Online Surveillance
Line Heesch Jessen – Exam synopsis 2018

What is your entry [concept/idea/term]?

My entry to the lexicon revolves around the idea of tracking online. The main theme of the entry will focus on reflecting on software critically and will evaluate the ethics of tracking users on different platforms, with the purpose of storing and selling this captured data to external interests.

Today, computer and online surveillance programs are widespread, and almost all internet traffic can be monitored. This aspect of our technological development can both be seen as being beneficial for our society and safety, but at the same time others speculate whether it can be harmful for our individual freedom. Surveillance allows governments and other agencies to maintain social control, recognize and monitor threats, and prevent and investigate criminal activity, however, concern have been expressed, that with increasing surveillance of citizens, we could potentially end up in a mass surveillance society, with limited political and personal freedoms. The notion of personalized advertisement is an aspect of surveillance that is located in the gray zone, because it is not primarily concerned with the gathering of information with the purpose of improving the safety of society, but has emerged from a commercial ambition, and thus is potentially not interested in the protection of the privacy of the individual.

I find this ethical question regarding personal freedom really interesting, because it seems to be a subject that increases in relevancy with time and is a concern I believe we need to address and understand when generating future technology and software.

For this subject I chose the term "*Online Surveillance*", because I think it broadly covers the subject, while at the same time excluding aspects of surveillance that I will not be covering, such as surveillance in general society, as seen in prisons, public domains and private properties.

What problem do you want to address and why [define the problem, and list questions you will want to address when writing, why is it important]?

When writing my paper there are several questions that I find would be relevant and interesting to try to answer and discuss, such as:

- How is surveillance online improving our safety? Concrete examples.
- How is surveillance online reducing our safety? Concrete examples.
- When did "cookies" evolve and how? What was the original purpose of them, and how are they being used today?
- How can and are social media and other websites tracking and storing our information, the things we choose to share, and potentially also the things we are not aware of them having access to?
- Who can get access to this information?
- Can information be found on these websites on exactly what they "capture"?
- Are there any way around online tracking? What consequences could such an exclusion have as an individual who wants to be a part of general society?
- How would it affect the popular social medias if online surveillance did not exist? *"social media depend for their existence on monitoring users and selling the data to others."* (Baumann & Lyon, p. 7)
- What would happen if we were more aware of what information is currently being stored about us? Would it affect anything? (Cambridge Analytica case – Facebook)
- Does online surveillance matter as long as we are not really aware of it, as seems to be the case for many people today?

These questions are important because they highlight how online surveillance has evolved from the beginning, and how it will continue to evolve throughout time, hereby also how it will continue to affect us as society and as individuals.

How you are planning to do it [what sources you are planning to use and how they might help in answering your questions]?

Sources:

- Albrechtslund, A., Fuchs, C., Boersma, K. & Sandoval, M. (2011). *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media.* England: Taylor and Francis Ltd

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- Bauman, Z. & Lyon, D. (2013). *Liquid surveillance, (1-17).* Cambridge, England: Polity Press

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- Lyon, D. (2007). *Surveillance Studies: An Overview,* (46-66). Cambridge, England: Polity Press

- Penney, J. W. (2017). "Internet surveillance, regulation, and chilling effects online: a comparative case study." *Internet Policy Review* (2), 1-39

- Prokop, A. (2018, 21. marts). *Cambridge Analytica and its many scandals, explained* [Online-artikel]. Hentet den 27. marts 2018 fra: https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/3/21/17141428/cambridge-analytica-trump-russia-mueller

- Sulleyman, A. (2017, 22. maj). *Snooper's charter: Majority of public unaware of government online surveillance* [Online-artikel]. Hentet den. 27. marts 2018 fra: https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/snoopers-charter-investigatory-powers-bill-government-online-surveillance-majority-uk-unaware-a7749851.html

These are the sources the assignment will be based on so far. As I begin to write, I am sure that additional sources will be added to the list.

What are your next steps?

How I am planning on addressing the task of writing my exam paper is to first carefully read all of the literature that I am planning on basing my arguments on and annotating anything that I find would be relevant to use. From here I want to make a general outline showing how I want my paper to be structured, so that I get an idea of how to distribute the available pages. At this point in my process, I have a general disposition draft, that I think could be a way to structure the paper, but this is unarguably something that will change and evolve along the way:

- Introduction:
    o Short presentation to online surveillance
    o General problem – *"how does online surveillance affect the way we behave online, and what potential consequences can it have for our personal freedom?"*
    o Methods – how am I going to address the problem, what sources am I going to use, and why?
- Presentation of the influence that online surveillance has on society today and how it has evolved from the beginning.
    o Where and when do we experience this surveillance?
    o How does it affect the individual user contra the bigger commercial users? (different uses)
- Discussion of / critical reflection on the consequences that online surveillance has today and might have in the future.
    o Positive and negative tendencies?
    o The ethics of unknown surveillance
- Conclusion – is online surveillance a thing that should continue to exist and evolve, or are there too many negative aspects and consequences to the privacy of the individual, that it should result in a reduction of the surveillance that we currently experience online?

I am aware that my subject might be too "big", and that there might be too many things to cover, but I don't want to limit myself from the beginning, rather, this is something I want to address

along the way when I am writing my paper. I think this is when I will be most able to determine which parts are important, and which are not. I might even change the overall term to something more specific, if I find this to be necessary.