacy in order for them to be effective in doing so. However, one would wonder what their motivations are and where the line blurs from prevention to infiltration.

The recent cases of undercover police officers engaging in physical relationships with activists shows that this is a grey area, and it is very easy for the lines to be crossed, and it is also very rare indeed that the perpetrators of these acts are brought to light and justice.

Rogers discusses the Lady in Red and Gezi Park picture data (pages 235 to 236) and explains that the Turkish government effectively censored Twitter users’ stories and accounts of people that were at the protests against the government. But what point does a social media provider have a responsibility to ensure that the stories that people are publishing online are portrayed accurately, and when should they bow to the pressure of state to authority? Mcluhan says that the Media is the Message, and if that is the case then perhaps the message needs to be placed in greater importance than the dictates of authoritarianism.

There is a counter argument that would certainly come from authority that insurrection, civil disobedience, et cetera needs to be curbed, but there is a reason you separate military and the police. One fights the enemies of the state, the other serves and protects the people. When one becomes the other, then it is not uncommon for the people to become the enemy.

This behaviour is not limited to what we would consider oppressive regimes, it was also used in 1983 in the United Kingdom by Margaret Thatcher. The police were effectively used as soldiers in order to break up the Coal Miner strikes, culminating in the use of mounted charges to disperse and injure men who had genuine grievances with their working conditions and pay. Had this tableau played out in the 21st century then it is almost certain that the government would have likewise restricted coverage on social media.

“With respect to the picture-takers, the top images that endure are from particular camera brands and models, such as a Canon EOS or Nikon D series (both professional grade, the latter retailing at €5000). At the top are not cheap pictures, so to speak; however, much lower down in the ranks (and by overall quantity) more economical, pocket-sized devices are well represented.” (Rogers, p238)

It was interesting to see that the camera brands that took the pictures were almost exclusively professional. This is something that Rodgers notes specifically and suggests that despite the wealth of images coming from user-created content, it is still professional journalists who have their images consistently curated and often form the top results on Google. This reminds me heavily of agenda setting theory developed by McCombs and Shaw in 1968 and reviewed in 2014 (McCombs, 2014). to paraphrase their work, they suggested that media has a great influence on their audience by instilling what they *should* think about, instead of what they *actually* think. For example, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. Macomb's and Shaw’s work even in the 1960s was not new; with the history of agenda setting being traced back to Walter Lippman's 1922 book, *Public Opinion*. He argued that the mass media is the principal connection between events in the world and the images in the minds of the public. Although this isn't what we today call ‘agenda setting’, his thinking is clearly along those lines and highlights even at this early stage the impact that media can have on large scale audiences.

Final section of this chapter deals with governmental cookies, and Rodgers suggests that the cookies used inside a web browsers I've become part of a larger scale ecosystem that enabled the tracking of behaviour across the web.

“Some years later, cookies were no longer primarily considered aids for remembering user preferences and the lubricant for frictionless surfing (Elmer, 2003). They had become part of an ecosystem, together with so-called ‘third-party elements’, that enable the tracking of behaviour across the web (pulling data from users) as well as the customization of content and ads delivered (pushing content to users) (Gerlitz and Helmond, 2013)”

In the United Kingdom, social media mass surveillance is permitted by the law. Charles Farr, a senior security official in the UK government detailed that searches on Google, Facebook and a vast range of other social media as well as emails are monitored for security services as they are deemed to be external communications. (Ballcott, 2014)  
 despite demands for the regulation of investigatory powers act to be overhauled, the government not only refused to do so but has in the years since increased control over the amount of data that can be accessed both with and without warrant. this means that GCHQ effectively has a scope of activity but can reach into every aspect of a persons life, and can be justified under the guise of external communications that can be monitored under general warrants according to Section 8 of the act.

it is interesting to note that members of parliament are exempted from this level of surveillance on the grounds that their communications are considered to be nationally sensitive. Despite this we are told that members of the public should expect a level of intrusion into their lives and that if they have done nothing wrong, then they have nothing to fear.

# Bibliography

Ballcott, O., 2014. *Social media mass surveillance is permitted by law, says top UK official,* London: Guardian.

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