

Doctoral (PhD) thesis

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2022

**NEMZETI KÖZSZOLGÁLATI EGYETEM
(NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE)**

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**Attitude and behavioral change in the surveillance society, with a
focus on the effects of identification with the role of the
Observer/Observed**

Theses of PhD Dissertation

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BUDAPEST, 2022

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1. Research problem

The 21st century is without a doubt the information age. The citizens of the information society are rapidly faced with the new opportunities and challenges in data collection, analysis, and surveillance as private individuals, citizens, or as part of an organization because of the emerging information technologies. The opportunities are expanding at an increasing pace as computing technologies get faster, smartphones gain new capacities, and data collection, analysis, and surveillance increase. The keys to these ever more important information technological tools are in the hands of the people. Therefore, to resolve the unavoidable problems such as data management mistakes, cyber security, cyber crime, or even questions regarding predictive policing, it is *absolutely necessary to know the behaviors, attitudes, patterns and possible psychological barriers of the users and stakeholders*. If in fact users use a special strategies - for example emotion-driven or those that include cognitive distortions – to reduce their concerns about surveillance and data collection, then getting to know them is essential for creating more successful data protection, preventative measures, and more effective law enforcement.

The central concept of the dissertation is "surveillance society", with a focus on those who surveil and those who are surveilled, or "society that surveills" in another translation (surveillance society, Lyon 1994; 2001, 2007; Murakami Wood et al. 2006). A "surveillance society" is a society that is organized and structured using techniques based on surveillance, and where surveillance technologies are widely used to monitor people's daily activities. In the society of surveillance, comprehensive digital and social changes affect both organizations and private individuals, whether they are civil citizens or members of law enforcement. This dissertation focuses on *individuals*. Its purpose is to demonstrate that in the surveillance society, *Observer/Observation roles show plausible permeability, and that identifying with a given role - even if only temporarily - has a behavior-modifying effect*.

The central question of the doctoral dissertation is how the citizens of the information society experience the effects of the surveillance society, the blurring between the previously quite separate Observer/Observed roles, the possibility of changing roles, and inheriting both roles in parallel. The research examines the attitudes of civil and law enforcement stakeholders regarding the possibility of systematic information acquisition, data collection, observation, or recording; how do they view social and technical changes that increasingly allow private

individuals or organizations to see into the lives of others (including themselves) and to follow, record, observe and analyze their lives and activities?

The thesis does *not* focus on the technical issues, methods, regulations of surveillance, the possibilities of data collection and information acquisition of surveillance and the resulting social problems, but rather on how surveillance/data collection/information acquisition, *affects the attitudes and the behavior* in civil persons and those who are working as police officers. In this sense, the present paper does not intend to grapple with the objective problems of the surveillance society, but rather *the subjective experiences of people will be examined in an interdisciplinary framework*.

This research raises the possibility that people *know* about the possibility of omnipresent surveillance, but in order to maintain a "livable life" they *reduce its impact* on their lives by actively avoiding dealing with it and its consequences: they filter out the surveillance, trivialize and compartmentalize its impact on their own lives and those of their acquaintances. The thesis shows that *the rejection of the possibility of systematic data collection/observation* by people is not (only) due to the lack of information or ignorance, but rather *the active avoidance is a proactive strategy to increase the individual's sense of personal security*, the signs of which are less noticeable if the interviewee identifies with the observer rather than the observed.

2. Research question, area of study, and issues

In the 21st century surveillance society, the era of Big Data, ubiquitous data collection and monitoring possibilities (ubiquitous surveillance, Andrejéivé 2012; Oulasvirta et al. 2014), and established "surveillance assemblages" (surveillant assemblage, Haggerty –Ericson 2000; 2006; Lyon 2006; 2007) mean that both civil citizens and law enforcement personnel must realistically reckon with the possibility that their online and offline activities will be subject to data collection and analysis in some form, and that their behavior will be observed and recorded.

The willingness of civilians to record in public areas has increased significantly these days (Farmer–Sun–Starks 2015; Kies 2011), which now appears as a new factor exerting influence on the operation and regulation of law enforcement (Potts 2015).

Citizen "counter-surveillance" or "back-surveillance" (sousveillance, Mann et al. 2003), when citizens record events to share later, and/or use as evidence, has become an increasingly significant factor. A special form of sousveillance is the so-called "citizen journalism" (Miller 2019) - where individuals record an event in order to later share it for its news value, display it

on the internet, or sell it to news portals – which has particularly increased the number and publicity of such recordings. Therefore, not only private individuals are affected by the changes, but also the police are forced to face the transformation of their roles related to data collection/information acquisition/observation, and the emergence of both the "new visibility" of the police (Thompson 2005; Goldsmith 2010; Sandhu 2017) and the "new transparency of police" (Brucato 2015).

