

Lurking in the Shadows of Corporate Media: Mediatization, Surveillance and the Neoliberal Mode of Capitalist Reproduction

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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 enabled through social media. What once was experimented privately is now possible through certain 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, gadgets, apps, platforms, and mediums – technologies, that are adapted for individual uses; networked with each other; and, all having Internet and mobile connectivity, potentially make their data public.

According to Friedrich Krotz, one of the leading scholars of this novel media studies paradigm, the metaprocess of mediatization cannot be comprehended in isolation from other three metaprocesses: of globalization, individualization, and commercialization. Among these four transformative forces, commercialization is the most “basic process providing the stimulus to all action”, since in capitalist societies everything depends on the economic dimension (Krotz, 2007, p. 259). This point is further underlined by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, one of the best known researchers of development studies, as he emphasizes that “the media do not defend corporate capitalism, they *are* corporate capitalism” (Pieterse, 2010, p. 174; italics in the original).

The intertwined relationship of mediatization with surveillance and the neoliberal capitalism clearly reveals itself within the political economy of commercial, for-profit, social media platforms – which *quid pro quo* offer their users communicative, entertaining, and informative services. Unbeknown to most of their users, at least prior to the Cambridge Analytica scandal, what is being exchanged is the right to infiltrate users’ privacy in return for free services. The value placed upon pristine meta-data, obtained through monitoring of increasingly mediatized activities, drives different state bodies (including security, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, together with secret services) to establish close links with private corporations thriving on gathering of individual information. The amalgamation of these practices on the part of such actors consequently translates into a radical transformation of the ways modern surveillance functions – as well as the current mode of capitalist production, where the content of social media is solely provided by users.

This presentation focuses on all these private and public data acquisition actors (collectively dubbed as surveillative apparatuses) and argues that by placing *media* into the main focus of analysis, it is possible to observe how the collaborative surveillance practices of states and private companies are gradually being normalized in daily life through different cultural interventions by the same players – thus making new (and old) capitalist oligarchies go unnoticed.

References:

- Krotz, F. (2007). The meta-process of ‘mediatization’ as a conceptual frame. *Global Media and Communication*, 3(3), 256-260.
- Pieterse, J. N. (2010). *Development theory: Deconstructions/reconstructions* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.