The situation is further complicated by the fact that nowadays no one just fits the role of the Observer or the Observed -these roles that were previously tied to tasks, positions or perhaps a political goals are becoming more and more interchangeable and mutually applicable: we are all data collectors, observers of the activities of others, and at the same time subjects of some data collection, information sharing, and monitoring.

- And if the Observer/Observed roles can be flexible in the surveillance society, then the question arises as to whether identification with *one of the roles affects the attitude or behavior of the given person regarding surveillance/being surveilled?*

The increase of online and offline data collection, monitoring, information acquisition and analysis, and the widening of the surveillance society's official and citizen monitoring and recording possibilities raise questions about the following factors:

1. *How do civilians and law enforcement personnel experience the above effects, the possibility of ubiquitous surveillance data collection/information acquisition/observation, and*
2. *How do the attitudes that develop in connection with the observation ultimately influence the behavior these people?*

3. Research objectives

This research sets out to analyze a very relevant contemporary issue: the investigation of effects of digitization, the network society, information technology development, and the increasing possibility of data collection/information acquisition/observation on the behavior of civil citizens and law enforcement personnel. The aim of the research was to learn about the more important emotional factors and possible prevention mechanisms that influence the attitude and behavior of the people involved in relation to monitoring/data collection.

The main goal was to examine the parallelism of the roles of "Observer" and "Observed", as well as the possibility of confusion between the roles, and to explore the attitude and behavior-changing effect of the given role, both for civilians and law enforcement.

An important objective was to discover and formulate the elements of the attitude of the police, and the narrative of law enforcement, in the area of the "new visibility" of the police, as well as the effects of "citizen journalism"; recording and sharing of police work.

The main long-term goal of the dissertation is to arrive at a conclusion, which contributes to more practical and effective crime prevention measures and more successful police training and methods, by analyzing the attitudes and behaviors of civilians and law enforcement personnel with regards to data acquisition, information collection, surveillance, and the interchangeability of the Observer/Observed role.

4. Hypotheses

Based on the above considerations, the research examined the following hypotheses:

- H1: In the surveillance society, the flexibility between the roles of "Observer" and "Observed" has increased, switching between roles has become easier, and it has become possible to fulfill both roles in parallel.
- H2: Identifying with one of the roles ("Observer/Observed") – even temporarily - has a modifying effect on the attitudes and behavior of the persons shown with regards to the surveillance.
- H3: Identifying with the role of "Observer" results in greater acceptance of surveillance/being surveilled and a more permissive attitude towards monitoring methods.
- H4: Identifying with the "Observed" role causes more anxiety, more negative emotions, and more avoidance with regards to surveillance/being surveilled.
- H5: Personally experiencing an "observational role" has a long-term attitude and behavior-changing effect.
- H6: In order to create the mental construct of a "livable life", those involved use active psychological defenses and coping mechanisms to filter and, in many cases, distort the information related to possible surveillance/data collection/information acquisition.
- H7: Law enforcement personnel show a clearly identifiable narrative pattern in relation to surveillance and supervision.

5. Structure and research methods

The dissertation begins with chapter 1., a summary, which is followed by a literature review in chapter 2. In this part, after presenting the economic and social changes towards the information society, as well how it is presented in the social sciences, it gives an overview of the most important literature related to the development and characteristics of the "surveillance society".

It presents the major social effects, the behavior and attitudes of civilians and persons working for the police with regards to the possibility of increasing data collection, information acquisition and surveillance. The chapter focuses on issues of citizen journalism, sousveillance, and the "new visibility" of the police and police officers in particular.

The literature review is followed in Chapter 3. by a research methodology chapter, which introduces and defines the terms "surveillance", "Observer" and "Observed" used in the dissertation, and describes the objectives, hypotheses and research methods used.

Chapter 4 presents 4 types of preliminary research and their results to the reader. Among them is research looking at documents such as the political materials and state security professional materials from socialist Hungary, a case study on an agent based on archival research, and a user attitude and behavior analysis based on literature research and online internet searches. (see table no. 1)

1. table: Presentation of preliminary examination methods (Source: made by the Author)

Period	Activities (Rn = research number)	Sources	Tested hypothesis	Research questions	Era
1.Pre-digital period	R1. „Vigilance” Inspection of political statements, party documents and newspaper articles related to surveillance and "vigilance".	Early sources such as <i>Szabad Nép (Hungarian Newspaper)</i>	H1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there transience between the roles of Observer/Observed? ➤ How does the „observation of the observers” appear as a topic/goal in these sources? 	Socialist Hungary
	R2. „Documents” Overview of official state security materials.	ÁBTL (Historical Archives of	H7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there a special (state security) law enforcement 	Socialist Hungary ¹

¹ According to the ÁBTL archive (1944. december 21. és 1990. február 14.).

Period	Activities (Rn = research number)	Sources	Tested hypothesis	Research questions	Era
		the Hungarian State Security)		attitude/narrative regarding surveillance?	
	R3. „Agent” analysis of files.	ÁBTL, files about the agent	H1–H6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How do the agents that observe each other see the surveillance? ➤ Is it possible to change roles? ➤ Is there identification with a role? ➤ If so, how does it appear and what are its effects? ➤ Are there short-term and long-term effects of observation and being observed? 	Socialist Hungary ²
2.Digital era	R4. „User behavior analysis” Analysis of Google searches related to surveillance.	Google, online sources, and relevant literature	H2–H6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the typical user behavior regarding surveillance? ➤ Is there a typical user response? ➤ Do surveillance opt-outs appear in Google searches? ➤ Is there an observable pattern of user behavior when dealing with concerns related to 	The 2000s

² Same as above

Period	Activities (Rn = research number)	Sources	Tested hypothesis	Research questions	Era
				data management and data security?	

After presenting the preliminary results, chapter 5 contains the main research of the thesis.

1. Here you can read an in-depth interview with a civilian enthusiast, as a non-"professional" observer, and its analysis, and after that:
2. It is followed by the analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews with managers working in law enforcement.

In the final part of the dissertation, the results of the research are summarized in chapter 6, and in chapter 7 two problems related to policing are discussed based on the results. Possible psychological barriers to information security awareness, and the „\\”new visibility” of the police are discussed. The study concludes with a summary of the research results in chapter 8, and finally the dissertation contains the sources as a literature list and the relevant appendices.

6. The results of the research by hypothesis

Hypothesis		Research Results
H1	In the surveillance society the roles of „Observer” and „Observed” has become more flexible, switching between the roles has become easier, and it is now possible to fulfill both roles simultaneously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CONFIRMED: As precedent, we can consider the agent/observed roles of the pre-digital era. ➤ With the modern techniques of surveillance and sousveillance, both civilians and law enforcement can assume the role and position of Observer and Observer.
H2	Identifying with one of the roles ("Observer/Observed") - just as temporarily - has a modifying effect on the attitudes and behavior of the persons shown in relation to the observation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ PARTIALLY CONFIRMED: attitude and behavior change often appears, but how it changes depends on many factors.
H3	Identification with the role of "Observer" results in greater acceptance of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ PARTIALLY CONFIRMED: The law enforcement or civilian Observer role (e.g.

Hypothesis		Research Results
	surveillance/being surveilled and a more permissive attitude towards monitoring methods.	<p>detention officer, detective, fan of a public figure) works in the direction of greater acceptance,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ but the Observer role taken on out of necessity (e.g. agent) judges the observation more ambivalently. He becomes more accepting of his own surveillance practice and denies its harmful effects, but he also shows greater concern about the possibility that he too is being observed, and condemns this type of surveillance practice.
H4	Identifying with the "Observed" role involves more anxiety, more negative emotions, and more avoidance in relation to surveillance/being surveilled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CONFIRMED: observation that cannot be proven, but is very likely, activates anxiety, negative feelings, paranoid approach, evasions, permanent social mistrust. ➤ Inconsistent user behavior is the reaction to secure data collection: temporary change of behavior (e.g. temporarily changing the settings on an online interface), but lack of long-term changes (e.g. rejection of "digital abstinence"), avoidance, trivialization, denial of the problem.
H5	The personally experienced "observational role" has a long-term attitude and behavior-changing effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CONFIRMED: The voluntarily assumed role of Observer (professional observer, fan) contributes to increasing knowledge of the related expertise and methods, and to a more accepting attitude towards the methods. ➤ The non-voluntarily undertaken Observer (e.g. informants who are being coerced) experiences cognitive dissonance, the result of which may be different: reevaluation of one's own role, avoidance, denial, trivialization, etc.
H6	Persons working in law enforcement show a clearly identifiable narrative pattern in relation to surveillance and supervision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CONFIRMED: an unemotional, pragmatic, task-oriented approach to the issue, the primacy of legality, support for professional monitoring and its tools, emphasis on social utility, "blindness" to systemic anomalies, support for state supervisory functions.

7. The major findings of the theses

T1. The results of the research show that the methods of data collection/information acquisition/observation in the information society have a serious emotional and behavioral impact not only on civil society, but also on law enforcement personnel.

T2. Both ordinary citizens and police officers have to cope with the increased possibility of increased publicity, data collection/information acquisition/observation, and recording.

T3. Based on the examination of the pre-digital precedents, it can be said that next to feeling observed, being observed outside of personal control and being in the role of Observer, which is experienced with negative emotions, causes a long-term attitude and behavior modification effect and induces avoidance.

T4. There is a significant effect on the attitude and behavior of people based on their feelings of danger and perceived control with regards to data collection/information acquisition/surveillance, whether these feelings are positive or negative.

T5. The cognitive components of the users' attitude are appropriate: the vast majority of those concerned know about the importance of data and information protection and have heard about various data leaks. However, user behavior is often inconsistent: in many cases, the actual behavior does not match the user's own declared data protection strategy.

T6. The behavior of users regarding data protection is not rational, but "rationalized" (it is not adjusted to the true danger, or the real level of control, but to the user's personal opinion, or their mental image). Actual behavior is influenced by emotional, dispositional, and situational factors, giving room for cognitive distortions and emotional influences.

T7. An incorrect assessment (underestimation or overestimation) of both danger and personal control can lead to inadequate, emotion-driven, rationalized behavior, which can inhibit the behaviors that would be expected based on information security awareness.

T8. In order to improve information security awareness in the long term, it is absolutely necessary to learn about user attitudes and behavior patterns, and the various rationalization techniques deployed in order to achieve a "more livable life"; the aim of which is to avoid potential threats related to information security, to dissociate cognitive content from real behavior, and to incorporate it into crime prevention work.

T9. The long-term role of "Observer" can contribute to the development of a more permissive and supportive attitude towards the methods related to surveillance in both civilians and law enforcement personnel.

T10. With regards to the "new visibility" of the police and the surveillance issues of the digital age, the professional narrative of law enforcement officers appears to be well-defined. In addition to the support of supervision and monitoring tools and methods, the unemotional, pragmatic approach, professional supervision and adherence to legal frameworks stand out. At the same time, a certain degree of "blindness" towards systemic problems is also demonstrable.

T11. Experienced Observers expressed more concern/avoidance when it came to what kind of observation methods should be allowed to be used in relation to them, and they also showed more caution in their actual behavior.

T12. The attention of civil citizens to the police and the increase of technological tools have brought new opportunities and challenges for the police in many ways, which must be considered at the level of organization and strategy because it is extremely important for professional, legal, transparent and modern law enforcement operations.

8. Summary, new scientific findings

The following can be considered to be the main findings of the dissertation:

1. The presentation of blurring between the clearly-visible roles of Observer/Observed in the past based on a case study by examining political and state security documents from the pre-digital era (Socialist Hungary).
2. An overview of the most important attitudes, emotional and behavioral changes related to the experience and parallelism of the Observer/Observed roles using literature and user behavior analysis methods.
3. The proposals formulated to break down the psychological barriers to security awareness by exploring the user behavior of the digital era, its various inconsistent behavioral elements and their emotional background reasons, and the long-term limitations of information security awareness.
4. The presentation of the professional narrative of the Hungarian leaders working in law enforcement regarding the new visibility of the police, based on the analysis of interviews, and the effects of identification with the role of Observer.

9. Practical applicability of new scientific results, recommendations

This research makes suggestions for breaking down the psychological barriers to security awareness and the long-term limitations of information security awareness. The results provide a new perspective that can be used to enrich and further develop the training and informational materials to improve user information security awareness. Taking into account the emotion-driven, rationalized and inconsistent nature of user behavior in many cases, as well as the reasons for this, can open up a new field in the efforts made to create more conscious information security and crime prevention measures. These aspects are practical findings for *IT and crime prevention specialists* in the field and could be used to *reduce the online criminal exposure of civil society members*.

The results of the thesis also contain findings that can be used *in (further) training materials and for the socialization of police officers*, which can be used as learning material or as an element of training topics in the education regarding the policing challenges of the digital era.

The dissertation contributes to better understanding the topic for both those who are *preparing for a career in the police* and those who are *already serving*, the development of (further) training and informational materials, to the expansion of the police socialization toolkit, as well as preparation to support lawful, humane, and proportional policing measures under the pressure of surveillance and recording.

Taking into account the problems related to the new visibility and transparency of the police in the dissertation can contribute to making the *strategic planning and decision-making of central management* more efficient, and improve the *adaptation of the police force to the emerging challenges of the information society of the 21st century*.

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